THE TRADITION OF *TAJDID*
IN WESTERN BILAD AL-SUDAN:
A STUDY OF
THE GENESIS, DEVELOPMENT AND PATTERNS
OF ISLAMIC REVIVALISM IN THE REGION
900 -1900 AD.

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ABSTRACT

This is a study on the tradition of *tajdid* in Western Bilad al-Sudan, the tradition of Islamic revival and revolution which spun out several centuries and brought about far reaching social, economic and political changes in the region. It aims at examining the genesis, development and fruition of the thoughts and ideas which spurred this tradition over the centuries in the region. To this extent, the study represents an attempt at the intellectual history of the Islamic revolutionary movements in the 19th century Western Bilad al-Sudan.

The rationale for this study emanates from the fact that previous studies on the *jihad* movements in the region tended to interpret events outside the Islamic frame of reference and pay little heed to the thoughts and ideas of *tajdid*, which in point of fact were the key motivating factors. Recent studies which conceded to Islam a central role in these events have, with some justification, concentrated on individual manifestations of the phenomenon of *tajdid*. While this brings us closer to understanding these movements, it does not provide us with the broader perspective within which the real weight and significance of these events can be assessed and appreciated. Thus this study of the tradition of *tajdid* provides us not only with the perspective within which to appreciate the various *jihad* movements but, perhaps even more important, it informs us about the genus of which the *jihad* movements are species.

The study first discussed the concept, meaning and place of *tajdid* in Islam to provide both a working concept for *tajdid* and the Islamic frame of reference within which events are
interpreted. The study then focused on the tradition of learning in Western Bilad al-Sudan, within which the thoughts and ideas of *tajdid* were nurtured and developed. The genesis and development of the thoughts and ideas of *tajdid* were then traced and five various approaches to *tajdid*, the schools of *tajdid*, as it were, that developed between the 16th to the 18th centuries were discerned. *tajdid* in the 19th century which took the form of intensive teaching followed by *jihad* and the reordering of society (*islah*) was then discussed in the context of these schools of *tajdid*. The study then examined and discussed the features of this tradition of *tajdid*. The study was able to show that this tradition of *tajdid* has deep roots in the history of the region and provides a key component for the understanding of the major social, economic and political developments in the region. It was also shown that the thoughts and ideas of *tajdid* lie at the very core of the Islamic worldview and tend to retain their potency through the vagaries of time and may continue to do so for the foreseeable future.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My thanks and gratitude are first and foremost to Allah the Most High, for reasons too obvious and too numerous to mention here. I wish to then express my profound gratitude to my Supervisors, Dr. al-Tayyib Z. al'Abidin who started supervising the work and Professor Yusuf Fadl Hasan who saw it through to its rather tedious end. To both I shall remain indebted for their patience and understanding and above all for the valuable suggestions they made in the course of this work.

As is usual with a work of this nature, there are several institutions and individuals who have rendered varied and valuable assistance during the course of this work. While it is not possible to mention all, it is certainly unfair not to mention any. I wish to therefore gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Munazzamat al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya, the International University of Africa (formally the Islamic African Centre), both in Khartoum, Sudan; the Muslim World League, Makka, Saudi Arabia; the Islamic Council, London, UK; and the Islamic Foundation Leicester, UK, whose assistance, hospitality and research facilities were of great benefit. I must also express my gratitude to the staff of educational and research institutions like the IFAN, University of Dakar, Senegal; CEDRAB, Timbuktu, Mali; SOAS, University of London, UK; Centre for West African Studies, University of Birmingham, UK; and the Institute of African and Asian Studies, University of Khartoum, Sudan.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Rationale

The days when African history was seen as an appendage of European history have certainly gone for good. But the influence of European perspective on African history seems to linger on and may take some time to wither away. In West Africa in particular, the *jihad* movements of the 19th century, which were once thought to be inner reactions to European presence in the region, have continued to be seen and studied within the western European frame of reference. Several studies on these *jihad* movements, for example, tended to interpret events outside the Islamic frame of reference and paid little heed to the thoughts and ideas of *tajdid*, which in point of fact were the key motivating factors. It was only recently that the Islamic character of the *jihad* movements began to be gradually, if grudgingly, conceded. This liberation, as it were, has already revealed the link between the 19th century *jihads*, and the previous reform movements in the region. This has raised hopes that the real history of this astonishing phenomenon of *tajdid* in West Africa will eventually be known.

To be sure, it was Professor Abdullahi Smith, who exactly three decades ago, first discerned and boldly, then, stated that "the history of the West African Savannah in the 19th century has its own independent theme and this consists in a series of revolutionary movements which radically changed the social and political complexion of the whole zone during the hundred years
or so before the establishment of European government"\textsuperscript{0} In his submission Smith called for special efforts to be expended in the collection of the large body of written materials and oral traditions relating to these jihad movements. Nearly two years later, M. Hiskett, who along with A.D.H. Bivar, had been collecting and working on manuscripts relating to these jihads, realised that these works "illustrate the development of a tradition of reform which, having remote origins in the Almoravid movement of the eleventh century A.D., achieved literary expression in the Muslim empire of Songhay in the sixteenth century and which was continued in the Habe (i.e. Hausa) Kingdoms almost three centuries later."\textsuperscript{1}

About a decade later, P.D. Curtin noted that while the jihads have come into focus, the emerging details of the individual movements call for a broader synthesis. "While it is no longer possible" Curtin observed, "to write sensibly about the Soninke marabout wars of the Gambia without some understanding of what sheikh 'Uthman Danfodio had already accomplished a half-century earlier and two thousand miles away, the wave of influence linking these revolts remain cloudy."\textsuperscript{2} Thus it was increasingly felt that there was a common Islamic tradition from whence these various jihad movements drew both their inspiration as well as example. And until we can fathom this tradition and discern the nature of the linkages of the various


movements our understanding of these *jihad* will remain precarious, to say the least.

Evidently the roots of this tradition of reform are to be found in the tradition of learning in the region where the thoughts and ideas that gave birth to these *jihad* movements were generated and nurtured and through which they were transmitted. Indeed as more of the Arabic manuscripts came to light, especially in the last two decades, more light is thrown on the depth of this tradition and the links that existed between the scholars within and outside the region. The work of Ivor Wilks on 'the transmission of Islamic learning in the Western Sudan'; John Hunwick's various works on scholars like Muhammad Baghayagho, Ahmad Bada, Salih al-Fulani and al-Maghili; and Elias Sa'ad's *Social History of Timbuktu*, are particularly significant in this respect.

These works along with the availability of Arabic sources have stimulated several studies where Islam occupied an increasingly central role in the interpretation of events. But these studies largely concentrate on individual scholars or a particular *jihad* movement. While these greatly improve our appreciation of the tradition of learning and the understanding of these *jihad* movements, they do not provide us with the broader perspective within which the real weight and significance of these events can be assessed and appreciated. Rather they only impressed upon the sense of urgency for the study of a tradition of which the *jihad* movements are only one of its manifestations. In other words, a study of the tradition of *tajdid* provides us not only with the perspective within which to appreciate the various *jihad*
Movements in the region, but, perhaps even more important, it informs us about the genus of which the *jihad* movements are species.

**Frame of Reference**

In undertaking such a study, however, it is particularly essential that full cognizance is taken of the Islamic character of these reforms. For the leaders of the various movements were essentially Muslim scholars who were heirs to the centuries old Islamic tradition of learning going back over a millennium and who sought to tread the beaten path of their mentors. The teaching they devoted their lives for, the *jihads* they fought and the reform they carried out, were all integral parts of the Islamic tradition of *tajdid*. This tradition occupies an esteemed position within the Islamic world-view and is greatly cherished and revered by the generality of Muslims. Any study which ignores the centrality of this Islamic factor or seeks to interpret events outside the Islamic frame of reference is more likely to obscure rather than clarify our understanding of this phenomenon.

This is a fairly obvious point that hardly deserves mention here, but for the lingering influence of the Western European perspective, particularly the apparent intransigence of Western scholarship in conceding to Islam the central role it plays in Muslim affairs. This, it might be worth adding, is not only in the field of history but also in other fields of studies. As late as this year (1991) scholars in the field of African literature had an occasion to complain about this undue marginalization of Islam especially in the sub-Saharan Africa. “For nearly a millennium” the scholars observed, "Islam has been present in sub-Saharan
Africa, profoundly making the culture, society, and religion of more than a third of the continent. In spite of this fact, critics oddly perpetuate the African notion that black African literatures are an amalgam of traditional African and Western literacy cultures. Islam" they noted, "had been ignored, unseen, or glossed over. And yet, in the works of many African writers Islam provides the key component."³

The problem, to be sure, is not only glossing over Islam, for even when it is acknowledged, it is often not accepted for what it is nor its believers are taken for what they believe. Professor Bernard Lewis, a leading Western historian of Islam, has himself expressed his concern over what he describes as "this recurring unwillingness to recognise the nature of Islam or even the fact of Islam as an independent, different, and autonomous religious phenomenon".⁴ The problem, Lewis believes, is essentially that:

"Modern Western man, being unable for the most part to assign a dominant and central place for religion in his own affairs, found himself unable to conceive that any other peoples in any other place could have done so and was therefore impelled to device other explanations of what seemed to him only superficially religious phenomena. We find, for example, a great deal of such meaningless questions as “Was Muhammad sincere?”...We find lengthy explanations by historians of the “real” underlying significance of the great religious conflicts within Islam between different sects and schools in the past,...To the modern western mind, it is not conceivable that men, would fight and die in such numbers over mere differences in religion; there have to be some other “genuine” reasons underneath the religious veil.”⁵

⁵ Ibid. P. 18
This is perhaps easy to understand, for as Professor Gibb, another leading Western orientalist, ventured to explain:

No one who has attempted it will underestimate the difficulty of grasping the religious attitude of men whose outlook upon the world differs widely from our own and has been modeled wholly or in part, by a different tradition. But it is peculiarly difficult for the modern Western man who has to do so. ... in the typical Western man, who has inherited English rationalist thoughts and values of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and who has become mentally conditioned by it or by the German thoughts and values of the last century and a half the intuitive faculty has been so starved and neglected that he had the greatest reluctance to admit even its existence and cannot imagine how it operates. Our religious judgment has become in consequence seriously unbalanced.  

The simple but fundamental point which is being stressed here is that, it is only through the Islamic frame of reference we can hope to understand the subject of this study, the tradition of *tajdid*. If only for the simple reason that while other societies may have their traditions of reform, *tajdid* is peculiarly Islamic. This is not to ignore the merits of Western tools of inquiry and analysis, but rather to appreciate the fact that they have underlying assumptions and prejudices which renders their value in this kind of study rather limited. Indeed the Islamic frame of reference has its own assumptions and prejudices, and the whole point being raised would not have been necessary but for the fact that while taking liberty to allow their assumptions full reins, Western scholars often deny others the same liberty.  

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7 The experience of a Muslim scholar studying recently in a Western university might bring this point home. He writes: “Thus, if you work with the assumption that Islam was some how invented by Muhammad and proceeded to investigate how this was possible, nobody will demand the proof for this assumption. However, if your working assumption implied in any way the acceptance of the truth
Objectives

The study wishes to aim at achieving the following objectives:
1. To delineate the concept, meaning and place of *tajdid* in Islam.
2. To trace the development of Islamic scholarship and the genesis of the ideas of *tajdid* in the region.
3. To explore the interaction of thoughts and ideas as the region became intellectually incorporated into the wider Muslim world and discern the various trends and approaches to *tajdid* that evolved there from.
4. To examine the links between the 19th century *jihad* movements and various approaches to *tajdid* which had evolve earlier in the region.
5. To delineate some of the features of the tradition of *tajdid* in the region.

Scope

The Bilad al-Sudan (literally the countries of the black) is the name early Muslim historians gave to the vast region of savanna grassland, sandwiched by the Sahara desert in the north and the dense forest in the south, stretching from the shores of the Atlantic in the west to the Nile valley in the east.\(^8\) For convenience modern historians have divided this expansive region into western, central and eastern. The phenomenon we seek to study here was not, however, strictly confined to the

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western Bilad-Sudan, as the title of the work might suggest. This is to be expected, for very rarely do historical events confine themselves to arbitrarily drawn boundaries. The theater of this phenomenon of *tajdid* under study consists of the area stretching from the shores of the Atlantic in the west to the Hausaland in the central part of the region. But the major events that shaped this phenomenon as well as the institutions of learning that played a major role in the spread of the ideas were all located in the western part of the region. In other words, the centre of gravity of the phenomenon under study lied firmly in the western part of the region. Hence it was thought appropriate to maintain the 'Western Bilad al-Sudan' even as a substantial portion of the central part of the region was also involved.

There is a similar problem in respect of the period the study seeks to cover. While the thoughts and ideas of *tajdid* took concrete shape about the 17th and 18th centuries and gained widest application in the 19th century, the roots of these ideas go back much earlier in the region. To follow these ideas from their roots in the 11th century al-Murabitun movement to their fruition in the 19th century meant covering an extensive period of time. This is no doubt cumbersome, but the never-ending chain of history does not leave us with much choice. So while moving through this rather long period, the study will keep in constant focus its primary concern, the thoughts and ideas of *tajdid* allowing more details during the 19th century when the ideas gained application and interacted more than any other time during the period. To allow us concentrate on the thoughts and

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9 All dates used in this study are Gregorian unless otherwise stated.
ideas of *tajdid*, a whole chapter is provided which discusses the outline of the spread of Islam in the region taking up the social, economic and political developments associated with this spread.

The study consists of seven chapters altogether, including this introduction. The second chapter is on the concept, meaning and place of *tajdid*. It delineates the meaning and place of *tajdid* within the Islamic world-view, using the views of relevant Muslim scholars to illustrate the various emphasis that exists among scholars. An outline of the spread of Islam in Western Bilad al-Sudan from the earliest times to the 19th century makes the third chapter. This, as has earlier been mentioned, is to furnish us with a suitable background for our discussion and allow us to subsequently dispense with historical details while concentrating on thoughts and ideas. The fourth chapter discusses al-Murabitun movement, concentrating on its transformation of society and role in the development of the tradition of learning and setting the tone for scholarship in the region.

In the fifth chapter, the study then takes up the genesis and the evolution of the ideas of *tajdid* which covered the period between the 16th to the 18th centuries. Here the study concentrated on the leading scholars such as al-Maghili, al-Suyuti, Ahmad Baba, al-Kunti whose perspectives on *tajdid* had considerable impact in the region and discerned the different schools of *tajdid* that consequently emerged during these centuries. The study then examined, in the sixth chapter, *tajdid* in the 19th century, particularly the relationships between the three major *jihad* movements and the extent to which they
represented the various schools of *tajdid*. The seventh and final chapter then reflected on the tradition of *tajdid* in the region and attempted to identify some of its features. The study then ended with such conclusions as the findings would allow.

**Sources**

A study with these objectives, scope and, persuasion, must necessarily rely heavily on primary sources, almost all of which were invariably written by historians, scholars and the *mujaddidun* themselves. Indeed, the advocates of the thoughts and ideas which form the focus of this study as well as the disseminators and the principal actors, being scholars, have left us a plethora of written works in Arabic language providing a rich and copious source for this study. However, not all these works are extant and not all the extant works have been recovered and preserved in a way, which makes them accessible to researchers. The collections made over the last three decades or so, have never the less brought to light a substantial body of material which allow us to throw further light on this, no doubt, interesting phenomenon of *tajdid* in Western Bilad al-Sudan.

Some of the major manuscript collection centers visited for the collection of data for this study include Northern History Research Scheme of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Research Data Center, Bayero University, Kano; Center for Islamic Education, Usmanu Danfodio University, Sokoto; Center for Arabic Documentation, University of Ibadan, Ibadan; and Arewa House, Kaduna; all in Nigeria. Centers visited outside Nigeria include the Institute Fundamental du Afrique Noire (IFAN), Dakar, Senegal; Ahmad Baba Center for Documentation and
Research (CEDRAB), Timbuktu, Mali; and the Institute for Research in Social Science (IRSH), Niamey Niger. Institutions like the Center for West African Studies, University of Birmingham and the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, were also consulted for the relevant doctoral theses and other secondary sources in their libraries.

Some of the important sources that touch on the biographical works on the Ulama and general history of the region have since been edited and published. Biographical work include Nayl al-ibtihaj bi a’ayan ‘Ulama’ al-Takrur of Abu Bakr al Bartali of Walata and Ida al-nusukh man akhahtu ‘anhu min al-Shuyukh of Abd Allah b. Fudi. Works on the general history of the region include Tarikh al-Sudan of Abu al-Rahman al-Sadi, Tarikh al fattash of Mahmud al-Kati, and Infaq al maysur fi Tarikh Bilad al-Tukrur of Muhammad Bello. There are some which are of immense value in the study, which have also been edited, and published, some with English translation like Ajwiba of al-Maghili, published as Sharia in Songhay by J. Hunwick (ed. trans) Shurb al-Zulal of Barnawi, Bayan Wujub al Hijra ala ibad and Ihya al-Sunnah wa Ikhamad al-bid’a, both of Uthman b. Fudi, Tazyin al Waraqat of Abd Allah b. Fudi and Rimah Hizb al-Rahim ala Nuhur Hizb al Rajim of al-Hajj Umar al Futi.

The bulk of the works are still in manuscript form, either preserved in the various centres or available on the streets of some Muslim cities where these works are still read and studied in Islamic scholarly circles. These works include al-Adab al-Amara of Imam al-Hadrami, claimed to be the oldest indigenous
manuscript in the region\textsuperscript{10}; *Kitab al-Nasiha* of Sidi al-Mukhtar al–Kunti, *Bayan Bidi‘i al-Shaytaniyya, I‘dad al-Da‘i* and *Siraj al-Ikhwan*, all of Uthman b. Fudi; *Diya al-Hukkam* and *Diya al-Tawil*, both of Abd Allah b. Fudi *al-ad tirar ila Allah* of Ahmad Labbo; and *Kaff al-Ikhwan an Ittiba Khutuwat al Shaytan* of Muhammad Bello. There are also some useful correspondence parts of which had been translated and used in these and some other research papers. Oral sources were also collected in the form of recorded interviews with local experts. Some of those interviewed include Shaykh Malik Ndjaye of Thies in Senegal, Shaykh Ahmad Shuwayd, a local consultant for CEDRAB in Timbuktu, Mali and Alhaji Garba Said, the grandson of the famous Hayat b. Sa‘id, an archivist with the History Bureau in Kano, Nigeria.

All the above sources are generally the works of indigenous scholars. Prior to the development of indigenous scholarship our knowledge of the region was largely driven from the works of Muslim Historians like al-Bakri who wrote from al-Andalus and al-Umari who wrote from Egypt and was able to preserve a lot of the details of the Hajj of Mansa Musa. There was also accounts of people who physically visited and traveled through the region like Ibn Batuta. There were also those who used their contemporary and other sources wrote very useful accounts like Ibn Khaldun in his *Kitab al-Ibar*. Most of the works in this category have luckily been collected, edited, translated into English and published in one volume, *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History*. This work was of immense value in this study.

\textsuperscript{10} Interview with Shaykh Ahmad Shuway, a consultant for the CEDRAB, in Timbuktu, Mali.
In addition to these primary sources there is a large body of secondary Sources in the form of published books and articles and unpublicized theses and Papers mainly in English and French. Most of the works in this category have been done in the best traditions of Western European scholarship. They contain a substantial body of data and information which this study cannot ignore.

**Translation and Transliteration**

For the English translation of the Qur’an, Abd Allah Yusuf Ali’s translation was used for the most part. When this was found inadequate, resort was often made to Marmaduke Pickthall’s or Muhammad Asad’s translation. As for the numerous Arabic documents used in this study, English translation and edited translated texts were used whenever these exist. As for manuscripts, the author made his own translation, often in consultation with experts. Where a translation of a manuscript had been used in theses or some research papers, published or otherwise, these have always been used when found adequate, though sometimes with modifications, and the sources acknowledged.

As for transliteration, the system of the Encyclopedia of Islam was used within the limits provided by the typing facilities. In respect of and however, ‘q’ and ‘j’ have been preferred over the ‘k’ and ‘dj’ of the Encyclopedia. All Arabic and other non-English terms have been italicized, except for oversights.

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11 Needless perhaps to add that the Qur’an cannot actually be translated. Its rendering into English, or any language for that matter, other than the Arabic Language, is only an attempt to approximate to the meaning.
CHAPTER TWO
CONCEPT, MEANING AND PLACE OF TAJDID

“Man” Ibn Khaldun cautions, "should not trust the suggestion that his minds makes, that it is able to comprehend all existing things and their causes and to know all the details of existence. Such a suggestion of the mind" he warns, "should be dismissed as stupid. It should be known” he contends, “that every person with perception has the superficial impression that the whole of existence is comprised by his perceptions, and that it does not extend beyond (the realm of perceptions), the matter", he enjoins, “is different in fact. The truth lies beyond that.”

Obviously this caution is not a rejection of human intellect or reason nor is it meant to degrade its status or role in human life. Rather it is meant to tame it, to curtail that inherent tendency to arrogate to itself powers it does not possess, to keep it within the bounds of its capabilities, for indeed reason serves man best when it recognizes its limits and remain within its pale.

This caution has become necessary because the human mind has inherently been agitated by the urge to comprehend the ultimate reality in life, the urge "to peep across this life hemmed in by space and time, and find out our ultimate destiny." It has been confronted by such questions as: What is the meaning and goal of life? What is the nature and purpose of the universe? What is the place and role of man in this Universe? Only the human mind rages with such questions, "and properly so", says Garaudy, "for only man cannot live without raising them.”

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3 R- Garaudy, 'The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century' in *A. J. I. S. S.* vol. 2 p.2
search for reality" notes Siddique, "is not thus, something which is a matter of option or choice for the, human mind. You cannot point to a single human action", he contends, "which can be comprehended without seeing its relevance to the world of reality. Despite all changes and disguises - of myth, legend and symbol - the fact remains", Siddique adds, “that the consciousness of human race has always been grappling with Reality."\textsuperscript{4} Besieged as The human mind inescapably is by such fundamental and indeed vexing questions, the answers of which appear to lie beyond the purview of his intellect, the import of the caution sounded by Ibn Khaldun can clearly be seen.

The significance of these questions which vex human mind, to be sure, goes very much beyond polemics. For it is the answers to these fundamental questions which inform the perception of the human mind about the nature and meaning of life, on earth and consequently determine the principles upon which human society is organized and run. Where, for example, human perception is informed entirely and exclusively by modem science and since "Science deals with the "actual", with what is here and now, particularly what can be comprehended with the help of senses, there is inherent in science" Siddique asserts, "a natural tendency to assure that man too, like inanimate matter, is a bubble that busts and a vision that fades and, thus, nothing survives after his death.”\textsuperscript{5} Therefore not only does human life becomes a meaningless riddle, some would say a cruel joke, but human society built on such premise cannot but be organized and run on sheer expediency devoid of any eternal principles or

\textsuperscript{4} A. Siddique, Op. cit p.2
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid. p.12
the sense of accountability and restraint a belief in a life after
death engenders, with all the consequences in its trail. Some such
obvious consequences will be the tendency for might to be right
and for the end to justify the means.

Where however, the meaning of life becomes informed by a
religion with a belief in a supreme being who created man and
the universe he lives in and to whom man eventually and
inescapably returns to render account of his sojourn on earth, the
resulting human society will hardly have room for expediency
and will certainly be characterized by such restraint and
discipline as are engendered by belief in the day of reckoning. In
Islam, at least this endeavor of ordering society along its
world-view is beyond rhetoric’s, as Professor H.A.R. Gibb had
occasion to concede. "The kind of society that a community
builds for itself he notes, "depends fundamentally in its belief as
to the nature and purpose of the universe and the place of the
human soul within it. This is a familiar enough doctrine as
reiterated from Christian pulpits week after week. But Islam
possibly is the only religion which has constantly aimed to build
up society on this principle. The instrument of this purpose was
law."6 Perhaps we can now turn our attention to the Islamic
world-view and this law, the Shari’a, through which it finds
expression in human society.

In Islam, man and the universe he lives in, are not a result
of some accident, far from it, they are a deliberate creation of
Allah their Lord and Sustainer. Allah the creator has left man in
no doubt about the purpose for which he created him, as well as

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the universe he was meant to live in. Narrating the whole story of
the creation of man in a fairly long passage in the Qur'an, Allah
said:

"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a
vicegerent <Khalifa> on earth." They said: "Wilt Thou
place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed
blood? Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy
holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not." And He
taught Adam the nature of all things; then He place them
before the angels and said: "Tell Me the nature of these if
ye are right." They said: "Glory to Thee: of knowledge we
have none, save what Thou has taught us: in truth it is
thou Who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom." He said:
"O Adam! tell them their nature." When he had told them,
God said: Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of
heaven and earth, and I know what you reveal and what
you conceal?" And behold We said to the angels: Bow
down to Adam;" and they bowed down: not so Iblis: he
refused and was haughty: he was of those who reject faith.
We said: "O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden;
and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and
when) ye will; but approach not this tree, or you run into
harm and transgression." Then did Satan make slip from
the (Garden)... We said: "Get ye down all from here; and if,
as is sure, there comes to you Guidance from Me,
whosoever follows my guidance, on them shall be no fear,
nor shall they grieve." 7

This passage, more than any in the Qur'an, summarizes the
whole story of man on earth and subsumes, in very succinct if
sometimes subtle tones, the most fundamental issues in the
world-view of Islam. Three such issues are directly relevant to
our discussion here: that man is here or earth primarily as Allah's
Khalifa (vicegerent); that man's high esteem and choice as
khalifa, has to do with man's intrinsic endowment, specifically
knowledge and free-will (which tile angels feared could lead to

7 Qur'an 2:30-38. Some translations use ‘names of all things’ instead of ‘nature of all things’.
transgression)\(^8\) that Allah promised to send to man *Huda* (guidance) and that man's only hope lies in following that guidance. We shall now probe a little further into the meaning and implication of man's responsibility as Allah's *Khalifa* on earth.

The word *Khalifa* has appeared, in various grammatical forms, in eight other places in the Qur'an.\(^9\) In all these places and forms the word *Khalifa* has conveyed the meaning of vicegerency\(^10\) or heirs/inheritors.\(^11\) These meanings are often reinforced by a call to establish justice on earth with a clear sense of accountability and gratitude to Allah. So being Allah's *Khalifa* on earth, confers both honour and responsibility on man. An honor because that is the highest status any creation of Allah can ever hope to attain, a responsibility because it places on man the burden of establishing justice on earth and the obligation of rendering full accounts.\(^12\)

The choice of man as Allah's *Khalifa* is, as has been noted above, predicated on man's inherent qualities which precisely made him eligible to shoulder this heavy responsibility (*Amanah*), which, as the Qur'an informs us, even the heaven and earth flinched from taking. Foremost of these qualities is

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\(^10\) As in Qur’an 38:26; 6:165 & 10:14.

\(^11\) As in Qur’an 10:73, 7:69 & 27:62

\(^12\) Different *mufassirun* have emphasized different aspect of the word *khalifa*. While al-Tabari collated a variety of views, Ibn Kathir emphasized the inheritance of the earth and Suyuti emphasized the establishment of justice on earth through the *shari'a*. Building on these, some contemporary *mufassirun* have stressed further the *Khalifa* role of man and ventured to spell out conditions of this *Khilafa*. See ibn kathir, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* vol. 1. p. 49-51 al-Tabari *Jami' al-Bayan* vol. 1. pp. 195-201.; Suyuti *Tafsir al-Jalalyn* p. 6 Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* vol. 5 p. 3,019 and Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an* (English trans.) vol. 1. p. 59-60. Recently, Professor Ja’afar Sheikh Idris has argued that this concept of man as *Khalifa* smacks of *shirk* and should be done without. But his arguments are, as yet, far from convincing. See J.S Idris, *Is man the Vicegerent of God?* J.I.S O.U.P vol. 1 1990. p. 99-110
knowledge, “the names (or natures) of all things”, in words of the Qur'an. Muslim scholars have probed deep into and written volumes on the nature of this knowledge\textsuperscript{13}. Here we shall be content with the fact that this knowledge confers on man a vast capacity to know his lord (\textit{ma’rifa}) and to know all things sensible and intelligible and discern and understand all phenomena around him (\textit{'ilm}) - a favour reserved only for mankind. "We have honored the sons of Adam;" the Qur'an declares, "provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours above a great part of our creation."\textsuperscript{14} Thus this favour enables man to both carry the weight and deliver the goods.

It is both interesting and significant that man, who has been created as a vicegerent on earth and bestowed with those qualities to execute that responsibility, is also endowed with a free-will, the freedom to believe or disbelieve, to obey or disobey. This freedom it should be added is however tempered with an insight built in the soul of man for distinguishing the right from the wrong, the good from the evil. In Allah’s own words:

\begin{quote}
And a soul and Him who perfected it, And inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and (What is) right for it. He is indeed successful who causeth it to grow, And he is indeed a failure who stunteth it.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

This inherent sense of right and wrong is what makes man a moral being possessed of a conscience which acts as both an inner sight that can visualize the ultimate result of his action and inner voice that warns against evil and urges good. Indeed this

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid
freedom, tempered as it is meant to be by man's moral conscience, is essential for the kind of mission man has been assigned on this earth. "The amanah" as al-Attas observed, "implies responsibility to be just to it; and the 'rule' refers not simply to ruling in the socio-political sense, nor to controlling nature in the scientific sense, but more fundamentally, in its encompassing of the concept nature (tabi'ah), it refers to the ruling, and governing, and controlling, and maintenance of man by his self." 16

"Man's first act of disobedience" Iqbal points out, "was also his first act of free choice; and that is why according to the Qur'anic narration, Adam's first transgression was forgiven. Goodness", Iqbal adds, "is not a matter of compulsion; it is the self's free surrender to the moral ideal and answers out of a willing cooperation of free egos. A being whose movements are wholly determined like a machine cannot produce goodness. "Freedom", he concludes, "is thus a condition of goodness."17 Thus man fully equipped, 'is totally free to shape his own history but alone remains responsible for his own destiny. To do good he needs to make efforts which then, and rightly so, qualifies him for the pleasure and the reward of his Lord. If he should choose to do otherwise, it could not be because he had no alternative or the insight to appreciate fully the consequence of his choice, thus justifiably qualifying for the wrath and punishment of his Lord. Above all he is urged by the realization that life on this earth has

16 Al-Anas, op. Cit. p: 25. Bint al-Shati has made an illuminating comment on this amanah which to her is what the word kabad in Qur'an 90:4 refers to. See her Al-Tafsir al- Bayan lil Qur'an al-Karim, or see M.A Sid, 'The Hermeneutical Problem of the Qur'an in Islamic History, unpublished. Ph d. thesis Temple 1975, p. 343-4.
a sublime purpose, beyond bread and butter, that he has a mission of vicegerency to accomplish in this vast constituency. But what really, perhaps we should now ask, does this vicegerency entail? What precisely is this mission of man? And how is he to go about it?

Here lies the import of the guidance (Huda) which Allah had promised to send to mankind, for these indeed are the very questions these messages sought to answer. In fulfillment of His promise, Allah raised prophets among mankind, starting with Adam himself and sent them with messages explaining to man the meaning and purpose of this life, defining his role in it and showing him how to go about fulfilling this role. These messages were sent to different communities at different epochs in their various languages with each message emphasizing on the peculiarities and needs of that community at that point in time. It must be stressed however, that all these messengers, from Adam, through Nuh, Musa, 'Isa, to the last of them Muhammad (S.A.W.), carried essentially one and the same message. Addressing the last of this chain of messengers, Allah said "Not a Messenger did We send before thee without this inspiration sent by us to him: That there is no God but I; therefore worship and serve Me."

This chain of prophets was necessitated not only by the dynamic nature of human society, always breaking new grounds and creating new needs but also because decline is inherent in human society. With the passage of time, these messages tend to be corrupted or fall in to oblivion, causing the moral and ethical

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18 Qur’an 21:25
consciousness of the society to be blunt and the society to lose its bearings and begin to decline. Indeed it is in the nature of man to forget and become weak in his resolve.\textsuperscript{19} The role of the prophets therefore, to be sure, is not just to deliver the message to their respective communities. The message itself is intended to return the community, to which it was sent, to the straight path, the path of truth, which their Lord and Sustainer wishes them to tread. The prophets in these communities always represent a higher level of ethical, moral and mental consciousness. It is an integral part of their duty therefore to raise their societies’ level of consciousness, sharpen their moral taste, strengthen their resolve, redirect their course until the community reunites with and submits fully to its Lord and Sustainer. In other words the messengers are to deliver their messages and to endeavor to return their communities, as it were, back to Islam. But why, we must ask, did this chain of messengers terminated with the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.)? Has human society after him ceased to be prone to stagnation and decline? Or has man been relieved of his vicegerency? Certainly neither! For human society will continue to be susceptible to degeneration as long as it remains human just as man will continue to be the vicegerent he has been created to be for as long as he remains in this universe. Rather, the fact of the matter, is that human society has over the epochs evolved and developed that one comprehensive message is all mankind needs to accomplish its mission on earth. The closing verse of this message, that took twenty-three years to come down, is as suggestive as it was reassuring. "This day" Allah

\textsuperscript{19} See Qur’\textsuperscript{an} 20:15, and the relevant commentaries
declared, "have I perfected your religion for you completed my favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion"20 The birth of Islam" lqbal notes, in his rather eccentric style,

is the birth of inductive intellect In Islam Prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition. This involves the keen perception that life cannot for ever be left in leading strings; that in order to achieve full self-consciousness man must finally be thrown back on his own resources. The abolition of priesthood and hereditary kingship in Islam, the constant appeal to reason and experience in the Qur'an, and the emphasis that it lays on Nature and History as sources of Human knowledge, are all different aspects of the same idea of finality.21

The Qur'an, then, is Allah's complete and final message designed to the end of time. Comprehensive in its scope, literally covering every conceivable aspect of human endeavor, delivered in a language of such immense richness and a style of such astounding uniqueness and subtlety, which continues to unfold its meaning with the passage of time; the Qur'an represents for man the only dependable and inexhaustible guidance for his life on earth. "Nothing" Allah assured, "have we omitted from the book."22 The totality of the life of the prophet (S.A-W.), the Sunna, complements and further explains the message. What more, Allah has promised to protect the Qur'an from any form of corruption or adulteration. "We" He declared, "have, without doubt sent down the message; and we shall assuredly guard it (from corruption)."23 The prophet on his part assured the

20 Qur’an 5:3  
22 Qur’an 6:38  
23 Qur’an 15:9
Muslims in his farewell address, inter alia, "I am leaving you with the Book of God and the Sunna of His Prophet. If you follow them, you will never go astray. O Men harken well to my words." Thus the stage had been set for man to fend for himself, as it were.

Being the seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (S.A.W.), had an extra responsibility over and above the delivery of the message and serving as the model. It was also his responsibility to ensure that man has indeed imbibed the spirit of fending for himself. When the prophet appointed one of his learned companions, Mu'adh Ibn Jabal, a judge to Yemen, he interviewed him as if to satisfy himself that Mu'adh has a good grasp of his assignment. "According to what shall thou judge?" The Prophet asked Mu'adh. "According to the book of God (i.e. Qur'an)," replied Mu'adh. "And if thou findest naught therein?" asked the Prophet. "According to the Sunna of the 'prophet of God," replied Mu'adh. "And if thou findest naught therein?" Asked the Prophet again. "Then I will exert (ajtahidu) my self to form my own opinion". And there upon the Prophet said: "Praise be to God Who has guided the messenger of His Prophet to that which pleases His Prophet."25

This incidence goes beyond the Prophet's approval of *ijtihad* to underline the real significance of his assignment as the seal of the Prophets. That whenever the two principal sources of Islam are silent on an issue the learned among the Muslim community have the permission, indeed the obligation, to exert themselves to come up with a ruling within the frame of *Shari‘a* to keep the

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community on the path of Islam with the passage of time. As the learned took this responsibility, they also took with it the visibility of returning the Muslim community back to Islam in the event of decadence or deviation. The saying that "The learned (al-‘ulama’) are the heirs of the Prophets", has not been meant to be only a compliment for the learned, but rather more importantly, it was meant to be implemented to the letter.

For the avoidance of doubt, this responsibility of regenerating the Muslim community and returning it to the path of Islam anew, has been unequivocally bequeathed to individuals within the community in the following declaration of the Prophet, "Certainly Allah will raise for this community (umma), at the head of every hundred years, one(s) (man) who will renew (yujaddid) for her, her religion."²⁶ Here then is both an admission that the Muslim community after the prophet will indeed go through some stagnation and an assurance that it will certainly be revived and put back on track. As this hadith is central to this subject, we need to analyze it further to clarify its content delineate its message.

The key word here is yujaddid, the present form of the verb jaddada the noun of which is tajdid. The one(s) who undertake tajdid are thus led "mujaddid(un)". In its purely linguistic sense the word jaddada means renew something²⁷. The word in its various grammatical forms has however been used in the Qur’an²⁸ and appeared in some ahadith²⁹ of the prophet. It has

²⁸ Qur’an 17:49-51; 34:7; 32:10
since then acquired a rather technical meaning. It means returning something anew exactly as it was originally. In the context of this particular hadith, the word mujaddid refers to renewing or better still reviving the application of Islam in the Muslim community. Since the religion of Islam, as contained in its two principal sources, has already been revealed and will remain intact, needing neither addition nor subtraction only interpretation and application, certainly it is the application which with time tends to wane and needs resuscitations. The word tajdid means, therefore, the renewal of the application of Islam in society, revitalizing their community and returning it to the path of Islam anew, as it was originally.

Though the very words jaddada and tajdid have not been used anywhere in the Qur'an, the concept of tajdid as well as the roots of the hadith are firmly ingrained in the Qur'an. The very advent of the Qur'an, represented the tajdid of previous messages sent through earlier messengers. Likening this tajdid of the Qur'an to bringing the earth back to life, Allah said, "Has not the time arrived for the believers that their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of God and of the truth which has been revealed (to them) and that they should not become like those to whom was given revelation aforetime, but long ages passed over them and their hearts grew hard? For many among them are rebellious transgressors. Know ye (all) that God giveth life to the earth after its death! Already have We shown the signs plainly to you, that ye may learn wisdom."30 Turabi has cogently argued that the coming down of messages as well as its frequent

30 Qur’an 57:16-17
remembrance, revitalizes the community very much in the way the rain does to the earth. That these *ayat* therefore point to the necessity of receiving messages or remembrance thereof in order to forestall the drying of hearts to revitalize the community.

Being the last of these messages, the Qur'an had to go further to entrench the very culture of *tajdid* in its message to ensure the continuity of this tradition. By choosing to start its message with the command to "Read: In the name of thy Lord Who created. Create man from a clot", and proceeding to repeat "Read: And thy Lord is the most bounteous. Who teacheth by the pen, teacheth man that which he knew not", the Qur'an was proclaiming an era of learning, encouraging the spirit of inquiry and closing the door of blind imitation (*taqlid*). In subsequent revelations, the Qur'an made its position very clear, censuring the blind followership of fore fathers, insisting that claims are substantiated - "Have you any proof or knowledge to substantiate this claim of yours?", and cautioning men not to follow that of which they have no certain knowledge; the hearing, the sight, and the mind (as faculties of knowledge) are responsible.

The Qur'an in numerous passages encouraged critical observation and reflection and, as if astonished by the sway of *taqlid* and irrationality, kept asking the Question, will they not reason (afla *ya' qilun") The fact that in course of their long history Muslims have become oblivious of this reality and went back into *taqlid*,

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32 Qur'an 96:1-5
33 Qur'an 2:170
34 Qur'an 27:64
35 Qur'an 17:36
36 See for example, Qur'an 50:6-8; 67:3-4
37 See for example, Qur'an 2:219; 6:50; 8:176; 59:21
38 See for example, Qur'an, 36:68; 39:43
with the Ahl al-Sunna closing the door of ijtihad, does not affect this reality which remains in the Qur’an as fresh as ever. Indeed the Muslims will have to discover that, “the Qur'anic condemnation of taqlid touches all kinds of conservatism including Muslim conservatism; the desideratum, being that every faith, and pre-eminently Islam, should be held by conviction and not by convention, that conviction is always personal and requires constant renewal.”39

In the Qur'an, the first step towards tajdid seems to be to pre-empt stagnation by constant renewal and strengthening of Iman. The Prophet had informed us that "certainly Iman (faith) wears out inside one of you just like cloth, so ask Allah to renew your the Iman, in your hearts."40 It is in this light that Turabi perceived the significance of those Ayat of the Qur’an which all on those who believe to believe again, those who do good deeds to do again and again, those who fear God to fear Him again.41 When men ignore such appeals, as they often do, and therefore fail to forestall stagnation, then, the Qur’an assures us, Allah Himself causes a party of the faithful to rise up to the challenge so that the agents of corruption and injustice do not ultimately have their way. In the words of the Qur’an”... “And did not God check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief: but God is full of bounty to all the worlds."42 In another place a similar aya ended with "... God will certainly, aid those who aid His (cause); - for verily God is Full of

40 See al-Suyuti, Al-Jami’ al Saghir p. 133
41 H.Turabi “al-Din wa al Tajdid” op. cit p. 24. For the ayat see Qur’an 4:136-7 5:96; 57:28; 59:18
42 Qur’an 2:251
Strength, Exalted in Mighty.” 43 It is significant that al-Suyuti cited the hadith on tajdid to explain this aya of the Qur'an in his tafsir. 44

Renewal of Din or revitalization of the Muslim community, it must be explained further, means the restoration of the Islamic order in that society. Holistic in its approach, comprehensive in its nature, the Islamic order neither admits of any spiritual-mundane dichotomy, nor does it leave any aspect of human endeavor outside its purview. The restoration of this order must therefore involve every facet of society, the intellectual and spiritual as well as the socio-economic and political aspects of the society. This Islamic order is symbolized by the supremacy of the Shari'a. For the latter is the embodiment of the former.

The Shari'a is the instrument through which the Islamic belief and world-view find expression in the everyday life of the Muslim community. The immediate aim of the Shari'a is to protect the human conscience, life, property, honor and lineage. In so doing the Shari'a guarantees justice for the inhabitants of the universe, Muslims and non-Muslims, humans and non-humans, and creates conducive conditions for the realization of man's mission on earth. The Shari'a essentially consists of some eternal principles contained in the Qur'an and Sunna, leaving a vast scope for human thoughts and ingenuity. While the "eternal gives us a foot hold in a world of perpetual the vast scope allows the Shari'a to comfortably accommodate the dynamics of human society and survive the vagaries of time. It is

43 Qur'an 22:40
44 al-Suyuti, al-Durru al-Manthur fi Tafsir al-Ma'thur, Dar al-Fikr, Bayrut, 1983 vol. 1 p. 768
thus a system designed for all times and situations leaving practically nothing out of its purview.

"The Shari'a", observes Ibrahim Sulaiman, "is a world system. It anticipates from the very beginning the gradual transformation of the world into a global village. Although it's first and primary constituency is the Muslim umma because it is the umma that voluntarily declares its obedience to its dictates, the Shari'a always addresses mankind as a whole and appeals to its conscience as a single entity. The scholar of the Shari'a", Ibrahim adds, "is universal scholar, who is concerned primarily, of course, with the specific problems of the umma, but also with the wider problems of the world." It is the responsibility of the Muslim jurists (fuqaha'), of every age and place, to derive the details of the Shari'a (fiqh) from the general principles in the Qur'an and Sunna as the needs and circumstances may require. While these details (fiqh) are bound to become obsolete with time, principles of the Shari'a live on as the eternal source of law and guidance for mankind.

The process of deriving the details from the general principles, especially as new issues arise, involves ijtihad, the self exertion to arrive at a ruling or position acceptable to the principles of the Sharia. Ijtihad, as we have seen earlier, has been practiced from the days of the Prophet. After prophet the practice of ijtihad grew tremendously, not only because the prophet was no longer there to be referred to but also because the Muslim community was becoming complex as it expanded and

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46 al-Shafi, based on the Qur’an 2:150, is said to have argued for the necessity of qiyas and ijtihad. See A.Hassan, The Early Development of Islamic Jurisprudence, I.R.I Islamabad, 1970. p. 54
had to meet the challenge of time. By the end of the second century after the Hijra a whole science of jurisprudence had been developed and the nucleus of the different schools of law (Madhahib), reflecting the varying nuances of Muslim jurists, had taken shape.47

This trend continued for the next two centuries during which Islamic jurisprudence became sophisticated, eliciting copious flow of literature, with jurists developing varying views, and the qualification of those who could exercise *ijtihad* raised to unprecedented levels. In the fourth century however, the Sunni scholars, for reasons beyond the scope of this chapter, closed the door of *ijtihad* and encouraged the imitation (*taqlid*) of earlier jurists.48 It is significant that the Shi’a scholars never had to close the door of *ijtihad*.49 As *taqlid* gained ascendancy, the Sharia, the life vein of the community, lost its dynamism and the Muslim community gradually began to stagnate. The restoration of *ijtihad*, which in turn is the very soul of the Shari’a, is thus an essential step to the regeneration of the Muslim community. There may be an occasion to say more on this later, meanwhile we shall return to the *hadith* for more light on *Tajdid*.

The word *yub’ath*, the present form of the verb *ba’atha*, meaning to raise, used in the *hadith*50 may yet throw further light on this key hadith on *tajdid*. The same word has been used

47 For details see ibid.
48 For details see M.A Sid, op. cit p. 312-18, and S.H.H. Nadvi, Islamic Legal Philosophy and the Qur’anic origins of Islamic Law, Academica, Durban, 1989 p. 219
49 For the Shi’a the door of *ijtihad* has always been opened and cannot, in fact be closed. Some of their ulama in their quest for currency and relevance insist that the *ijtihad* of a dead mujtahid need not be followed for as they argue, he is no longer in touch with the circumstances which elicited his *ijtihad* and which his *fatwa* is to be applied. For details see Abu Zahra, Al-Imam al-Sadiq Hayatuhu wa Asruhu, Dar al Fikr al- Arabi Nd. p. 547-50. Abu Qasim al-Halli, al- Mukhtasar al-Nafi fi Fiqh al Imamiyya, Dar al Kitab al Arabi, Misr, Nd.
50 The *hadith* referred here is the main *hadith* on *Tajdid*, see footnote no. 26 on page 35.
in the Qur'an in reference to the prophets raised. This obviously is not to equate the mujaddid with the prophet nor does it mean that the mujaddid is directly appointed in the way Prophet is. But it certainly suggests a relationship of a kind: a relationship of continuity of role; a sharing in the divine blessing. The mujaddid to be sure, does not receive any divine revelation, this has ceased with the termination of Prophethood. The mujaddid in fact receives no more what each and every Muslim receives: the various calls in the Qur'an and Sunna to search for Knowledge, live according to the Shari'ā, command right and forbid the wrong, and giving his property and when necessary his life to ensure the supremacy of Kalimat Allah - the word of Allah. The mujaddid is a mujaddid because his efforts in this respect excelled that of and brings about the desired transformation of society. This action seems pertinent in order to demystify the mujaddid, portray his human essence with all its contingencies, while not denying his endeavour divine blessing it rightly deserves.

Another word of particular interest is the Arabic Pronoun “MAN”, meaning “WHO”. In the Arabic construction man can mean both singular and plural, conveying the meaning that the mujaddid can be one person or several other persons. Many Muslim scholars have tended to see the mujaddid as a single person often peerless in his time and of course exceptional in his contributions.51 This type of perception tends to cast the mujaddid into the mould of the Prophets, sprinkling, as it often does, his personality with a tinge of super humanness. More

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51 Scholars like Ibn al-Athir, Ibn Asakir, and al-suyuti. For further reference on their works see B.M. Siad, op. cit
recently, however, some scholars see the *mujaddid* made up of a group of several individuals.\(^{52}\) This interpretation tends to emphasize the human essence of the *mujaddid* and see *tajdid* more as a team work than that of an individual.

There is in the *hadith* this reference to 'the head of every one hundred years' or a century. Here again many Muslim scholars have taken *the* statement literally and consequently laboured to identify the *mujaddidun* of every century, ending up some times with a contrived Islamic history.\(^{53}\) But the human society, complex and dynamic as it is, does not lend itself to such precision. The reference to a century may be no more than an indication of a period of time after which a Muslim community or any human society for that matter may require revitalization. Ibn Khaldun's theory of rise and fall of civilizations, which takes about four generations, may give credence to such interpretation. The message of the *hadith* in this respect may simply be that *tajdid* will occur frequent enough to ensure that Muslim community remains extant and generally on course. With the growing number of the faithful and their increasing territorial spread and complexity, *tajdid* can easily be seen to warrant more than one *mujaddid* in more than one epoch.

Perhaps we should now look at the views of some of the leading Muslims scholars on *tajdid*, especially those that seem to have influenced Islamic scholarship in Western Sudan. The early Muslim scholars, as noted earlier, became tempted into identifying the *mujaddid* of every century. They carried out this self-assigned job with both care and passion, and it soon became

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\(^{52}\) A.A. Mawdudi, *A Short History of Revivalist Movement in Islam*, Lahore, 1975

\(^{53}\) See B.M Said, op. cit
a norm among scholars after them. The fast growth of the Dar al-Islam in territory and complexity never appeared to have discouraged them. Predictably, however, they could not cope, but in the criteria they drew, we can see their, and therefore enrich our, understanding of tajdid. We shall draw mainly from al-Suyuti's work on tajdid in which he sampled the views of many scholars before giving his. Suyuti writes:

"The shaykh Afif al-Din al-Yafi'l said in al-Irshad: A group of scholars, among whom was the Hafiz Ibn Askir, said in regard to the hadith ..., that God sends to this community at the end of every one-hundred years one who regenerates the matter of its religion that at the head of the first (one-hundred years) was Umar ibn 'Abd al-Aziz, and at the second was the Imam Shafi'i and at the head of the third (hundred years) was the Imam Abul-Hassan al-Ash'ari and at the head of the fourth (hundred years) was Abu Bakr'al-Baqillani, and at the head of the fifth (hundred years) was Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali. This (last designation) was because of the many wonders found in his works and his plunging into the seas of learning..."

Another group of scholars have a different list:

"The hafiz al-Dhahabi reported that the one sent at the head of the six century was the hafiz 'Abd al-Ghani.... It has come to me some of the 'Ulama' maintained that in the six century it was the shaykh Muhy al-Din al-Nawawi and in the fifth century before it was shaykh Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi..."

Ibn al-Athir clarifies this apparent confusion and seems to offer a way out, it may be worth quoting at some length:

"Every scholar in his own day differed in his interpretation of this tradition, and each one indicated

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54 This is al-Suyuti's work on mujaddids, until recently in manuscript form, which has been provisionally edited and translated by Bobboy, Hunwick Kramer and Poston, NW University, Chicago (1986).
55 Ibid p. 24-5. A. Ib
56 Ibid p. 28.
the person who renewed for the people their religion at the head of each 100 years, and each one proponent favoured his own law school ... Some of the 'Ulama' came to (the conclusion) that the most fitting would be to interpret the tradition in a general sense, for the saying of the Prophet (on him be blessing and peace) was that 'God sends to this community at the head of every 100 years one who regenerates its religion for it". This saying of his does not necessarily mean that it should be only one who is sent at the head of each century but rather it may be one or it may be more than one. For even though the community derives general benefit in matters of religion from jurists, their benefit through others is never the less (equally) great; for example, those who govern the community, the traditionists, the reciters, the admonishers and those who belong to the various class of ascetics. One person gives benefit in an area which others do not give benefit in. The root of preserving religion is the preservation of the political statutes, the spread of justice and mutual fairness through which (the shedding of) blood is averted, and the ennoblement of the laws of the Shari'a to be upheld. This is the task of those who govern. Similarly, the traditionist are beneficial (in giving) religious admonitions and exhorting people their perseverance in piety and indifference to the world. And each individual gives benefit in a way different from the others. It is better and more fitting that this should be an indication of occurrence of a group of great and celebrated men at the head of every 100 years who renew for people their religion and preserve it for them in the various regions of the earth."57

This rather long but obviously useful passage clarifies a lot of the confusion about what constitutes tajdid among Muslim scholars while at the same time offering a more comprehensive and dynamic understanding of tajdid. First it explains, without necessarily justifying, the variety of criteria and therefore list of

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57 Ibid. p. 33-4
mujaddidun among some Muslim scholars. The presence, as Ibn al-Athir sought to explain, is often due to environmental orientation or parochial proclivity among some scholars or sometimes sheer partisanship, the tendency for each to promote the shaykh of his Madhhab or his hero.

Ibn al-Athir thought that this was unnecessary, for, he believes, the hadith on tajdid had already anticipated the growth of the umma and the spread and development of knowledge into various disciplines and specializations. Thus different parts of the umma may have different needs for their regeneration. One community may require a Sufi (an ascetic), another may need a mujtahid, another a mujahid, yet another may require a combination of all the three for its regeneration. While admitting such variations within the ummah, for the purpose of tajdid, there are certain fundamental elements, "the root of preserving religion", he calls them, which are common in each and every case. These, Ibn al-Athir says, are the political statutes, spread of justice, and upholding of the Shari’a. In other words, Ibn al-Athir is saying whatever the peculiarities of the Community might be a process of tajdid must necessarily involve, ultimately, the establishment of sound political statutes, the spread of justice, and the upholding of the Shari’a. Because, as he would argue, these are the roots of preservation of religion.

It is interesting that centuries after Ibn al-Athir had expounded his views, some of the factors he had identified as responsible for the varying views and criteria of tajdid among scholars, continued to play their role. This is particularly glaring in two contemporary scholars who had a profound impact on
western Bilad al-Sudan, the focus of this study. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti lived in the serenity of Cairo of late 15th century Mamluk Egypt while Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Karim al-Maghili in the turbulent Tuwat (in Algeria) of late 15th century and later moved to western Bilad al-Sudan. For Suyuti the mujaddid’s main thrust is the spread of knowledge, as he says:

"It is not enough that his task be confined to one country or region, but rather his knowledge must spread to the horizons and be conveyed to the (various) regions, so that his regeneration of the religion be all-encompassing and the benefit of his knowledge be felt in (all) the quarters of Islam..."\(^58\)

With al-Maghili, however, the stress is different, he says:

"Thus it is related that at the beginning of every century God sends men a scholar who regenerates their religion for them. There is no doubt that the conduct of this scholar in every century is enjoining the right and forbidding what is wrong, and setting aright people's affairs, establishing justice among them and supporting truth against falsehood and the oppressed against the oppressor, will be in contrast to the conduct of the scholars of his age. For this reason he will be an odd man out ... Then will it be plain and clear that he is one of the reformers (al-muslihun)...\(^59\)

These two views says as much about \textit{tajdid} as about the two personalities and their environments. We shall examine these views later in the appropriate chapter. It will suffice here to note that both views fit in comfortably within Ibn al-Athir's comprehensive perspective and can in fact be complementary. For while an all-encompassing scholarship is an essential requisite of \textit{tajdid}, to bring about \textit{tajdid}, this scholarship must

\(^{58}\) Ibid p. 13-4
not be for its own sake, rather it must be for the sake of the ultimate goal in *tajdid*, reform or better still *islah*. To see this relationship between scholarship and *islah*, more clearly, we need to look at the process of *tajdid* a little more closely.

*Tajdid*, revitalization or regeneration, presupposes stagnation or degeneration, which is usually characterized by *fasad* (corruption) and *zulm* (injustice) in the absence of the proper application of the *Shari’ā*. This improper application of the *Shari’ā* may be as a result of the refusal of those in authority to allow the *Shari’ā* full reins or because *taqlid* has taken the better part of the *Shari’ā* and with little or no *ijtihad* the *Shari’ā* has lost its vitality and dynamism. The development and spread of knowledge is a necessary step in restoring the vitality of the *Shari’ā* and awakening Muslims both the leaders and the led, to their responsibilities. The resulting awareness kindles in the hearts of Muslims a yearning for the ideal, motivating some of them to call for and work towards change. Indeed "Allah changeth not the condition of a folk until they (first) change that which is in their hearts."

This yearning for truth and justice, which can also be brought about or accentuated by the spread of tyranny, injustice and deprivation, renders the Muslims easy to rally around and mobilize for change. The objective of this change, however, is not the over throw of some regime, though this may be necessary, but *islah* - the reordering of society along Islamic lines, in other

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60 *Ishlah* has often been translated as reform, but this, for a number of reasons, some of which have been given below, is far from adequate. Thus with many such terms the original Arabic has been retained. For an elucidation of the term *islah* in the Islamic world view see I.A Umar, *Falsafat al-Tanmiyya: Ru’ya Islamiyya, Bait al-Ma rif*, Khartoum, 1989 p. 41. For Islamic concept of change, development and progress, see S.N Al-Attas, Preliminary Thoughts in the nature of knowledge and definition and aims of education in Al-Attas (ed) *Aims and objective of Islamic Education*, p.34.

61 Qur’an 13:11
words, the restoration of the Islamic system. For the goal of tajdid is to return the Muslim community to what its name suggests: submitting totally to its Lord and Creator. With its commitment renewed, the supremacy of the Shari’a restored, the community becomes and revitalized, becoming once again what it used to and indeed ought to be.

Ilm, or true knowledge, in Islam, must eventually lead to islah just like no true islah can come about without ‘ilm. This intrinsic connection between ilm and islah, which is perhaps to be found only in Islam, has led to the rather obvious conclusion that the mujaddid must be an 'alim of some renown. The Image of a scholar in Islam, is that of a potential mujaddid. In his tafsir of the Qur’anic aya 9:122 the learned Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, has argued that a proper understanding of Islam can come about only through movement and involvement in the affairs of the community such as Jihad. A Muslim scholar, al-Tabari suggests, must therefore venture to travel out not only to see the signs of Allah but also to familiarize himself with the affairs of his community.

Sayyid- Qutb, building on al-Tabari’s argument in his Fī Zīlal al – Qur’ān carried the point further, arguing rather cogently, that Islamic scholarship is not to be found in the serenity of the ivory tower but in the ruffles and realities of the

62 All too often western scholars have questioned the sincerity and motive of many a mujaddid or Tajdid movement when they try to take over power. Haunted by their Christian backgrounds, with its separation between the Church and the state, these western scholars le to reconcile in their minds the scenario of a religious leadership with political Power. Clouded by secular considerations, it may perhaps even be more difficult for them to comprehend why this power is not an end in itself, but simply a means through which the necessary changes in society -islah - can be effected. For such accusations and insinuations, see J.R. Willis, In the Path of Allah: the Passion of AJ-Haji Umar. Frank Cass London 1990. p. 96 & p. 167

daily life of the community. To Sayyid Qutb a scholar who is not involved in the struggle to establish the Islamic order cannot even understand the very text he is supposed to be the custodian of, much less, teach it. Suggesting in his characteristic strong style, that the *fiqh* or teachings of a scholar who acquires his knowledge and lives in the ivory tower, reading what he (Qutb) calls "cold texts" is not even acceptable.\(^64\) For Sayyid Qutb, scholarship in Islam is synonymous with activism. A scholar in Islam cannot stay aloof from his community he must fully identify with its problems as well as its aspirations. He must symbolize the conscience of the community warning it when it goes astray and setting its affairs right when they go wrong, with out, to use a Qur'anic expression, "the fear of the blame of a blamer". This is precisely what makes the scholar a potential *mujaddid*.

This rather strong position on Islamic scholarship is not peculiar to Sayyid Qutb. Many Muslim scholars before him have expressed similar views in various ways with varying ardor. This is particularly so in the Shi'a circles where the *'alim* came to stand in for the *Imam*, symbolizing the Islamic just order and a protector of people against the unjust behavior of those in power.\(^65\) In western Bilad al-Sudan, like in many part of the Muslim world, this image of the *'alim* became the very criterion by which Ulama came to be judged. Those scholars who fail to measure to these standards, especially those that are seen to have betrayed these expectations, came to be to be called names by

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\(^{64}\) Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* vol. 11, p. 1734-6  
those who believe that they could have done better. Names such as *Ulama' al-su'* (venal scholars), *ulama al-Dunya* (worldly scholars), and *Ulama' al-Sultan* (court scholars) are common charges the *ulama* of western Bilad al-Sudan used, as we shall see later.

The *alim* generally, the *mujaddid* particular, endeavors to walk in the shadow of the prophet (S.A.W.). He ardently tries to follow the prophet's *Sunna* in every thing he does particularly in his struggle for *Tajdid*. He draws his inspiration from the *sirah* of the prophet, the struggle of the prophet and his *sahaba* (companions) and the Islamic state they founded in Medina become both the Model and the standard by which he assesses his own efforts. Major events in the *Sirah* of the prophet like the *Hijrah*, the *Sulh* of al-Hudaybiya, the major battles like Badr, Uhud, Hunyn, Tabuk, often find echoes in the struggle for *Tajdid*. The *mujaddid* is fully aware that he can never reach the perfection of his model, he only seeks to approximate it as much as possible, content with being just a degree below it - a position the prophet has promised him. For as Hasan al-Basri narrated, Allah's Messenger (P.B.A.U.H.) said: He whom death overtakes while he is engaged in acquiring knowledge with a view to reviving Islam with the help of it, there will be one degree between him and the Prophets in Paradise."66

The *mujaddid*, to be sure, is not out to create some past scenario in the history of the *umma*. Rather, he is out to reapply the principles of Islam in his contemporary context so that his community lives and symbolizes those ideals of Islam. To do this

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66 The *hadith* is transmitted by Darimi, see *Miskat al-Masabih, Hadith* no. 249
he needs to anchor himself fully in the prophetic model to avoid being carried away by his quest for justice to commit excesses or falling prey to the *gurur* (lure) of the worldly life. So that to use some contemporary parlance, to restore justice he needs not play the poor against the rich as in a communist revolution and to develop he does not have to blindly copy some "modern civilization". He sees his success not in terms of the territory he is able to acquire or in terms of the power he is able to wield, but in terms of the approximation to that model community in Madina or its replica some where in Muslim history.

The promise of a *mujaddid* has given many a Muslim community hope in difficult times. But there is also another promise which the Prophet is reported to have made; the promise of a *Mahdi* (the guided one) who will come at the end of time and fill the earth with justice as it has been filled 'with injustice'.  

Even though these *ahadith* do not appear in the more meticulous books of hadith like the Bukhari and Muslim; and even as some scholars, particularly Ibn Khaldun, have in a painstaking study, casted doubt on these *hadith* the belief in a *Mahdi* has historically stirred some turbulence in various Muslim community. Many a flag has been raised in the name of a *Mahdi* and many a Muslim aspiring for a return to the Islamic order has gone to the battle field. The Shi'a, who suffered so much execution in the hands of the Umayyads and later the Abbasids, have long perceived the return to the just order of Islam through

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67 These *ahadith* are to be found in Ibn Majah, al-Hakim, Tabrani and Abu Dawud. The latter has a section on the Mahdi in which he brought about a dozen such *ahadith*, see *sunan Abi Dawud*, vol 4. p. 471-7.

the awaited *Mahdi, al-Mahdi al Muntazar*. While the belief in
the *Mahdi* may remain controversial, the *Mahdi* risings in
Muslim communities in history clearly point to the yearnings for
the ideal and the *tajdid* potential in the Muslim *umma*.

This *tajdid* potential is a permanent feature of the *umma*
from its inception to the end of time. It is a patent of the *umma*
any where any time. This potential may be dampened or
heightened by a number of factors but it remains in the
community precisely because the ingredients are contained in the
Qur’an and Sunna. The search for knowledge which has been
made obligatory for Muslims, both male and female70, the
inseparable link between this knowledge and *islah*, the command
to enjoin the right and forbid the wrong71, the promise for victory
and the greatest reward that accrues to this venture,72 all total up
into a formidable, if latent, prospect for *tajdid* in the Muslim
community.

Even in the seemingly westernized Muslim societies of
today, this *tajdid* potential is not lacking. The complexity of our
contemporary society may modify the role of the *alim-mujaddid*,
as the very agenda of *tajdid* and the business of reordering and
running a state today require a host of activists, technocrats,
professionals and of course 'Ulama. But the quest for *tajdid* and
the capacity of the Muslim *umma* to respond to this quest is
clearly born out by the thriving Islamic movements in many
Muslim countries particularly in Iran where the movement

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69 For details see A.A Sachedina, Op. cit.
70 Beside the numerous *ayat* of Qur’an which direct and inspire Muslims to pursue the search for
knowledge, every book of *hadith* has a whole section on knowledge. Sahih al-Buhari has brought 136
such *ahadith*. See *Sahih al-Buhari* M.M Khan, (trans) vol. 1. p. 50-100.
71 Here again there are numerous *ayat* of the Qur’an and *ahadith* of the prophet. See for example,
72 See for example, Qur’an 4:74-6; 22:39-40; 30:47
succeeded in mobilizing its Muslim population and wresting over power. There is clearly a latent energy for *tajdid* in every Muslim community, no matter how far it may appear to have strayed away from Islam. This energy can be so latent as to be ignored or under estimated and when activated can astonish indeed confuse many an observer. Our contemporary western scholars and journalist may be a good case in point.

Many western scholars have sought to explain the *jihads* in western Bilad al-Sudan and Muslim attempts at *tajdid* generally in terms of power struggle or class conflict or some form of craving for the trappings of this worldly life. Of course as humankind the *mujaddidin* may have fallen short of their very high standards, but to pick on such failings as an explanation of the whole phenomenon is to miss the whole point. Admittedly for some of these scholars, that is all there is to live for in this world, it is difficult for them to conceive a higher motive in life.73

So, *tajdid*, as this chapter sought to illustrate, is a process of change within the Muslim community which seeks to revitalize the community and return it to the just order of Islam by restoring the vitality and supremacy of the *Shari‘a*. This process, in the Islamic world-view, is the natural successor to Prophethood. While every Muslim individual has a responsibility to partake in this Process, the *ulama*’ within the community understandably shoulder the greater part of this responsibility. This process may involve one or a combination of other

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73 There appears to be a gulf between Western scholarship and Islam. Terms like fanaticism, fundamentalism, etc, may have their meanings in the West but they hardly make any sense in the Muslim mind. Similarly, terms like 'holy war' used for *Jihad* or 'Islamic reform movement for even 'Islamic revolution'' carry with them Western Euro-Christian notions of holy war, reform and revolution. The use of such Western terms in Muslim societies more often than not oversimplifies or confuses issues.
endeavours, chief among them being, the search and spread of knowledge, *al-amr bi al-ma’ruf wa al-nahy ‘an al-munkar* (enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong), *jihad*, and *islah*. The intuitions and instincts of *Tajdid* are inherent in every Muslim community.

How this process of *tajdid* unfolded itself in the western Bilad al-Sudan is the focus of this study. We shall first have an overview of the spread of Islam in the region, to allow us, thereafter, to concentrate on the process of *tajdid*. 
CHAPTER THREE
AN OUTLINE OF THE SPREAD OF ISLAM IN WESTERN BILAD AL-SUDAN 900-1900.

It has long been established that Muslims and their activities were conspicuous in the 9th century Ghana\(^1\) and Borno\(^2\). This suggests that Islam must have reached these areas sometimes in the 8th century, the second century of the *Hijra*. Some\(^3\) would suggest an even earlier date: sometimes during the first century of the *Hijra*. This is quiet plausible considering the fact that the North African region, which from time immemorial had been effectively linked with the Western Sudan through the celebrated trade routes, became Islamised in the 7th century, the first century of the *Hijra*.

With the Islamisation of North Africa and the zeal to spread the message of Islam across the desert, the number of caravans plying the trans-Saharan routes consequently increased.\(^4\) The corresponding increase in the volume and flow of trade, the rise in the number of Muslims who now needed to travel in search for knowledge and to perform the obligatory pilgrimage,\(^5\) were to generate an unprecedented intra-regional movements which were to further facilitate the spread of Islam in the region.

As Islam spread into the region, the social, economic and political complexion of the region became radically, if gradually,

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\(^3\) Ibn Abd al-Hakam, in Corpus op. cit p. 12-13

\(^4\) See O. Jah, Sufism and the Nineteenth Century Jihads...”p.68

transformed. With its emphasis on learning and having brought literacy to the region, Islam was soon to raise lettered men and women and developed centers of learning which produced scholars of international repute. Its universality, particularly its supra-racial appeal and stress on brotherhood, brought about the integration of various ethnic groups on a massive scale unprecedented. Trade and commerce acquired a new vigor and states of varying complexities emerged throughout the region. It is significant that all these developments were to strengthen the position of Islam in the region and generate fresh impetus to the process of Islamisation culminating into the 19th century jihads. The major phases of this gradual but rather complex process are what this chapter seeks to discuss. This discussion, it is hoped, will provide both the background and the context for the focus of this study, the tradition of *tajdid*.

Phasing or periodisation in history is often a matter of convention, or convenience. History itself is a continuum, any subdivision of historical times is only a product of the human mind and rarely do historical events fit exactly into a neat time frame. Yet periodisation appears to be the only intelligible way the human mind can appraise the past and assign the present its place within the scheme of history.

There have been numerous attempts at periodising the spread of Islam in the Western Bilad al-Sudan. Of these attempts that of Omar Jah seems the most appropriate. This is therefore modified here to reflect the current level of our historical

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8 O. Jah, Sufism and the nineteenth Century ?Jihads…’ p. 80
knowledge of the region and to meet the purpose of this study. Thus four distinct Phases become discernible. First, the period from the 9th to the 13th century was one in which Islam spread gradually and peacefully largely through the efforts of itinerant scholars and traders, without any institutional support. From the 13th century however, educational centers with established scholars engaged in full time scholarship and large States like Kanem-Borno, Mali, and later Songhay and the Hausa States emerged under strong Muslim leadership. Both these educational and political institutions became effectively used in the spread of Islam in the region. This may therefore be called the institutional phase.

By the end of the 16th century the State of Songhay was invaded and Timbuktu, perhaps the greatest center of learning in the region, sacked. Thereafter the political and educational institutions suffered a major set back to recover only in the 19th century. Thus the 17th and the 18th centuries represent another distinct phase. This was a phase in which the vacuum created by the fall of Songhay and the sack of Timbuktu generated a new socioeconomic and political climate in which the spread of Islam appeared to have been in jeopardy, for syncretism and violation of the \textit{Shari'a} were quite prevalent. Interestingly however, this was the same period during which \textit{Sufism} under Shaykh Mukhtar al-Kunti al-Kabir, developed and reached new heights. It was the phase during which the factors which led to the 19th century \textit{jihad} movements precipitated. It could therefore be called the pre-\textit{Jihad} phase. The 19th century itself represents the \textit{jihad} phase.
"This periodisation, it should be quickly added, does not, however, tally with developments in Borno. The reason is fairly obvious. Kanem-Borno had a rather unique history which it owed to its unique position in the Bilad al-Sudan. Being the terminus of the famous Tripoli-Fezzan-Kanem trans-Saharan trade route, believed to be the most active, Islam appeared to have reached Borno much earlier than the other parts of western Bilad 'al-Sudan. By 969 AD Kanem had already a Muslim ruler who was learned and involved in the propagation of Islam. In other words the spread of Islam in Borno entered the institutional phase as early as the 10th century. Similarly the fall of Songhay and the sack of Timbuktu did not affect Islam in Borno appreciably. In fact its educational centers at Machina, Birnin Ngazargumo and Kulumbar and were particularly active during the 17th and 18th centuries. But since our periodisation agrees on the whole with the developments in the rest of the Western and Central Bilad al-Sudan, we shall maintain it, specifying the exceptions in Borno where and when necessary.

**The Pre-Institutional Phase**

Contact between the Bilad al-Sudan and North Africa dates back to time immemorial. The brisk trade that went on between the Carthagians at Cyrene, their colony in North Africa, has been well documented by the Greek traveller Herodotus, as far back as 450 BC. Indeed the Sahara desert, as Bovill aptly observes,

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10 Ibid, p. 15
11 Ibid p. 16
unites more than it separates the two regions. Over the centuries numerous trans-Saharan routes joined the North African region with the Bilad al-Sudan. Caravans plying these routes arrived their terminals in the Sahel, the shores of the desert where they exchanged their North African goods for local products like Gold, Gum, slaves, etc. These termini or entrepots\(^\text{13}\) came to be the major cities around which states and civilization were to develop. Kumbi Saleh, the capital of Ghana and Manan (and later Njimi), the capital of Kanem-Borno, were two such entrepots in the western Bilad al-Sudan.

With the Islamisation of North Africa in the 7th century, the trans-Saharan trade got a new impetus and acquired a fresh vigor. The prospects of gold attracted Muslim traders from as far away as Bagdad,\(^\text{14}\) but so also the prospect of spreading the message of Islam across the desert attracted Muslim scholars and \textit{du'at}. Towns such as Zawila in Fezzan and Sijilmasa in Maghrib were some of the first to play host to these influx.\(^\text{15}\) Uqbah b. Nafi', the head of the Muslim army in North Africa had already shown the way by leading his forces along these routes as far as Kawar which bordered Kanem in 666 AD.\(^\text{16}\)

When in 718 the Umayyad Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz appointed Isma'il b. 'Ubayd Allah, a learned scholar of Hadith, as Amir of Ifriqiya, he sent with him ten scholars to teach and

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\(^\text{13}\) The Sahara is likened to a sea (of sand) and the camel to a ship, hence the terminus on the shores of the desert to a port.


\(^\text{15}\) Al- Yaqubi, \textit{Kitab al-buldan} quoted in Ibid. see also \textit{Corpus}, p. 22

\(^\text{16}\) A. Smith, "The Early States of the Central Sudan p. 165. It was in the enforcement of the Waddan pact earlier concluded by Busr b. Abi Artah, acting under 'Amr b. al-'As, that 'Uqbah marched towards Waddan and ultimately to Fezzan and Kawar. see Ibn'Abd al- Hakam \textit{Corpus} p. 12-13.
spread Islam. This policy of the Caliph was to set the standard. Thus 'Abd al-Rahman b. Habib b. Abi 'Ubayda b. 'Uqbah b. Nafi', who was appointed the governor of Ifriqiya in 745 AD ordered wells to be dug along the trans-Saharan trade route from Sijilmasa in the Maghrib to Awdaghust in Ghana. This was certainly to increase not only the volume of trade but also the "volume" of da'awah in the region.

With Muslim merchants, scholars and du’at plying the trans-Saharan routes, the message of Islam began to spread along these routes enlisting adherents from among the indigenous population. Conversion to Islam immediately brought with it the obligation to learn, at least the Qur'an and the basic duties of worship. Even at the very elementary level this involved reading and often writing. Thus Muslims came to acquire the vital skill of literacy. The use of literacy in trade and commerce as well as in the courts of rulers and kings, where correspondence and records had to be kept was to secure for Muslims a position of prominence and influence, which was to further facilitate the spread of Islam. There are also other factors which explain the astonishing speed and ease with which Islam spread in the region.

Thus by the 9th century Muslim presence in such terminals as in Awdagast, Kumbi Saleh and Kanem was substantial enough

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19 Some of these factors include the fact that the du’at soon came to be made up of entirely the indigenes, who are not only familiar with the local cultures and language but even more important, enjoy the confidence and trust of the populace. Islam's full cognizance of the nature of man made the demands of the faith come rather natural. Islam's supranational, universalistic world-view, with its obvious superiority over the Parochialism of the pagan beliefs, must have had its own contribution. For more detailed discussion on this issue, see E.W. Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race Edinburgh E.U.P. 1967. See also, T.W. Arnold, The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Muslim Faith 2nd. ed. London, Constable and Co. Ltd. 1913.
to deserve the attention of their contemporary historians and geographers. By 1040 AD Takrur, the first Islamic state in the region, was wholly Islamised, as al-Bakri reported:

Takrur a town on the 'Nile' (the Senegal), is inhabited by black people. These like the rest of the Sudanese, had been pagan and worshiped idols until the reign of War-Djabi (or War-Ndyay) son of Rabis. He became a Muslim introduced Islamic law, and enforced the religion upon his subjects, opening their eyes to the truth. He died in 432 (AD 1040-1). Today (1067-8) the people of Takrur are Muslims.20

At about the same time (1040 AD) Ghana had a large Muslim community exerting extensive influence. In the words of al-Bakri again:

The City of Ghana consists of two towns situated on a plain. One of these towns is inhabited by Muslims. It is large and possesses a dozen mosques, one being for the Friday Prayer and each having Imams, Muezzins and salaried reciters of the Koran. There are juriconsults and scholars. .... The king has a palace with conical huts (around), surrounded by a fence like a wall. In the king's town, not far from the royal court is a mosque for the use of Muslims who visit the king on mission.... The interpreters of the king are Muslims, as are his treasurers and the majority of his ministers.21

Kanem-Borno's unique geographical position had allowed it a much earlier contact with Islam. Since 666 AD 'Uqhah b. Nafi' was reported to have led his army to Kawar adjacent to Kanem. In addition to the Muslim merchants, scholars and du'at plying the trade routes terminating in Kanem, about 800 AD, a group of Muslims from Yemen came to settle in Kawar Oases, which was

20 Al-Bakri Corpus P. 77.
21 Quoted in N. Levtzion, 'The early States of the Western Sudan' p. 120.
then under the control of Kanem.\textsuperscript{22} Al-Bakri reported another group of Muslims, who claimed descent from 'Uthman b. 'Affan, moved to Kanem to escape the persecution of the Abbasids.\textsuperscript{23} Such reports give credence to Al-Uswani's account,\textsuperscript{24} written in 969 AD, that the \textit{Mai} (ruler) of Kanem of the time was a Muslim. Duis suggest that \textit{Mai} Hume Jilmi, who was reported to have converted to Islam about 1086 AD,\textsuperscript{25} may not be the first Muslim \textit{Mai}. It also suggests that Muslim \textit{Mais}, \textit{at} least from time of Ibn Mani, were reasonably learned. According to a \textit{Mahram}:\textsuperscript{26}

Mai Bulu read with Muhammad Ibn Mani From Tabaraka to Nas... Mai Arkii read from Yasin to Nas... Mai Kade Ibn Arju (Shu Ibn Arki) read from Kaf Ha Ya 'Ain Sad (Surat Maryam) to Nas... Mai 'Abd al-Jalil (Jil b uwa) read from Alif Lam Mim Sad (Surat alA'raf) to Nas.\textsuperscript{27}

\textit{Mai} Hume himself was reported to have read the whole Qur'an and the whole of the \textit{Risala} twice.\textsuperscript{28} It has also been asserted that the Mais from Hume (ca. 1086 AD) to Dunama Dibbalami (ca. 1259 AD) were all learned scholars distinguished for their learning and zeal, often deserving the epithets of \textit{faqih} or \textit{mujtahid} - a reflection of the role the Mais played in the Islamisation of Kanem-Borno. Not only did these kinds of developments launched Kanem-Borno into the Institutional

\textsuperscript{23} Al-Bakri \textit{Corpus}; p. 64.
\textsuperscript{24} Quoted in A. Mustapha, 'A New Interpretation of the History of Islam in Kanem-Bornu, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Mahram} is the name by which the indigenous written records of Borno were called. These are usually written by contemporary scholars and kept as part of the treasures of the \textit{Mai}.
\textsuperscript{28} A. Mustapha ' A New Interpretation of the History of Islam in Kanem-Borno under the Sayfawa.p.17. The \textit{Risala} means the \textit{Risala} of Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani a work on \textit{fiqh} according the Maliki \textit{Madhhab} widely read in North and West Africa to this day.
phase since about the 10th century, but they also put it ahead of its neighbors, a position it maintained up till the 19th century.

As for the Niger bend and Hausaland, dearth of sources has made it difficult to say with certainty when precisely Islam entered into the area. Located between Ghana and Kanem-Borno, however, their Islamisation must have come not too long after the two kingdoms. Recent research seems to strengthen this hypothesis. Farias's recent work has confirmed the presence of Muslim scholars and a substantial degree of Islamic culture in Gao as early as the 1040's AD. The experience of Gao is unlikely to be too different from that of Timbuktu to the north and Jenne and Hausaland to the south.

The spread of Islam during this phase was unsystematic and was undertaken by all and sundry, the learned as well as those of little knowledge. There was also, during this period, the presence of groups like the Kharijites and some of their off-shoots like the 'Ibadis. The practice of Islam was thus initially characterized by some lapses. These lapses could have taken longer time to be corrected but for the Sanhaja Berbers, whose leaders sought and got a faster and luckily effective remedy.

After performing the Hajj, Yahya b. Ibrahimi al-Gudali, the leader of the Gudala branch of the Sanhaja Berbers, made a sojourn in Qayrawan, where he attended the lessons of the distinguished Shaykh Abu 'Imran al-Fasi. From these lessons and perhaps experience during the Hajj, the Sanhaja leader realized

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29 Some of these recent researches has been referred to below.
30 P-F- de Moraes Farias 'For the Discussion of the Medieval and Modern Arabic Epigraphs of the Adrar-n--iforas and the Niger Bend' an Unpublished Paper, North western University, April, 1989.
how short the practice of Islam in his community has fallen. He requested the shaykh to give him a scholar from among his students, who will go with him and enlighten his people on the correct practices of Islam. The choice of this scholar eventually fell on 'Abd Allah b. Yasin, who took his assignment so seriously that it soon turned into a formidable movement which swept north through Maghrib as far as Spain and south through Takrur as far as Ghana. This was the celebrated *al-Murabitun* movement.

As this movement forms the subject of the next chapter, its details need not detain us here. We only need however, to state that the movement was primarily conceived and it largely remained aimed at correcting and improving the practice of Islam in societies which were wholly or substantially Muslim. Its major contribution to the spread of Islam in the region is not so much in the number of conversions it brought like in the establishment of educational bases and the inculcation of a taste for thoroughness in the practice of Islam.

It was the movement which introduced into the region the leading texts which later came to form the core of the curriculum of the educational centers. *Al-Murabitun* scholars have also been credited with improving the efficiency of the Arabic language and initiating local authorship.33 Diakha and Jenne, the earliest educational centers which later fed Timbuktu, developed under scholars with *Al-Murabitun* link.34 By improving the practice of

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33 Bivar and Hiskett have asserted that "literacy in the Arabic script and the custom of authorship in the Arabic language were introduced to West Africa during the period of the Murabitun (Almoravid) dynasty." see A.D.H. Bivar and M. Hiskett 'The Arabic Literature era to 1804: A Provisional Account', in *B.S.O.A.S.* 25(1), 1962, p. 105.

34 Timbuktu itself started as a camp for the Sanhaja tribe which made up the *Murabitun* movement. The nisba of the scholarly family of the prolific Ahmad Baba of Timbuktu, the jihad been traced back
Islam, founding a firm and institutional base for the *Shari‘a*, establishing a systematic study of texts enhancing the proficiency of the Arabic language and generating local authorship, the *Murabitun* movement succeeded in transforming the social and intellectual climate of the region, launching it to the second phase of its Islamisation.

**The Institutional Phase**

By the second half of the 13th century, the socio-economic and social transformation which the four centuries of Islam brought about, had began to yield fruits. The old order had over these centuries been greatly shaken, a new one was emerging. As people came out of the narrowness of their pre-Islamic past into the vast and comprehensiveness of Islam, their horizon broadened, new challenges dawned upon them, and their lives, liberated from previous inhibitions, attained a new vigor and vitality. The flow of traffic increased as commerce boomed, new routes developed, new towns sprouted and old ones grew into cities, group incorporation and ethnic integration increased with urbanization. Consequently, political realignment and alliances had to take place to conform to the emerging realities. These were to eventually lead to the emergence of a state whose power, territorial spread and complexity had been until then unprecedented. This was the State of Mali. Kanem-Borno which had emerged earlier was to grow in both power and complexity.

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The State of Mali emerged during the first half of the 13th century, under Sundiata, who was soon to convert to Islam.\textsuperscript{35} Towards the end of the century, Mali grew in size and power, incorporating Ghana and numerous surrounding chiefdoms. It later incorporated Walata on the southern fringes of the Sahara, Gao, Timbuktu, and Jenne,\textsuperscript{36} all of which had become important bases for commerce and scholarship. Jenne in particular, was the leading center of Islamic scholarship at the time, hosting some 4,200 scholars (\textit{\textquotesingle}ulama\textquoteright).\textsuperscript{37} At the height of its power the empire stretched from the Senegal valley in the west to Air in the east; from the fringes of the desert in the north to those of the rain forest in the south.

The incorporation of the centers of learning and commerce enhanced the prosperity and therefore the power of the State as well as its Islamic character. Some of the immediate successors of Sundiata even before Mansa Musa were reported to have made Hajj.\textsuperscript{38} The Hajj was particularly significant to the region, for it widened the horizon of the pilgrims, it also opened the region to Islamic thoughts and ideas and in time integrated the region with the rest of the Muslim world. In this respect the celebrated pilgrimage of Mansa Musa in 1324-5 AD, seem to be the most consequential, not because of the large number of men and large

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{35} Oral tradition projects Sundiata as a Muslim even during the initial phase of his struggle \~ft Sumanguru. According to Ibn Batuta, the grandfather of Mansa Musa, one Sariq Jata 'embraced Islam at the hands of the grandfather of one Mudrik b. Faggur (\textit{Corpus}, p. 295). The grandfather of Mansa Musa was given as one Abu Bakr who was a contemporary of Sundiata (Mari Jata), see Ibn Khaldun, \textit{Corpus}, p. 425. One Barmandara was also said to 'be the first king of Mali to embrace Islam, see \textit{Corpus}, p. 333.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Al-Sa\'di believes that Jenne was not co-opted into the state of Mali at least not fully. It lost its independence only during the time of Sunni Ali (of Songbay). See \textit{Tarikh al-Sudan} section on Jenne, p. 11-16.
\item \textsuperscript{37} See i-bid. This number may appear rather too high for Jenne of that period, but it nevertheless indicates the scholarly character of the city.
\item \textsuperscript{38} P.B. Clarke, \textit{West Africa and Islam} London, Edward and Arnold, 1982, p. 43.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
quantities of Gold he took with him, but because of the number of books, scholars and artisans whom he brought back into the region.\textsuperscript{39}

The Impact of Hajj on the Islamisation of the region was enhanced by a deliberate state policy. Mansa Musa in particular threw the whole weight of the State behind this Islamisation drive. For as al-\textsuperscript{'}Umari reported, the scholars he brought were largely experts in Islamic law (of Maliki School), many of the books were also in Islamic law and with these he established the Shari\textsuperscript{'}a as the supreme law of the land, with experts appointed as judges.\textsuperscript{40}

Mansa Musa also started the practice of sending students to North Africa for further education while devoting "himself to the study of the religion".\textsuperscript{41} The Spanish Muslim architect, al-Sahili, built a number of mosques with minarets, and Mansa Musa instituted a regular Friday congregational prayers throughout Mali. The significance of the congregational prayers seemed to have been well entrenched in Mali. For Ibn Batuta, who visited Mali during the time of Mansa Sulayman, about mid fourteenth century, became impressed with "their assiduity in prayer and their persistence in performing it in congregation", adding that, "if it is a Friday prayer and a man does not go early to the mosque, he will not find anywhere to pray because of the press of the people."\textsuperscript{42} Such decisive and far reaching steps taken by Mansa Musa were to establish a firm base for Islam and to accelerate its spread within and outside the State of Mali.

\textsuperscript{39} For details of this pilgrimage see, U. al-Naqr, The Pilgrimage Tradition in West Africa, p.11-16.
\textsuperscript{40} Al-\textsuperscript{'}Umari - Corpus, p. 2 67-70.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibn Batuta, Corpus p. 296.
One factor which greatly helped this spread was the network of Mande Traders, ceaselessly plying the trade routes which crisscrossed the western Sudan. Diligent, indefatigable, astute, these traders also known as Dyula or Wangara, were to be found in virtually every nook and corner of the region, from the Senegal to the Niger valley, from the fringes of the desert to that of the dense forest. To be sure these were no ordinary traders, they were also preachers (du’at), often scholars who loose no opportunity to spread the message of Islam wherever they went. It was the arrival of these Wangara traders in Kano, about the middle of the 14th century, as reported by the Kano Chronicle that was thought to mark the entrance of Islam in Hausaland.

In Kanem-Borno, it was Mai Hume Jilmi, about 1086 AD, who was the first to make the Hajj and institute the office of the Qadi. This was to open the Kingdom to wider Muslim influences and to eventually integrate it into the wider world of Islam. The Mais that came after him, built hostels and a mosque in Egypt, where their citizens stayed when on their way to or back from Hajj or in search of knowledge. It was Mai Dunama Dibbalemi (1221-59 AD), more than any before him, who took a more definite step towards higher education, by founding a school for Borno students in Cairo. Thus from Mai Hume to

43 For details see, L.0, Sanneh, The Jakhanke London, I.A.I. 1979. See also P.B. Clarke, West Africa and Islam p. 34.
45 AAl-Umari~ writing about 1337/8 AD, mentions that the Kanemis "have built at Fustat in a malikite Madrasa, Where their company of Travelers lodge", (Corpus P. 261) but out mentioning when and who built it. How ever al-Maqrizi (1364-1442), in his Madrasa was more precise. According to him, " when the Kanem reached Cairo in 1240's (which coincides with the rule of Dunarna Dibbalerni) proposing to make the pilgrimage they paid the Qadi Alam al-Din Ibn Rashid money with which he built it. He taught there and so it took its name from him. It acquired great reputation in the land of Takrur and in most years they used to send money to it." (Corpus 353)
Dunama, the State was consciously involved in the Islamisation of its society.

Following the breaking of Mune, by Dunama, Kanem-Borno was thrown into chaos and disorder lasting nearly two whole centuries. This period of anarchy must have taken its toll on the social, economic and religious life of the kingdom. Fortunately Mai Ali Gaji in 1470 was able to restore order and establish once again a strong and stable administration. He also quickly restored the tradition of state's support for Islamisation. For his new found capital Of Ngazargumo, soon attracted a large body of scholars and acquired fame as center of learning and scholarship.

About a century later, Mai Idris Aloma was able to do even more. He showed exceptional zeal for Islamisation. He built mosques, fought lax morals, enhanced the position and operation of the Shari‘a, and established an Islamic consultative assembly (Majlis al-Shura). He also carried Borno even closer to the Muslim World by opening diplomatic relations with Morocco, and improving those with Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. Thus Borno under Aloma became a model Islamic state and a center of learning, famous for its specialization on the reading of the Quran.46

As for Hausaland, the entrance of Islam has for long been associated with the arrival of the Wangara traders in the mid-fourteenth century. In what appeared to be a contrived support for this pervading view, Adeleye argued that, "the Tuareg country screened Hausaland from the salutary effects of the

Madrasa was in the Hammam al-Rish quarters in old Cairo, and is quite evident from the Azhar riwaq system.

46 For details see M.N. Alkak 'Kanem-Borno Under Sayfawa...'op. cit.
trans-Saharan trade routes up to about the 14th century. The trans-Saharan trade routes up to this period sidetracked Hausaland on their Way to Mali, Songhay as well as Kanem Borno." Thus, he continued, "the Islamic penetration came with the through-going opening of Hausaland to an east-west communication in West Africa in which Hausa traders became an active element." 47

Such views have, recently, been increasingly challenged and emerging evidence point to much earlier date for Islam in Hausaland. Mahdi Adamu and Shehu Galadanchi have argued that Hausaland was effectively linked with its neighbors and must have therefore come in contact with Islam much earlier. The arrival of Wangara represented a stage in the Islamisation of Hausaland rather than its beginning. The real significance of the advent of the Wangara, in Adamu's words, "should at the very best be taken to refer to the Islamisation of the government circles in Kano, but not to be regarded as giving an acceptable history of the first arrival of Islam in Hausaland. 48

Furthermore, Philips, writing on the Islamisation of Kano, has argued that:

In Western Sudan Islamisation of the people seems to have preceded that of their rulers, for instance, in Jenne there were already 4200 Muslim scholars when the ruler converted. In ancient Ghana there were 12 mosques at the time of the Almoravids. Although the conversion of the rulers often accelerated the conversion of the masses, it rarely began it in West Africa. The conversion of the ruler and his court was a dramatic turning from which date the State may be

considered Muslim. But this is a climax of a process of Islamisation rather than its commencement.49

Thus, it is overwhelmingly evident that Islam entered Hausaland much earlier than the mid-fourteenth century.50 But it was not until the second half of the 15th century that it got the kind of institutional backing as in Borno and Mali. During this period, changes in leadership, probably reflecting the increasing presence and awareness of Muslim subjects, in some of the major Hausa States of Zazzau, Kano and Katsina, brought to power Muslims with ardent zeal to spread and strengthen Islam. These rulers, all of whom ruled for about a quarter of a century, were contemporaries: Muhammad Rabbo in Zazzau, Muhammad Rumfa in Kano, and Muhammad Korau in Katsina. This was a rather opportune period for Islam in Hausaland. In the cautious words of Professor 'Abd Allah Smith:

The pre-eminence of these rulers is partly due to the roles they are believed to have played in the spread of Islam in Hausaland. Muhammad Korau and Muhammad Rabbo are stated in the King list to have been the first Muslim Kings of Katsina and Zazzau respectively while Muhammad Rumfa is regarded as an Islamic reformer.51

Each of these rulers took numerous decisive steps and exerted a lot of efforts in seeing to the spread and establishment of Islam in their lands. Muhammad Rumfa in particular, the details of whose efforts are more known, "was the first Sarki who

50 The precise date is still to be ascertained. For further discussions on this and more evidence for an early date for Islam in Hausaland, see U.M. Bugaje, 'A Comparative Study of Movements of 'Uthman Dan Fodio and Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi', unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Khartoum, 1981, p. 12.
51 A. Smith, 'The early States of the Central Sudan, p. 198.
appears to have applied himself seriously to the problems of ruling a multi-religious community in accordance with Islamic law." It was for this purpose, continued Smith,

he went as far as consulting a jurist of international fame, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karim al-Maghili. Al-Maghili not only entered into correspondence with him and wrote a treatise on the art of government for his use, but actually settled in Kano and established a community of North African Muslims there which eventually became assimilated into the society of the Birni.52

The sum total of the efforts of the three Muhammads was to consolidate Islam and open the gates of Hausaland to Islamic cultural and intellectual influences more than ever before. A further impetus to their efforts was received from a similar change in leadership in Songhay which brought Muhammad Toure to power as the Askia of Songhay. The cities of Hausaland soon acquired fame as centers of learning and attracted pilgrims en route to Hajj and scholars, some of whom introduced a number of texts such as *al-Shifa'* of Qadi 'Iyad, *Mudawwana* of Sahnun, *Jami’ al-saghir* of al-Suyuti, etc. Kano and Katsina in particular attracted scholars from Timbuktu, Borno, and Agades. The sojourn of al-Maghili in Katsina and later Kano, that of Aida Ahmad in Katsina, where he stayed and became its Qadi, the visit to Kano, of Ahmad b. 'Umar b. Muhammad Aqit (the grand father of the more famous Ahmad Baba of Timbuktu), were among the well documented.53

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52 Ibid p. 200.
53 The visit of Ahmad b. 'Umar b. Muhammad Aqit, Ahmad Baba's grandfather, was not mentioned in the *Nawl al-ibtihaj* of Ahmad Baba. But al-Sa'di in *Tarikh al-Sudan* made reference to it, quoting from *Kifayat al-muhtaj* of Ahmad Baba. Both al-Maghili and Aqit appeared to have visited Hausaland before the emergence of Askia Muhammad Toure in Songhay.
While these developments were taking place in Hausaland, Mali was declining, loosing some of its northern towns like Walata and Timbuktu, to the Tuaregs. The small kingdom of Gao which used to be a tributary of Mali, was however growing under the leadership of Sunni Ali, incorporating Timbuktu, Jenne and other areas that Mali was loosing. This soon transformed into the Songhay empire incorporating most of Mali and even more. Sunni Ali, who ruled from 1465 to 1492 AD, unlike the rulers of Mali fore him, did not however, favour Islam. He was reported to have abandoned the *Shari’a* and to be particularly hostile to scholars, some of whom he was reported to have killed.

Soon after the death of Sunni Ali, however, one of his military commanders, Muhammad Toure, wrested power from Sunni's successor and the title of the Askia. Askia Muhammad repealed the hostile policies of Sunni Ali and expanded the State of Songhay to the boarders of Kebbi in Hausaland. He returned to the earlier tradition of Mansa Musa's Mali, an earnest drive for the establishment of Islam, respect for scholarship and, esteem for Hajj. During his own pilgrimage, Askia Muhammad, like Mansa Musa before him, sought the advise of many scholars and on his return saw himself responsible for the spread of Islam in the whole of Western Sudan.

Back home the Askia upheld the *Shari’a* and sought for a more thorough and comprehensive application. In pursuit of this, he sought and got the assistance of many scholars from within and outside Songhay. He specifically encouraged scholarship, his meeting in Cairo with Suyuti, whose works had become widely read in the area, and his correspondence with al-Maghili, were
very significant in this respect. Timbuktu in particular was allowed full reins, scholars flocked to it from all parts of the region and beyond, scholarship flourished more than ever before and learning reached unprecedented standards, making it to excel its contemporaries and became the greatest center of learning in the region.

Perhaps the most significant impact on Askia's policies came from al-Maghili, who made a sojourn in Songhay at the invitation of the Askia. Al-Maghili's replies to Askia's several questions seemed to have cleared a lot of doubts from the latter's mind and to have propelled him into taking several decisive and courageous steps for the strengthening of Islam in Songhay.\footnote{These replies have been edited and translated by John Hunwick and published under the title, *Shari'a in Songhay: The Replies of al-Maghili to the Questions of Askia al-Hajji Muhammad* Oxford, O.U.P. 1985.} It is worth noting, in passing, that some of these ideas expressed by al-Maghili, especially those on *tajdid* and the venal scholars (*Ulama al-su’*), and the revolutionary fervor with which he expressed them where to echo audibly during the *jihad* of the 19th century.

This phase was one during which large and powerful States emerged under Muslim leadership who threw the weight of the States behind the process of Islamisation, spreading and strengthening the position of Islam.\footnote{To Western historians, like N. Levtzion, M.G. Smith, M. HiskeM H. Fisher and their students, such moves by rulers of West African States, must have some hidden motives, they are sure to find them. A careful reader will however realize that these insinuations betray the cultural gaps and prejudices of these scholars, which are not always admitted.} The *Shari’a* in particular gained wider and thorough application, securing for Islam firm roots in these societies. It was also a phase during which educational centers sprouted, developed and acquired international fame. These centers received and produced scholars
of repute. It was indeed a golden age for Islam in the region, the beauty of which was enhanced by the peaceful atmosphere that prevailed. The Moroccan invasion of Songhay in 1591, with its pillage of Timbuktu, was what however brought this phase to end. There after a different trend developed, which then marked another phase in the spread of Islam in the region.\textsuperscript{56}

\textbf{The Pre-Jihad Phase}

The Moroccan invasion of Songhay was what triggered the events that came to mark this phase. The invading Moroccan army, largely made up of Spanish mercenaries, pillaged the cities with audacious impunity. Timbuktu the cradle of learning and the conscience of the region was desecrated. The plunder of people's property was so thorough that not even Women's Jewelry were spared. Scholars were humiliated, killed and those able to escape were taken in chains to Morocco, after their books had been confiscated. Ahmad Baba who lost some 1600 books was reported to have the least number of books among his group. Of this group all perished in exile in Morocco. Only Ahmad Baba returned back to Timbuktu after the death of al-Mansur, the Moroccan ruler who perpetrated this abomination in the name of Islam.\textsuperscript{57}

The State of Songhay consequently broke up into smaller chiefdoms where Islam gradually lost its central role. The absence of the restraining force of the state of Songhay meant a


\textsuperscript{57} See al-Nasiri, \textit{Kitab al-Istiqsa} op. cit. p.130.
free-for-all situation, with various groups vying for control. The nomads, especially the Tuaregs, seemed to have had a field day, ceaselessly harassing the settled groups, creating an atmosphere of insecurity and uncertainty. Predictably this situation affected trade and caused movements and dislocation of peoples. It was to continue until the emergence of Shaykh Sidi Mukhtar al-Kunti, about the mid eighteenth century.

The resulting confusion and the power vacuum must have contributed significantly to the rise of the Bambara States of Segu and Ka'arta in the 18th century. These States grew under pagan or at best nominal Muslim leadership and promoted largely animists beliefs and practices. These grew very powerful in the Niger bend incorporating such places as Timbuktu. Though Shari’a judges continued to be appointed within the domains of the States, the application of the Sharia itself suffered a serious setback and Islamic learning generally declined. This state of affairs understandably gave a lot of concern to the Muslim population especially the scholars among them.

As the picture was becoming gloomy, a ray of hope was emerging from the fringes of the desert. This was the activities of the Qadiriyya Sufi shaykh, Sidi Mukhtar al-Kunti (1729-1811). The tariqa entered the region since the early 16th century, but its transformation into a dynamic and diligent Sufi brotherhood, appear to be the singular efforts of al-Kunti, about the middle of the 18th century. The concepts of asceticism (zuhd) which the shaykh propounded ensured that all his-followers were economically productive, while his emphasis on jihad against the carnal soul (jihad al-nafs), gave them the moral training
(tarbiyya) which restrained their excesses. At the intellectual level, al-Kunti's liberal approach to the issue of the schools of law (madhahib) and jihad, injected a fresh impetus into scholarly circles. Paraphrasing some of his ideas Batran wrote:

Sidi al-Mukhtar made clear that Zuhd (asceticism) does not lie in complete detachment from the world but in emptying the heart of the desire of the world. He deprecated a life of mendacity and exhorted the muridun to take a profession and increase their riches. Wealth, he asserted, was the corner stone for Jah (social standing, dignity) and Haiba (authority, respect).

Besides calling the people to jihad against the carnal soul Sidi al-Mukhtar called for the return to the basic sources of Islamic jurisprudence and the restoration of the teachings of the companions of Muhammad. Moreover, he rejected exclusive adherence to one madhhab and open the door of ijtihad to who ever was juristically qualified.58

The situation in Hausaland was not very different from that of the Niger-bend. Though Hausaland never had to break up into chiefdoms, for it had always been made up of independent states, the absence of the training force of Songhay contributed to the rise to prominence of the less Islamised axis of Kebbi-Zamfara-Gobir. First Kebbi grew very powerful to the point of challenging Borno. The decline of Kebbi less than a century later saw the rise of Zamfara, which ultimately gave way to the State of Gobir, the epicenter of the 19th century jihad in Hausaland. The rather sudden power fluctuations within these Hausa States triggered off an inter-State internecine warfare, with its harmful effects on commerce and learning. The presence

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of Borno was not to much avail as it was busy repelling attacks from the Kwararrafa and the Tuaregs.

As the inter-States conflict raged on with no clear winner emerging, resources became stretched, the situation became increasingly desperate and expediency soon took the place of ideals. The application of the Shari’a suffered, Islamic principles were ignored as rulers resorted to all manners of raising revenue and sought the assistance of both the Mallam (a Muslim scholar) and the Boka (a pagan priest). In time despotism was breeding discontent while syncretism was seeking to supplant the Islamic influence and weaken the moral fibre of the society. The case of Kano as it entered the 18th century seems typical of other Hausa States:

For Kano the strain on the State’s resources in trying to stem external war and contain internal rebellion is reflected in the rise of the taxation imposed by its eighteenth century rulers. Muhammad Sharefa dan Dadi (1703-31) is reported to have introduced seven practices for raising revenues, 'all of which were robbery...' of whom the chronicle writes 'He invented many other methods of extortion'. His successor, Kumbani, is said to have almost killed Kurmi market by his excessive taxation. He taxed even the learned men - Mallams - and it was on account of his extortions that there were disturbance leading to their departure from the city.59

As for syncretism:

the Dirki - the Qur'an turned fetish to which sacrifices of cattle were offered - was not destroyed in Kano until the reign of Al-Wali (1781-1807). A Katsina talisman, similar to the sacred Mune of Borno in the belief attached to it as guardian of state security, was

59 R.A. Adeleye, Hausaland and Borno 1600-1800, op. cit. p. 592
reportedly opened only-towards the end of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{60}

Though learning continued in Hausaland during this period, not much is known about the scholars and their activities and one gets the impression that it was not at its best. A few details have survived regarding some prominent ones like Muhammad b. Sabbagh, his student Muhammad b. Masani and Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Fulani al-Kashnawi, who died as a guest of al-Jabarti in Egypt.\textsuperscript{61} The learned scholars available appear to have withdrawn to the serenity of their ivory towers leaving the courts to the charlatans and scholars of little learning. Towards the end of the 18th century, however, the scholarly circle started to pick up again, with a few scholars like Shaykh Jibril b. 'Umar voicing up and pointing accusing fingers. The opening of the Dirki in Kano and the Talisman in Katsina could be seen as part of the impact of the changing trend.

The area of Senegambia, which comprised Futa Toro, Bundu, Bambuk, and Futa Jallon, could not have been seriously affected by the fall of Songhay. For since the eclipse of Mali the area had been left largely to itself. The spread of Islam continued gradually since the days of Mali, but did not from all indications, get the kind of patronage it got in the Songhay under the Askias. Though no educational center of regional repute was known to have existed in the area during this period, numerous scholars

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{60} Ibid p. 599

\textsuperscript{61} See Muhammad Bello, \textit{Infaq al-Maysur}, passim, and A.D. H bivar and M.Hiskett, the Arabic Literature of Nigeria to 1804: a provisional account” in \textit{B.S.O.A.S} vol. xv xv part 1, 1962. pp. 104-48 al-Kashnawi died in 1741 in Egypt as a guest of Hasan al Jabarti and was said to have taught the latter, his host, a variety of subjects including numerology. Abd al-Rahman al- Jabarti, the famous Egyptian historian and son of al-Kashnawi’s host wrote on the learning of the latter, their guest, in very high terms, in his \textit{Aja’ib al-athar fi al- tarajim wa al- akhbar}, vol. 1. pp. 159-60}
had moved in the area and were particularly active during the 17th and the 18th centuries.

Such scholars as Malik Sy who moved into Bundu from Masina area towards the end of the 17th century was able to raise an Islamic State about 1696 and carry out a local *jihad* to strengthen it. About 1727 Alfa Karamako, after extensive teaching, was able to lead his Muslim community in a *jihad* against the pagan rulers of Timbo in Futa Jallon and to institute Imamate. Sulayman Bal, apparently inspired by the *jihad* in Futa Jallon, where he went to study, returned to Futa Toro where he carried out his *jihad* in the 1760’s, leading to the establishment of another Imamate. Though these *jihad* movements were localized, their impact was felt beyond their localities. For they provided both the bases and the impetus for the more pacific and wide spread network of the Jakhanke *du'at*. It was the latter that carried the message as well as the ideals of the *jihad* beyond Senegambia into the nooks and corners of the region as far as the dense forest of the Ashantis in modern day Ghana.

At the time of the demise of Songhay, Borno, under the great Idris Aloma, was at the height of its glory and was not affected by the events in Songhay. With peace and stability established under Aloma, the Mais that followed were able to make great contributions in the field of Islamic learning and scholarship. Indeed Borno had for centuries been a seat of learning, but it was during the 17th and 18th centuries that it reached its peak, when centers like Machina, the Sufi settlement of Kulumbardo and the Birni itself attained their full blossom.
Almost all the Mais during this period were pious scholars, making the Hajj and holding discussion with the scholars when not engaged in jihad. For the most part of this period, but particularly during the reign of Mai Ali b. Dunama (1749-93), the capital Birnin Gazargamu, appeared to have been very much like a university town, the court dominated by the "Ulama' constantly engaged in debate on some of the fine points of the Shari‘a. Similar sessions were said to be taking place in all the four Friday mosques of the Birni.\(^{62}\) This was also the period during which most of the renowned Borno scholars like Shaykh Tahir b. Ibrahim al-Barnawi, Shaykh Muhammad b Muhammad al-Fulani (Bindu), Shaykh Ahmad Makaramma and Imam Muhammad b. Hajj 'Abd al-Rahman al-Barnawi (Ajrami), who wrote the *Shurb al-Zulal*\(^{63}\), lived.

Towards the end of the 18th century, however, Borno was declining militarily. Whether this was due to the failure of Borno to keep up with the tradition of importation of muskets which allowed it to have an edge over its vassals or it was due to Mai Ali b. Dunama's indulgence in the intellectual discourse, remains to be ascertained.\(^{64}\) Al-Tahir al-Fallati's *Qasida fi madh Dunama*,\(^{65}\) which was supposed to be an eulogy for Mai Ali b. Dunama, but which on closer examination appears to be a serious urging of the Mai and the wider Muslim community for jihad, clearly betrays


\(^{63}\) The significance of this work is still to be properly assessed, the Sokoto mujahidun it in their criticism of the practices of the rulers of Hausaland as well as in the political economy of their post Jihad politics.

\(^{64}\) For these arguments see R.A. Adeleye, *Hausaland and Borno 1600-1800*p. 569.

an apprehension in Borno's capacity to deal with the growing menace of Tuaregs and nomadic Arabs. These challenges coupled with the Mandara revolts about the same period, might have sapped Borno's strength rendering it susceptible to the attacks of the Sokoto *mujahidun* early in the 19th century.

The pre-*jihad* phase is obviously a complex phase during which various and often conflicting trends were simultaneously developing and in time creating tensions and strain which were to be resolved only with the 19th century *jihads*. It would appear that the most important developments which determined the events in the 19th century were those in the Niger-bend and Hausaland. Indeed these areas provided the main theater in which the *jihads were* fought. With the *jihads* however, unlike the fall of Songhay, both the Senegambia, and Borno were substantially shaken.

**The Jihad Phase**

Identifying the 19th century as the *jihad* phase does not ignore the fact that there were *jihads* in the region before and after this period. We have just noted the *jihads* of Malik Sy, Alfa Karamako and Sulayman Bal, in the 17th and 18th centuries Senegambia. So did *jihads* continue well into the twentieth century like that of Ahmad Bamba in Senegambia. But while the pre-nineteenth century *jihads* were localized and stunted in magnitude, those in the 20th century were largely the extensions of the major ones in the 19th century. Moreover there was no century or period in the history of the region which became so occupied with *jihad as* the 19th century: a fact which all the
historians of the region seemed agreed upon. In the words of Professor Abdullahi Smith:

The history of the West African Savannah in the nineteenth century has its own independent theme- and this consists in a series of revolutionary movements which radically changed the social and political complexion of the whole zone during the hundred years or so before the establishment of the European governments. These movements were *jihads* resulting in the formation of Islamic States, the emergence of a new West African Muslim aristocracy and widespread conversion to Islam.⁶⁶

We shall now proceed to discuss the three major *jihad* movements: The *jihad* of Shaykh 'Uthman b. Fudi in Hausaland; the *Jihad* of Shaykh Ahmad Labbo; the *jihad* of Hajj 'Umar al-Futi in Senegambia and Segu.

**The Jihad of Shaykh Usman b. Fudi**

Shaykh Uthman was born into a learned and scholarly family and went through the traditional Islamic education, emerging with a remarkable sense of mission. Moved by the level of ignorance among his people, Shaykh Uthman, as early as 1774, then at the age of twenty, embarked on teaching people the basics of Islam. He started single handedly around his home town of Degel in the Hausa State of Gobir, but was soon to be assisted by his brother 'Abd Allah twelve years his junior. As they began to expand their teaching programmes to different parts of Gobir and beyond into the neighboring Hausa State of Zamfara, they were joined by yet another hand, who, though much younger, was to prove to be vital to the ultimate success of the venture.

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⁶⁶ A. Smith, a Neglected themes of West African History: The Islamic Revolutions of the 19th Century in A Little New Light: Selected Historical Writings of Abdullahi Smith, Zaria, A.S C. H. R 1987, p. 131
This was Muhammad Bello, the son of Shaykh 'Uthman. The three put together formed the triumvirate that led this movement intellectually and politically, saw it through to its logical conclusion and even had the rare opportunity of translating into practice the ideals they spent the whole of their lives fighting for.67

While these men were undertaking the painstaking job of educating the general public in Hausaland, they also continued their scholarly pursuits, learning from as many Shaykhs as were around and reading as any books as were available. That 'Abd Allah could not remember all the Shaykhs from whom he "took knowledge"68 that Muhammad Bello alone read about 20,000 books,69 not to mention the Shaykh 'Uthman, may give one an idea of their level of scholarship. "The breadth of their knowledge of Arabic writings" wrote Abdullahi Smith, "is remarkable when it is realized that none of them ever visited North Africa or the Middle East." "This learning of the leaders" continued Smith:

Showed itself in their writings which were voluminous. The astonishing total of 258 books and pamphlets is at present provisionally attributed to the triumvirate, and these writings cover a very wide range of subjects including all the classical Islamic sciences, as well as history, mysticism and medicine... remember that a large number of these books were written in the midst of active campaigning, and that they do not include official correspondence which the leaders (especially Muhammad Bello) had to keep up with their supporters in the field.70

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70 A. Smith A little New Light p. 136.
For nearly twenty years the triumvirate and their expanding team of disciples and students traveled the length and breadth of Hausaland, teaching the basics of Islam, and raising yet more students and following. Wherever they went and whenever they moved, they left behind some of their students to continue what they had started. Through this rather modest and steady process, knowledge spread far and wide and the Shehu, as 'Shaykh 'Uthman came to be referred to, raised followers all over Hausaland and beyond, in Borno and Masina.

To be sure, Shehu stood out of the crowd of Scholars of Hausaland not so much for his learning like for his determination to make basic Islamic knowledge a household commodity and raise the consciousness of the Muslim community to abide by the teachings of Islam. He was particularly keen on the education of women, who were the most ignorant and oppressed segment of the society. He specifically encouraged them to attend his public preaching, even as they had to often mix with the men, and reminded them their rights and duties in Islam.

Until Shehu appeared on the scene, the 'ulama' had been in the practice of remaining in their ivory towers where they taught only their few students, to the neglect of even their immediate families. Shehu's efforts at educating the Muslim public became an open challenge to these 'ulama, and as the public acquire Islamic teachings they shed away their ignorance along the mystique of the 'ulama and the awe of their nominal Muslim rulers. Rather predictably, this elicited a hostile response, first from the 'ulama' and later from the Hausa kings. In responding
to the ‘ulama’, the Shehu had to compose nearly fifty works in which he often had to quote such authorities like al-Maghili, al-Suyuti, Ahmad Baba, al-Kunti, among others.

For the next ten years, the Shehu and his team were to return to his home town Degel to settle for more teaching and writing to meet the growing needs of his expanding community, the Jama’a, as it came to be known. Degel was soon to become a center of learning and headquarters for the jama’a, with the Shehu and his lieutenants having to add to their teaching the job of counselling and coordination. Despite this busy schedule the Shehu managed to find time to develop his spiritual leanings through tasawwuf, along the lines of the Qadiriyya tariqa to which he had subscribed. But this situation was not to last as long as the Shehu had perhaps wished. As the consciousness of the Jama’a was growing, they became increasingly impatient with the excesses of the Hausa rulers. The latter themselves were growing apprehensive of the former and in time confrontation appeared inevitable.

It was however neither the Shehu nor his Jama’a that was to start the conflict. It was the Hausa rulers, especially of Gobir, whose power base had been drastically narrowed by the increasing following of the Shehu. In a desperate and frantic move to save their dwindling authority they resorted to attacking the Jama’a at Gimbana in the Hausa State of Kebbi. The Jama’a ambushed the returning Gobir forces and released their brethren. This incidence could have blown into a full confrontation but for the timely intervention of the Shehu.

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71 Shehu ‘Uthman has been reported to have also joined other Qadiriyya related tariqas, Khalwafiyya and Mahmudiyya in particular. Details of this will come up in the following chapters.
The Shehu ordered the Jama’a all over Hausaland to make Hijra to Gudu in the outskirts of the State of Gobir. The Shehu and his Jama’a converged there early in 1804, but the Gobir Rulers would not leave them alone and the Jama’a had to defend itself. Thus in the same year, the Jama’a, few, impoverished and scattered all over Hausaland, started fighting, under the leadership of the Shehu, against their Hausa rulers, who had all along disregarded the Shari’a and had sought to curtail the activities of the Jama’a. Even in Borno, an Islamic state with impressive credentials, the Jama’a found sufficient grounds to rise against its rulers. This attack generated a heated debate and series of correspondence between Shaykh Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanemi, acting initially on behalf of Bomo rulers, and the Sokoto jihad rulers.72 The Jama’a had already scored some limited successes in Borno when the leadership of both states decided to negotiate a settlement, cease hostilities and lay the matter to rest.

In Hausaland, the Jama’a, who were first on the defensive, soon overcame their initial difficulties and took to the offensive with remarkable successes. By 1810 the greater part of Hausaland had fallen to the Jama’a, the jihad was in the main over, leaving to the Jama’a the task of translating their ideals into practice. This new task of establishing the Islamic order did not seem any easier than the jihad itself. It triggered a spate of writing and debate among the scholars on the details of the socio-economic, legal and political order that was to be operated in the new dispensation. The Shehu seemed to have been totally absorbed

72 For details of these correspondences see M. Bello's Infaq al-Maysur.
into this task that he found it necessary to devote the rest of his
time to laying the intellectual foundations of the new State,
leaving the routine administration to his two able assistants,
Shaykh 'Abd Allah and Muhammad Bello.\textsuperscript{73}

The Sokoto caliphate which emerged out of the jihad was
soon to grow into a large and complex polity, extending to the
south as far as the Yoruba land. Internally, it brought a total
reordering of society along Islamic lines and provided Hausaland
with the equilibrium and stability which had eluded it for
centuries. Externally, it occasioned some shake up in Borno,
leading to the emergence of Shaykh Muhammad al-Amin
al-Kanemi. But perhaps "the most important" effect as Professor
Smith observed, "was the influence which the leaders exerted on
later jihad movements in other parts of the Sudan."\textsuperscript{74}

\textbf{The Jihad of Ahmad Labbo in Masina}

Masina in the Niger bend, was in the 18th century under the
pagan Bambara State of Segu. It was however a traditional
Muslim society, very much like Hausaland, under nominal
Muslim rulers condoned and encouraged by a class of local
‘ulama’. Ahmad who had a traditional Islamic Education in
Masina, started teaching about 1797 then in his early twenties,
while still learning from older scholars. Though he was in contact
with the scholars of Jenne, an old center of learning, and Shaykh
Mukhtar al-Kunti, the Qadiri Shaykh of the region, Ahmad owed
much of his education, and hence his frame of mind, to Sokoto

\textsuperscript{73} For details see 1. Suleiman Islamic State and the Challenge of History London, 04-011, 1987.
Mansell, 1987

\textsuperscript{74} A. Smith, A Little New light P. 138.
jihad leaders. He was indeed part of Shaykh 'Uthman's circle of students. Though Ahmad never met the Shehu, he remained in constant contact with him, receiving his books and seeking his opinion and advice on several issues.

Seku Ahmadu, as Ahmad Labbo was known, seemed to have shunned the cities, concentrating his teachings in the rural areas. With the assistance of his disciples and students, he was able to raise a growing following of young Muslims cutting across the social strata of Masina. His followers distinguished themselves for their piety and zeal. In the course of the twenty years Seku Ahmadu spent teaching, his following increased not only in number but also in their zeal to correct the prevailing un-Islamic practices. Predictably, Seku Ahmadu and his men gradually came into conflict with the local Fulani chiefs, the Ardo’en, whom he accused of promoting un-Islamic practices and serving as tools in the hands of their Bambara overlords.

Understandably, Seku Ahmadu had to also clash with the "ulama" of Jenne, who provided excuses for, what to him was a decadent order and condoned innovations (bid'a). He was referring to these 'Ulama' when he wrote in his only known work, al-Idtirar ila Allah, "when I saw their satanic innovations in which they were so steeped as to take them for orthodox..."\(^{75}\) It was to Sokoto he turned for both moral and intellectual support in his fight against the "Ulama". As Brown noted.

As early, as 1815-16 A.D. there is evidence of his effort to build a case against the ‘ulama of Jenne and other Muslims who followed similar practices. In his correspondence with Abd Allah b. Fudi of Gwandu in 1231

H. (1815-16) he sought legal and moral support for his criticism and received it.⁷⁶

In opposing the oppressive practices of the Ardo’en, and challenging the complacency of the ‘ulama, Seku Ahmadu and his following were offering "as Shaikh 'Uthman had offered in Sokoto, hope for the oppressed in the form of a Muslim society based solely on the rule of law."⁷⁷ What precipitated the conflict in Masina was an incidence in which the son of an Ardo was killed after insulting and assaulting Seku Ahmadu's students. The pagan Bambara over lords were called in to deal with Seku Ahmadu. The Seku prepared for Hijra and sent some of his students to Sokoto (in 1817) to in Shehu's permission for jihad. This, Seku Ahmadu got in a form of a flag and the jihad broke out.

Barely a year after it had started the jihad was over. By 1818 the yoke of the Bambara establishment along with their surrogates had been overthrown and an Islamic State made up of five emirates administered centrally by a council of forty, had been established. Hamdullahi founded in 1821 came to be the new capital of this caliphate of Masina. Despite this rather obvious connection with Sokoto, Seku Ahmadu resisted persuasions for integration into Sokoto and maintained Masina as an independent but friendly Islamic State. Ahmad himself died in 1845 and the Caliphate continued until 1862 when it became engulfed by the third major wave of jihad led by Hajj 'Umar al-Futi.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 20.
Seku Ahmadu may not have been a prolific scholar, with only one book credited to him, but was distinguished for his piety, humility and zeal. The level of scholarship in Ahmad's Masina compared to Timbuktu and Sokoto, appeared low. "It is Ahmad's great achievements" observes Last, “that he was able with such scanty resources to establish a clearly Muslim regime." It appeared to be a very efficient and responsible regime, for Last adds that, "The success with which the State supplied both the worldly and the spiritual needs of its people seems to have been largely due to Ahmad who managed to combine a minimum of overt personal authority with an ability to counteract the puritanical excesses of some of his councilors."\(^78\) To these must be added the large number of Muslim converts especially from the pagan Fulanis and the new sense of responsibility and direction he gave to scholarship.

**The Jihad of Hajj Umar al-Futi**

The *jihad* of Sulayman Bal in Futa Toro in the late 18th century and establishment of the Imamate had further consolidated Islam and given boost to its educational centers. Born about 1794, barely two decades after this *jihad*, 'Umar al-Futi grew up in a fairly spirited Muslim community and acquired a good traditional Islamic education.\(^79\) But as he grew into manhood the tempo of the *jihad* was waning and European presence in the coastal towns was increasing with the French making frequent incursions into the hinterland. The pagan Bambara State of Ka’arta and Segu were similarly encroaching

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\(^78\) Ibid, p.17

into the Senegambia area. This unfolding state of siege could not have escaped the notice of some of the perceptive minds in the area.

Judging by his intelligence and wide travels in the area, 'Umar must have noted with concern the impending threat these development posed to the Muslims of Senegambia. His decision to go to Hajj may not have much to do with this, but the situation at home appeared to have constantly been in his mind throughout his sojourn outside Senegambia. His Hajj appeared to have been under the influence of his teacher, Shaykh Muhammad al-Naqil, a renowned scholar of Futa Jallon, who initiated him into the Tijaniyya tariqa and whom he wanted to accompany to Hajj. They could not however leave together, so the teacher left first and 'Umar followed him later, starting his journey about 1827 going through Masina, Gwandu, Sokoto, Air and Egypt.\(^\text{80}\)

At Sokoto 'Umar spent a few months and in Air he spent a much shorter period. While in Air 'Umar learnt about Muhammad al-Ghali the head of the Tijaniyya tariqa in Hijaz. On arrival in Hijaz 'Umar sought this Shaykh and kept his company, learning from him, until he received an ijaza from him and was eventually appointed the Khalifa of the Tijaniyya in western Sudan. Having made Hajj and acquired some learning, 'Umar visited Syria and Jerusalem, before returning home. Towards the end of 1830 'Umar made his way home through Borno, armed with his knowledge, rich experience and the

\(^{80}\) 0. Jah has given an earlier date for 'Umar's departure from Futa Jallon and has given some details on his short sojourn in Masina at the request of Ahmad Labbo who wanted him to teach in Masina and to take particular responsibility of Labbo's grandson Ahmadu Ahmadu. See ibid. pp. 128-9.
distinguished honor of Khalifa of the Tijaniyya in the Western Sudan.  

In Borno 'Umar's stay was brief as his relationship with al-Kanemi went sour rather soon after his arrival. In 1831 he left for Sokoto, but not before he had taken a wife, a daughter of one the Borno notables. In Sokoto however, 'Umar met a ready welcome from his host Sultan Muhammad Bello, where he remained until the death of the latter about seven years later. During his stay in Sokoto, 'Umar became involved with scholarly activities as well as administration. He was appointed a judge in Bello’s court, whom he also accompanied in some of his campaigns. Throughout his stay in Sokoto, 'Umar seemed to have enjoyed a very close relationship with Bello, whose daughter he also married. Following Bello's death 'Umar set out for Futa Toro in 1838 along with his family and disciples, among them Hausa and Kanuri. He went through Masina, the Bambara State of Segu, and his home in Futa Toro, arriving in Dyegonko near Timbo in 1840, where he was allowed to settle and establish a zawiya.

'Umar remained at Dyegonko up to 1848. During this period 'Umar engaged himself in an extensive teaching, raising followers as his fame permeated Senegambia. As the khalifa of Tijaniyya tariqa in West Africa, he organized his following along Tijani sufi doctrines. He also set a trade network, the proceeds of which went into supporting his organization, purchasing arms and such

82 Ibid. p. 75.
83 From Bello's daughter he got Habibu who later commanded for him at Dinguiray. From another wife given to him in Sokoto, he had Ahmadu who succeeded him as Amir al-Muminin see A. Smith, A Little New Light p. 140.
provisions as would be required in the eventual confrontation. For as his famous work *Rimah hizb al-Rahim 'ala nuhur hizb al-rajim* (the lances of the party of the merciful [God] against the throats of the party of evil), completed about 1845, indicates, he had conceived of a confrontation and was only taking his time to make the spiritual and material provisions. In 1849, he made *Hijra* to Dinguiray, along with his following, the *Talaba*, as he called them, apparently in anticipation of a confrontation.

As in Sokoto and Masina, it was the frantic response of the establishment that precipitated the *jihad*. The pagan chieftain of Tamba despatched an army to destroy 'Umar's new base. Hajj 'Umar and his *Talaba* routed the pagan army, and their king along with many of his people converted to Islam. Having started the *jihad* in earnest Hajj 'Umar attacked and conquered the pagan Bambara State of Ka’arta in 1855. Alarmed by the growing power of the Islamic forces, the French organized a boycott against Hajj Umar. The latter took his time, and later attacked the French stronghold of Medine in 1857. Though Hajj 'Umar could not dislodge the French and many of his Talaba were martyred, he however made his point: that both the pagan establishment and the French were a threat to the survival of the Muslim community in the Senegambia. Hajj 'Umar then attacked and conquered the pagan Bambara State of Segu and founded his capital in Segu itself.

As Hajj Umar was pressing on the Bambara State of Segu Masina negotiated a deal with Segu, perhaps at the latter's request and Segu was proclaimed a pagan protectorate of Masina, which was meant to save it from Hajj 'Umar's attack. But
Hajj Umar, apparently aware of the ploy, proceeded to attack and conquer Segu. He did not leave the matter there. He felt offended by Masina's role and took it to task. The ensuring debate led Hajj 'Umar to attack and occupy Masina in 1862. 'Umar himself died two years later in battle and was succeeded by his son Ahmad.

The conflict between Segu, under Hajj 'Umar, and Masina echoed the one between Sokoto and Borno. While Sokoto and Borno were able to resolve the issue without one having to take over the other, the case of Segu and Masina had to escalate to this level. The reasons for these differences would appear to lie not only in the intellectual and temperamental make up of the leaderships but also in the social and political context of the conflict.

Though the French colonial army which invaded Segu, two decades after Hajj 'Umar's death, did not allow the state he founded to last long, Umar had already sown the seeds of his struggle in the hearts of many in the region. The tradition he founded was to spur a series of *jihads* against European imperialism: Muhammad Lamin, Maba Diakhou, Samori Toure, Ahmad Bamba, etc., were in a way all extensions of Hajj 'Umar's movement. These *jihads* were to pave the way for further spread of Islam in the region and provide both the motivation and the framework for resistance against European imperialism in the region.

The 19th century *jihads* did not only radically change the socio-economic and political complexion of the whole region but also transformed substantially the pace and scope of Islamisation in the region. Large groups of people were converted to Islam in
relatively short period of time. Many non-Muslim groups came under Muslim leadership and became more accessible to Muslim du'at, converting to Islam in course of time. The very process that gave birth to the jihads had to first raise the educational level moral consciousness of their respective societies, thus laying firmer foundations for the States established.

Needless perhaps to add that these jihads were not carried out to force non-Muslims into Islam, the leaders of the jihads were too learned to be oblivious of the fact that "there is no compulsion in religion" As Professor Oloruntimehin observed:

Turning people into good Muslims from their various primordial religions and cultures has never been achieved by the sword: It requires a long period of proselytizing and educating in-order to tune the minds of those concerned in the right direction. For all this, the sword could create the opportunity by giving the revolutionaries power to control and direct society. Indeed as Professor Last has rightly noted:

The war itself was an extension of intensive preaching, once the war was over, the teaching had to continue as strongly as before not least since ideals are apt to be among the casualties of victory.

In all, the spread of Islam in Western Bilad al-Sudan has been a very gradual, if persistent, process made up of distinct phases, one leading to the other. In the course of its spread, Islam had spurred socio-economic, political and intellectual developments which were to strengthen its foothold in the region. These developments which culminated into the 19th century jihad had been informed and sustained by the thoughts

85 Qur'an 2:256.
and ideas of *tajdid*, which the *Jihad* represents. How these thoughts and ideas developed and came to fruition in this region is the main concern of this work and is what the rest of the chapters will be addressing themselves to.
CHAPTER FOUR
AL-MURABITUN MOVEMENT AND THE GENESIS OF TAJDID IN WESTERN BILAD AL-SUDAN (1000-1400)

It was about 642 AD during the reign of the second Khalifa, 'Umar b. al-Khattab, when 'Amr b. al-'As at the head of a large Muslim army took the initiative of entering Egypt, then under the Byzantine empire. His capture of Alexandria, the capital of the Byzantine empire, in the same year, brought an end to the Byzantine rule in Egypt and a lot of relief to it's Christian subjects, especially the Copts who bore the greater brunt of the Byzantine oppression.¹ By 642 AD when 'Amr was recalled to Madina, he had already conquered Cyrenaica and Tripolitania further to the west. During the same period, 'Uqba b. Nafi' al-Fihri, then a commander under 'Amr, penetrated as far south as the oasis of Zawila.² This started the process of Islamisation of the North African region as far as the Maghrib, a complex process which took over two centuries to come to fruition. We shall here be particularly interested in the unfolding of this complex process in the western most part of the region (Maghrib al-Aqsa) as it was from here Islam first crossed the Sahara into much of the Western Sudan.

Abd Allah b. Abi Sarh, the successor of 'Amr b. al-'As, continued to make in roads further west as far as Ifriqiya, the

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² Zawila was said to have probably not existed during 'Uqba's march to Fezzan. In the eight century it developed into an important commercial center of the Ibadi. In 309/918-9 it became the center of a small Ibadhi state ruled by Ibn al-Khattab and his descendants. See N. Levzion and J.F.P. Hopkins (eds. and trans.), Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History, Cambridge, C.U.P. 1981. p. 60. Here after referred to as Corpus.
area of present day Tunisia and south along the Nile, while consolidating his position in Egypt. This he did for nearly one decade with the full blessings of the government in Madina. The assassination of 'Uthman b. 'Affan in 656 and the consequent conflict between 'Uthman's successor, 'Ali b. Abi Talib and Mu'awiyya b. Abi Sufyan, then governor of Syria, threw this process of Islamisation into jeopardy. Not only did this conflict consumed the attention of the central government in Madina which was understandably busy trying to resolve the crisis, but perhaps more seriously, this conflict led to the emergence of break-away groups that were to continue to be at each others throats not only in the Hijaz, the scene of the crisis, but spread over to North Africa, including the Maghrib.

Foremost of these were the Khawarij who at first differed with 'Ali b. Abi Talib over the punishment of the assassins of 'Uthman but later differed also with 'Ali's main contenders, the Umayyads, broke away and developed a whole range of theology of their own. First they contended Umayyad's claim that the leadership of the umma must remain within the Quraysh, to which the Umayyads belong. The Khawarij were not ready to allow lineage, no matter its esteem, to become a substitute for rectitude and impeccability. Their position that any irreplaceable Muslim could qualify for the leadership of the umma was thus a clear assault on the very pillar on which the Umayyad's claim to legitimacy seemed to rest. A more serious challenge to the Umayyad rule was the Khawarij's view that committing a mortal sin was apostasy and that rebelling against and, when ever possible, deposing a sinful ruler was not only
desirable but mandatory. Thus the Khawarij had several clash with the Umayyads and later the Abbasids and many of them, mainly the Ibadis, had to flee to North Africa and the Bilad al-Sudan, where they continued their struggle and occasionally managed to establish their own regimes.\(^3\)

There were also the Shi'a - literally party (of 'Ali) - who made up the core of the supporters of 'Ali throughout the crisis. After the death of 'Ali, they rallied behind his son al-Husayn, who they recognized as the legitimate heir to the Khilafa (caliphate). It was the killing of al-Husayn at Karbala by Yazid's army led by 'Ubayd Allah, the governor of Kufa, followed by the desecration of Madina by Umayyad army, led by Mu'awiyya's son Yazid and the campaign of calumny against the very person of 'Ali, sponsored by the Umayyads, that more than anything transformed an otherwise political difference into a poignant doctrinal estrangement giving birth to a distinct group, the Shi'a, with an elaborate theology of its own. Henceforth, the Shi'a were unwilling to forget much less forgive the Umayyads and by extension the Abbasids, for what they believed to be both heinous and immortal crime. This gave them the resolve to fight, though unlike the Khawarij, prudent enough to know when to rise against the rulers and when to lie low. In the North Africa and the Maghrib, where the authority of the central government was precarious, they managed to wrest power and established their own states albeit for short periods.\(^4\)

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With the emergence of Mu'awiyya in 660 AD as the head of the main stream Muslim *umma*, with his base in Damascus, Syria, the systematic Islamisation of North Africa was to continue. After about a decade of consolidation of what came to be the Ummayad dynasty, the veteran 'Uqba b. Nafi' was sent to the region some times in the early 670's. In 675 'Uqba established a base in Qayrawan which soon came to be the center for the spread of Islam in the region - a position it was to maintain for centuries. By this time, however, the Khawarij and Shi'a elements, fleeing from Umayyad persecution, had already taken refuge in much of North Africa, including the Maghrib. These groups lost no time in converting their hosts and neighbors in to their beliefs and developing further their doctrines. These groups had already predated the orthodox mainstream Muslim groups in the Maghrib and further south across the Sahara in to the Sudan. The challenge of Uqba and his successors or more properly the scholars in Qayrawan, was thus not only one of spreading Islam among largely Berber population of North Africa *per se*, but also the more difficult task of making the splinter groups to conform to orthodoxy. This was to make the spread of Islam in North Africa a complex phenomenon and rather protracted than it was elsewhere. Particularly when North Africa and its neighboring regions of Bilad al-Sudan continued to give refuge to waves of refugees fleeing from one predicament or another. Even some groups among the Umayyads, after loosing power to the Abbasids in 750 AD, were to take refuge in the Maghrib and Kanem in Bilad al-Sudan.\(^5\) Indeed Africa had provided refuge to Muslims

\(^5\) See al-Bakr *Kitab al-Masalik*, in *Corpus* p. 64.
from persecution since the first generation of Muslims who made the first Hijrah to Abyssinia.

With his base in Qayrawan, 'Uqba started his march into the Maghrib al-Aqsa, pressing south through southern Morocco across the desert to the Sudan. It will be recalled that in his earlier mission he had marched south to Fezzan and Kawar oasis near Kanem. It was about 683 AD that 'Uqba was said to have reached Sabta (Ceuta) at the extreme North of the Maghrib. Then he moved southwards towards the Sus al-Aqsa until he reached Adrar where he met and conquered the veiled Sanhaja a tribe of Masufa. From the Adrar some sources claimed that he moved further south through Walata reaching as far as Takrur on the bank of river Senegal. The veracity of these claims have been challenged by some scholars despite the numerous support it received from oral traditions. But Ibn Abi Zar's report in his Rawd that 'Uqba converted the Banu Waritha, a Sanhaja group in the neighbourhood of Adrar, to Islam is not much in doubt as it has been corroborated by Al-Bakri.

Whatever may be the gains of 'Uqba, he himself did not have the opportunity to consolidate it as he died in the battle of Tohuda with the Berbers in 683 AD. His deputy Zuhair b. Qays, who took over from him did not find it easy either. He too died in

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7 Takrur, also spelt Tukrur, is the name of both a State and its capital which flourished on the lower Senegal river c.a. 1000 AD. It is thought to be the first Islamic State in the region and lasted well in to the Murabitun period helping the latter in spreading Islam in the region. For details see U. al-Naqar, 'Takrur, the History of a Name', in J.A.H. x, 3(1969) pp. 365-74.
9 See Ibid.
11 Al-Bakri, Kitab al-Masalik, in Corpus, p. 70.
12 This is the date given in Corpus, p. 469. Levitzion in Willis (ed.), Studies in West African Islam has given a later date 689 AD.
a battle about five years later in 688/689 in an attack on the Byzantine forces that had occupied Cyrenaica during his operations in Tunisia.\textsuperscript{13} It was Musa b. Nusayr about twenty years after 'Uqba that was able to consolidate the gains of his predecessors, pacified a good part of Ifriqiya, the Sus, Dar'a and Tafilalit, and began a more systematic propagation of Islam.\textsuperscript{14} It was the same Musa b. Nusayr who led the Muslim army into Spain 711 and captured what became al-Andalus in 716.\textsuperscript{15} Subsequent Umayyad governors of Ifriqiya were to further facilitate communication across the Sahara with the Sudan. 'Abd al-Rahman, the son of Habib b. 'Ubayd b. 'Uqbah b. Nafi', who was appointed a governor in 745, specifically ordered wells to be dug along the tracks leading, through the oasis of Southern Morocco, to the Sudan. At the same time the Khawarij principalities of Sijilmasa and Tahert developed as centers of trans-Saharan trade.\textsuperscript{16}

The opening and pacification of North Africa and Maghrib from the second coming of 'Uqba to his grand son 'Abd at-Rahman took place during and for the most part at the behest of the Umayyad government based in Syria. It thus bore the stamp and character of that regime. Reports of ruthless suppression of Berbers and unfair treatment of subjects abound among historians.\textsuperscript{17} The honorable exception being the brief rule of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz who not only declared unlawful the enslavement of Berbers and collection of heavy levy in the name

\textsuperscript{13} J.M. Abun N\textit{asr}, \textit{A History of the Magrib}, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{14} N. Levzioni\textit{on in Willis (ed.), Studies in West African Islam} p. 83.
\textsuperscript{16} N. Levzioni\textit{on in Willis (ed.), Studies in West African Islam} p. 83.
\textsuperscript{17} J.M. Abun N\textit{asr, A History of the Magrib}, p. 71.
of Jizya\textsuperscript{18}, but took the issue of the propagation of Islam more seriously\textsuperscript{19}. By appointing as governor, 'Ubayd Allah, a well known scholar of hadith and sending him with ten scholars among the tabi'un, Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz clearly and unequivocally underscores the very essence of the opening of the Maghrib. The tragedy was that his was a short period of two years and soon things reverted to what they had been.

The conflict, hostility and aversion which characterized the spread of Islam in the Maghrib during this period quite understandably was to leave an indelible mark on the character of Islam-in the region and by extension the Western Sudan. The Berber resistance to Arab domination, which many historians emphasize, tends to simplify a complex situation and obscure a number of other factors which might have well played greater role in this conflict. For as had been noted, the Khawarij and Shi'a, who had already inhabited these areas, had their own scores to settle with the Umayyads and, though perhaps with less vigor, the successor Abbasids. Even among the Sunnis, many pious ones had been averse to the departure of the Umayyads, and after them the Abbasids, from the high standards of the Khilapha Rashida (rightly guided Caliphate), their licentiousness and the lavish life style of their courts in particular.

The transfer of the capital from Madina\textsuperscript{20} to Damascus by the Umayyads was, to many, what signaled the departure from the righteousness of the Khilafa Rashida. The crave for worldly power and disregard for the Islamic standards of modesty and

\textsuperscript{18} This is the head tax on free non-Muslim men under Muslim rule, also called the 'poll tax'.
\textsuperscript{19} J.M. Abun Nasr, A History of the Magrib, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{20} Though the fourth Khalifa, 'Ali b. Abu Talib, moved from Madina to Kufa in 656, the prestige and sanctity of Madina remained until the arrival of the Umayyads.
morality, started by the Umayyads was taken to greater heights during the Abbasids. A few pious ascetics managed to raise accusing fingers at the regimes against these hideous developments Abu Dhar al-Ghifari (d. 32/652) among the *sahaba* (companions of the prophet), Hasan al-Basri (d. 110/728) and Sufyan al-Thawri (d. 161/778) among the *tabi’un* (the generation following the *sahaba*). But the majority preferred to quietly withdraw and keep as much distance as they possibly could from these regimes. As they withdrew they began to cluster together finding solace and support as they concentrated in devotion. These turned out to be the seeds which were soon to germinate into *tasawwuf* (sufism) and spread to other parts of the Muslim world.\(^{21}\) By the third century of the Hijra, a leading figure of these circles of ascetics Abul Qasim al-Junayd (d. 298/910) had expounded sufficient theories in his teachings to make *tasawwuf* a distinct discipline\(^ {22}\). It is worth adding that Abu ’Imran at-Fasi, the spiritual father of the *al-Murabitun* Movement had visited and studied with al-Junayd in Baghdad.\(^ {23}\)

The bulk of the Muslim scholars who did not withdraw but remained in the lime light and tried to discharge their obligations, obviously found themselves working under enormous pressures. Often they found it necessary or expedient to bend to the wishes of the rulers. This apparent pliability of the scholars, most of whom were fuqaha, made the ascetics to suspect their rulings (*fatawi*) and began to look at some of them


with the same disdain they looked at the courts. Perhaps it is in an effort to escape the traps of this *fiqh*, that, in developing Sufi doctrines, they went out of their way to create the concept of the *Haqiqah* (reality) which transcends the pale of the *Shari’a*, to which some of them felt no longer obliged to conform to. The conflict between the *fuqaha* and the sufis soon grew into another *fitna* (dissension) which took al-Ghazali and his voluminous *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* to reconcile. It is significant that this conflict did not feature in the Maghrib which al-Ghazali (d. 1111) so envied and wanted to migrate to.\(^\text{24}\) We can now return to Qayrawan to see the social, political and in particular, the intellectual developments there and how they prepared the ground for the *al-Murabit* movement.

Qayrawan was first established as a base by 'Uqba b. Nafi' in 675 during his second return to Maghrib.\(^\text{25}\) In line with Islamic military practice, this base was reinforced by a chain of *ribatat* (small military posts, sing. *ribat*) especially along the coast of the Maghrib where the danger of Byzantine attack was eminent. A *ribat* is an out post where the *mujahidun* keep guard on the *Dar al-Islam* while occupying themselves with worship and learning. Because of their military and spiritual alertness and their readiness for *Jihad*, the residents of a *ribat* are called *murabitun* in the sense the word is used in the Qur'an.\(^\text{26}\) Soon, however, a powerful Muslim navy was developed and the *ribatat* gradually lost their military significance. The *ribatat*, however, maintained

\(^{26}\) See Qur'an 3:200 and 8:60. These should be read together with Q. 9:122 especially Tabari's and Sayyid Qutb's *tafsir* of the latter aya. An interesting etymology of the term *Ribat* and *Murabitun* has been provided in PR Moraes Farias, 'The Almoravids: Some Questions Concerning the Character of the Movement Duiring it's Period of Greatest Contact with the Western Sudan', in *Bulletin de LIFAN* XXIX, series B. 813-817.
and in fact enhanced their spiritual character becoming centers of learning and devotion permeated by the spirit of jihad.

Qayrawan itself, feeling more secure, developed its educational and spiritual character receiving students from the ribatat and spreading learning and raising the quality of worship. This role which Qayrawan was playing received a decisive boost during the time of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz (d. 720) when ten learned tabi'un came to settle there and devote their time to teaching. The presence of these learned and revered scholars literally turned Qayrawan into a city of learning, a kind of university town. It also tilted the balance decisively in favour of orthodoxy in a region where numerous heretical Khawarij and Shi’a groups abound.

The arrival of the disciples of Malik b. Anas (d. 795) in Qayrawan about fifty years later was soon to see the city turned into the Maliki center of the Maghrib. Indeed, before the arrival of the Maliki scholars, there were the Hanafi scholars who were largely in the service of the then Aghlabid state. But the Hanafi scholars appear to have been no match for the Malikis. Coming fresh from Madina, the Malikis appeared to have been more learned, pious, discreet and inexpedient. Their coming to Qayrawan appeared to have been motivated not only by the need to spread knowledge but also by their abhorrence to the growing profanity of some of the Caliphs. For they kept their distance from the authorities in Qayrawan, identified with the down trodden, often challenged the government to fulfill it's

\[27\] J.M. Abun Nasr, A History of the Magrib, p. 67
obligations to the commoners and declined to accept posts.\textsuperscript{28} As with the authorities, the Maliki scholars were firm and resolute in their struggle against heresy. They took a position against the \textit{Mu'tazila} and \textit{Qadariyya} and bore with dignity the persecution this invoked.\textsuperscript{29} They stood against the powerful Fatimid (Shi'a-Isma'ili) government, refusing to recognize it with impressive tenacity and even supported the revolt of Abu Yazid, a Khawarij, in the mid-tenth century against the Fatimid. In all these struggles, the Maliki scholars carried along with them the \textit{murabitun} and the common folk, whose cause they fully identified with consistently.\textsuperscript{30}

The Maliki scholars eventually won over Qayrawan with it’s ever increasing network of \textit{ribatat}, turning them into centers of learning. Champions of orthodoxy, guardians of the downtrodden and symbol of piety, independence and militancy, these scholars comfortably combined their \textit{zuhd} (asceticism) with their pursuits in \textit{fiqh}. Unlike their brothers in the East, they never had to abandon one for the other. For them there was no conflict between \textit{fiqh} and \textit{zuhd} even after the latter had become full blown into \textit{tasawwuf}. There was for them, thus, no cause for the reconciliation which al-Ghazali laboured for in the East. Their \textit{zuhd} never meant withdrawal to the margins of society, they remained it’s main stream, constituting it’s main core, wielding

\textsuperscript{29} A brief exposition on the history and doctrines of the \textit{Mu'tazila} and \textit{Qadariyya} is given in the \textit{Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam} pp. 421-7 and 201 respectively.
overwhelming moral authority, and becoming the true leaders of the people.\footnote{Ibid.}

It is pertinent to mention some of the leading figures which gave Maliki scholarship its character in the Maghrib and the impact of whose work continued to echo in Western Sudan for centuries. Foremost among these is perhaps Sahnun (d. 854) whose Shaykh Asad b. al-Furat (d. 828) studied with Malik b. Anas in Madina before returning to settle and teach in Qayrawan. Sahnun, "a man noted for his courage in upholding his religious convictions in opposition to rulers"\footnote{J.M. Abun Nasr, A History of the Magrib-, p. 56.}, earned himself a place in Maliki scholarship with his famous \textit{Mudawwana}, a comprehensive digest of Maliki \textit{fiqh}. Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani (d. 996) was another scholar of considerable influence. His \textit{Risala}, a synopsis of Maliki \textit{fiqh}, though not his major work, became a leading text and an object of several commentaries. Abu 'Imran at-Fasi, a contemporary of Ibn Abi Zayd, is another towering figure of considerable influence. Abu 'Imran appears to have been a born activist for he was said to have been expelled from Fas (Fez) by a heretic Barghawata group due to conflicts arising as a result of his zeal in carrying out \textit{al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar} there.\footnote{See A. Kanun, \textit{Al-Nubugh al-Maghribi Fi Adab al-Arabi} vol. 1 p. 53.} He studied in Andalus, made Hajj, studied with Abu Qasim al-Junayd, the sufi in Baghdad, and returned to teach in Qayrawan. He is said to have distinguished himself with a remarkable memory, mastered the seven recitations of the Qur'an, the science of the \textit{hadith} and Maliki \textit{fiqh}. He wrote a commentary on the \textit{Mudawwana} of
Sahnun. Al-Fasi (d. 1038) apparently lived long in Qayrawan and became one of its most leading scholars attracting students from all over the Maghrib and Andalus. He must have imparted on his students not only his vast knowledge and deep zuhd, but certainly his militant spirit.

Wajjaj b. Zallu, the shaykh of 'Abd Allah b. Yasin, the leader of alMurabit movement, is one such student. He studied with al-Fasi in Qayrawan and later returned to the Sus al-Aqsa to start his own ribat. In the words of al-Tadili:

(Wajjaj b. Zallu al-Lamti) of the people of the furthest Sus. He traveled to al-Qayrawan and studied with Abu 'Imran al-Fasi. Then he returned to the Sus and built a house which he called Dar-al-Murabitin (the house of the Murabitun) for students of religious learning and reciters of the Koran. The Masamida used to visit him in order to be blessed by his prayer. If a drought befell them, they asked him to pray for rain.34

"We have here then" Levtzion, remarked, "an extension to southern Morocco of Qayrawans brand of Islam"35. The extension may well have gone beyond there. For Wajjaj, whom another scholar36 described "ascetic and devout", must have been one among many of al-Fasi’s students, who may have operated similar ribatat in the wide expanse of the maghrib and beyond.

Now the Murabitun movement. In a way it started with the pilgrimage to Makka by Yahya b. Ibrahim, the chief of the Gudala37 Sanhaja tribe. In course of this trip the level of ignorance and the extent of unconformity with the Shari’a prevalent in his community dawned upon him more than ever

34 Al-Tadali, Kitab al-tashawwuf ila ryal al-tasawwuf, in Corpus, p. 155.
36 Ibid.
37 Also spelt Judala or Juddala, see Corpus, p. 447.
before. In his return journey, Yahya b. Ibrahim took the trouble of coming through Qayrawan, attending the lessons of Abu 'Imran al-Fasi and discussing the situation of his community with him. Having learnt of the rather pathetic case of the Sanhaja, the great *faqih*, al-Fasi, immediately recommended that a teacher go with him and remain there, teaching them their religious obligations and seeing to it that they conform to the provisions of the *Shari’a*.

There are two important points here, which shall be taken up later, but whose cognizance needs to be taken if only in passing. Hajj, the pilgrimage to Makka, for Yahya b. Ibrahim, as indeed for many pilgrims after him, had not been only a matter of fulfilling a religious obligation. It was much more. By exposing him to the vastness of the world and the cultural and educational heights of the Muslim world, the Hajj widened his horizon and raised the level of his awareness. He could easily see the place of his community in the scheme of the Muslim world and the much that needed to be done to improve the situation. It is also clear that with all its ignorance and unconformity, the Sanhaja community on the southern fringes of the Sahara, is a Muslim community.\(^{38}\) The assignment of the teacher is clearly not to convert them as such but to teach them the correct ways of worship and conduct and alert an otherwise oblivious Muslim community to their obligations.

Unable to find an immediate hand in Qayrawan\(^ {39}\), al-Fasi gave Yahya b. Ibrahim a letter to his student Wajjaj b. Zallu asking the latter to provide Yahya with a teacher. It is interesting

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\(^{38}\) All sources agreed on this. See for example Ibn Idhari’s *al- Bayan, Corpus*, p. 220.

\(^{39}\) *Ibid.*
to catch a glimpse of this letter, excerpts of which Ibn Abi Zar' had taken care to preserve in his *Rawd*:

So the Faqih Abu 'Imran wrote him a letter saying: “peace be on you and God's mercy. When the bearer of this letter, who is Yahya b. Ibrahim al-Gudali, reaches you, send with him to his country one of your students in whose piety (*din*), blamelessness, learning and diplomacy (*siyasa*) you have confidence, so that he may teach them the Koran and the laws of Islam and instruct them in their religion. For that you and him will receive a great recompense, for God does not omit to reward him who does a good deed. Farewell."  

Wajjaj on his part chose his student 'Abd Allah b. Yasin for this assignment. Wajjaj's choice of Ibn Yasin must have been informed not only by his Shaykh's specifications, but also by his knowledge of the people among whom Ibn Yasin was to discharge his obligation. Indeed Wajjaj must have known the Sanhaja, with whom he enjoyed a high position of reverence, as much as he knew Ibn Yasin. Besides his modest learning, Ibn Yasin must have had a wider horizon having studied for seven years in the Andalus and familiarized himself with the terrain of the Maghrib on his way back. Above all, he enjoyed the full confidence of his shaykh so it became his good fortune to initiate a movement which was to transform the Maghrib and leave its permanent imprints on the western Sudan.

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40 Many sources have indicated that al-Fasi was unable to find some one from Qayrawan to send with Yahya b. Ibrahim see al-Bakri, *Corpus*, p. 71, Ibn ldhari, *Corpus*, 217, Ibn Abi Zar', *Corpus*, p. 238. Ibn ldhari's account in *al-Bayan* suggested that no student was willing to go "because of the difficulty of the long journey and the isolation in the desert". This did not seem to agree with the spirit of the study circles and it is unlikely that there were not among alFasi's students some from the desert, who like Wajjaj before them, will eventually return to start their *ribat*. At-Bakri's account which suggests that at-Fasi deliberately referred him to Wajjaj, saying, "one such as you seek is not found in Qayrawan, but in Malkus, there lives a man learned in the Quran and pious.... Wajja b. Zalwi", is more likely to be correct.

41 Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd*, in *Corpus*, p. 238.
In the year 1039-1040, Yahya b. Ibrahim arrived in the Gudala country with 'Abd Allah b. Yasin. True to his zeal, the latter did not loose time in starting his assignment. Available sources are not however explicit about the way he went about his assignment. The details are still sketchy and at times ambiguous.\(^4^2\) It is still possible, however, to sift through and reconstruct a good deal of the major events. Ibn Abi Zar's account in the \textit{Rawd}, with it's richness in details seems most helpful in this respect. He records:

He was 'Abd Allah b. Yasin b. Makuk b. Sir (b.) 'Ali b. Yasin al-Guzali. When he arrived with Yahya b. Ibrahim in the land of the Sanhaja and settled in their midst and saw reprehensible actions evident and widespread among them, and encountered men who married six, seven or ten wives, or what ever number they desired, he reproached them for that and forbade it, saying: "this is not according to the Sunna; the practice (sunnah) of Islam is that a man may have four wives at once but he has freedom in respect of what his right hand possesses." then began to teach them religion and explain the law and the sunna to them command them to go good and forbid them to do evil.\(^4^3\)

Summarizing Ibn Yasin's assignment, collated from the numerous original sources, Abun Nasr remarked:

"From the moment of his arrival with Yahya b. Ibrahim in the territory of the Gudala, Ibn Yasin led a rigorous campaign against the practices which he considered incompatible with the \textit{Shari'a} and proceeded to create an organized Islamic community. He established a public treasury, levied the legally prescribed Ushr and followed the \textit{Shari'a} mode in the distribution of the booty. Yahya b.

\(^{4^3}\) In Abi Zar, \textit{Rawd}, in \textit{Corpus}, p. 239.
Ibrahim seems to have given Ibn Yasin his full support and at his behest repudiated five of his nine wives.44

This collation might convey the impression that Ibn Yasin had it all smooth, but in fact, the contrary was the case. Ibn Yasin's zeal and vigor in implementing the provisions of the Shari'a to the letter, some times with little regard to their parochialism, was understandably not received well by a nomadic people who are ordinarily averse to order. Ibn Yasin seems to have faced such mounting oppositions that only the support and good will of Yahya b. Ibrahim helped to surmount. Predictably, soon after the death of Yahya b. Ibrahim, about ten years after their arrival, the Gudala rebelled against Ibn Yasin and expelled him.

All the major original sources from al-Bakri down to Ibn Khaldun have reported the expulsion of Ibn Yasin from the Gudala.45 While al-Bakri was silent about the causes, only noting, "on account of events which are too long to relate"46, other sources like Ibn - Idhari, Ibn Abi Zar, and Ibn Khaldun were explicit. Ibn Abi Zar', thanks to his care for details, reported that on expulsion, Ibn Yasin made hijra to a ribat with a few disciples whose number continued to increase and later returned to attack and over power the Sanhaja tribes.47 Faria's meticulous and rather exhaustive study48 which included an archaeological survey on the proposed site of this ribat had long shown that the idea of hijra to a ribat cannot stand the body of available


45 See al-Bakri, in Corpus p. 71; Ibn Whari, in Corpus p. 218; Ibn Khaldun, in Corpus p. 329; for example.

46 Al-Bakri, in Corpus p. 71.

47 Ibn Abi Zar, in Rawd, Corpus, p. 240.

48 P.F Moraes Faria's, "The Almoravids ......
evidence. But interestingly, the issue of the disciples among the Sanhaja gathering around Ibn Yasin and learning very much in a *ribat* fashion has been reported by al-Bakri, Ibn al-Athir and Ibn Idhar among others.\(^49\) Though most of these sources made mention of about seventy disciples, they were silent on the content of this teaching. Here again we have to return to Ibn Abi Zar' for the details:

He began to teach them the Book and the Sunna, the ritual ablutions, the prayer, the alms giving and the like obligations which God imposed on them. When they had become versed in these matters and had become numerous, he preached to them admonished them, made them long for 'paradise and fear hell, ordered them to fear God to command good and forbid evil, and told them of God's reward and great recompense for these actions. Then he called upon them to make -Holy War on the tribes of Sanhaja who opposed them saying: "O Almoravids, you are a numerous body, the chiefs of your tribes and the heads of your clans. God has reformed you and led you to his straight path and put you under an obligation to be thankful for his grace and to command good and forbid evil and to fight the holy war for his sake."

They replied: "O blessed shaikh, make what commands you will, you will find us obedient. Were you to order us to kill our parents we shall do so." "Go with God's blessing" said he. "Warn your people. Make them fearful of God's punishment. Tell them of His proof (Hujja). If they repent, return to the truth and 'abandon their ways, let them be. But if they refuse, continue in their error, and persist in their wrong-headedness, then we shall ask for God's help against them and wage holy war on them till God shall judge between us, for He is the best of judges.\(^50\)

\(^{49}\) See their accounts in Corpus.

\(^{50}\) Ibn Abi Zar', *Rawd*, in Corpus, p. 240.
Of course, as the majority of sources suggest, this teaching appears to have taken place prior to the death of Yahya b. Ibrahim and the consequent expulsion of Ibn Yasin. On expulsion, Ibn Yasin was reported to have raised the case with his Shaykh and master Wajjaj. Predictably, “Wajjaj' was indignant” and as Ibn Idhari continues:

he wrote to some of the Shaykhs of the Gudala rebuking them for what happened to 'Abd Allah b. Yasin through them and to what he heard of the deeds of those who rioted against him while he was staying among them. He blamed them fully for it and rebuked them severely because, having submitted to him, they had then found fault with what his enemy had (falsely) put about concerning him. When the shaykh Wajjaj received a reply from the above mentioned shaykhs of the Gudala asking for his forgiveness for their default in giving 'Abd Allah b. Yasin his due, he ordered him to return to those desert tribes and wrote to their shaykhs telling them that he who was in dispute with him was in dispute with the (Islamic) Community (Jama'a).\(^{51}\)

The ease with which Ibn Yasin returned and the swiftness with which the *jihad* took off soon after his return, is explained not only by the no doubt overwhelming moral authority of his shaykh, Wajjaj, but also by the fact that Ibn Yasin had disciples whom he had brought up along the spirit of the *ribat*. Apparently, the expulsion had convinced him that the time had come to use force. This time he aligned himself fully with the Lamtuna branch of the Sanhaja, who were apparently more amenable to his teachings, and made their chief Yahya b. 'Umar his commander. He then embarked on *jihad* against those groups who stood on the way to his reforms. The first encounter

appeared to have been with a Berber tribe inhabiting the mountain range near the Lamtuna. It was far from easy, the battle was reported to have been fierce and victory for Ibn Yasin was only at the cost of nearly half of his men. It was the impressive resolve and valor of his men in this battle that was said to have made him name them \textit{al-Murabitun}\textsuperscript{52}, an epithet denoting their attainment of the true qualities of the people of \textit{ribat}.

Abd Allah b. Yasin appear to have proceeded in this manner until he consolidated his position among the Sanhaja tribes. Having done this, Ibn Yasin then turned his attention north to Sijilmasa which was under the control of a particularly intransigent heretic group, the Barghawata. Ibn Yasin was already familiar with this group and the havoc they wrecked in northern Morocco, since his Andalusian days. He immediately saw it his calling to extend his mission to Sijilmasa. Before proceeding to Sijilmasa, it may be appropriate to catch a glance of the peculiar way \textit{al-Murabitun} fought their battles, a point we may have cause to take up later. Here al-Bakri’s account will suffice:

In fighting they displayed great vigor and bravery such as was peculiar to them alone. They preferred death to retreat and as far as memory could reach they never fled from an advancing enemy. They fought on horse back and on camels, but the majority of their fighting forces were composed of infantry men drawn up in ranks. Those in the first rank held on spears with which they jabbed and thrust. The other ranks were armed with javelins, of which every soldier carried several and threw them almost unfailingly, hardly ever missing the target. Before the first ran, they placed a

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, p. 221.
man with a banner in his hand. As long as his banner is held aloft they remained standing. When it was lowered they all sat on the ground and remained firmer than mountains. They do not pursue those who fled before them. They killed all dogs and do not keep any of them.53

Ibn Abi Zar' reported that Ibn Yasin and Yahya were invited to Sijilmasa by its learned and pious men, "urging them to come to their country to purify it of the evil practices, injustice and tyranny which were rife there."54 For Ibn Khaldun, it was Wajaj himself who "wrote to them to tell them of the injustices and tyranny suffered by the Muslims in his neighbourhood at the hands of the Ibn Wanudin, the Maghrawa emir of Sijilmasa and the Muslim's eagerness to change their circumstances."55 While both reports are plausible, they must not be allowed to conceal the fact that, the situation of Sijilmasa, which Ibn Yasin knew very well, is itself a sufficient motivation, given the agenda which he (Ibn Yasin) had set for the Murabitun. In the year 1055 Ibn Yasin marshalled his men for the attack on Sijilmasa, which he took over apparently with little resistance. "He remained there", Ibn Abi Zar' reports,

until he had pacified it and put it to right and changed the objectionable practices which he found there. He chopped up the instruments of music and burned down shops were wine was sold. He abolished non-Koranic levies and taxes (maks, maghram, makhazani) and left only what the Book and Sunna required to be left. He placed governor from Lamtuna in charge and retired to the desert.56

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53 Al-Bakr in Corpus p. 72.
While Ibn Yasin was in Sijilmasa, the Gudala were reported to have rebelled again. He sent his commander, Amir Yahya b. 'Umar to contain this rebellion. It was in the year 1056 and it was reported to have been a tough battle. Yahya did eventually succeed in containing the rebellion but he lost his life in the process. His brother Abu Bakr b. 'Umar was immediately appointed to replace him\(^57\) and the struggle continued. For Ibn Yasin knew that despite the capture of Sijilmasa, the Barghawata menace was far from over since their main bases in Dar'a and northern Morocco were still intact. With out loosing much time, he mobilized his forces and made for Dar'a. Here they met in a battle the Barghawata leader, who professed prophethood, Abu Hafs b. 'Abd Allah b. Abi 'Ubayd Muhammad b. Muqallad b. al-Yasa b. Salih b. Tarif al-Barghawati.\(^58\) Unlike Sijilmasa, the battles in the Dar'a were tough and protracted. The Murabitun were indeed prepared for it and eventually won. But here, however, they lost their revered shaykh and leader. For Ibn Yasin sustained fatal wounds and eventually died in the year 1059. Before his last breath, however, Ibn Yasin was able to address the leadership of the Murabitun. Ibn Abi Zar' reports:

> He was weighed down by wounds and carried to his camp and there drew his last breath. So he gathered the shaykhs and leaders of the Almoravids and said to them: 'O Almoravids, you are in the lands of your enemies and I shall die on this day inevitably, so beware lest you loose courage and fall and loose your power. Be united in the defence of the Truth and brethren for God's sake. Beware of dissension and envy in seeking the leadership, for God gives his authority to whom he wills and makes his deputy on this earth

\(^{57}\) Ibid
\(^{58}\) Ibid p. 244
whom he wishes of his slaves. I leave you, so consider which of you, you will put to exercise authority over you and lead your armies and make raids on your enemies and divide your booty among you and collect your alms and tithes". They agreed to put in their head the leader in war, Abu Bakr b. Umar al-Lamtuni, so 'Abd Allah b. Yasin put him at their head by the agreement of all the Sanhaja. 'Abd Allah b. Yasin died in the evening of that day, which was Sunday, 24th Jumada 1, 451 / 8th July 1059. He was buried at a place called Kurifala in Tamasna and a mosque was built over his grave.

The Murabitun had to part company with their esteemed leader 'Abd Allah b. Yasin. But to their good fortune, his spirit remained with them all through, boosting their moral and urging them to attain those high standards for which he was revered and adorned. This is fairly easy to understand. For during the cause of the twenty years he had been with them, his ascetic bent, his zeal and courage, his care and meticulousness, - his taste for thoroughness, and above all, his concern for learning, left an indelible mark on the personality and vision of his disciples. Indeed Ibn Yasin took particular care to develop a core of adherents on whom he inculcated the ribat philosophy of life in which asceticism is taken for granted, the pursuit of learning the principal goal and jihad a way of life.

This is clearly reflected in his last words to his disciples. He emphasized the continuity of jihad to replace heresy with orthodoxy and institute a proper Islamic state as he had the opportunity to do in Sijilmasa. He then stressed the maintenance of the high moral tone he had laboured to instill and the strengthening of the ties of Islamic brotherhood as the only

59 Ibid, p. 244-5.
means of keeping together. By declining to appoint a successor and allowing the shura to decide and warning against greed and ambition for power, Ibn Yasin must have meant to forestall the crippling effect of the human lust for power and allow the movement sufficient respite to accomplish its set objectives. In other words, Ibn Yasin with all his weakness\textsuperscript{60} had established a movement of high standards of piety, seriousness of purpose and tenacity; sets its agenda for it and showed the way. The extent of his success is revealed by the astonishing vigor and sincerity with which they sought to maintain the standards and remain faithful to the ideals.\textsuperscript{61}

Under the command of Abu Bakr b. 'Umar\textsuperscript{62}, the movement proceeded north in the pursuit of its objectives. They continued their campaign against the Barghawata until the latter agreed to abandon their heretical beliefs. They pushed further north to Miknasa and later matched against the ancient city of Marakesh, which was to remain their headquarters for some years. From their base in Marakesh, the Murabitun went about the business of reordering society along what they considered to be proper Islamic lines. The movement appeared to have succeeded in procuring massive human and material resources and in building a fairly elaborate if unsophisticated state machinery. In 1069 they

\textsuperscript{60} Al-Bakri, in Corpus, p. 74, has mentioned Ibn Yasin's weakness on women and his frequent marriages. Other sources seem to have copied this information uncritically.

\textsuperscript{61} That Abu Bakr b. Umar chose to return to the desert to continue the Jihad, when he realized his deputy and cousin was interested in maintaining power in the Maghrib, clearly shows discipline and sincerity of purpose. Though Yusuf b. Tashfin acquired enormous powers he was reported to have avoided the trappings of the Maghribi palace life and maintained his desert austerity. He was reported to have participated physically in the building of the mosque in Marakesh while fasting. His son Ali appeared to have maintained similar standard, for details see A. Kanun, al-Nubugh al Maghrib p. 6-9.

\textsuperscript{62} P.F.M. Faria's has cited a source (Ibn Khaldun), which claims that one Ibn Addu was first appointed spiritual successor of Ibn Yasin, but himself died a few month later. See Farias, 'The Almoravids...'P. 860-1.
took control of the city of Fez and proceeded to unify the city and develop it into their new capital.

In the same year Fez was completed, 1070, however, yet another rebellion was reported in the desert.\textsuperscript{63} Abu Bakr b. 'Umar left immediately to contain it, leaving behind his cousin Yusuf b. Tashfin to deputize in his absence. Having quelled the rebellion and established order, Abu Bakr returned in 1072. Yusuf b. Tashfin was however said to have indicated his interest in remaining in power.\textsuperscript{64} Abu Bakr in the spirit of the *ribat*, and perhaps with Ibn Yasin's last words in mind, conceded and returned to the desert to pursue the same ideals further south into western Sudan. Though our main interest here is the impact which this southern wing of the *al-Murabitun* had in western Sudan, it was the North that provided the scholars as well as the books that were to have outstanding influences in the south. We therefore need to tarry a little in the north to take stock of the intellectual developments there before returning to the south.

A movement which was started by scholars and whose very *raison d'etre* was to spread knowledge, develop scholarship and piety and to establish an Islamic community which conforms to the rules of the *Shari'a*, must certainly place a high premium on learning and scholarship. This potential was further reinforced by the fact that the Maliki scholars in the Maghrib quickly identified with the regime established by this movement. Indeed

\textsuperscript{63} Some scholars give the date of this rebellion and Abu Bakr's return to the desert as 1061 AD. Indeed the original sources gave conflicting dates. But Farias using numismatic evidence had since reconciled the discrepancies. See P.F.M. Farias, *The Almoravids*.

\textsuperscript{64} The role of Zainab with her beauty and talent for intrigue, first mentioned in the anonymous *Kitab al-Istibsar*, (Corpus p. 14) later copied by *al-Rayan* (gotpus p. 225) and *Rawd*, (CMus p. 246) has clearly been blown out of proportion. Western scholars with their taste for such exotic oriental tales have made a fortune of it. Careful reading of the original sources, however, reveal that it was something that could have happened even without Zainab.
it had their blessings all along. For them, this was perhaps the first time there emerged a regime neither at the behest nor by leave of the monarchy of the East. It was clearly the first genuine indigenous effort of establishing Islam of it's scale. It was not surprising therefore that this era in the history of the Maghrib produced luminaries like Qadi Iyad of Sabta, of whom it was said, "were it not for Iyad the Maghrib would not have been mentioned." What was surprising, if understandable, was that many western scholars have portrayed this era as one characterized by intellectual rigidity and a general decline in learning. This is all too familiar a theme to warrant a response here.

Under the leadership of Yusuf b. Tashfin, the Murabitun, between 1082-1106 expanded their territory to incorporate the area of Algeria and the Andalus - Muslim Spain, thus augmenting their human and particularly their intellectual resources. By restoring order and establishing justice alone, they helped to create a conducive atmosphere for learning. They appointed to posts, especially that of Qadi, men of learning and integrity. The court of b. Tashfin and that of his son and successor 'Ali b. Tashfin continued to be surrounded by Maliki scholars. The

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65 Perhaps this explains why even when the Murabit state became, after b. Tashfin, a monarchy, the high moral standards and respect for Sharia and learning continued to characterize the state up to the point it gave way to the al-Mu-wahhidun.


67 From the work of the Dutch orientalist R. Dovzi (1820-1883) down to the recent works of N. Leviotzion (1979) and J.M. Abun Nasr (1987), the impression has consistently been created that the Murabitun were anti-learning, rigid Malikis, who suppressed Sufism, etc, see also A. Kanun, al-Nubygh p. 66-67.

68 For details of this expansion see J.M. Abun Nasr, The History of the Maghrib.
leadership maintained great respect for the Shari’a and it’s custodians, the fuqaha.

When al-Ghazall’s work reached Marakesh during the reign of 'Ali b. Tashfin, it was the fuqaha who were asked to examine the work. Because the very conflict which the Ihya 'Ulum al Din sought to resolve was not existent in the Maghrib and perhaps because of the sensitivity which the Maliki fuqaha, the champions of orthodoxy, had developed for any thing which smacks of heresy, the fuqaha did not pass the work. 'Ali b. Tashfin with his total confidence in the fuqaha, ordered the book burned. But this state policy on the Ihya did not stop individual scholars from keeping their copies and reading them and openly too.69 Sufi scholars also developed their tasawwuf. The state may not have encouraged Sufism, but that could not mean that it was suppressed as Abun Nasr and others claimed.70 Indeed there was total reliance on the Maliki fiqh for very obvious reasons it was Maliki inspired movement and Maliki manned institutions. But the scholars were too learned not to know of alternative views and the state too considerate to oppress scholars of other opinions.71 In any case, with the intellectual developments in the Muslim world and the growing communication within the umma through trade and Hajj, the situation was bound to change.

69 Aba al-Fadl b. Nahwi was one such scholar, who supported al-Ghazah against his critics and revered the Ihyd - dividing it into thirty portions in Ramadan and reading one portion daily. For further details see A. Kanun, at-Nubygh al-Maghribi, p. 70.
71 Ironically it was the Murabitun’s tolerance and clemency that was to see them out of power. Ibn Tumart who was to rebel and later oust the Murabitun first challenged 'Ali b. Tashfin the Amir of the Murabitun. 'AWs response was to arrange a debate between In Tumart and the Fuqaha. At the end of the debate, the leader of the fuqaha, Malik b. Wuhayb, "counseled the An-dr to put Ibn Tumart to death". But 'Ali's piety and compassion would not allow that. Rather he banished him from Marakesh from where ibn Tumart organized the rebellion which saw the end of the Murabitun and beginning of al-Muwahhidun. See J.M. Abun Nasr, The History of the Magrib p. 87-89.
To be sure, the intellectual developments during the Murabitun era were not restricted to fiqh only, despite the obvious prominence of the fuqaha. There were developments in literally all fields of knowledge existing at the time - philosophy, medicine, mathematics, engineering, sufism, etc. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into details but perhaps some of the prominent scholars could be mentioned. There was, during this period, the philosopher and physician Abu Bakr Ibn Baja, the physician Abu Alab. Zahr and Ibn Marrana who combined the knowledge of mathematics, engineering and fiqh. The latter in particular was said to have large number of students and numerous publications.

This same era saw the introduction of new sciences which were until then not studied in the Maghrib, like 'Ilm al-Kalam and 'Ilm al-Qiraat. Scholarship during this period was not restricted to men alone. Mention has been made of women scholars who took part in both learning as well as teaching. There was for example Zainab bint Ibrahim b. Tafilayit who many poets were said to have praised for her piety. There was also Tamima b. Yusuf b. Tashfin the sister of Amir 'Ali b. Yusuf who lived in Fas who was said to be famous for Adab and Karam. Some of her works are extant, excerpts for which have been published.

In respect of our area of interest, the Western Sudan, it was the more traditional sciences of tafsir, hadith and fiqh that were to have the most immediate impact. In this area, perhaps more

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72 For details see A. Kanun, al-Nubugh p. 65-95.
73 Ibid, p. 72.
74 Ibid
75 Ibid p7 4
than any, there was, understandably, large number of scholars and numerous works. Only the major ones could earn our mention here. There was Abu Bakr b. Tawzi al-Sabti, who wrote a *tafsir* and a book on *tawhid*. There were *al-faqih* Ibrahim b. Ja'far al-Lawati who was one of Qadi Iyad's teachers; *al-faqih* Qadi Abu 'Abd Allah al-Tamimi, Abu al-Qasim al-Ma'fadi, Marwan b. Samhun and the Sufi 'Ali b. Hirzihim. There was also the famous Andalusian *faqih*, Ibn Ruslid, the author of the well known *Bidayat almujtahid wa nihayat al-muqtasid* and the grandson of the renowned Muslim philosopher, Ibn Rushd, known to the West as Averroes.\(^{76}\) Many of these scholars appear to have travelled widely in search of learning before settling down to teach and write.

By far the most prolific and perhaps for this reason most prominent and respected is Abu Fadl Iyad b. Musa b. Iyad al-Sabti popularly known as Qadi Iyad. He served as Qadi for sixteen years in Sabta and later in Granada, Andalus. He is reported to have authored about twenty works covering the fields of *fiqh, hadith*, history and literature (*adab*).\(^ {77}\) These include a commentary on the *Mudawwana* of Sahnun, a commentary on *Sahih Muslim*, *Tartib al-Madarik* - a bibliographical work on Maliki scholars and *al-Shifa 'fi ta'rif bi huquq al-Mustafa* - a work on the biography of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.). The impact of this later work, *al-Shifa*, in western Sudan is rather astonishing, as to this day, it is widely read in West Africa and forms the center of the celebrations of *Maulid* - the birthday of the Prophet (S.A.W.).

\(^{76}\) Ibid; p. 94-95, for a list of the books.

Now perhaps we can return to western Sudan to see the impact the *Murabitun* had there. When Abu Bakr b. 'Umar decided to return finally to the south to continue the *jihad*, he was said to have returned with nearly half of his men. These must have included scholars not only because the *Murabitun* leadership have always surrounded themselves with scholars but also because the very nature of this enterprise requires scholars for the purpose of teaching and implementation of the *Shari'a* - a cardinal objective of the movement. For the avoidance of doubt, he specifically requested the learned shaykh, Imam al-Hadrami to come along with him.78

On arrival to the south, Abu Bakr made a base at Azzugi a town on the edge of the Sahara, north of the Senegal River.79 Abu Bakr's return to the south, did not cut off the south from the north. Rather it enhanced communications.80 As the south became Islamised, it became more secure, boosting trade and guaranteeing the flow of gold northwards, enabling the *Murabitun* there to continue to strike "such a rich and variegated coinage in the Maghrib and al-Andalus." Certainly, trade could not be the only beneficiary of the Islamisation and pacification of the Sahel and Western Sudan. There must have been scholars from the north coming to the south to give a hand in the obviously expanding teaching opportunities and perhaps students from the south going north for further studies. Dearth of written records at this stage of the history of the region will not allow us to say with certainty the volume of traffic of these

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80 Ibid.
scholars and students. But the ultimate transformation of the region bears a clear testimony to this scholarly traffic.

Similarly, the details of the campaigns of Abu Bakr are not available. It is easy to understand why. The level of education and literacy was low as the culture of learning was just spreading. Scholars must have been busy teaching the basics of Islam with little or no time left for the luxury of compiling chronicles and biographies. But here again the effects of Abu Bakr's campaigns and the impact of the teachings of the *Murabitun* scholars was to reveal itself in the speed with which Ghana and its environs became Islamised and the pagan power base withered away paving the way for the emergence of Mali with a clear Muslim power base and unmistakable Islamic leadership.

We have been assured, however, that Abu Bakr continued his campaigns non-stop until he died in the year 1087.81 This means Abu Bakr campaigned in the area for some fifteen years. He might not have done it alone; his resources may have been augmented by the neighboring Islamic state of Takrur, as was the case earlier.82 Our sources made vague references to Abu Bakr's campaigns against the Negroes. This along with the evidence of Ghana’s conversion to Islam tempted many historians to conclude that the *Murabitun* attacked and conquered Ghana. Of course, we now know that there was never such conquest.83 Al-Zuhri reported that the inhabitants of Ghana became Muslims

82 See al-Bakr in *Corpus*, p. 73.
in 1077 under the influence of the Lamtuna. Writing in about 1137 he said:

In former times the people of this country professed paganism (Kufr) until the year 469/1076-7 when Yahya b. Abi Bakr the amir of Maṣufa made his appearance. They turned Muslim in the days of the Lamtuna and became good Muslims. Today they are Muslims and have scholar’s lawyers and Koran readers and have become preeminent in these fields. Some of their chief leaders have come to al-Andalus. They have travelled to Mecca and made the pilgrimage and visited the Prophet’s tomb and returned to their land to spend large sums on the Holy War.84

The extent as well as the speed of this transformation of Ghana must have come about as a result of intensive teaching and proselytization. This is made particularly plausible by the fact that there has been a substantial and growing presence of Muslims in Ghana decades before the arrival of the Murabitun. This is further reinforced by Ibn Khaldun’s report that "...The authority of the people of Ghana waned and their prestige declined as that of the veiled people (Murabittin) .... grew (as we have related). These Murabitun extended their domination over the Sudan and pillaged, imposed tribute (Itawat) and poll tax (Jizya) and converted many of them to Islam".85

These reports taken together, clearly suggest that in their efforts to spread Islam and establish the Shari’ā in Western Sudan, the Murabitun were not relying on campaigns alone. Rather, teaching and proselytization played a substantial if not a major role. The reports also suggest that after Ghana had become decidedly Islamic, the Murabitun extended their campaigns as

84 Al-Zuhri~ in Corpus, p. 98.
85 Ibn Khaldun, Kitab Al-Ibar, in Corpus, p. 333.
indeed their teaching and proselytization in to other parts of the Ghana empire. These must have included the areas south and east of Kumbi Saleh, the capital, into the expanse of the Western Sudan. But after Abu Bakr death, the campaigns in particular appeared to have tapered off, as the sources became silent on them, perhaps loosing their significance in the wake of increasing volume of teaching and proselytization. That during al-Zuhr's time students from western Sudan were coming to Andalus and going to Hajj, points to the increase not only in the number of scholars available in the region but also in the level of their scholarship.

The dearth of historical records will not allow us to assess with an appreciable degree of certainty the magnitude and spread of this teaching and proselytization process. Of course the fruits were born many decades later in the form of centers of learning which sprouted and developed in the Western Sudan. A glimpse of this process could however be gleaned from the scanty information available on Imam al-Hadrami, the learned scholar who was brought by Abu Bakr b. 'Umar and made the Qadi at Azzugi. He was evidently a towering scholar86 and a pillar to the educational tradition instituted by the Murabitun. Having spent the last 25 years of his life in Azzugi, adjudicating, teaching and perhaps proselytizing, he must have been a model for his, no doubt, numerous students and other scholars in the region. Through the network of these students he must have spread a lot of learning and exerted tremendous influence in the region - the reminiscence of which is still echoed by oral tradition.87

86 See the numerous sources which allude to this in P.F.M.Farias (1967), p. 855-6.
87 See Ibid, p. 951-5, for the various traditions.
Al-Hadrami was said to have authored a number of books, initiating the tradition of authorship among the scholars of the region.\textsuperscript{88} Not all of the works appear to have been extant. One, however, has been carefully preserved, now at the Ahmad Baba Center for Research and Documentation in Timbuktu, Mali.\textsuperscript{89} The title of this work, \textit{Duraran min Adab al-Imara wa al-Wizara} suggests that it may be the same work the existence of which was referred to by Farias.\textsuperscript{90}

This work is made up of 105 Folios written in clear \textit{Sahrawi} script. It is made up of an introduction and some thirty sections (\textit{abwab}). Imam al-Hadrami started the introduction by exalting the virtues of knowledge, wisdom and reflection. These to him are to be found embodied in the works of earlier scholars, access to which can only be got through the patient and painstaking process of learning. He also argued that knowledge and wisdom are the only things worthy of pursuit. For indeed it is only through them that power and prestige are acquired, maintained and enhanced. He further stressed that this pursuit is best undertaken in one's youth. For as he reasoned,

\begin{quote}
I have found in it (youthful age) four qualities (or benefits) which no other age (period of one's life) has. The first of them is swiftness of memorization. The second is sharpness of understanding. The third innocence and the fourth is acquisition of wisdom before the development of any bad (evil) habits.\textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}

It was not surprising therefore that his first chapter on "The motivation (\textit{al-hadd}) for Learning and Reading" and the second

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{88} Ibn Bashkuwal, quoted in Ibid, p. 857.
\textsuperscript{89} Manuscript in author's possession.
\textsuperscript{91} Imam al-Hadrami, ms. f 3.
\end{footnotesize}
one "The Principles (or rules) of Reflection and Understanding". It was later in the work he took the issue of "dealing with people associated with power" (section 12), "classification of rulers and how to relate to them" (section 13). For the rest of the work Imam al-Hadrami seemed to have concentrated on social issues and character building (tarbiyya). He has sections dealing with "clemency and patience" (s. 17), "courage and cowardice" (s. 25), "war and peace" (s. 26) and "conspiracy (hila), intrigue and deception" (s. 28).\textsuperscript{92}

Here then we have a deliberate attempt to stimulate learning promote scholarship and develop the Islamic personality through character building. His wealth of learning, his rich experience as well as familiarity with the social terrain Is clearly reflected in the content as well as the style of presentation of the work. The impact that this work had on the region may be difficult to measure but certainly easy to imagine.

Imam al-Hadrami may have been at the forefront of this educational offensive in the region but certainly he was not alone. In addition to his growing network of students there must have been other scholars, who may have perhaps written works which are not extant. There were also visiting scholars whose contributions ought not to be ignored. Such a visiting scholar was one Abu Bakr b. Mahyu al-Sanhaji, obviously a Sanhaji, who having studied for eleven years in Egypt, came to Canary Islands were he taught for some time then went into the "land of the Sudan" were he was urged by the king to remain, but eventually

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid, p. 4-6.
chose to leave for Aghmat where he died in 1208. While many of the prominent scholars appear to have stayed in the big towns and trading centers, the students enthusiastically carried the teachings into the nook and corners of the region. Being indigenes and therefore armed with knowledge of the local language and culture as well as the terrain, these students were the vehicles through which the teachings permeated the region, transforming it often beyond recognition.

One immediate effect of the activities of du'at and teachers was the quick expansion of the Dar-al-Islam and the consolidation of orthodoxy, as the case of Zafun illustrates. Writing about 1137, Al-Zuhri observed:

About twenty farsakhs to the east of Ghana is the town of Zafun. This is the nearest of the desert towns to Waraqalan and Sijilmasa. Between these towns the Almoravids live. These people accepted Islam when the people of Waraqalan did so in the time of Hisham b. 'Abd al-Nfalik (105/724 - 125/743). But then they adopted a school which took them outside the Holy Law. They returned to orthodox Islam when the people of Ghana, Tadimakka and Zafun adopted Islam. They are attached to the town of Ghana because it is their capital and the seat of their kingdom.

A far more consequential effect of this network of duat and teachers was the gradual cultural transformation, with its broader and more universal world-view and an ardent sense of mission in life. Thus releasing the tremendous latent energy and material resources embodied in the region. This was to trigger off, as it were, an unprecedented incessant movement of people and waves of migration along both the latitudes and longitudes of

93 Al-Tadik in Corpus, p. 156.
the region. In the process, new trade routes were developed, with new trade centers and new towns sprouting some of which were soon to develop into centers of learning.

Summarizing up some of the west - east movements, with evidence collated from Ibn Battuta among others, Hunwick writes:

...there is evidence of eastward movement of Sanhaja along the Sahelian corridor to as far east as Air which may be roughly dated to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Of the three major tribes of the Sanhaja, the Massufa, whose territory was the most easterly in the Sahara, appear to have taken the lead in this migration.95

"Further evidence from al-Sa'di", Hunwick adds, "also points to Sanhaja activity as far east as the borders of Air." He states that the town of Takedda itself was founded by the Sanhaja and that one of it's best known scholars in the late fifteenth century, al-Aqib al-Anusamani, bore the nisba al-massufi.96 These movements were not restricted to the Sanhaja nor along the Sahelian corridors only. Perhaps even more dramatic was the movement of the Jakhanke. Their leader, Hajji Salim Suware, a serakhulle native of Diakha-Masina said to have lived about twelfth-thirteenth century, moved west and established the town of Dhiaka-Banbukhu and established a clerical tradition in which travel constituted a fundamental aspect. "In their own accounts", writes Lamin Sanneh, "the Jakhanke community was occupied with what has come to be seen as the fundamental triad of clerical life: diligence in learning (Ar. al-Qiraah), farming

(al-harth) and travel or mobility (al-safar)."\textsuperscript{97} This Jakhanke wave brought to Kano in the late fifteenth century 'Abd al-Rahman Jakhite at the head of some 3636 versatile Ulama on their way to Hajj. The then Sarki of Kano, Muhammadu Rumfa, however, entreated him to remain in Kano and help consolidate Islam. His stay in Kano, during which he met 'Abd at-Karim al-Maghili, was to decidedly confer Kano city with a definite Islamic image.\textsuperscript{98}

The area of the middle Niger generally and Timbuktu in particular seem to owe so much to this continuous and rather unrelenting traffic. "This area, as Hunwick observed, does not seem to have been served directly by a trans-saharan route in early times. It's link with trans-saharan commerce were through at least until the rise of Walata in the twelfth century, through the west-east route from ancient Ghana running along the northern sweep of the Niger Bend to Gao and Tadmakka. The lack until comparatively late date (second half of the fourteenth century), of any direct route from Wargala or Sijilmasa to, say, the area in which Timbuktu was established, is no doubt due in part at least to the extreme harshness of the region lying immediately to it's north ... It was not until Dyula merchants opened up the route southwards from Jenne to the edge of Akan forests that Timbuktu was assured of a steady and a fairly copious supply of gold. This probably took place in the second half of the fourteenth century....\textsuperscript{99}

These rather drastic and demographic and cultural changes which gave birth to and were in turn enhanced by the phenomenal growth in trade, were soon to erode the foundations

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid, p. 68-69.
of the old socio-economic and political order, paving the way for the emergence of a new one reflecting the prevailing realities. Thus as early as the second half of the thirteenth century, Ghana gave way to the emerging state of Mali. Delineating such transformation, Ibn Khaldun wrote:

"Then the authority of the rulers of Ghana dwindled away and they were overcome by the Susu a neighboring people of the Sudan who subjugated and absorbed them. Later the people of Mali out numbered the people of the Sudan in their neighbourhood and dominated the whole region. They vanquished the Susu and acquired all their possessions, both their ancient kingdom and that of Ghana as far as the ocean on the west. They were Muslims. It is said that the first of them to embrace Islam was a king named Barmandana, who made the pilgrimage and was followed in this practice by the kings after him.\textsuperscript{100}

The state of Mali was soon to grow in size, prosperity and indeed Islamic character. The cumulative effect of the growing Islamic awareness in Mali was to be seen by the increasing Islamic personality of their kings their avidity in learning, the crave, some would say craze, for Hajj, their readiness to undertake measures to secure for Islam a stronger foot hold in Mali. Mansa Musa who made his celebrated Hajj about 1324 was reported to have been fluent in Arabic.\textsuperscript{101} Of course, he was not the first of Mali kings to go to Hajj, there was Mansa Wali who made Hajj during the period 1260 - 1277 and Sakura about a quarter of a century later.\textsuperscript{102}

Mansa Musa's Hajj was significant in many respects. Beyond the much-talked about gold and even before its full

\textsuperscript{100} Ibn Khaldun, \textit{Kitab al-ilbar}, in \textit{Corpus}, p. 333.
\textsuperscript{101} Al-'Umar in \textit{Corpus}, p. 269.
impact on the region was to be felt, it brought to the fore an Islamic personality which was to continue to characterize Islamic leadership in Western Sudan as far as Borno, for the centuries to come. Al-Umari, writing in Cairo only twelve years after the Hajj, had preserved substantial details that reveal this personality. His readiness to comply to the dictates of the Shari‘a is clearly revealed when the governor of old Cairo, Ibn Amir Hajib, who had become very friendly with the Mansa, told him that the taking of free women as concubines, which was the practice of the then kings of Mali, was not allowed by the Shari‘a. Mansa Musa immediately concede to the demands of the Shari‘a. In the words of al-'Umari:

"I said to him (said Ibn Amir Hajib) that this was not permissible for a Muslim, whether in law (Shari‘a) or reason and he said, "Not even for kings?" and I replied, No! He said: 'By God, I did not know that. I hereby leave it and abandon it utterly."\(^{103}\)

While still in Cairo, Mansa Musa was requested by the same Ibn Amir to visit and greet the Sultan of Egypt as protocol then required. But Mansa Musa "refused persistently saying "I came for pilgrimage and nothing else. I do not want mix anything else with my pilgrimage."\(^{104}\) When he was eventually persuaded to meet the Sultan, he refused to kiss the ground and the hand of the Sultan, saying: "how may this be?"\(^{105}\) While al'Umari reported that, he was eventually convinced to make a gesture after saying "I make obedience to God who created me!"\(^{106}\) Other sources gave a slightly different report. Ibn Kathir writing twenty

\(^{103}\) Al-'Umari, in Corpus, p. 268.
\(^{104}\) Ibid p. 270.
\(^{105}\) Ibid.
\(^{106}\) Ibid.
seven years after the incidence said: "when he entered the citadel to salute the sultan, he was ordered to kiss the ground, but he refused to do so. The sultan treated him with honour but he could not sit before he left the presence of the sultan."\textsuperscript{107} Al-Maqrizzi, writing a century later said: "He refused to kiss the ground and said to the interpreter: "I am a man of the Malikite school and do not prostrate myself before any but God". So the Sultan excused him and drew him near to him and did him honour."\textsuperscript{108}

As with Yahya b. Ibrahim of the Gudala, so it was, indeed even more, with Mansa Musa. Hajj had made him aware, more than ever before, of the lapses that needed to be rectified. It had widened his vision and deepened his commitment to strengthening Islam in his kingdom. He thus made sure he returned with books, scholars and even artisans who could build for him the kind of mosques he saw in the East, with their peculiar minarets. Armed with these, and above all, the resolve to advance the cause of Islam, Mansa Musa set about his task with a sense of mission. Paraphrasing al-Sa'di’s \textit{Tarikh al-Sudan}, Levtzion wrote:

Back from the pilgrimage, Mansa Musa pursued an Islamic oriented policy even more ardently. He built new mosques and sent scholars abroad for further studies in Fez, where the Sultans of Morocco, of the Banu Marin dynasty, built new \textit{Madaris} [schools] and encouraged the study of Maliki \textit{fiqh} .... Timbuktu, therefore, developed as an important center of Islamic learning, under the influence of Maghrib. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, a faqih who came to Timbuktu from Hijaz found the city full of black

\textsuperscript{107} Quoted in N. Levtzion, ‘Mamluk Egypt and Takr&, p. 188
\textsuperscript{108} Quoted in Ibid.
fuqaha who surpassed him in the knowledge of fiqh. So he decided to go to Fez to study fiqh there before settling in Timbuktu. He and his descendants later became integrated into the scholarly community of Timbuktu.\textsuperscript{109}

With these kinds of kings, a growing and expanding trade, flow of books and scholars, Mali soon consolidated the gains of the Murabitun movement in the Western Sudan. Indeed they carried the torch further by seeking to establish the supremacy of the Shari‘a, strengthen the educational foundation and widen Islam's territorial spread, especially into the more southern gold producing areas. Though substantial pagan community continued to exist, the emergence of Mali had clearly tilted the balance in favour of Islam. Paganism, it may be added, continued to intrude in to this Islamisation process in the region over the centuries, when ever the situation permitted, until the nineteenth century jihad which seemed to have sealed if s fate in the region for good.

So the educational, cultural and socio-economic developments in the Western Sudan, indeed the very state of Mali itself, were, to say the least, echoes of the Al-Murabitun movement. The movement itself was an extension of the struggle against ignorance, heresy and injustice, started and symbolized by the Maliki scholars in the Maghrib. Having won the battle against heresy and laid firm foundation for Islamic scholarship, the Murabitun scholars paved the way for the emergence of a distinct Muslim community where learning and scholarship occupied a central place.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid, p. 197.
But by far the most important impact of the movement in the region is the initiation of a tradition of *tajdid*. Their aversion to heresy, their zeal to see practices conform to the *Shari‘a*, their taste for thoroughness, with a matching resolve to achieve it and the spirit of the *ribat*, left indelible marks on the scholarly tradition as well as the psyche of the region. Perhaps there are no better illustrations of this than the semblance between the Hajj of Yahya b. Ibrahim of Gudala and that of Mansa Musa of Mali, despite the three centuries that separated them. The anxieties of Mansa Musa over Mali, his readiness to abide by the *Shari‘a*, his zeal to see it established in his community, clearly echoed the anxieties and zeal of Yahya b. Ibrahim. Though the scholars Mansa Musa brought with him from Hajj never found it necessary to take up arms, as 'Abd Allah b. Yasin had to, they were clearly on the same mission.

The books that Mansa Musa brought from Hajj, the mosques he built and particularly the way he threw the weight of the State behind the process of Islamisation was to nurture the growth of this tradition on the soil of Western Bilad al-Sudan. Thus the seeds of a tradition of *tajdid* had already been sown, even before the thoughts and ideas that ensconced it and gave it its various shapes and nuances were developed. It is to these thoughts and ideas we shall now direct our inquiry.
CHAPTER FIVE
THE TRENDS IN TAJDID IN WESTERN BILAD AL-SUDAN 13TH-18TH CENTURIES

We have already seen how the cultural momentum and currents of movements that were stirred up in the aftermath of the Al-Murabitun movement, enhanced by a growing trade network, led to the emergence of the state of Mali and later Songhay. These forces continued under the Islamic leadership of the Mansas, and later the Askias, to transform the whole region, developing new towns and creating centers of learning. To be sure, many of the towns in the region like Dia (Jakha), Jenne, Kabara, Gao, Walata, Timbuktu, Agades, etc, were established long before the 13th century, but their significance as commercial or educational centers came as a result of these transformations which began in earnest only in the 13th century.1 Too often the centers of commerce were also the centers of learning. It is with the development of this learning and the ideas generated by the scholars, especially those ideas that relate to tajdid, that this chapter is primarily concerned with.

The role that the Murabitun played in spreading Islamic learning, initiating a tradition of local scholarship and sowing the seeds of tajdid has already been alluded to. But beside the nisba of some Murabitun leaders that some scholarly family, like that of the Aqit of Timbuktu, are known to have, it has not been possible to trace a definite chain of transmission of Islamic

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learning to any of the Murabitun scholars or their contemporaries. The furthest current research has gone is to trace back the chain of transmission at Timbuktu to a certain Muhammad al-Kaburi, a black scholar, who along with others bearing the same Kaburi nisba, originated from the town of Kabura in the Niger floodplain south of Timbuktu.² This scholar may have lived in the late 13th or early 14th century.³ There was of course the semi-legendary figure Hajj Salim Suware, the leader of the Jakhanke, who, as Sanneh had argued, lived in Dia (Diakha) in Masina in the 12th century.⁴

On the whole the beginnings of the local Islamic tradition of learning seem to have began with the Soninke, the inhabitants of old Ghana, who were based in Dia (Diakha). Diakha itself appear to have been either the seat of learning or an important base of old Ghana, and it was from there that Muslim scholars and traders moved in to Kabura, Jenne and later Timbuktu. The early imams of the great mosque of Timbuktu -Jengerebe - all appear to have come from Diakha or Kabura.⁵ "The earliest tradition of learning in Timbuktu" Hunwick concludes, "would appear, therefore, to have been a Sudanic one, and more specifically a

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² E. Saad, Social History of Timbuktu, p. 7.
³ Ibn Battuta's evidence. Saad, op cit, p. 8 Hunwick, op cit, p. 18
⁴ L. Sanneh, The Jakhanke, London, I.A.I. 1979. pp. 23-6. Saad noted that, "It is of considerable interest that the origin of this scholar is associated with the town of Dia (Diakha, also Zagha), a town near Kabura, where Ibn Batuta noted the existence of an Islamic learned tradition of long standing, already in the mid-fourteenth century. Remarkably, Suware is sometimes identified as son (almost certainly a putative son) of the Soninke founder-ancestor Denga (Dinya) of ancient Ghana." E.N. Saad, Social History of Timbuktu, p. 8. Wilks has however argued that Hajj Salim Suware lived in the 15th century, see I. Wilks, 'The transmission of Islamic Learning in the Western Sudan in Literature in Traditional Societies, J. Goody (ed.), London. C.U.P. 1968, pp. 162-195.
⁵ "Al-Sa'di tells us that down to the time when his great-great-grandfather Abdullah al-Balbali (from Tabalbala) was appointed, during the time of Sunni Ali (1463-92), all the imams of this mosque had been Sudanese, i.e. from peoples indigenous to sub-Saharan Africa, and the Great Mosque had been built on Mansa Musa's orders shortly after he came back from pilgrimage in c.1325." J.O. Hunwick, Shari'ain Songhai p.18
Soninke one which was itself in its earliest days, dependant upon Sanhaja (Maliki Almoravid) Tradition." This interesting wheel of Scholarship, Hunwick observes, "came full circle in the second half of the fifteenth century. One of the pupils of the Kabari scholar Mu'addib Muhammad was 'Umar b. Muhammad Aqit, a Masufi whose father had brought their clan to settle in Timbuktu c.1450." The latter married a daughter of another pupil of the Kabari scholar from which union descended generations of teachers, Imams and Qadis, culminating in the celebrated Ahmad Baba al-Timbukti (d. 1627). "Although in the third generation Ahmad Baba could acquire much of his early education from his relatives, his principal teacher, whose lessons he followed for more than ten years, was the Dyula scholar Muhammad Baghayagho, whom Ahmad Baba considered the regenerator (mujaddid) of the tenth century of the Hijra in Timbuktu."6

Despite this strong indigenous base, Islamic scholarship in western Bilad al-Sudan was neither static nor localized. Since its humble beginnings during the Murabitun period, it had drawn its texts from the North African orthodox Maliki scholars like Sahnun, Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani, Qadi Iyad, e.t.c. As it grew into maturity it widened its contacts through Hajj and through students who went out in search of learning as well as visiting scholars, often on their way to Hajj, in fulfillment of their obligation to spread learning.7 The expanding trade, which created new routes and made old ones busier, was to particularly facilitate these movements and contacts. It was along these routes that books were conveyed and fatawi on various issues to

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6 Ibid. pp. 18-9.
7 Like the Qadi of Gao, Salih al-Fulani and several others.
various scholars moved to and fro. The efficiency of these routes can be deduced from the fact that al-Suyuti, operating from far away Egypt was able to make as much impact through his books and *fatawi*, as al-Maghili who was physically present in the region.\(^8\)

The intra regional movements must have been equally old but perhaps more extensive. The Soninke dispersion in particular, which began as early as the 13th century, seem to have- been the most pervasive in the region. The case of the Jahkanke scholar 'Abd al-Rahman Zaghaiti who was in Kano at the head of 2300 other scholars, where he met al-Maghili and was eventually persuaded to settle is perhaps the most dramatic.\(^9\) But there must be many others, like Shaykh al-Mustafa (d. 1732), another Jakhadke scholar who died, in the learned city of Yandoto, in the state of Katsina in Hausaland.\(^10\) There must also have been numerous non Jakhankan like Shaykh Wali Didi al-Fallati, who read in Timbuktu and Agades and returned to Kalumbardo in Kanem-Borno.\(^11\)

This network of scholars within and out side the region was to ensure the spread of knowledge through out the region and the maintenance of a fairly uniform standards and curriculum. Though books, tracks, *fatawi*, poems and other Islamic literature circulated much more widely than the level of technology of the

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\(^8\) Writing about Muhammad Baghayagho, a prominent Timbuktu scholars, Hunwick remarked that: "The scholars whose works Muhammad Baghayagho studied and taught represented every area of the Muslim world from Spain and North Africa in the West, through Egypt Syria, Arabia and Iraq in the Middle East, to Persia and Soviet central Asia in the east." see J. O. Hunwick, ‘A Sixteen Century African Scholar: Muhammad Baghayagho’in Studies in Memory of Kwame Yeboah Da aku, an Unpublished paper, 1988?


region would suggest, the emphasis in the learning process was the shaykh rather than the books. This is not so much because the shaykhs have committed to memory most of the standard texts, like the Qur'an, books of hadith and fiqh texts, but because learning in this tradition, goes beyond mere acquisition of knowledge to involve the shaping and moulding of the pupils character. Knowledge is being acquired to be put into practice and both knowledge and practice must always go together. Thus it is the piety of the shaykh which recommends him to prospective students as much as his learning.

The significance of the matter was such that students defy distances and other obstacles and difficulties to travel to renown Shaykhs to acquire learning. This central role of the shaykh made the chain of transmission of learning (silsila) and the shaykh's permission for the student to teach the subject he learnt (ijaza) very important. This seems particularly so in the Bilad al-Sudan, where "scholars tended to play a far more prominent role in their communities than in the North African and Middle Eastern cities".  

12 In Sufi circles both the shaykh and the silsila acquire a special significance as they determine the position of the murid in the hierarchy of the tariqa. Both within sufi and non-sufi circles, the silsila and the ijaza join together the shaykhs, their students and the muridun, otherwise separated by gulps of time and space, into one fraternity, reinforcing this network of scholarship and enriching the quality of knowledge.

Though the curriculum remained uniform throughout the region and throughout the period, it did not remain static. It was

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12 E.N. Saad, The Social History of Timbuktu p. 18.
constantly being nourished and updated through the movements of scholars in and out of the region either for reasons of Hajj or the more routine search for knowledge. Considering the depth and breadth of this curriculum it is neither possible nor even desirable to delineate it here.\textsuperscript{13} It may be useful however to mention the core curriculum if only to show that it was not very different from what was to be found in most parts of the Muslim world of the time, the difference, if any, being one of emphasis.

As will be expected in any Muslim community the Qur'an forms the focus of the curriculum, which forms the first reading material from childhood and is often committed to memory. In advanced studies it is the \textit{Tafsir} (exegesis) of the Qur’an that is studied and there are several of such \textit{Tafsir}, each with its leaning, emphasis or style. The \textit{Tafsir al-Jalalayn}, which was started by Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli and completed by Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, became particularly popular in the region from the 16th century. Next to the Qur’an comes the \textit{hadith} of the prophet which in advance studies is read along with the \textit{Sira}, the life history of the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.). Beside the \textit{sihah al-sitta} (the six most authentic ones) and their various commentaries, of which the \textit{Sahih Bukhari} and \textit{Sahih Muslim} are to this day the most prominent, the \textit{Muwatta} of Imam Malik, which is at once a \textit{hadith} and \textit{fiqh} book, occupied a special place in the region. Similarly the \textit{al-Shifa} of Qadi Iyad takes a prominent position among Sira books, a position it has maintained to this day in the region.

\textsuperscript{13} For details see ibid, pp. 58-93.
Fiqh (jurisprudence) also forms a core course, the study of which starts from childhood when the basic acts of worship are learnt, and later the more complex issues of marriage inheritance, commercial transactions, social interactions, political issues, etc are discussed. Here, while the Risala of Ibn Abi Zayd of Qayrawan takes care of the more elementary issues, the Mudawwana al-Kubra of Sahnun and the Mukhtasar of Khalil and their various commentaries take up the more advanced issues with details. At a more advanced level the study of fiqh entails the study of the sources or foundation of jurisprudence, usul al-fiqh. It is here more than anywhere else that a thorough knowledge of the Arabic language becomes necessary. Indeed some knowledge of the language is acquired along the system of education, but at this level a proper study of nahw (grammar), balagha (rhetoric), 'arud (prosody), and mantiq (logic) becomes essential. In addition to the language requirements the study of tawhid often compliments the study of usul al-fiqh.

While these form the core of the curriculum, there are many other subjects that engage the attention of scholars. These include history, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and the science of tasawwuf. Scholars in the region like their brothers in the rest of the Muslim world, tended to acquire a wide educational base before specializing in any field of interest. While the region was opened to ideas from the wider Muslim world, the North African centers of learning with their Maliki scholars have right from the Murabitun's time had an overwhelming influence on the intellectual climate of the region.
In a similar sense, even though the region had various centers of learning of high reputation, it was Timbuktu more than any other that had the edge on and took the lead in the intellectual tradition in the region until its invasion by Morocco in 1591. Even after this tragic invasion, the mystique of Timbuktu seemed to have lingered on for a long time in the region. During this period certain scholars at certain times in certain parts of the region excelled in their fields of knowledge or exerted overwhelming influences intellectually and socially bringing about certain changes in their societies often initiating a process of *tajdid* or even leading it. It is with these scholars and their ideas we now wish to concentrate.

The thoughts and ideas of *tajdid*, as we have seen earlier, are latent in every Muslim community. While Muslim scholars are all agreed on the Muslim community's periodic need for *tajdid*, they differ in their approaches to *tajdid*. While some see the process in terms of the spread of knowledge others see it as an active execution of *al-amr bi alma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an almunkar* (the commanding of the right and the forbidding of the wrong), yet other scholars see it in terms of spiritual refinement through a Sufi endeavour. In the Western Bilad al-Sudan of the period under study, there were several such views among the scholars of the region. Such views produced several trends or schools of *tajdid* in the region. Five such schools or approaches have been identified in the region during the period and what follows will be a delineation of these schools.
The Fiqh School

Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti is one of the most influential scholars in the Western Bilad al-Sudan. Though he never visited the region, his absence was more than compensated by the large number of his books that circulated in the region, the number of Fatawi which reached him from the region and the number of scholars from the region who visited him and studied with him.\(^{14}\) His *Tafsir al-Jalalyn, al-itqanfi ‘ulum al-Qur’an, al-Jami' al-sagir*, were particularly popular in the region. One of the surviving fatawi addressed to one of the scholars of Agades and the letters he wrote to the sultan of Agades and Ibrahim the king of Katsina reveal the level of involvement of Suyuti in the affairs of the region.\(^{15}\) Suyuti, who boasts of his influence in Tukrur, claimed that his influence was such that his *fatwa* (legal opinion) was sufficient to restrain a powerful aggressor from attacking a certain Muslim community.\(^{16}\) His meeting with al-Hajj Askia Muhammad of Songhay during the latter's pilgrimage must have added to Suyuti's prestige and influence in the region.\(^{17}\)

Al-Suyuti was born in Cairo, the capital of Mamluk Egypt, in 1445 and died in 1505 at the age of about sixty years. This was late Mamluk period, which in fact came to an end barely twelve years after Suyuti's death, when the Ottoman Sultan Selim invaded and took over Egypt. Since the fall of the Abbasids to the Mongols in 1258, the Abbasid Caliphs had found refuge in


\(^{15}\) For details see Ibid. p. 51; and J. O. Hunwick, "Notes on a late-fifteenth-century document concerning 'al-Takrur' ", in C. Allen and R. W. Johnson(eds.), *African Perspectives*, pp. 7-33. The letters are contained in a manuscript titled, *Risalah ila Muluk al-Takrur*, (MS Majami no. 416) in Egyptian National Library. The letters consists of exhortations to the kings to be just to their subjects and to observe the *Shari'a*.


\(^{17}\) Ibid. p. 51.
Mamluk Egypt where they were accorded a nominal role while real power lied with the Sultan who is ostensibly appointed by the Caliph. Though the strength of the regime must have given the Muslims in Egypt a sense of security, yet the Muslim mood could not have been at its best. Thus Suyuti lived in a fairly depressed atmosphere which called for some *tajdid*. Though the Sultans maintained some respect for scholars and extended their patronage to many of them, Islamic scholarship appear to have concentrated on the more classical sciences of the Quean, *hadith*, *fiqh* and *tasawwuf*, comfortably ignoring the issues of social justice and the quality of leadership. Interestingly however the cherished ideal, among the Muslim scholars of old, of keeping a distance from the seats of power seemed to have remained glorified, even if rarely practiced.

Suyuti was clearly the most prolific scholar of his time, with 550 works to his credit, some of which, however, were directed to his detractors among the 'ulama.' The works cover a very wide variety of subjects, including a new discipline which Suyuti claimed to have founded. But it is his ideas of *tajdid* that we shall here be concerned with. Some of the reasons which he identified as eliciting or justifying *tajdid* include:

(1) the Franks' occupation of Granada and other parts of Spain,

(2) the appearance in Takrur of Sunni Ali, a sort of Timur Lan who destroyed worshippers of God, and cities, and continued this for twenty years until God caused his death in 897/1491-2, and

(3) the spread of ignorance throughout the earth, and the disappearance of scholars in all countries, a thing

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19 This is the science of the principles of language (*Usul al-lugha*), see Ibid. p. 70.
which has never been witnessed before in all the history of Islam.\textsuperscript{20}

Though the reasons Suyuti identified suggests an appreciation of the political problems the Muslim \textit{umma} was facing, it was the intellectual problems that really engaged his attention. He laboured to establish that the gates of \textit{ijtihad} are and must remain open.\textsuperscript{21} He strongly argued for the need to make \textit{ijtihad} and proceeded, in a manner which had become typical of him, to argue that he was a \textit{mujtahid} of his period.\textsuperscript{22} His contemporaries contested his claims and the arguments that ensured were to enliven the intellectual atmosphere of the time. But it was in his conception of a \textit{mujaddid} that his perception of \textit{tajdid} as an intellectual endeavour becomes very clear. Here again Suyuti expressed the hope of being the \textit{mujaddid} of his own century. In his autobiography, \textit{Kitab al-Tahadduth bi Ni'mat Allah}, he had a whole section on 'The mention of those who are raised at the head of every 100 years', in which he brought several traditions on \textit{tajdid} and several comments of earlier scholars emphasizing the intellectual content-of \textit{tajdid}.\textsuperscript{23} It was however in his \textit{Tanbih}, while answering a question on \textit{tajdid} that both his view of a \textit{mujaddid} and his wish of becoming one becomes most revealing. In his words:

\begin{quote}
What caused the man to ask, was that he had understood from me that I hoped, by the favour and the grace of God, to be the \textit{mujaddid} at the end of this ninth (fifteenth) century, just as al-Ghazali had hoped for himself because I alone have mastered all kinds of
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. p. 67-70.
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different disciplines, such as Qur'anic exegesis and its principles, Prophetic tradition and its sciences, jurisprudence and its principles language and its principles, syntax and morphology and their principles polemics, rhetoric and good style, and history. ... My works and my knowledge have travelled to all countries, and have reached Syria, Rum, Persia the Hijaz, the Yemen India Ethiopia, North Africa, and Takrur, and have spread from Takrur to the ocean.\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{Tajdid} in this perspective is primarily the task of scholars, who are to regenerate and revitalize the society through the development and spread of knowledge. The premise seems to be that stagnation in society and the deviation from the Sunna practices and the standards of the \textit{Shari'a} are the results of indolence among scholars and ignorance among the wider society. The role of the scholar in \textit{tajdid} is therefore to make the necessary \textit{jihad} and explain the Sunna and discourage the \textit{bid'a}. It is appreciated that for the scholar to make some impact in society, he needs a moral authority, which is best cultivated by the scholar's efforts to personify the Sunna and keep some distance from the seats of power. Al-Suyuti himself had to make special efforts to save his own reputation in his encounter with sultan Qaytubay, asserting his independence, on which the value of his teachings and his impact on society, both in Egypt and beyond, appeared to have rested.\textsuperscript{25} But even then, the role of the


\textsuperscript{25} About the year 892/1486-7 al-Suyuti~ who had been appointed the shaykh in charge of an endowment, was summoned to appear in the sultan's palace along with the Qadis to greet the sultan and receive their stipends. After a few visits Suyuti could not come to terms with what appeared to be subservience, in his words: "So I said to myself, 'Is there nothing left to me at the end of my life except to call upon kings to get my daily bread, when all my life I have followed the path of the early Muslims, and acted according to the traditions which are quoted about it. This will never happen!" see Ibid. p. 88.
scholar in *al-amr bi al-maryf wa alnahy an al-munkar*, in this perspective, is comfortably brushed aside or at best under played.

This perspective need to be seen within its own context, the context of Mamluk Egypt, which is largely an extension of the Umayyad/Abbasids setting in which monarchy has been rationalized and the subordinate role of the scholar came to be accepted. In these circumstances the best scholars were those that kept away from the sultan's palace and strove to maintain their independence. Al-Suyuti's encounter with his sultan brings this point home clearly, in his words again:

> At the beginning of 901 (1495), he sent to me again, and I refused. Meanwhile Ibn al-Karaki was with him, ... He persuaded him that the sultan's orders was to be obeyed, that obedience to him was obligatory and that anyone who disobeyed him, sinned and rebelled. On 20 Safar, an envoy from the sultan came to me, and uttered dreadful threats ... So I said to him, 'Go and tell him that, for thirty years during which he has been sultan, we have never seen an evil action on his part, and I have loved him and prayed for him during the whole of that time, and I have sought no worldly goods from him. If he confirms me in my adherence to the Sunna and my emulation of the early Muslims, there is nobody dearer to me than he. But if he wishes to prevent me from doing this, I shall turn to the apostle of God, may God bless him and grant him salvation, to judge between us and to defend me from him.'

> The very way Suyuti reported this encounter conveys the courage it takes a scholar to do just this much. The notion that unconditional obedience to the sultan was obligatory, wrong as this is under the *Shari'ah*, seemed to have also been rationalized and accepted by many. Scholar's expectations of these kinds of leaders in these kinds of situations were, understandably, not

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26 See Ibid. p. 89.
much. Scholars would be quite happy to ignore the issue of the legitimacy of the sultan if only he could implement the rest of the Shari'a and maintain some degree of justice in his administration. It should be easy to see also why many scholars in these kinds of environment conceived *tajdid* as the development and spread of knowledge, which should then facilitate the implementation of the Shari'a.

The familiarity and popularity of Suyuti's numerous works in the Western Bilad al-Sudan, made him a kind of model to the literati of the region and helped to convey a frame of mind which had reconciled itself with monarchy and the imperial posture of rulers and had become content, some would say obsessed, with the study of *fiqh*. This was particularly made easy by the fact that the region shared with Mamluk Egypt some of the social and political features which engendered such a frame of mind. It continued however to retain its peculiarities, especially the greater respect and awe with which rulers held scholars and the independence and high standing the scholars enjoyed in society. This is best illustrated by Timbuktu, a seat of learning inhabited by scholars and their students, which, ruled by a qadi, enjoyed virtual autonomy under both Mali and Songhay for nearly five centuries.\(^{27}\) The involvement of the *Ulama* in Askia's coup

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\(^{27}\) The rulers of Mali and Songhay, the Mansas and the Askias, allowed Timbuktu autonomy under the Qadi who is appointed from among the most prominent scholars of the city, along a number of concessions like exemptions from taxation. When ever these rulers visit the city they dismount the rides before entering the city and walk to the house of the Qadi as a symbol of respect to the scholars and the sanctity of the city. Askia Ishaq b. Dawud, who ruled in the late 16th century, was said to have ignored the scholars and violated the Shari'a, so when he visited the Qadi of Timbuktu, the Qadi refused to come out to receive him, arguing that he could not receive a Zalim. This situation continued until the Moroccan invasion in 1591. For details see E.N. Saad, *Social History of Timbuktu*. 
against Sunni Ali\textsuperscript{28} and the 'ulama's' resistance to the Moroccan invasion of Songhay\textsuperscript{29} represent yet another feature peculiar to the region.

Ahmad Baba al-Timbukti (1556-1627) is perhaps the greatest and certainly the most prolific scholar of his time, in the region. During his long and illustrious career, he taught, like many of his teachers, a wide range of works, including many of Suyuti's works, and wrote about fifty, often voluminous, works covering a wide range of specialities.\textsuperscript{30} One of these works was on \textit{Mujaddidun}, in which he identified his teacher, the learned shaykh Muhammad b. Mahmud b. Abubakr al-Wangari at-Timbukti, known as Baghyu'u (Baghayogo), as the \textit{mujaddid of} his time for the Timbuktu region.\textsuperscript{31} This work, very much like Suyuti's, conceives of \textit{tajdid} primarily as an intellectual activity, especially the spread of knowledge that leads to the establishment of \textit{Shari'a}. It is significant that, in sharing this view, Ahmad Baba was not oblivious of al-Maghili's works, some of which he had studied with this same shaykh of his. Ahmad Baba's perspective becomes clearer when he describes his shaykh:

Our shaykh and our blessing, the learned jurist of varied specialities, the righteous pious servant, one of Allah's choicest righteous servants and practising scholars... And he had great patience for teaching (which he did) through out the day, and gets his points

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\textsuperscript{29} F.I. Abdallah, 'The Role of the 'Ulama' in the Resistance Against the Moroccan Invasion of the Sudan', C.B.A.A. VOL. 19 (1) 1986-7, pp. 47-60.
\textsuperscript{30} A total of 56 works have been identified, 32 of which are known to be extant; for details see A. al-Bartali~ Fath al-Shakur, pp. 31-7; M. Zoubeir, Ahmad Baba deTombouctou (15 56-1627): sa Vie et Son Oeuvre, Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 1977; and E.N. Saad, Social History of Timbuktu p. 79.
\textsuperscript{31} See J.O. Hunwick, Further Light on Ahmad Baba at-Timbuktu, RBCAQ, 2, ii (1966), pp. 19-31.
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across even to the dull without being bored or tired... He devoted the whole of his life to teaching even as he had to attend to the needs of the generality of people and judicial matters, as there was no one to take his place. The sultan requested him to take legal appointment [Qadi] in his capital, but he vehemently refused... he acquired so much knowledge until he became the unequalled shaykh of his time in the various branches of knowledge. I kept his company for more than ten years, and completed with him Mukhtasar of Khalil... In all he is my shaykh and my teacher, I have not gained from anyone as I did from him and his books.\textsuperscript{32}

The mujaddid here, very much like with Suyuti, is a scholar of high integrity, who devotes his time to learning until he becomes unequalled, while attending to the need of the ordinary people and keeping a distance from the seats of power. The eulogistic nature of such biographical notices does not often allow details of what exactly makes the shaykh unequalled. This can however be surmised by taking special note of some remarks and reading between the lines. For example the reference to the fact that the shaykh corrected several of the existing commentaries of the Mukhtasar of Khalil,\textsuperscript{33} the leading Maliki fiqh text, points to the shaykh's deep understanding of the usul al-fiqh and that his abilities are beyond the routine teaching of fiqh. That he was constantly consulted by the Qadi of Timbuktu, who was himself one of, if not, the most learned of the scholars of the city, suggests that he is a mujtahid who could make new rulings from the Shari'a.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32} Ahmad Baba, \textit{Nayl al-Ibat Hajj} pp. 341-2. See also, at-Saadi, \textit{Tarikh al-Sudan} pp. 43-7.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid. p. 342, and pp. 46-7, respectively.

\textsuperscript{34} Following the death of al-'Aqib in 991/1583, who had been the qadi of Timbuktu, and the refusal of 'Umar to take his place, shaykh Baghayogho took the initiative to stand in for over one year, during which time he persuaded 'Umar to accept the post, thus saving what could have resulted into a social and political crisis in Timbuktu. See E.N. Saad, \textit{The Social History of Timbuktu}. 52-3.
While his knowledge enables him to revive learning and corrects people's practices, his distance from power and therefore corruption buttresses his moral authority and make him a beacon of justice in society, around whom people could rally and on whom people could rely in trying times. There is however some silence on who should carry the burden of *al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*. Though a good scholar, it is assumed, cannot absolve himself from this responsibility, yet in this perspective the burden is not clearly placed on his shoulders.

In other words *tajdid* is seen in this school as essentially the development and spread of learning, especially *fiqh*, which is more directly related to the everyday practices of people and the establishment of the *Shari'a*. While it doesn't exclude other endeavors, the main thrust of this perspective seems to be *fiqh*. Physical opposition to oppression and injustice in certain circumstances, like the opposition of the scholars of Timbuktu to the Moroccan invasion, in which shaykh Baghayogho in fact lost his life, finds accommodation within this *fiqh* thrust. This perspective on *tajdid*, understandably became a trend among the scholars of the region. Ahmad Baba himself was, two centuries later, to be declared the *mujaddid* from among the *fuqaha* of his time, by the shaykh Mukhtar al-kunti.36

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35 Shaykh Baghayogho seemed to have played a central role in the opposition against the invading Moroccan Army; one of the resistance leaders who took a temporary refuge in Timbuktu put up with him; he also coordinated a local resistance group in the city; and refused to sign a fatwa for the arrest of some of the scholars of the city and was along with other scholars put in chains and bound for morocco, but died in subsequent risings. For details see al-Sadi- *Tarikh al-Sudan* ' pp. 163-181; al-Kati- *Tarikh al-Fattash* pp. 170- 184; E.N. Saad, The Social History of Timbuktu p. 56, pp. 178-9.

The *fiqh* School of *tajdid* therefore perceives the regeneration of society through the development and spread of learning, especially that branch of it which directly relates to the society’s establishment of the Sunna and the maintenance of the *Shari’a*. *Fiqh* in particular seem to occupy a central place in this scheme. This trend clearly places less burden on the scholar beyond the intellectual and educational endeavour. Beyond this the process of *tajdid* seem to be left to chances; the chance of having a Muslim ruler, who rules with some measure of justice and is prepared to operate within the limits of the *Shari’a* and respect its experts i.e. the scholars.

This approach understandably spread throughout the region and was to find expression in the way scholars welcomed the efforts of rulers who endeavored to apply the *Shari’a* often on the advice of or in consultation with the jurists (*fuqaha*). Muhammad b. Sabbagh, one of the most prominent scholars of the region in 17th century Katsina, for example, composed a poem in praise of the then sultan of Katsina, nicknamed *Karya Giwa*, for having applied the *hadd* of the *Shari’a* on someone who claimed prophethood.37 The sigh of relief expressed in this poem and the way the sultan was praised for implementing the *hadd* clearly reveals the limits of the scholar in this school of *Tajdid*. But, rather luckily, this was only one among other schools.

**The Militant School**

Though the basic ingredient of this school has always been inherent in the world view of Islam and is not without

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37 MS. in author’s possession.
precedence in the region, it was Muhammad b. 'Abd al-karim al-Maghili who formulated it and gave it the weight that earned it the support in the region. The very circumstances under which he grew up in his native Tlemcen and particularly his encounter with the Jews in Tuwat, where he lived, all in the Maghrib, may have had an impact on his perspective on *tajdid*. Al-Maghili was born in the early decades of the 15th century, when the power of the Marinid dynasty ruling the Maghrib was on the decline. This was also a period when the Jews whose number and power had been on the increase since they were first deported from Andalus on the *fatwa* of Ibn Rushd, following their role in a battle against Granada.\(^{38}\)

The Jews, who were supposed to be *dhimmis*, were taking over the economy and were steadily finding their way to the seats of power. The increasing Jewish monopoly was generating resentment among the Muslim population and, in time provoked several clashes that often left a few people dead. The audacity of the Jews was explained by their increasing closeness to those Muslims in authority, who appeared to have been bought off, or so the Muslim subjects believed. The fears of the latter were confirmed when 'Abd al-Haqq, the last sultan of the Marinid dynasty which ruled the Maghrib, eliminated his Muslim wazir, Abu Zakariya al-Wattasi, and appointed a Jew in his stead. This Jewish wazir in turn seized the opportunity to appoint more Jews in positions of power and secure for the Jewish community such concessions that were to transform them form a *dhimmi* community to a privileged class. Matters were made worse when

\(^{38}\) See, J. Abun-Nasr., *The History of the Magreb* p. 86.
the Jewish wazir imposed heavy taxation and started maltreating the Muslim subjects to a point of imprisoning a woman of sherifian decent. In 1464 the Muslims in Fez obtained a fatwa from their Mufti to kill the Jews and rose against the Jews and overthrew the Marinid dynasty.39

Al-Maghili was one of the few ulama' in Tuwat to be vocal on what he saw as the growing menace of the Jews, and to vigorously campaign against them. The thrust of al-Maghili's argument was that, as dhimmis and enemies of the prophet, the Jews must, in keeping with the requirements of the Shari'a, be held under humiliation and kept at some distance from the position of power and influence. It is also not enough for them to pay the jizya but they must pay it in a manner that symbolized their submission and humiliation, otherwise the jizya becomes no more than rashwa (bribery). Muslims who befriended them, especially those in authority, and those who seek to secure for them more rights than was allowed by the Shari'a, were acting contrary to the Shari'a and to the extent that they saw their actions as lawful are unbelievers. Despite some opposition to these views from some of his contemporaries, al-Maghili did manage to rally Muslims around this course and stirred up an uprising which led to killing of some Jews and the demolishing of some of their synagogues. It was after this incidence he left for the Western Bilad al-Sudan.40


40 For details see, HI Gwarzo, 'The Life and Teachings of al-Maghili', 1972; and J.O. Hunwick, 'Al-Maghili and the Jews of Tuwat: the Demise of a community'.

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About 1491 al-Maghili set out for Air and stayed at Agades and Takkedda where he met and taught among others Ayda Ahmad al-Tazakhti, who accompanied him and later became the Qadi of Katsina, and al-'Aqib al-Anusamani, who had studied under Suyuti and later became a leading jurist who also answered some of the questions of Askia Muhammad. From Air he moved further south into Hausaland, first in Katsina where he taught students and advised the ruler on establishing an Islamic administration, and later in Kano where he stayed longer, teaching and taking active part in the running of the state. It was in Kano where he wrote the famous work on Islamic government, *Taj al-din fi ma yajib ala al-muluk*. From Hausaland he was invited over to Songhay where his fame had preceded him and where Askia Muhammad had wrested power from the secular Sunni Ali, and was keen to restore an Islamic administration, in keeping to the wish of his immediate Muslim constituency and the tradition of the region.

Western Bilad al-Sudan of the late 15th century, Hausaland and Songhay in particular, unlike al-Maghili’s North Africa, was a land whose subjects were anxious to learn and whose rulers were keen to apply the *Shari’a* and establish an Islamic administration. It was therefore an opportune moment for both al-Maghili as well as his hosts. So wherever al-Maghili went he found open arms, students ready to listen and imbibe his lessons and rulers keen to solicit his advice and implement it. So the development of Islam in the region during this period clearly and distinctly bore his imprints. But it was the situation in Songhay

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41 In a recent paper C. Blum and H. Fisher had laboured, rather passionately, to underrate the impact of al-Maghili in the region. The arguments were, however, far from convincing. The fact that
which presented him with an opportunity to give vent to his revolutionary spirit and it was these ideas that had the most serious consequences on the region. It is to these ideas of al-Maghili that we shall now concentrate our attention.

Askia Muhammad put to shaykh al-Maghili several questions, covering numerous issues associated with establishing and running an Islamic government. These questions range from the kind of scholars he should associate with, the status of Sunni Ali, the issue of syncretism, *jihad* against unjust rulers, taxation allowed by the *Shari‘a*, inheritance and how to deal with fraudulent practices in the state. These appeared in seven categories in the *Ajwiba*. Our interest here, however, is on those replies which touch on the issue of *tajdid*. It is significant that Askia’s first question was on how to identify the good scholars on whom he could rely for the implementation of the Sharia in his land. It was in reply to this question that al-Maghili made clear his vision of a *mujaddid*. First he classified scholars into two broad categories, *ahl al-dhikr*, the people of Reminder, the good ones whose advice should be sought and followed, and the *ulama’ al-su’*, the venal scholars who should be avoided and shunned. He then went ahead to assure Askia "that the behaviour of the people of Reminder can in no way be confused with the behaviour of the venal scholars either in word or in deed." It is

evidences which point to the contrary were tactfully avoided, throws the objective of the whole paper into question. See C. Blum and H. Fisher, 'Love for Three Oranges, or, the Askia’s Dilemma: the Askia, al-Maghili and Timbuktu, c. 1500' unpublished paper presented to international Seminar on Islamic Identities in Africa, S.O.A.S. London, April 1991.


43 This is Hunwick’s translation. A. Yusuf Ali’s has used those who possess the Message’ as in his translation of Quran 16:43.

among the people of the reminder that Allah raises a mujaddid, who is a scholar with some unique characteristics; in his words:

"Thus it is related that at the beginning of every century God sends men a scholar who regenerates their religion for them. There is no doubt that the conduct of this in every century in enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and setting aright peoples affairs, establishing justice among them and, supporting truth against falsehood and the oppressed against the oppressor will be in contrast to the conduct of the scholars of his age. For this reason he will be an odd man out among them on account of his being the only man of such pure conduct and on account of the small number of men like him. Then will it be plain and clear that he is one of the reformers (al-muslihun) and that whoso opposes him is one of the miscreants, because of the saying of the prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace: 'Islam started as an odd man out (gharib) thus will it end up, so God bless the odd men out.' Someone said, 'And who are they, 0 Messenger of God?' He said, 'Those who set matters aright in evil times.' That is one of the clearest signs of the people or provider through whom God regenerates for people their religion.\textsuperscript{45}

The Mujaddid, in al-Maghili's perspective, is clearly a scholar who distinguishes himself from his contemporaries not so much for his knowledge like his rectitude, courage and above all his zeal in 'commanding the right and forbidding the wrong' (\textit{al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar}) and bringing about reform (Islah) in society. This perspective does not exclude teaching and spreading of knowledge, which the designation of a scholar automatically implies, rather, teaching in this perspective, far from being an end is only a means; it represents the first, rather than the last step, in the process of tajdid.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. pp. 66-7.
Scholarship is at best only the beginning of *tajdid*, for *Islah* the end result of the process of *tajdid*, can only come about through unrelenting efforts in carrying out *al-amr bi al-maruf wa al-nahy an al-munkar*. Thus, in this perspective, this is precisely why the scholar/mujaddid needs exceptional qualities of courage, zeal, and the likes, over and above his knowledge, to be able to bring about *Islah* in society.

Carrying out *al-amr bi al-maruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*, as al-Maghili had learnt through practical experience, involves a lot of difficulties and provokes hostilities from various groups with vested interest in the status quo, including, perhaps surprisingly, some of the *ulama*. These scholars are the ones al-Maghili called *ulama' al-su',* the bad or venal scholars, who, from his Tuwat experience at least, are the most serious obstacles to the process of *tajdid*. He thus took a lot of time in the replies to describe them and highlight their dangers. "And one of the clearest signs of the venal scholars" al-Maghili informs Askia,

is that they do not set matters aright nor do they leave [in peace] those who do set matters aright. Their likeness is that of a rock [blocking] access to a river - it drinks not, neither does it allow others drink. Each one of them is more harmful to people than a thousand devils; and hearsay is not the same as being an eye-witness.\(^{46}\)

One issue which was directly related to the process of *tajdid* in Western Sudan and which vexed the mind of the Askia and persisted beyond him well into the 19th century was the issue of *takfir*. There were substantial populations who claimed to be

\(^{46}\) Ibid. p. 67.
Muslims but who for a variety of reasons mixed Islamic beliefs and practices with non-Islamic pagan beliefs and rites. It was important to know who may be considered a Muslim and who may not, not only for the purpose of the application of the *Shari‘a*, but also for the purpose of *jihad*.

Al-Maghili, building on what Qadi Iyad had earlier ruled in his *al-shifa*, classified unbelievers into three broad groups: born unbelievers like Jews, Christians and pagans; apostates, those who have clearly renounced the faith; and those who are adjudged unbelievers on account of their actions. The case of the first two groups is a clear one, the problem was with the third, and this was where al-Maghili went beyond Qadi Iyad, using his knowledge of the area, to provide rulings in this rather intricate issue. Al-Maghili’s rulings generally represented a stricter interpretation which he may have judged to be best in arresting the growing *takhlit*, ‘mixing’, as Uthman b. Fudi later called it, and paving the way for proper Islamic practices. These rulings were sometimes contrary to some of the Maliki *fuqaha* who, however, lived and wrote centuries earlier and did not have the benefit of visiting the region and being familiar with the terrain. These more austere rulings were clearly meant to restrict substantially the 'mixing' that was taking place and the enslavement and plunder that was done under various pretexts. The rulings therefore represented a quest for a purer Islam and a more just society, a fundamental goal in *tajdid*.

*Jihad* was another issue on which Askia sought clarification, as he was keen to carry out *jihad* within the limits of the *Shari‘a*.

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47 Ibid. pp. 72-9 & 118.
For al-Maghili, *jihad* was an instrument of *tajdid*, a means through which Islam is practiced properly, the *Shari'a* gains supremacy, and above all justice established. After expounding the virtues of *jihad*, al-Maghili proceeded to give rulings on the various questions raised. It is the *jihad* against Muslims who went beyond the bounds of Islam that will interest us here, as *jihad* against non-Muslims is fairly clear and well known. Al-Maghili ruled that *jihad* is justified against three categories of Muslims: a Muslim ruler who apostatize or otherwise became a kafir, a *zindiq*, a Muslim who professes Islam with the tongue but continues to hold fast to ancestral beliefs and cults; an *amir*, a Muslim ruler, who is "considered to be ruling oppressively and causing hardship to his Muslim subjects by imposing taxes not sanctioned by the *Shari'a* and by failing to curb marauders and other evildoers". 48 In fact al-Maghili considered these *jihads* against these groups not only justified but meritorious. As he argued in the case of the *zindiqs*:

There is no doubt that *jihad* against them is more fitting and worthy than *jihad* against [born] unbelievers who do not say: 'There is no god save God; Muhammad is the messenger of God', since those whom you describe have confounded the truth with falsehood in such a way as to mislead many of the ignorant Muslims so that they become unbelievers without realizing it. They are more worthy [to be made the object] of a *Jihad* than the outright unbelievers whom no Muslim would imitate. 49

Similarly, al-Maghili argued that *jihad* against an oppressive [*zalim*] Muslim ruler is particularly praiseworthy:

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48 Ibid. p. 130.
49 Ibid. p. 78.
One aspect of the way of God (fi sabil Allah) is warding off oppression from the Muslims and changing what is reprehensible and jihad against the marauders and the oppressors among the amirs and others for the sake of changing what is reprehensible; and fighting in defence of the Muslims is the most worthy of jihads - nay it is more fitting and more pressing than a jihad against those unbelievers whom you described.\footnote{Ibid. p. 82.}

Here again al-Maghili has gone beyond the traditional Sunni views which allowed for the deposing of amir on grounds of apostasy but not on grounds of committing sin. This radical view comes very close to that of the Khawarij for whom it is not just desirable but mandatory to depose a Muslim ruler on grounds of sin or oppression. It is easy to understand how both the Sunni and the Khawarij views developed when we recall the historical circumstances. Al-Maghili's case was clearly different. He may have imbibed the Maliki defiance, reminiscent of the struggle of the Qayrawan scholars against heresy and monarchy, through some of his teachers, like al-Tha'labi, but the militant radicalism seem to be more the product of his individual zeal and experience. He seemed anxious to see Islam properly practiced and the Shari'a supreme and his experience had convinced him that, that was the best way. He was careful enough to operate within the Shari'a, for he was as keen to keep within the bounds of the Shari'a as he was to achieve results. He did not encourage reckless militancy but a calculated one which is weighed against the end result. Advising the Askia further, he said:

If you cannot bring his oppression of the Muslims to an end except by causing harm to them, here two evils are conflicting; so beware lest you change one
reprehensible state of affairs for another like it or worse than it. So be sure here to commit the lesser of the two evils, for committing the lesser of the two evils is a widely accepted rule and a firmly transmitted Sunna.  

Jihad, al-Maghili seems to suggest, must produce the desired results and care must be taken to avoid using it to achieve goals other than those stipulated by the Shari'a. Askia was specifically advised to ascertain that he was not taken in by those who may have other motives than the strengthening of Islam and the establishment of justice. Elaborating further al-Maghili said:

So if there is a Muslim land in which there are many sultans or chiefs, as you described, and one of them claimed that he would establish justice and do away with oppression if you were to aid him against them, then look into the reality of what he says and the proof of his claim. For every statement has its reality and every reality has its proof and circumstances is more veracious than report. Nobody is taken in by fine words accompanied by evil behaviour except fools and children. So examine the behaviour of him who asks assistance from you, and if you are confident of his claim and that if you reinforce him he will fulfill his promise and pledge then give him support in so far as it is beneficial to the Muslims according to what I have explained to you...

The establishment of justice had been utmost in al-Maghili's mind even before his meeting with the Askia. For he had earlier given advises to and written epistles for Hausa rulers, Muhammad Rumfa of Kano in particular, in which he extolled justice and placed a heavy burden of personal responsibility on the ruler in maintaining justice and seeing to the welfare of his

51 Ibid
52 Ibid.
subjects. Similarly with the Askia, he impressed upon him the magnitude of this responsibility and advised on how best to fulfill it including the appointment of a trust worthy inspector to serve as muhtasib. It is when a ruler fulfils such conditions that he becomes deserving of the obedience of his subjects, who are then obliged to pay tax and support him in all that is lawful including jihad.

The thrust of this militant school is that while scholarship represent the essential and initial step in tajdid, the process itself can only be brought about through extra scholarly endeavour; particularly through the carrying out of al-amr bi al-ma’ruf wa al-nahy ‘an al-munkar, which subsumes jihad. It particularly encouraged jihad as a means of establishment of justice and the supremacy of the Shari’a. The standards in this perspective are clearly very high, for any claims to Islam will have to be substantiated practically through the proper application of the Shari’a and the establishment of justice. A Muslim regime which falls short of the minimum requirements of the Shari’a and became oppressive and tyrannical becomes, in this perspective, a target for Jihad. Though al-Maghili was not the first to introduce jihad in a Muslim community, as some sources claimed, having been preceded by the Murabitun, he was certainly the first to give the idea its weight and potency in the region. It was from this school many of the mujahidun in the region got their inspiration and it was to its ideologue they turned to in justifying their jihads.

54 Ibid. p. 102.
55 Ibid. p. 100.
This understanding of \textit{tajdid} gained a lot of adherents in the generations that followed al-Maghili, though it was only in the 19th century that it gained such extensive application that transformed the region and brought it close to al-Maghili's high standards. One of the students of al-Maghili, who became a leading \textit{faqih}, al-'Aqib al-Anusammani, was also consulted by the Askia on the subject of \textit{takfir} and \textit{jihad}. The replies of al'Aqib, fragments of which have survived, clearly echoed and reinforced the views of al-Maghili.\footnote{This MSS was obtained from Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. It is incomplete and is made up of seven folios written in Sahrawi script.} Al-'Aqib, quoting such authorities as al-Ghazali and 'Izz al-din 'Abd al-Salam, developed eight categories of levels of belief four of which he ruled should be fought until they match their pronouncements with the correct actions.\footnote{Al-Aqib al-Anusanmmani - \textit{Ajwiibat al-Faqir an As'ilat al-Amir}, folio 3&5.}

Al-'Aqib lived in Takedda near Agades were he met al-Maghili, he must have had his own students from the various Tuaregs clans of that region and these ideas must have been well known in the area. In 1650 a scholar activist called Hadahada in alliance with the qadi of Agades shaykh Hamidtu ruled that the \textit{bay'a} to the sultan was invalid and they organized a \textit{jihad} against the latter. Though details are still sketchy, there is enough to indicate a clear echo of the teachings of al-Maghili.\footnote{For details see H.T. Norris, \textit{The Tuareg: Their Islamic Legacy and its Diffusion in the Sahel Wilts}, England. 1975. pp. 118-34.} Nearly another one and a half centuries later there was another attempt in the same area of Agades by another scholar/activist shaykh Jibril b. 'Umar, the renowned teacher of shaykh Uthman b. Fudi.
Still not much is known about Jibril's attempt\textsuperscript{60}, but his militancy and his khariji-like ideas and his sufi links through qadiriyya and khalwatiyya Mahmudiyya are well noted by some of his students\textsuperscript{61}. In him also we find another echo of this militant approach to \textit{tajdid}.

The \textit{jihad} of Nasr al-Din in southern Mauritania in 1670s; that of Malik Sy a generation later which established imamate in Bundu, south of the Senegal river in 1690s; that of Sulayman bal and 'Abd al-Qadir Kan, less than a century later, which established an imamate in Futa Toro along the Senegal river in 1770s; seem to have all been informed by this militant school of \textit{tajdid}.\textsuperscript{62} Though no direct links have yet been established, the very manner in which these local \textit{jihads} were carried out suggest the links. Nasr al-Din who lived in southern Mauritania which was intellectually part of the Western Bilad al-Sudan, and in which the works of al-Maghili along with other scholars of the region were well known, could not have failed to be familiar with these ideas. The network of scholars in the region was also there to give a hand.

Nasr at-Din was said to have gained popular support in his \textit{al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa alnahy 'an al-munkar}, but the rulers refused to follow suit and he, very much in line with at-Maghili's advise, took up arms against them.\textsuperscript{63} Malik Sy, who was part of the fighting force of Nasr al-Din, literally repeated what the latter

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\textsuperscript{60} Jibo Hammani of the University du Niger in Niamey is currently carrying out research in this field. So we shall hopefully soon know more about this important scholar and his activities in the region.

\textsuperscript{61} See M. Bello, \textit{Infdq al-Maysur}, p. 65.


\textsuperscript{63} See P. Curtin, 'Jihad in West Africa ...' p. 16.
had done, with greater success, in Bundu.64 'Abd at- Qadir, who
like many of the jihad leaders was from a scholarly family, his
father having studied in the famous seats of learning like Diakha
and having teachers like shaykh Nuh, the teacher of karamako
Ba, who founded the Diakhanke clerical tradition of Touba in
Futa Jallon, also followed the footsteps of his predecessors both
in his jihad and in the running of the Imamate he established.65
Robinson's observation on 'Abd al-Qadir's Imamate, though
clothed in typical Western flavor, clearly echoes al-Maghili's
advise to the Askia:

The usual pattern leading to a military campaign began
with a complaint lodge with Almamy [the imam-Abdul
Qadir] by a Muslim community about the conduct of
the ruler of their territory. Abdul would then send
delegations and letters to the ruler to persuade him to
change his conduct. A refusal was the signal to
mobilize the Futanke forces. On most occasions the
flight of the Muslims was real.66

The Sufi School

Sufi thoughts and ideas have always been part of the Islamic
heritage that reached the Western Bilad al-Sudan through the
remarkable network of the Islamic scholarship. The works of
many sufi scholars like al-Ghazali and Ahmad Zarruq were
familiar and had substantial impact on the minds of the region.67
But until Qadiriyya began to take roots about the 16th century,

64 Ibid, PP. 18-21.
65 See D. Robinson, 'Abdul Qadir and Shaykh 'Umar 'p. 294.
66 Ibid. p. 296.
67 Al-Ghazah's Ihya 'ulum al-Din was a well known text to the scholars of the region. Ahmad Zarruq
(1442-93) grew up in Fez during the reign of 'Abd al-Haqq of the Marinid, studied under several
leading scholars of his time, including 'Abd al-Rahman al-Tha'alibi-al-Maghili's teacher, and wrote
many books which had impact on the scholars of the region, before he died in Misurata. For details
see Ahmad Baba's Mayl al-ibtihaj and A.F. Khusham, Zarruq the Sufi: a biographical and critical
study of a Mystic from North Africa Tripoli, 1976.
through the activities of Ahmad al-Bakkai, the sufi shaykh of Walata and the ancestor of the Kunta, there were no organized tariqas as such.\textsuperscript{68} Of course soon after Qadiriyya had began to take shape a few others found their way, like Mahmudiyya in Air and the sufi brotherhood of Kalumbordo in Borno, both in 17th century.\textsuperscript{69} But it was Qadiriyya more than any other tariqa that dominated the region up to the first half of the 19th century.\textsuperscript{70}

The real ascendancy and dominance of the qadiriyya tariqa in the region was the work of al-Shaykh Sidi al-Mukhtar al-Kabir al-Wafi al-Kunti. Born in 1729-30 in al-Mabruk in Azwad, the region to the north of Timbuktu, Sidi Mukhtar received a thorough traditional Islamic education and soon rose to prominence as a distinguished scholar with exceptional abilities.\textsuperscript{71} He grew up in wholly Muslim society which, after one and a half centuries of the Moroccan invasion and Arma rule, had lost a lot of its Islamic features and had sunk into decadence and anarchy. The absence of a strong Islamic authority had encouraged the growth of the pagan State of Ka'arta which had

\textsuperscript{68} See A.A. Batran, 'The Kunta, Sidi at-Mukhtar al-Kunti and the Office Shaykh al-Tariqa' al-Qadiriyya', in J.R. Willis, \textit{Studies in West African Islamic History}, vol. 1. pp. 120-3. See also R.G. Jenkins, 'The Evolution of Religious Brotherhoods in North and Northwest Africa 1523-1900', in Ibid. pp. 40-77. Jenkins, quoting French sources claimed that al-Magbili and his disciple, 'Umar al-Shaykh the son of al-Bakkai~ were initiated into Qadiriyya by Suyuti in Cairo. Bivar and Hiskett in their 'Arabic Literature in Nigeria... ', \textbf{B.S.O.A.S.} xxv, 1, 1962, have made similar remarks, relying on Paul Marty. It has been shown that this claim, found in Kunta Hagiographical writings, has no historical validity.


\textsuperscript{70} By 1551 the Kunta were reported to have reached as far as Borno. See A.A. Batran, 'The Kunta ... ', P. 124. The Qadifiyya continued to hold sway until the arrival of the Tijaniyya in the region in the 19th century.

\textsuperscript{71} He rose to this prominence after encountering series of oppositions and debates from the contemporary 'ulama'. Once he established this prominence he attracted multitude of students, from far and wide, seeking knowledge, guidance and Baraka, as his fame spread throughout the region. See A.A. Batran, 'The Kunta... ' pp. 129-30.
imposed its suzerainty over some of the traditionally Muslim areas to the south of Timbuktu. It had also given vent to clannish feuds among the multitude of groups in the Sahel and given the often uncouth and belligerent Tuaregs ample chances for raids. The Tuaregs appeared to have been such a menace that Sidi Mukhtar himself was reported to have said:

The dynasty of the, Arma (Moroccans) was better than that of the (Iwillimedien) Tuaregs because the former adhered to the policy of a kingdom. As for the Tuaregs they conquered without knowledge of how to run the policy of a kingdom and the establishment of offices according to the Shari’ah. They ruin and do not build and construct. This is their habit and their custom ...

Despite his obvious sufí persuasion, Sidi Mukhtar al-Kunti was quick to realise the need for tajdid in his society. He in fact took time to analyze the reasons which led to the decadence and anarchy in the Muslim community. Politically he traced the decline to the Moroccan invasion of Songhay and the establishment of the Ruma administration. Matters were made worse when a century later following the battle of Taghargharat between the Ruma and the Tawariq of Tadmakkat, the power of the former declined and the unruly Tawariq came to dominate the Niger Bend. It was on the moral decline however, that Sidi Mukhtar placed the major portion of the blame. He continued to dwell on it in his talks as well as his writings. Paraphrasing Sidi Mukhtar's arguments on this issue, Batran wrote:

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73 Ruma was the name by which the invading Moroccan army, largely made up of Christian renegades and Andalusian fugitives, came to be known. The name itself was driven from the Arabic rumat, meaning musketeers. After the invasion they ruled the Timbuktu area and eventually became assimilated into the society of the Niger bend. They are also known as the Arma. For details see E. Saad, Social History of Timbuktu pp. 89, 147, 155 & 170.
74 A.A. Batran,'Sidi'p. 167.
One of the recurrent themes in the shaykhs writings was discussion of the reason for the decline in learning and pervasion of bid'a during the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries of the Hijra among the Muslim community in the Middle Niger and the Western Sahara. The blame, he said, lay with the ulama al-su'. It was they, he maintained, who had misguided the community and to them was to be attributed the decadence and distortion of religious knowledge. They interpreted and explain the 'ilm in a way that will serve their evil purposes" and "accursed desires'. The Shari’a was subsequently neglected and the umma sank into ghafla (heedlessness), distrust in God and laxity in the observance of his commands and prohibitions.75

Sidi Mukhtar believed that tajdid was the only means through which the umma can be resuscitated from its decadence and the supremacy of the Shari’a restored. Tajdid, in his words, is "the resuscitation of what has withered away [ma-andarasa] of the knowledge of the Qur'an and the Sunna and the commandment of their observance."76 Commenting on the well known hadith on tajdid, Sidi Mukhtar argued that it was necessary for mujaddidun to be sent periodically so that each set take over the task from their predecessors and in this way the umma could be continuously regenerated so that it keeps on the path of Islam. The reference to 'the beginning of every century' ('ala ra's kull mi’a), Sidi Mukhtar further argued need not be taken literally and the mujaddid could come any time during the span of the one hundred years.77

Sidi Mukhtar’s vision of the mujaddid is that of a scholar who was "erudite in al-ilum al-zahira (exoteric knowledge) and

75 Ibid. pp. 177-8. Batran was collating from three Sidi Mukhtar’s works: Nuzhat al-Rawi, Sharh Tuhfat al-Mawhud and Jadhwat al-Anwar.
76 al-Burd al-Muwashsha, vol. 1, f. 40, see Ibid. p. 164.
77 Ibid.
al-ilum al-batina (esoteric knowledge). In fact his expanse of knowledge, in Sidi Mukhtar's opinion, should be such that "assuming that all religious knowledge were forgotten, all literature were burnt and he were resorted to, he would have the capacity to resuscitate that knowledge and write similar books." This is certainly a tall order which can hardly be met, and it seems the shaykh himself appreciated that, it however shows how Sidi Mukhtar felt about the intellectual standard of the mujaddid. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that he admitted in his list of mujaddidun of different periods scholars of varying fields of specialization and of different regions and madhahib, who could not be said to have met such high standards. Even more interesting is the fact that, despite this rather high stress on knowledge, Sidi Mukhtar was still able to broaden his category of mujaddidun to include such Muslim rulers as Askia Muhammad who dedicated their rule to the restoration of the Shari'a and the establishment of justice.

Though Sidi Mukhtar al-Kunti stressed the role of knowledge in tajdid, he recognized the use of al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar as an instrument of change. Sidi Mukhtar however drew a distinction between al-amr bi al-ma'ruf -wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar and jihad. The objective of the former, stated Sidi Mukhtar, "was to reduce evil (taqlil al-shar) in contrast with that of jihad, which was to forcefully uproot all evil." So while urging scholars, in his Nudar

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78 al-Burd at-Muwashsha, vol. 1, f 40, see Ibid. p. 169.
79 Kitab al-Taraif, vol. 1, f 40, see Ibid.
80 Ibid. pp. 170-1.
81 Ibid.
82 Kitab al-Taraif, f. 525, see Ibid. p. 149.
al-Dhahab\textsuperscript{83}, to wake up to their obligation of \textit{al-amr bi al-ma’ruf wa al-nahy ’an al-munkar}, he cautioned them, in his \textit{Sharh tuhfat al-Mawdud},\textsuperscript{84} to undertake it only when and in a way that it will not be futile. He argued that in circumstances where tribulations (\textit{fitan}) had broke out, innovations (\textit{bid’a}) had become wide spread, and the umma had succumbed to corruption (\textit{fasad}) and heedlessness (\textit{ghafla}), undertaking \textit{al-amr bi al ma’ruf Wa al-nahy ’an almunkar} becomes very precarious and care must be taken to ensure that it achieves the desired results.

Sidi Mukhtar specifically beseeched his following, especially his students, to be tolerant and "to adhere to \textit{rifq} (leniency and kindness) and \textit{lin} (softness and tenderness), as he believed that it was only through the gentle words (\textit{al-kalam}) and not \textit{ghilza} or \textit{fazaza} (harshness and aggressiveness) that people would be successfully converted".\textsuperscript{85} In a number of his writings Sidi Mukhtar promoted these values and cultivated, in a typical sufi tarbiyya fashion, the very akhlaq that encourage and facilitate the practice of tolerance and leniency. In his \textit{Nasiha al-Bayt li Jami’ Kunti}, for example, he concentrated in cultivating good character among his following, urging them to imbibe such qualities as contentment, patience, kindness, and consistency in the observance of the religious obligations like salat.\textsuperscript{86}

This tolerant and lenient posture of Sidi Mukhtar al-Kunti, must have been, understandably, informed by his sufi disposition

\textsuperscript{83} See Nudar al-Dhahab, ff. 3-10.
\textsuperscript{84} See Sharh Tuhfat al-Mawdud, f 140.
\textsuperscript{85} Kitab at-Taralf, ff. 184, and 345, see A. A. Batran, ‘Sidi ’ PP. 148-9.
\textsuperscript{86} See \textit{ATasiha al -Bayt Ii Jami’Kunfi}, a nis of IOff. classified in CEDRAB, Timbuku, as \textit{Kitab al-Masiha}. 

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with its emphasis on jihad al-nafs, the struggle against carnal soul. He did not however exaggerate the position of tasawwuf within the scheme of Islam nor did he allow it to submerge his societal responsibility as has often happened in the Maghrib and the orient of his time. Tasawwuf with all its importance was still secondary to the fard al-Aiyn and the Sharia. While he asserts that the heedless soul must be progressively disciplined to attain nearness to Allah and approach the state of perfection, which can only be achieved through a tariqa and under the guidance of a shaykh, he was liberal enough, however, to allow people to feel free to have as many shaykhs and as many tariqas in their search for discipline and perfection. As with tasawwuf so with fiqh in following the Sharia one needed not to be tied to one single madhab. Here then was a lively tasawwuf which willingly conceded supremacy to the Sharia, allowed fiqh its dynamism and was prepared to tackle the world head on, as it were. So far from the naive ascetics that many would expect, the Kunta muridun turned out to be a vibrant and seasoned Muslim community. Summarizing these views Batran observed:

Sidi al-Mukhtar made clear that zuhd does not lie in complete detachment from the world but in emptying the heart from the desire of the world. He deprecated a"166 of mendacity and exhorted the muridun to take a profession and increase their riches. Wealth, he asserted, was the corner stone for jah and haiba.

Besides calling the people to jihad against the carnal soul Sidi al-Mukhtar called for the return to the basic sources of Islamic jurisprudence and the restoration of the teachings of the companions of the Prophet and the Tabi’in. Moreover he rejected exclusive adherence to
one madhhab and opened the door of ijtihad to whoever was juristically qualified.87

Sidi Mukhtar may owe these rather unique views to the fact that he was inward looking and remained unimpressed by Islam in the Maghrib and the Orient of his time. The Maghrib, he maintained, "was under the rule of decadent and despotic princes (umara' a-lfitna)" while the Orient "was rapidly falling under the influence of the Khawarij (the Wahhabis)". He rated the Islam of his zawiya and the scholars of the region higher than what was then available in the Maghrib and the Orient. Indeed "all the chain of authorities for the works studied by Sidi al-Mukhtar were traced back ultimately to West African and not to Maghribian or Oriental 'ulama'".88

Sidi Mukhtar's tolerant and lenient posture and his concentration on akhlaq as a means to regenerate his society may not be entirely informed by tasawwuf, there are practical considerations also. The Muslim community in the Niger Bend where Sidi Mukhtar lived was without any strong Muslim ruler such as Askia Muhammad, who had both the will and the resources to carry out jihad. Such Muslim rulers as may be there, were very weak, mostly existing by the leaf of the strong pagan kingdoms, and were in any case ignorant and nominal Muslims who seemed least prepared to carry out any jihad. The general Muslim public appeared even more unprepared, immersed as they were, in ignorance, bid'a and fasad, their energy consumed by feuds and the repelling of the attacks of the unruly Tuaregs, they themselves needed jihad to be carried out on them. In

87 A.A. Batran, 'Sidi al-Mukhtar, p. 343.
88 Ibid.
situation of this nature only persuasion and character building, buttressed by the spread of learning can be effective or indeed possible. So it was not only tasawwuf alone, there was good sense too.

The main thrust of this school therefore is that while learning and its spread is an essential pre-requisite for tajdid that alone is not enough. Al-Amr bi al-ma'ruf -wa alnahy 'an al-munkar must go along with learning to achieve the transformation of society. But al-amr bi al-maruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar, here, means persuasive means of minimizing evil and encouraging good, to the exclusion of force. The jihad priority was the nafs which must first be conquered to allow the cultivation of those qualities (suluk) that will enhance the societal transformation. So while this school has gone a step ahead of the fiqh school, by insisting that knowledge alone was not enough to bring about Tajdid except when backed up with a conscious drive towards 'commanding good and forbidding evil', it lags behind the militant school by asserting that force was not necessary.

**The Semi-Militant School**

This school of tajdid sees al-amr bi al-maruf wa al-nahy 'an almunkar as the main instrument of tajdid and subscribes, in principle, to the use of force in tajdid. But it differs from the militant school in the emphasis it gives to caution in expressing its position and in establishing its ideas. This school was particularly noticeable in, though not restricted to, Borno. It may have well been nurtured by the very social and political climate in Borno, where its proponents lived. These scholars, al-Imam Muhammad b. al-Hajj 'Abd al-Rahman al-Barnawi and shaykh
Tahir Feromma b. Ibrahim al-Falla ti al-Barnawi, lived in late 17th early 18th century Borno. They were both contemporaries and more important both students of the famous shaykh Buba Njibima, known in the *Infaq al-Maysur* as al-Bakri, who studied in Timbuktu and Takedda and of whom some Borno oral accounts assert "All knowledge began in Borno from Shehu Buba Njibima, and twelve of his students are called the' Stars of Birni'." Shaykh Muhammad b. al-Hajj 'Abd al-Rahman, also known as Ajirami, and shaykh Tahir Feromma were two of these 'Stars of Birni'.

Intellectually these scholars belonged to the Timbuktu school. This is fairly obvious because their teacher al-Bakri studied there under the rigorous Shams al-Din al-Najib al-Takkidawi al-Anusammani, from whom he must have imbibed, the taste for thoroughness and the spirit of al-amr bi alma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar. Their Timbuktu intellectual roots are further revealed by the references cited in their works. Socially and politically, however, they lived in 18th century Borno, which appeared to have been lax in the application of the *Sharia* and wanting in its spirit of *jihad*, despite the rather substantial presence of *Ulama'* in Birnin Gazargumo, the capital. These are conditions which usually elicit efforts towards *tajdid*. But the *Mais* of these periods appeared to have been sensitive to anything that resembled dissent. Al-Bakri himself was said to have been killed as a result of his activities which were deemed

90 See M. Bello, *Infaq al-Maysur*, p. 22-3; A. Bivar and M. Hiskett, *The Arabic Literature of Nigeria to 1804: a Provisional Account in B.S.O.A.S.* vol. xxv, 1, 1962, p. 117; L. Brenner, ibid, p. leg. Muhammad Bello reported that al-Bakri was also at Yandoto, which used to be part of Katsina.
91 In their analysis of the sources of *Shurb al-Zulal* of Ajrami Bivar and Hiskett traced the majority of the references to authorities cited in the *Nayl* of Ahmad Baba.
by the authorities to imply dissent.\textsuperscript{92} His students seemed to have taken their cue from this by treading a more subtle path in their activism.

This subtle approach is clearly revealed in The \textit{Shurb al-Zulal} of Ajrami. This poem was not the only work of Ajrami but it was certainly the most popular. The Sokoto \textit{jihad} leaders drew a lot from it in their criticism of the corruptions of both Hausaland and Borno, as shown in the \textit{Kitab al-Farq} of Shaykh Uthman b. Fudi. The poem is, on the surface, a formal didactic \textit{fiqh} work whose formal purpose is the time-honored one of defining the limits of \textit{halal} and \textit{haram} in both public and private life. Even viewed at this level it informs us of the practices which were prevalent at the time in both public and private life.\textsuperscript{93} But on a careful reading the poem reveals veiled references to non-Islamic practices that went on around the courts and a subtle instigation of the Muslim public against these practices. The following stanza for example clearly suggests that the author had in mind the powerful in society:

If you are present at the eating of the food of unjust men, you have a choice. Consider what is given as food.
...
And likewise your taking of dinars which have been seized unjustly, and dirhams taken forcibly.
And if you eat (unlawful food) for fear of discord, not having need of it, give its price in alms.
(The learned) have declared that such dealings (with an unjust man) are disliked. Therefore eschew him and speak gently to him.

\textsuperscript{92} See M. Bello, \textit{Infaq al-Maysur}, p. 22-3. Bello also reported that shaykh Tahir Feromma himself had the doors of the city shut against him. Though this appeared more out of the intrigue that went on between scholars, it still reflected some of the problems scholars like him faced.

\textsuperscript{93} See, M. Bivar and M. Hiskett, \textit{The Arabic Literature of Nigeria to 1804} p. 130.
And if you are called to a feast of some persons, then consider their condition in refusing or accepting.

Al-Mawwaq and al-Ajhuri have issued fatawi concerning this, on the authority of Ibn Lubb. This is the received opinion.

Do not abstain from a small portion, while taking the greater portion of something which comes from an illegal source.\(^{94}\)

Here we have a clear condemnation - of illegally acquired wealth by the powerful in society especially the rulers, and an urging of the Muslims to keep their distance not only from these illegally acquired wealth but also from their owners. The allowance made for people in certain circumstances, when discord is feared’, to eat the food but pay back the value in form of alms to the poor, clearly indicates the problems encountered in implementing these invocations. This very concession suggests the weakness of a guest in the face of an impious but powerful host who may take offence at the righteousness of his guest and perhaps retaliate ruthlessly. It also signifies the determination of shaykh Ajrami to ensure that people strive to keep to the minimum of the steps of *al-amr bi al-ma’ruf wa al-nahy ‘an al munkar*, at a time when doing that much could be risky.\(^{95}\)

Shaykh Ajrami himself went a step further by defining the limits of the sources of revenue of the state in a manner which suggests that he was addressing those in authority. In his words:

> The kinds of the public treasury are the fifth, the tithe, and the poll tax, and land tax; booty and surplus.

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\(^{95}\) The steps here refer to the well known hadith of the prophet which says, 'Who ever amongst you sees evil should correct it with his hand, if he cannot then with his tongue, if he cannot then with his heart, and that is weakest form of Iman'.

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Then that which the owners are unknown; and the inheritance of property lacking (rightful) heirs.

These seven constitute the public treasury for him who wishes to make use of lawful things.

And everything that is taken from a Muslim (by force) in the market, what is taken (thus) is illegal.

Also violence and enmity and belligerence, illegal taxation, and every vain thing, if one suspects them.  

These verses are without doubt directed to the rulers who ran the public treasury, imposed and collected the taxes, and inflict violence and aggression against the people. The extent to which these oppressions were taking place in Borno of the time can be contested, but that they were happening at all is beyond dispute. By declaring the practices and their proceeds illegal, shaykh Ajrami was not only attacking these oppressive practices and tendencies, but he was also subtly encouraging dissent. The dissent here is not just a revolt against rulers who are oppressive, but, as the thrust of Ajrami's argument show, a revolt against the violations of the Shari'a. Violations of the Sharia, especially in respect of illegal taxation, by al-Maghili’s fatwa, were enough reason, to rebel against and fight where possible against a Muslim ruler. Though shaykh Ajrami made no direct reference to al-Maghili, reading between the lines of the poem, al-Maghili's ideas could be easily deduced.

To be sure, shaykh Ajrami meant to initiate a process of change, for he went further to compose a poem on the significant issue of al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar. The manuscript of this poem had just come to light, and it clearly

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96 See, M. Bivar and M. Hiskett, 'The Arabic Literature of Nigeria to 1804 pp. 1239.
97 This manuscript is made up of 55 verses contained in six folios, catalogued under N/AR2/86 at the Northwestern University, Illinois.
reveals the anxiety of the shaykh in bringing about *tajdid*. Though this poem is shorter than the Shurb al-Zulal, it was more direct in its reference to *al-amr bi al-maruf -wa al-nahy 'an al munkar*. The following passage from the poem brings home this point:

> And after (the greetings), know that I am an admonisher, to the heedless like me and the one who reflects.  
> When you see an evil expose it, say this is an evil let it be known.  
> Admonish (against it) verbally and if the situation does not revert (to good), then use a harsher language.  
> Use as harsh a language as will achieve desired result, (if it is to no avail) threaten with force as many times as you find necessary.  
> (If that does not work) beat him and draw out your weapons, if necessary fight if you find that appropriate.  
> These are the stages in the prevention of evil, in a simplified form.98

This clearly is an exposition of the well known *hadith* on the subject, but shaykh Ajrami in this exposition has given force to the whole provision and specifically ratified and tacitly encouraged the use of force. What the shaykh did not do, in this or any of his other works, was to identify a specific target or direct this call to a specific quarter, as the advocates of the militant school often did, and in this subtlety lies the caution in his approach. But by virtue of his position as the Imam of the main Mosque of the Birni and his stature among the scholars and the wider society, this message must have gone far and wide, and

98 Muhammad' Abd al-Rahman al-Barnaawi (Ajrami), *Al-Amr bi alma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar* (Qasida), Ms, f. 1. See Ibid.
those to whom it concerned most must have taken the necessary note.

Another proponent of this school was shaykh Tahir Feromma, a contemporary and not surprisingly a close associate of shaykh Ajrami. Oral tradition reported that when he first came to the Birni, shaykh Ajrami advised him to keep some distance from those in authority, an advise he was said to have heeded to.\footnote{Communication with H. Bobboyi, who had collected a lot of field data in Borno and is currently writing up a doctoral thesis in this field, at the Northwestern University, Illinois.} He died about the year 1775, about twenty years after shaykh Ajrami. In his \textit{Qasidah fi Madh Dunama}, a poem whose stated purpose was an eulogy for the Mai, Ali b. Dunama, the majority of the 200 verses were calls for \textit{jihad}. Even when he praised the Mai and his courtiers, it was in respect of the role their forefathers had played in \textit{jihad}, and by implication, the role they were expected to play themselves. A closer reading of these verses will again reveal a lamentation over the dampening of the spirit of \textit{jihad} and an ardent urging for its revival by someone who was determined to be careful enough not to offend the Mai and his lieutenants. A glimpse of this ardent hope could be gleaned from some of these verses:

\textit{Jihad is} one of the fundamentals of the religion (of Islam), and taking up arms for it is a strong pillar of it.

Many are (the Qur'anic) verses that enjoin it, and (.so are) traditions promising those who take up arms for it paradise.

Suffice that (a participant) would not be asked (questions) in his grave and his judgment (on the day of resurrection) will be delayed.
The reward of his deeds will not cease with his death, while (rewards of) other deeds are bound to cease. Death in the cause of it is martyrdom; steadfastness in it is an increasing good fortune. So fight in the course of your Lord, and take up arms; The wrath (of Allah) will be away form you with (His) pleasure.

For whoever commences (a thing) in the name of his Lord, with Him (supporting) shall he, no doubt end it. So leave all matters in his hands, you will be blessed with soothed mind all your life.

This school therefore has a perspective on al-amr bi al-maruf wa al-nahy 'an almunkar which considers force as a viable alternative in the process of tajdid and give jihad a clear prominence. In putting across this view, however, they have used subtle rather than direct language, and they clothed their ideas with a sense of caution. This may be as much the product of their dispositions as the limits imposed by the very circumstances under which they lived and nursed these ideas. Thus the school distinguishes itself from its militant cousin by the level to which it has elevated caution both in communicating its ideas and in implementing them.

The Pacifist School

Despite these varieties of views and approaches to tajdid in the region there were some scholars who did not share or identify with any of these views. There were among them however some who took their quietism further by taking a firm position against

jihad and giving pacifism a kind of doctrinal status. These are the Jakhanke, who splintered off from their Serakhulle background under their leader al-Hajj Salim Suware, probably about the 13th century, and developed into a religious elite. They were dispersed all over the region, engaged in educational and trading activities and came to be known as Soninke or Wangara in other parts of the region.

Though they were scholars who devoted their lives to learning and teaching, they did not find it necessary to argue their position cogently as proponents of other views had done. But scholars of the Jakhanke have gleaned from various Jakhanke sources that al-Hajj Salim founded the clerical vocation on the basis of repudiation of war and of political office. To the Jakhanke, learning and teaching was the way of life and the only way of spreading Islam. "The missionary theme in Jakhanke Islam" observed Sanneh,

is underpinned by the educational function of clerical centers. Education served many purposes. It spread knowledge of Islam; it created an instructed body of believers; it produced a distinct class of teachers and educated men; It produced a cadre of students devoted to their teachers and to Islam through study; it led to mobility as students, teachers and whole communities followed the educational trail in search of improvement. The student is instructed, the cleric rewarded and the community renewed through participation in the educational process.

Tajdid, in the perspective of this school, can best be achieved peacefully through education. The various jihad in the

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101 Many scholars of Islam in West Africa had written on the Jakhanke, but the works of Ivor Wilks and Lamin Sanneh have understandably been more specific. See in particular, L. Sanneh, The Jakhanke: the History of an Islamic Clerical People of Senegambia London, I.A.I. 1979.
102 Ibid. p. 242.
region with their varying successes did not persuade the Jakhanke to change their position. They had a firm belief in the reforming capacity of peaceful education and never saw the need for taking up arms. Summarizing their position, Sanneh wrote:

Equipped with sufficient knowledge of the literary sources of religion, the cleric and his community were able to embark on a programme of purification and renewal. There was no need to resort to military solutions in the maintenance of Islamic standards. In situations of conflict, the consequent disruption of life that followed, the Jakhanke abandoned their centers and withdrew to a quieter life where they used the educational instrument to perpetuate their vocation. Dispersion thus helped them both to escape military confrontation and to preserve their pacific tradition.¹⁰³

Some scholars have thought that this pacific posture of the Jakhanke was motivated more by expediency, as a trading community they needed more peace than war.¹⁰⁴ Others, however, see this suggestion as an over simplification and had argued that it was a principle to keep away from war.¹⁰⁵ There were, however, two known cases in which the Jakhanke violated this cherished principle of peace, though; it has been argued, temporarily. These were their initial support to Momodou-Lamin Darame (c. 1835-87) in Bundu and Fode Kabba (d. 1911) in Casamance, which was said to have been withdrawn before long. Both of these mujahidan were of the Jakhanke extraction, and Sanneh, who was keen to maintain this pacific posture of the

¹⁰³ Ibid. This position had been assimilated into the psyche of the Jakhanke, as reflected by the following traditional Jakhanke saying: "The king has asked and given us a choice of taking up arms and joining battle, and, on the other hand, building a fortress. We have said if we are asked to build a fortress we shall build it, and if we are asked to take up arms and join battle, we shall build a fortress. We are entirely at his beck and call." Ibid. p. 192.
Jakhanke, explained that the Jakhanke were in both cases moved by group solidarity to support their members but could not sustain this because of their principled disavowal to armed struggle.\textsuperscript{106} Though these cases were clearly exception to the general rule, they nonetheless indicate the need for caution in taking the pacifism of the Jakhanke for granted.

In this school, \textit{tajdid}, needed never to take the form of armed struggle. Peace, rather than war, was deemed essential, for the educational activities, which are the main engagement of the community and through which they propagate and sustain Islam, are best carried out at peace times. Wilks, another scholar of the Jakhanke, was trying to capture this vision of the Jakhanke, when he remarked that:

The necessary preconditions of \textit{tajdid} are, first, the presence throughout society of a basic level of literacy and, second, the existence within society of a basic educated elite -the '\textit{Ulama}'- able to maintain links with the wider Muslim community and, through the study and interpretation of basic expositions of the Islamic sciences, to preserve, conformity between practice and the general precepts of Islam.\textsuperscript{107}

The thoughts and ideas of \textit{tajdid} in the region thus concretized into five schools during the period under study. There is the \textit{Fiqh} School that saw education and the spread of learning as the main instruments of \textit{tajdid}. The militant school,

\textsuperscript{106} L. Sanneh, The Jakhanke, pp. 67-89 & 245-6. To press his point further Sanneh (p.87) cited the case of -someJakhanke community in Bundu in 1893 having been surrounded by French forces, they first thought of defending themselves but later abandoned the idea. This point however does not make any case, as it was the most logical thing any group over powered by superior arms would do. The two cases cited might be seen as the impact of the militant school on the pacific Jakhanke, for Momodou-Lamin had contact with and partook in the \textit{jihad} of Hajj Umar at-Futi and Fode Kabba was under a similar influence.

however, insisted that *tajdid* could only come about through the active implementation of *al-amr bi al-ma’ruf wa al-nahy ‘an al-munkar*, including the use of force when ever necessary. The sufi school, on the other hand, felt that neither knowledge nor force as such can bring about the desired change in human society. Rather *tajdid* is basically a matter of *suluk* and hence pinned its hope on *tarbiyya*. The semi-militant school shared the perspective of the militant school but distinguished itself by the level of caution with which it expressed its ideas and sought to implement them. Similarly the pacifist school shared the perspective of the *Fiqh* School, but differed with it by taking a firm position against *jihad* and elevating pacifism to a level of principle.

All the schools, however, are agreed on the validity as well as the necessity for *tajdid* in a Muslim community. Their differences are in their approaches to *tajdid*, precisely when and how best it could be achieved. These differences in approach appear largely to reflect the background and disposition of the advocates as well as the social and political milieu in which these ideas were natured and expressed. These schools with their varying approaches were eventually bequeathed to the 19th century, at a time the region was saddled with all the problems that elicit *tajdid*. We shall now turn our attention to the events of the 19th century.

**CHAPTER SIX**

*TAJDID IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*
WESTERN BILAD AL-SUDAN

As the historical background and the outline of the nineteenth century jihads have already been provided in chapter two, this chapter wishes to concentrate on the thoughts and ideas of *tajdid* which informed the leaders of the *jihad* movements. In other words, we shall be interested here, to see the impact of the schools of *tajdid*, bequeathed to the region, on the *mujaddidun* of the century. We shall therefore take one *Mujaddid* at a time discuss his *tajdid* and examine his arguments and their relationship with the previous schools of *tajdid*.

**Shaykh 'Uthman b. Fudi**

Shaykh 'Uthman had a normal traditional education, first with his father and later with other teachers, many of them his uncles, who were educated in the best tradition of the region. He was said to have been astute and sharp during his school days. But this could be hagiographical details reconstructed in retrospect, as they often were, and in any case he needs not be the only one of his time in this respect. But what definitely made him unique was his sense of mission. After graduation, in his early twenties, moved by the level of ignorance in his society, he embarked on educating the ordinary people the basics of Islam. Starting first with his home town Degel and gradually expanding to the surrounding villages and towns, an assignment he happily combined with his higher education for the next two decades of his life.

It was in course of his higher education that he came along the thoughts and ideas of *tajdid* as well as the men who inspired in him the zeal and the revolutionary ideas that he came to be
identified with. It is our good fortune that the triumvirate of this *tajdid* have kept a rich record of their educational programme and intellectual development: Shaykh 'Uthman in his *Asanid al-Faqir*, 'Abd Allah in his *Tazyin al-Waraqat* and *Ida' al-Nusukh man akhadhtu 'anhu min al-Shuyukh* and Muhammad Bello in his *Infaq al-Maysur*. From these sources we are able to fathom considerably the deep sea of knowledge in which these scholars sailed; considerably, because, 'Abd Allah informed us at the end of his *Ida'al-Nusukh*:

I cannot now number all the shaikhs from whom I acquired knowledge, but these were the famous ones among them. Many a scholar and many a seeker after knowledge came to us from the East from whom I have profited, so many that I cannot count them. Many a scholar and many a seeker after knowledge came to us from the West, and I profited from them. Also many that I cannot count them. May God reward them all...¹

These sources, further reinforced by the other works of the triumvirate, reveal the teachers of shaykh 'Uthman at various levels in various disciplines. Most of his studies in *tafsir* and *hadith*, including *al-Shifa* of al-Qadi 'Iyad, were done under the feet of his uncles like 'Uthman Bidduri and al-Hajj Muhammad Raji'. In the field of *fiqh*, he started with such books like the *Risala* and the *Mukhtasar* with their various commentaries and in Arabic language, *al-Farida* of al-Suyuti, under scholars like Muhammad Sambo, Muhammad b. al-Hajj and Muhammad al-Maghuri. With Jibril b. 'Umar shaykh 'Uthman studied numerous *fiqh* and *tawhid* works, including al-Suyuti's, but more important, he acquired from Jibril a deep spiritual training,

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including *wird* of some sufi *tariqa*, which appeared to have been decisive in his career. For 'Abd Allah quoted him as having said, "If there be said of me that which is said of good report, then I am but a wave of the waves of Jibril". To all these we must add the Timbuktu curricula along with the influence of its towering figures like al-Maghili, Ahmad Baba and shaykh Mukhtar al-Kunti whose sufi ideas, along those of Ahmad Zarruq, the sufi of Misurata, made indelible impressions in the mind of shaykh 'Uthman.

At the beginning of his itinerant teaching and learning career there was understandably nothing to suggest that shaykh 'Uthman had identified with any particular school of *tajdid*. What was very clear, however, was the shaykh's attachment to the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). His first work, written about 1774/5, was a poem in praise of the Prophet, in which the shaykh described himself as a *Muqtadi*, one who models his life on that of the Prophet. This intrinsic tendency of the shaykh was further developed during his stay with his teacher and uncle 'Uthman Binduri, a pious scholar who led an austere life and encouraged the Sunna and abhorred *bid'a*. 'Abd Allah informed us that the shaykh took this teacher/uncle of his "as his example in words and deeds; he accompanied him for two years and moulded himself to his pattern of piety in enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong". Shaykh 'Uthman's association with Jibril b. 'Umar later reinforced his sufi leanings and boosted his resolve for clinging to the Sunna, opposing the *bid'a* and standing

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2 Ibid. p. 566.

3 for details see Ibid. See also 1. Sulaiman, *A Revolution in History* pp. 10-18.

4 Abd Allah b. Muhammad, 'Ida'al-Nusukh, p. 554.
against the currents in defending the ideals of Islam. For well after the *jihad* Muhammad Bello quoted the shaykh as having remarked of Jibril, with a sense of gratitude, "I do not know if we would have been guided to the way of reviving the Sunna and the destruction of the *bid'a* had it not been for this shaykh. For it was he who began to destroy evil practices in this Sudanic land of ours and his work was completed at our hands."

Though shaykh 'Uthman's association with Jibril was undoubtedly decisive in his career, he did not restrict his sourcing of ideas to Jibril alone. As he matured into a scholar in his own right, shaykh 'Uthman developed a broad mind and became amenable to a variety of ideas and learnt to select those appropriate to his environment and helpful to his mission. His mission, which became clearer with time, was essentially to revive the Sunna, obliterate the *bid'a* and spread the knowledge of Islam among the wider society, especially the women who were left to wallow in total ignorance and whose ignorance rendered them vulnerable to injustices and exploitation. This is clearly born out by his work *Bayan al-Bid'i al-Shaytaniyya al-lati Ahdathuha al-Nasu fi Ab-wab al-Milla al-Muhammadiyya*, written during the second half of his two decade itinerant career. This work has apparently been intended to be brief and is a catalogue of the various *bid'a* practices prevalent in Hausaland of his time and the legal rulings on them. The shaykh classified these innovations into three broad categories: *ja'iz* or *mustahsana* (approved), *makruh* (disapproved) and *haram*

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5 Muhammad Bello, *Infaq al-Maysur*, p. 27.

6 The MS of this work is made up of 35 folios of 19 lines each.
Only rarely does the shaykh elaborate or quote sources beyond the general reference to *ijma*, the practice of the sahaba and Qur’an and Sunna. But he concluded this work in a way which left no one in doubt about the significance of this subject. In his words:

> Know that all kinds of learning are available with scholars today. But what is missing at the present time is the knowledge of the Sunna and *bid’a*, except with very few scholars. If you should come across any of these few, cling to him for he is like a rare gem in these times. Know also that what protects a community from the appearance of calamity (*fitna*) is the presence of the prophet (S.A.W.) and after him the revival of his Sunna so ensure that you revive it and follow it.\(^7\)

In course of his efforts to spread the knowledge of Islam and particularly his zeal in reviving the Sunna and the eradication of *bid’a*, the shaykh met with serious opposition from many scholars. Shaykh 'Uthman seemed to have assumed, rather naively, that his mission was one which scholars would happily encourage and support. He was clearly astonished when they stood up in opposition to what was clearly the Sunna and even challenged his very efforts and questioned his credentials. He found himself gradually drawn into an involving intellectual debate, in the course of which it became clear to him that some scholars were bent on confusing issues and finding excuses for falsehood and injustice. He therefore found no difficulty in

\(^7\) *Bayan al-Bid'i al-Shaytaniyya*, ff. 35. The shaykh took care to give alternative views whenever they exist and to caution people in condemning other points of views. It is also worth noting that while the shaykh approved of the *karamat* of the saints he criticized numerous sufi practices, which were not in conformity with the *Sharia* and stressed the superiority of the *Shari'a* over the *haqqa*. Thus tasawwuf with the shaykh was kept within the limits defined by the *Shari'a* and under the constant guidance of the Qur'an and Sunna. See, ff. 31-4. This particular quotation, like a substantial portion of the book, was reproduced in the *Ihya'al-Sunna* of the shaykh in which the issues raised here were elaborated further.
agreeing with al-Maghili, that scholars fall into two broad categories: the good, Ulama' al-khayr or ahl al-dhikr, and the venal, I ulama' al-shar or ulama' al-su'. Evidently quoting al-Maghili, in his Ifham al-Munkirin, a work compiled in the heat of this intellectual debate, shaykh 'Uthman wrote:

Thanks to Allah, there is no confusion between the characteristics of the true scholar and the venal one, who do not help the cause of the religion of Allah. Of the characteristics of the venal scholars is that they do not set things right and nor allow others to do so. Their example is like that of a rock at the mouth of a spring. It neither drinks nor does it allow others to drink. Each one of them is more dangerous to men than one thousand shaitans, and seeing is believing!

And the characteristics of true scholars is the commanding of the good and the forbidding of the evil; setting right the affairs of men; establishment of justice between them; helping the cause of truth against falsehood; the revival of the Sunna and the eradication of bid'a and bad customs ....

The more involved shaykh 'Uthman became in this struggle the more convinced he became of his mission and the more bold and resolute he became in expressing it. For in the same Ifham al-Munkirin, he informed his teeming audience that his mission is Tajdid and his objective is to bring about Islah in Hausaland. He even went out of his way to refer to his superior learning as a credential for undertaking this task. He quickly added, however, that he was not boasting, quoting al-Suyuti when the latter boasted of Divine favours, implying that it is, after all, ja'iz.

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9 Ifham alMunkirin, (ms) f 11.
With the mission of *tajdid* very clear in his mind, shaykh 'Uthman proceeded to incorporate effectively his growing number of students and disciples, initially planted along his itinerary and later scattered all over Hausaland, into this process of *tajdid*. The Shaykh's plan was to mobilise all his students and disciples into the teaching and *da'wa* programme, which concentrated on the basics of Islam with particular interest in reviving the Sunna and eradicating *bid'a* and bad customs that had become prevalent in Hausaland. He wrote works which were clearly designed to prepare this growing circle of manpower for the task and give them the necessary orientation for the success of the venture. The most prominent of these works are *I'dad al-Da'i ila Din Allah* and *'Umdat al-'Ulama'*. In the *'Umdat al-'Ulama'* shaykh 'Uthman took up the issues that are to be taught to the general public; from matters of *usul al-din* like the unity of Allah, His attributes, belief in His messengers, angels, books and *qadr*, through matters of *fiqh* regarding acts of worship and social transaction; to matters of character building like *zuhd*, *tawba*, *tawakkul* and *ikhlas*. In each case the shaykh quoted the relevant verses from the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet (S.A.W.), making it a handy reference in hand of the *da'i*. In *Idad al-Dai* the shaykh

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10 The numerous work the shaykh wrote during this period of nearly two decades bear a clear testimony to this. Works like *Kitab Usul al-Din* which discussed the basis of religion and the basic acts of worship; *'Umdat al-'Ubbad* which took his audience a little further by discussing voluntary acts of worship like *nawajil*, fasting, recitation of the Quran and charity; *Kitab al-Adab* in which the shaykh took up the issues of social behaviour, including matters such as sleep. These works were also supplemented and reinforced by similar works by his able lieutenants, 'Abd Allah and Muhammad Bello, who were no less involved in this process of *Tajdid*. 'Abd Allah's *Tibyan* on family obligations, and Muhammad Bello's *Tamhid 'Umdat al-'Ubbad*, thought to be his first book, expatiating on the premise on which the *'Umdat al-'Ubbad* was based are few examples.

11 Ibrahim Sulaiman in discussing this work on page 54 of his *A revolution in History* has made the interesting observation that, by providing the relevant text of the Qur'an the shaykh meant to establish the supremacy of the Quran and Sunna in all the issues he raised, especially in *tasawwuf*, so that one
stressed the need for those among his growing followers who had already acquired some knowledge to come out and engage in *da’wa*, stating that it is incumbent on them not to keep silent at these times. He then proceeded to show the manner and style this *da’wa* should be undertaken, stressing patience and leniency with the low moral standards, ignorance and rough behaviour of the ordinary people. He also urged the *da’i* to present an optimum blend of ‘fear and hope’ so that he could be firm without, at the same time, frightening off the ordinary people.¹²

These works, more than any others written during the two decades of his itinerant career, convey the shaykh’s perspective of *Tajdid* and the choice of a particular approach. The stress on the spread of learning to all and sundry, especially the knowledge of the Sunna and the *bid’a*; the prominence of *fiqh*, though often tempered with *tarbiyya*; the conspicuous absence of political issues or *jihad*, all embellished with a tacit asceticism and coached in subtle sufi tone, became increasingly clear as the shaykh wound up his educational nomadism for a settled life in Degel. The last work he wrote before settling down, *Ihya’ al-Sunna wa Ikhmad al-Bid’a*, also his most voluminous work, further confirms this surmise. The *Ihya’al-Sunna* itself was an expansion of the *Bayan al-Bid’i al-Shaytaniyya*, written nearly a decade earlier, but which drew form the practical experience,

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¹² See *Umdat al-‘Ulamal* and *I’dad al-Da’i* (niss).
knowledge and wisdom the shaykh had gained since the writing of the latter. The *Ihya' al-Sunna* is far more elaborate, the arguments well substantiated and rich in sources; with the intellectual battle won, the language of the *Ihya* is more modest and reconciliatory; the shaykh's programme of *tajdid*, especially in the use of mosques and the network of scholars, far more specific; and significantly, issues like *al-amr bi al-ma'ruf*, *hijra* and *jihad* were still conspicuously missing. Some of the shaykh's concluding remarks in the *Ihya* are clearly indicative of his perspective of *tajdid*. In his words:

> It is incumbent on every scholar not to keep silent in the present times because innovations (*bid'a*) have appeared and are widespread. Verily the Hadith states 'Any scholar who keeps silent in the face of dissention and tribulation (*fitna*) the curse of Allah will fall upon him'.... And since the majority of people today are ignorant of the Shari'a, it is necessary that there should be jurist (*faqih*) available in every mosque and in every quarter in the town to instruct people in the tenets of religion. Similarly it is incumbent on every jurist who has completed his individual obligation (*fard 'ain*) to go out to the neighbouring territories and teach the people there the tenets of religion and the stipulation of the Shari'a.

> In fact it is a duty on every Muslim to start with himself by performing the obligatory acts (*fara'id*) and avoiding the prohibited (*muharramat*), then teaching that to his family and close relations, then his...

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13 The *Ihya'al-Sunna* is a work of thirty three chapters covering virtually every aspect of *fiqh*, from *Tahara* (purification) through *'Ibadat* (acts of worship) to business and social transactions, ending up with *tasawwuf*. In the introduction the shaykh assured his audience that his purpose was not to find fault with people but to revive the Sunna, and eradicate the *bid'a*. He particularly cautioned those who would be teaching the book to the ordinary people not to seek people's fault or expose their weakness unnecessarily, nor condemn their actions simply because they do not conform to the *maliki* madhhab, as other madhahib are equally valid. He also cautioned them not to hate the sinful ones among the Muslims, much less the pious ones. The shaykh ended the book with very powerful exhortations from an Andalusian scholar thus: "Follow Sunna and not *bid'a*; Be humble and not proud; Be austere not rich." p. 237. See Cairo edition published by Hajj 'Abd Allah Yassar in 1962.
neighbors, the people of his quarter, then the people of his town, then the surrounding suburbs of his town and so on to the farthest part of the world... This is the most important thing to who ever took the affairs of his religion seriously.\textsuperscript{14}

Thus by the end of the two decades of indefatigable itinerant \textit{da'wa}, shaykh 'Uthman had become convinced, through his readings and from his practical experience, that this approach to \textit{Tajdid} was the one most suited to the circumstances in Hausaland. The shaykh's very curriculum and the works he wrote during this period, reveal that he was familiar with proponents of this school of \textit{tajdid} as well as the other alternative approaches. In other words, his appeared to be an informed and conscious choice. The very writing of the \textit{Riya' al-Sunna} and his decision to settle down in Degel may be an indication of his satisfaction that the processes of \textit{tajdid} was well in place to allow him to avail himself the luxury, as it were, of a settled life. But sight should not be lost of the fact that the rigors of an itinerant life coupled with the tormenting intellectual battle that accompanied it, may not have allowed the shaykh time to reflect sufficiently over the process of \textit{tajdid} or the opportunity to develop his other thoughts or inclinations. The last chapter of his \textit{lhya al-Sunna} which was on \textit{tasawwuf}, suggests that his objective was more than to just point to the innovations associated with \textit{tasawwuf} in his days. Rather it indicates both his appreciation of the role of spiritual training in the process of \textit{tajdid} as well as his individual inclination. For he started the chapter by making a case for \textit{tasawwuf}, quoting the relevant traditions on \textit{ihsan} and closeness.

\textsuperscript{14} See Ibid. pp. 235-6.
to Allah, and referring to authorities such as Ibn Hajj al-Asqalani, al-Suyuti and Ahmad Zarruq the sufi.\footnote{See Ibid. pp. 228-33.}

The relative comfort of settled life in Degel certainly provided the shaykh with the opportunity to reflect further and develop his sufi leanings. His sufi thoughts and activities at this stage, however, took the format of the Qadiriyya \textit{tariqa}, especially the thoughts and ideas Sidi al-Mukhtar al-Kunti. The influence of the latter on the shaykh was such as to suggest that shaykh 'Uthman married his fiqh perspective of \textit{tajdid} with that of the sufi school, with its emphasis on knowledge and \textit{akhlaq} and apprehension for the use of force. The shaykh went into spiritual training with conspicuous avidity and soon found himself time for \textit{khalwa and} started encountering sufi visions where shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jaylani often featured prominently. Though his intensive sufi training did not stop him from his routine teaching, it certainly influenced it. There was a marked sufi bias in his lessons and he specifically encouraged his disciples and students to improve their spiritual discipline. Issues like \textit{takfir}, \textit{hijra} and \textit{jihad} were anything but prominent. There were evident efforts on the part of the shaykh to temper the zealousness and exuberance of the younger members of his team with caution.\footnote{See U.M. Bugaje, 'Comparative Study...' P. 81-3. It is particularly interesting to note that despite the shaykh's attachment to the Qadiriyya Sufi order, he did not make it a prerequisite for the membership of his community, not even his close disciples, much less the common people. Indeed the shaykh maintained an open mind regarding the Sufi orders as he did with the schools of fiqh, stressing compliance with Qur'an and Sunna rather than forms and conventions.}

But this was not to last for long. For the educational network he had established, which had become phenomenal all over
Hausaland and beyond, had been shaking and eroding the basis of the old Hausa order and generating tension in society as the new emerging order sought to overtake the old. The custodians of the old order, the Hausa aristocracy with their entourage of what the shaykh would unhesitatingly call 'Ulama' al-su', were becoming increasingly desperate and frantic as the anxiety of the shaykh's jama'a increased by the day. The shaykh, noticing some impatience within the jama'a, wrote a work aptly titled al-Amr bi al-Ma'ruf -wa al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar'. In this work the shaykh discussed this obligation of 'enjoining the good and forbidding the wrong' stressing that it is not the duty of the scholars alone. He cogently argued that every Muslim must observe this duty even if he be a sinner, because this obligation and individual piety are two distinct injunctions and the failure to observe one is no justification for neglecting the other. He also affirmed the obligatory nature of jihad but quickly reminded his audience that it was a collective duty (fard kifaya) and that no Muslim should take it upon himself to wage jihad on his own. The shaykh emphasized that, when "matters develop to fighting, only an Imam should be in charge for fear of dissention among the Muslims". He ended the work with serious words of caution, warning the ordinary Muslims against rushing and taking up arms in the name of jihad, as it often ended up in failure and drags weak Muslims into perdition unnecessarily. He cited the jihad of Abu Mahalli of early 17th century Maghrib, as a case of rush jihad which ended in failure leaving the ordinary Muslims much worse off. The message of the work was clearly to caution
the Muslims against resorting to force before making adequate preparation.17

Shaykh 'Uthman got his message across to his jama'a who mellowed for some time. But the other side in the impending conflict only grew more desperate with time and resorted to intimidation and persecution in their efforts to save what remained of their shrinking constituency. The patience of the jama'a, who were the main victims of this repression, was understandably running out and the shaykh realized that conflict was becoming inevitable. It was at this point the shaykh started to consider the approach of the militant school of tajdid which he had long been familiar with but perhaps never had cause to have recourse to. The shaykh's reaction came in a form of a poem in the vernacular in praise of shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jaylani about the year 1798, barely five years after settling in Degel. The message of the poem, however, was urging the Muslims to keep their distance from the unbelievers and to acquire weapons as it was Sunna to do so. He also prayed to Allah, in the poem, to show him Islamic rule in Hausaland. The link between the acquisition of arms and this prayer is very obvious. The choice of the language suggests that the target audience were the general public while the masking of the message in the praise of the sufi

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17 See 'Uthman b. Fudi, al-Amr bi al-Ma'ruf wa al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar, (ms). See also F.H. el-Masri (ed. trans.) Bqyan Wujub al-Hijra 'ala 'l-'Ibad K.U.P. 1978, p. 22. Abu Mahalli was a Sufi in Tafilet in the Maghrib who proclaimed himself to be the Mahdi and rose in arms against the Moroccan establishment in about 1610. He temporarily succeeded in expelling the Sa'adian sultan Zaydan and establish a precarious rule over some parts of the Maghrib for some two years only. He was eventually overpowered, killed and his head hung up on the city wall of Marrakesh. IEs was thus seen as an example of rush and adventure rather than Tajdid.
figure brings to mind the style of the semi-militant school of *tajdid.*

This call to arms, as it were, must have elicited some frantic reactions from the Hausa aristocracy, who could not have failed to notice the response to the message, veiled though the message was. But the shaykh and his *jama'a* managed to hold out until nearly five years later when the shaykh found it necessary to take the next major step on the confrontational path. This was the writing of the *Masa'il al-Muhimma*, a fourteen point document, in 1803. This work was prompted, rather predictably, by the growing tension between the *jama'a* and the Hausa rulers, especially the rulers of Gobir, in the domain of whom Degel, the headquarters of the *jama'a* was located. The relationship between the two groups had by 1803 reached breaking point and conflict was eminent. The very title of the work 'Important Matters' suggests the gravity of the situation. The shaykh's message in the *Masail*, simply put, was that the time had come when Muslims cannot continue to be "neglected" (*hummal*) without swearing allegiance (*bay'a*) to an Imam. The time had also come when migration from the land of unbelief had become obligatory. But that Muslims must still resist the temptation to rise against unbelieving rulers unless they were certain they had enough power to do so.

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18 See *Tazyn al-Waraqa*, p. 105. See also U.M. Bugaje, 'Comparative Study...' p. 83. It is worth noting that the shaykh did not explain who he exactly meant by the 'unbelievers', but the context suggested that his audience would have no difficulty in identifying those the shaykh had in mind. F.H. el-Masri– in his introduction to the *Bayan* (p. 23) has made reference to two fulfulde poems one dated 1797-8 and the other 1803 and assigned to the latter the message of call to arms. But from the *Taz in* and some secondary sources it was the work in 1798 that carried the message. Indeed the message may have been repeated in the work of 1803, after all that was just a year before the *hijra* and *Jihad*.

The Masa'il was a logical extension of the earlier work on al-Amr bi al-Ma'ruf wa al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar, but its brevity as well as its sharp and uncompromising tone betray two different circumstances. Though the brevity of the work did not allow citing of sources beyond direct references to the Qur'an and hadith\textsuperscript{20}, the ideas expounded as well as the tone in which they were expressed could easily be traced to the proponents of the militant school of tajdid. This is more evident in a later work, Bayan Wujub al-Hijra, where the ideas of the Masa'il received a more detailed treatment. Less than one year after the Masa'il was written and widely circulated, the anticipated break came, apparently a little sooner than the shaykh had expected. Yunfa, the reigning king of Gobir, after having attacked a group of the Jama'a in Kebbi, threatened to attack the Jama'a at Degel and requested the shaykh along with his immediate family to leave. The shaykh immediately ordered the hijra and issued a twenty seven point Wathiqat to be circulated widely throughout the length and breadth of Hausaland through the effective network of the jama'a.\textsuperscript{21}

The Wathiqat Ahl al-Sudan, as the shaykh called it, was written in circumstances more tense than those under which the Masa'il was written. It was more brief, direct to the point, with

\textsuperscript{20} The nature of the quotations from the Qur'an themselves reflected the mood of the shaykh, he wrote, for example: I say - and success is from Allah - that hijra from the land of unbelief or innovation or rebellion against Allah is obligatory by ijma'. And there is no need for further explanation after the exposition given by Allah Himself. Says Allah, the Most High: 'Behold those whom the angels gather in death while they are still wronging themselves, (the angels) will ask, "What was wrong with you?" They will answer, "We were too weak on earth." The angels will say, "Was Allah's earth not wide enough for you to forsake [make hijra from] the domain of evil?" For such then the goal is hen - and how evil a journey's end. But excepted shall be the truly helpless, be they men, women or children." See Quran, 4:97-8. See also Ibid. p. 110.

hardly any time for quotations, all assertions were authenticated by *ijma*'. The tone and style of the *Wathiqa* vividly convey the seriousness of the situation and the sense of urgency of the message. To appreciate this we may need to look at the opening and the first seven points of the *Wathiqa*. After the salutations, the shaykh wrote:

This is a dispatch from Ibn Fudi, the Commander of the Faithful, 'Uthman to all the folk of the Sudan, and to whom so Allah wills of the brethren in the (Hausa) State; It is a dispatch beneficial in the present times. Thus I say, and success comes from Allah. Know then my brethren:

i. Thus the commanding of righteousness is obligatory by *ijma*.

ii. And that the forbidding of evils is obligatory by *ijma*.

iii. And that *hijra* from the land of the heathen is obligatory by *Ijma*.

iv. And that the befriending the faithful is obligatory by *Ijma*.

v. And The appointment of the Commander of the faithful is obligatory by *Ijma*.

vi. And that obedience to him and to all his deputies is obligatory by *Ijma*.

vii. And that the waging of *jihad* is obligatory by *Ijma*.

In the rest of the *Wathiqa*, the shaykh addressed the issue of who exactly was to be fought and the basic rules and procedures governing the *jihad*. The categorization and the wording of the *Wathiqa* were evidently extracted from the *Ajwiba* of al-Maghili, except for the obvious adaptation to the local circumstances in Hausaland, as the following points illustrate:

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22 *Wathiqat Ahl al-Sudan*, (ms), this document has since been edited, translated and published in J.A. ii (1961) pp. 235-43, by A.D.H. Bivar, who calls it the manifesto of the jihad'. The quotations used here are from Bivar's translation with slight modification.
xv. And that to make war against the king who is an apostate - Who has not abandoned the religion of Islam as far as the profession of it is concerned. But who mingles the observance of Islam with the observance of heathendom, like the kings of Hausaland for the most part - is also obligatory by *Ijma*, and that to take government from him is obligatory by *Ijma*.

xvi. And to make war upon backsliding Muslims (al-Muhmalin min al-Muslimin) who do not owe allegiance to any of the Emirs of the faithful is obligatory by *ijma*, if they be summoned to give allegiance and they refuse until they enter into allegiance.

xix. And that residence in enemy territory (fi bilad al-harb) is unlawful by *Ijma*.

xxvii. And that in the matter of the property of Muslims who reside in enemy territory there are two opinions, the sound one being that (its seizure) is permitted.23

The *Wathiqa* thus represented the declaration of the *jihad* by the shaykh and his *jama’a*. Indeed the *jihad* started in Gobir soon after the shaykh’s *hijra* to Gudu in February of 1804, a few months after the *Wathiqa* was dispatched, and spread all over Hausaland, leaving the shaykh and his *jama’a* very little time to get really prepared. The *Masā’il* and the *Wathiqa* had succeeded in mobilising the *jama’a* and their supporters and sympathizers all over Hausaland and in getting the *jihad* to take off. But developments after the take off were too fast for these short tracts to provide enough guidance to the *jama’a* in the field. Reaching the shaykh was no longer easy as communications had become precarious in a state of war. The shaykh had to expand, elaborate

and even update the issues raised in the *Masa'il* and the *Wathiqat*. As the *jihad* would not wait, the shaykh had to do this in between battles. Sometimes in 1806, after the *jama'a* had found a base in Kebbi, the shaykh finished the work, which ran to some sixty three chapters and called it *Bayan Wujub al-Hijra 'ala al-Ibad*.

The *Bayan*, therefore, is essentially an elaboration of the ideas and issues contained in the *Masa'il* and the *Wathiqat*. It was the first, though not the best, opportunity the shaykh got, since the start of the crisis, to document, authenticate and elaborate the assertions he made in the earlier *Masa'il* and *Wathiqat*. The first, which also turned out to be the longest, chapter of the *Bayan* was, predictably, on the obligation of the *hijra* from the land of the unbelievers. After quoting the relevant *ayat* of the Qur'an and *ahadith* and such towering scholars as al-Suyuti, al-Kunti, al-Khazin and al-Wansharisi to establish the obligation of the *hijra*, the shaykh proceeded to establish the more contestable issue of Hausaland being the land of unbelief. The shaykh here relied heavily on the maxim that the status of a land is that of its ruler, so that once it can be established that the Hausa rulers are unbelievers then *hijra* from it and *jihad* against its rulers becomes obligatory. The shaykh first cited Ahmad Baba’s *al-Kashf wa al-Bayan* in respect of those areas of Hausaland where Islam had not become predominant. As for those areas where Ahmad Baba acknowledge Islam's predominance, the shaykh argued "these, too, are lands of unbelief without any doubt, since the spread of Islam there is [only] among the masses but as for their sultans, they are
unbelievers just like [those of] the first division, even though they profess Islam". The shaykh's reasons are:

That is because they are polytheist turning People from the path of God and raising the banner of the kingdom of this world above the banner of Islam - and that is all unbelief according to *Ijma'. And it is undisputed that the status of a land is that or its ruler - if the ruler be a Muslim, the land is a land of Islam and if he be an unbeliever, the land is a land of unbelief, from which flight is obligatory. On account of this Ahmad b. Sa'id said in his *Mukhtasar*: here is no disagreement about the obligation upon Muslims to depose their loer if he is an unbeliever. But it is only incumbent on them to rise against him if they think they can overcome him, [but] if they realise their inability to do so, they are not obliged to rise against him. However, every Muslim is obliged to emigrate from such a ruler's land to somewhere else.

He further buttressed his position by citing al-Kunti:

"Our Master al-Kunti said in his Nasiha: 'The Sudan is a land where unbelief prevails among majority of its people and all the Muslims there are under the dominion of the unbelievers whom they have recognized as rulers. And people generally adopt the behaviour of their ruler remaining in the darkness of ignorance, willfulness and unbelief.

As the *jihad* had already began, shaykh 'Uthman was concerned that the *mujahidun* do not lose sight of the objectives of *jihad* without which it looses its meaning. He thus found it necessary to remind them. In a chapter on the definition of *jihad*, the shaykh wrote:

As to the definition of the *jihad*, Ibn 'Arafa said: 'It is the fighting of the Muslim against an unbeliever who has no covenant [with the Muslims], in order to make God's law supreme. ... Al-Kharashi said [commenting

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25 Ibid.
26 Ibid. p. 51.
on the words] 'to make God’s law supreme': "This shows that whoever fights for the sake of booty or to show his bravery or the like cannot be considered a mujahid."  

Written in the midst of the jihad, the Bayan had to, of course, address the issues of the jihad itself- the laws governing the jihad-, the laws governing the sharing of the booty; the laws affecting dhimmis and unbelievers under protection (aman); the laws concerning missing persons, their properties, the 'iddkah of their wives; the shrouding and burying of the martyrs; the appointments of governors over conquered districts and the establishment of an Islamic government. The way the shaykh presented his arguments and the manner he supported his position with reknown authorities, suggests that the Bayan was primarily addressed to scholars. The scholars the shaykh had in mind may not be limited to those in the rank of the Jama’a who were in the battle field and on whom the implementation of the ideas of the Bayan principally devolves. There were also some scholars who had not joined the ranks of the Jama’a up to the outbreak of the jihad who needed to be convinced of the merit of the jihad on the basis of the Shari’a. Thus the Shaykh marshalled an enormous number of authorities of literally all disciplines and schools, with scholars like al Ghazali, al-Qadi ‘Iyad, Ibn Rushd, al-Isfahani, Ibn Khaldun al-Maghili, al-Suyuti and Ahmad Baba featuring prominently. That the Shaykh was able to do all this in the heat of the jihad, while constantly on the run, from one temporary camp to the other, is astonishingly remarkable.  

27 Ibid. p. 80.  
28 For a list of the authorities cited see ibid, p. 168-75. The Bayan was indeed the most voluminous work written under the shades of the sword but it was not the only work written nor was the shaykh the only person who wrote. His brother shaykh ‘Abd Allah was compiling his Tazvin al-Waraqat and
As the *jihad* progressed, Borno, an Islamic state whose Islamic credentials were thought to be beyond reproach, came under the attack of the *jama'a*. The Borno establishment understandably took up the issue with the leadership of the *jama'a*. Shaykh Muhammad al-Amin al-Kanemi, an illustrious Borno scholar, with the full blessings of the rulers of Borno, wrote, rebuking the *jama'a* for these attacks and challenging them to prove their case. Al-Kanemi argued:

Tell us therefore why you are fighting us and enslaving our free people. If you say that you have done this to us because of our paganism, then I say that we are innocent of paganism, and it is far from our compound. If praying and the giving of alms, knowledge of God, fasting in Ramadan and the building of mosques is paganism, what is Islam? These building in which you have performed the Friday prayer, are they churches or synagogues or fire temples? If they were other than Muslim places of worship, then why did you pray in them when you captured them? Is it not a contradiction?

Among the biggest of your arguments of the paganism of the believers generally is the practice of the amirs of riding in certain places for the purpose of making alms-giving, sacrifices the "the uncovering of the heads of free women; the taking of bribes, embezzlements of the properties of the orphans; injustice in the courts. But these five charges do not require you to do the things you are doing. As for this practice of the amirs, it is a disgraceful heresy and certainly blameworthy. It must be forbidden and disapproval of its perpetrators must be shown. But those who are guilty of it do not thereby become..."
pagans; since no one of them claims it is particularly efficacious, or intends by it to associate anything with God. ...

The taking of bribes, embezzlement of the property of the orphans and injustice in the courts are all major sins which God has forbidden. But sin does not make one a pagan when he has confessed his faith.

Acts of immorality and disobedience without number have long been committed in all countries. Egypt is like Bornu or even worse. So also is Syria and all the cities of Islam. There has been corruption, embezzlement of the property of orphans, oppression and heresy in these places from the time of Banu Umayyad right down to our own day. No age and no country is free from its share of its heresy and sin. If they all become pagan, then surely their books are useless.²⁹

Having argued his case, al-Kanemi concluded his letter by a rather sarcastic praise of shaykh 'Uthman:

Indeed we thought well of him. But now, as the saying goes, we love the shaykh and the truth when they agree. But if they disagree it is the truth which comes first.³⁰

Muhammad Bello replying on behalf of the jama'a, wrote, inter alia:

It is indeed seemly for me not to reply, but I am constrained to do so through solicitude for the ignorance of the talaba, so that they may not follow you... This is so that you will learn in the first place that what made it proper for us to permit our people neighbouring on you to fight Bornu was the continual receipt of news from those who mixed with the people of Bornu and knew their condition, to the following effect. It was that they make sacrifices to rocks and trees, and regard the river as the Copts did the Nile in the days of the jahiliya. It


³⁰ Ibid. Al-Kanemi’s arguments suggests that he belongs to fiqh school of tajdid.
was also that they have shrines with their idols in them and with priests. We have seen the proof of this in your first letter where you say: 'Among the biggest of your arguments for the paganism... the amirs riding to certain places... Then you explained that they do not wish by this to associate anything with God... But it is not hidden to meanest intelligence that this claim warrants no consideration. the verdict depends on what is seen. ...

For what caused the Amir of Bornu (according to what has reached us) to inflict harm on the believers among the shaykh's near to you until they were obliged to flee'. What caused them to begin to fight them, unless he were in alliance with the Hausa. Kings to assist them? It is manifest that he would not have risen to assist the Hausa kings had he not approved of their religion. And certainly the approval of paganism is paganism itself. To fight them is permitted, since the jihad against paganism is incumbent on all who are able....

The statements in your premises and the contentions you have used to elucidate them amount only to refutable arguments. How can it be said that it is not legal, for him who is able, to reform immorality or put an end to corruption? It is not right for an able man to point to learned men who in the past have not bothered to change it or speak of it. By my faith, that is of no avail....

Luckily for both sides, the conflict did not last for long as the two sides came to an agreement to cease hostilities and to reach an amicable settlement. This conflict represents in essence a conflict between two approaches to reform, a conflict between two schools of tajdid. While shaykh Muhammad al-Amin accepted in principle that some of the practices of the Muslims in

31 Ibid.
32 The jama'a agreed to cease its attack on Borno and the latter agreed to concede to the jama'a its southern provinces like Katagum and Misau which had been captured by the mujahidun and incorporated into the emerging Islamic state based in Sokoto. It will be recalled that al-Hajj 'Umar al-Futi was in Borno, on transit from Hajj proceeding to Sokoto, and he made some efforts at reconciling the two sides. Little did Hajj 'Umar realise, then, that he was going to go through a similar dilemma later in his career, as we shall have an occasion to discuss below.
Borno is not in conformity with the Shari’a, he argued that jihad was not the best way to correct the situation. Since in his own reckoning a lot of these wrongs are done as a result of ignorance it is the spread of knowledge rather than physical attack that can correct the situation. This argument is at the core of the fiqh school of tajdid. Muhammad Bello's argument, on the other hand, is that in so far as these practices are wrong they must be corrected by hand so long as there is the ability to do so, and the jama’a had reasons to believe that they had this ability. For Bello, it is not tenable to see immorality and corruption and to have the ability to change it but to only "point to learned men who in the past have not bothered to change it or speak of it. By my faith," Bello emphasized, "that is of no avail." This is precisely the position of the militant school of tajdid. The cessation of hostilities and the completion of the jihad gave the leaders of the jihad, especially the triumvirate, an opportunity to develop their thoughts and ideas about tajdid, particularly the establishment of the Islamic order.

Just as the Masa’il and the Wathiqa heralded the more voluminous Bayan so did the Bayan heralded a plethora of works elaborating, substantiating, updating and enriching the ideas of the Bayan. With the main leg of the jihad over, the issue at stake was how best to translate into reality the ideals they fought for, the stage of Islah in the process of tajdid. This triggered a debate from within and more importantly gave the shaykh the opportunity to reflect deeper on the whole process of tajdid with the benefit of hindsight. This debate was led and eventually dominated by the three major figures of the
enterprise, the triumvirate - shaykh 'Uthman, his brother 'Abd Allah and his son Muhammad Bello. Shaykh 'Uthman's conception of the new order is best conveyed by his two books *Kitab al-Farq bayn Wilayat Ahl al-Islam wa bayn Wilayat Ahl al-Kufr* and *Usul al'Adl* while 'Abd Allah's complementary, if often critical, ideas are contained in his *Diya' uli al-Amr wa al-Mujahidun* and *Diya' al-Sultan*. Bello initially took his seat in the audience but later joined the debate with his reconciliatory *Kaff al-ikhwan*, in which he aired some of his views on the new order and made special effort to cool down the tension generated by the debate.

In *Usul al-'Adl* the shaykh was concerned with the quality of the leadership of the new order. He discussed what he called the ten principles of justice and emphasized the centrality of 'Adl in governance under the new dispensation. Building on the last few chapters of the *Bayan Wujub al-Hijra*, the shaykh sought to present the new leadership with models and impress upon them the real weight of their responsibility. In *Kitab al-Farq* the shaykh wanted to emphasize the point of departure for the new Islamic order, lay down its structure and identify for it its source of revenue; drawing heavily from the *Shurb al-Zulal* of al-Bamawi. In the shaykh's words:

...*this is The book o difference between the governments of the Muslims and the governments of the unbelievers*. It comprises an introduction, four parts, and a conclusion. The first part is in explanation of the way of the unbelievers in their government. The second part is in explanation of the way of the Muslims in their government. The third part is in explanation of the foundation of governments and their ministers. The fourth part is in explanation of the different kinds
of public treasury upon which legend the welfare of the Muslims, and its expenditure.\textsuperscript{33}

Shaykh 'Abd Allah in his two books was essentially addressing the same issues but in his unique way. In his \textit{Diya' ul-al-Amr}, 'Abd Allah, in line with his very high taste for thoroughness, insisted that the new Islamic state must comply with the high standards of the \textit{Khilafa Rashida} in almost every respect. He also insisted that only men of knowledge, conscience and piety deserved to be appointed to offices of responsibility, and under no circumstances should the state allow monarchy to creep in for not only is it a departure from the Sunna but it is also the source of all corruption. In \textit{Diya' al-Sultan}, where he drew substantially from al-Maghili's \textit{Taj al-Din fi ma yajib 'ala al-Muluk}, 'Abd Allah took his arguments further and challenged a number of concessions shaykh 'Uthman had made on issues like flamboyant dressing for amirs, music etc. In his quest for high standards 'Abd Allah appeared unimpressed by what the revolution had achieved. To curb this tendency in 'Abd Allah and a few of his admirers, shaykh 'Uthman composed the \textit{Nasihat ahl al-Zaman} in which he reminded his audience, with 'Abd Allah implicitly in mind, the favour that Allah had bestowed upon them. "Know O Brothers" the shaykh proclaimed:

\begin{quote}
that condemning (one's) time is unrespectable attitude towards Allah and nothing will accrue from such other than bothering one's heart and tongue. Know, O, Brothers that the ordering of good is obligatory according to \textit{ijma'}, and this is happening at is time. That forbidding the wrong is obligatory according to \textit{Ijma'}, and this is happening at this time. That defending oneself, people and property is obligatory
\end{quote}

according to *Ijma* and this is happening at this time. That the application of the Shari’a is obligatory according to *Ijma*, and this is happening at this time. These are ten achievements and the people of this time should thank Allah for them because they are from the greatest bounties of Allah after the faith (Iman).\(^{34}\)

Establishing a new Islamic order in a well informed and highly learned society, especially with meticulous scholars like shaykh 'Abd Allah, meant that every point raised and position taken had to be sufficiently substantiated with relevant authorities. The very process of post *jihad* reordering of society, *islah*, needed a lot of *ijtihad*. Thus the boundaries of the *madhahib* had to be lifted and full access allowed to the wider and rich Islamic intellectual and scholarly heritage. The shaykh took a lead in this first by composing a short work, *Hidayat al-Tullab*, in which he cogently argued that it was neither necessary nor desirable that a student clings to one particular *madhhab*, for "neither Allah ta’ala in his book nor His Messenger in his Sunna obliged anyone to adhere to any one particular *madhhab* of the *mujtahidun* nor have we heard that any of the *'ulama’* of the *salaf* (Muslims of earlier generation worthy of emulation) commanded that a particular *madhhab* be followed."\(^{35}\) This idea was later expanded in his *Najm al-Ikhwan*. This latter work was what was thought to have closed this rather exhilarating debate, which interestingly never led to a rift in the ranks of the leadership or constraint in the running of the new state. Summarizing the essence of the, debate, Mahmud Tukur aptly observed:

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\(^{34}\) Uthman b. Fudi *Nasihat ahl al-Zaman*, ff. 1-5.

The point at issue between the Shehu and Abdullahi may, however, be that the former thought he knew better just how the 'Caliphal ideal' could be more effectively achieved. What he may be saying is that in deciding on policy for the achievement of a change of heart and outlook among a particular group of people it is necessary to pay great attention not only to the ideal itself, but also to the spiritual and intellectual conditions of the group as it actually is. In other words effective reform cannot be achieved by a simple decree enumerating principles (as Abdullahi may have thought in his administration of Kebbi), but by a more complicated and inventive process devised after a careful appreciation of local conditions and the local cultural heritage.36

With the subsiding of the debate, the shaykh took time to reflect further on the whole enterprise of tajdid. In his Kashf ma 'alaihi Amal min al-Aqwal, shaykh 'Uthman discussed the significance and crucial role of scholarship in the maintenance of the Islamic order and the advancement of the Muslim community. He called on scholars not to be content with the present level of knowledge but to always seek out for more. In Hisn al-Afham min Juyush al-Awham the shaykh concentrated on the role of scholars in the process of tajdid. He took up the arguments of the 'ulama' al-su', exposing the fallacies of their arguments and the emptiness of their claims, in a way which suggests that the shaykh saw them as the greatest danger to the process of tajdid. In his Siraj al-Ikhwan fi Ahammi ma Yuhtaj ilaihi fi hadha al-Zaman, shaykh 'Uthman took up what he considered are the ten major issues associated with his tajdid. Starting with the real difference between Muslims and non

Muslims, the difference between the true scholars (Ulama' al-din ahl al-dhikr, ansar al-Rahman) and the venal scholars (Ulama' al-su' ahl ghafala, ansar al-shaitan) into the justification for jihad against the different categories of people the jama'a fought. He relied heavily on al-Maghili in justifying jihad as an effective means of Tajdid, especially jihad against an unjust and corrupt ruler.37

What the shaykh seemed to be saying was that, while knowledge and the role of the true scholar is very important in the process of tajdid, ultimately jihad is inevitable for a total success. It is this conclusion, 'it seems, that gave the militant school a clear edge over other schools of tajdid in the nineteenth century.

**Shaykh Ahmad Labbo**

Seku Ahmadu, as he came to be known, was actually part of that expanding teaching network of shaykh 'Uthman. Indeed he had contact with Sidi Mukhtar al-Kunti, to whom he owes a lot of his sufi leanings. Seku Ahmadu had his formal traditional Islamic education in the Masina area, in the 1780s and 90s, when shaykh 'Uthman was on his itinerant mission. The fame of shaykh 'Uthman as well as his books must have spread into the Masina area, and Seku Ahmadu who graduated from the formal school system, in his early twenties, about 1797, must have been quite familiar with both the fame as well as the works of shaykh 'Uthman. Ahmad's very choice of career may have been influenced by some of shaykh 'Uthman's teachings, especially the

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37 See 'Uthman b. Fudi-. Siraj al-Ikhwan, ff. 23-5.
call in the *Ihya’al-Sunna*, completed about 1793, for all those who had acquired some learning to go out and teach, revive the Sunna and destroy the *bid’ā*\(^{38}\). What ever may be the case, by the time the *jihad* broke out in Hausaland, in 1804, the whole region new of the shaykh and his thoughts and ideas. For soon after the *jihad* was over Seku Ahmadu became in constant touch, through correspondence, with shaykh *‘Abd Allah* b. *Fudi* at Gwandu.\(^ {39}\)

Seku Ahmadu like many of the students of shaykh *‘Uthman*, devoted their entire time to teaching the ordinary people the basics of Islam and to fighting the *bid’ā* that had become prevalent in society, largely as a result of widespread ignorance. In time Seku Ahmadu became prominent and gathered considerable following. By about 1815 he was in a position to challenge the *’ulama’* of Masina and Jenne, for their complacency in condoning *bid’ā* and the pagan practices of the Bambara rulers. His only known work *al-Idtirar ila Allah fi ikhmad ba’ad ma tuqad min al-bid’a wa ihya ba’ad ma andarasa min al-Sunna*, written about this time, was clearly meant to raise these issues and establish a case against these *‘ulama*.\(^ {40}\)

In its contents, style and even format, *Al-Idtirar ila Allah*, is just another *Bayan Bid’i al-Shaytaniyya*. The issues raised are basically the same in both works, though arranged in a different order, even the formula introducing the issues, ‘*wa mimma ahdathuhu min al-bid’a*’ is the same. But certainly *al-Idtirar is*

\(^{38}\) See *Ihya’al-Sunna* pp. 236-6. Indeed the *Ihya’al-Sunna* had a profound influence on Seku Ahmadu; it was reported that after the establishment of the Islamic polity, following the *jihad*, he found difficulty in carrying his council along with him until he could quote from the *Ihya’al-Sunna*. See A. Smith, A little New Light p. 139.


\(^{40}\) Ibid. p. 21.
not simply a copy of the *Bayan Bid'i*. Because while in the latter, shaykh 'Uthman was content to support his position by pointing to *ijma*, in the former Seku Ahmadu quoted prominent authorities extensively, including shaykh 'Uthman, to support his position. While the diversity of these authorities reveal the breadth of Seku Ahmadu's learning, his choice of authorities and constant reference to the prophet (S.A.W.) and the *salaf* echoes the orientation of the Sokoto scholars. Another more significant difference is the addition of the *hadith* which mentioned that Islam started as a stranger and will return a stranger, with which Seku Ahmadu ended his work. This *hadith* should not be seen only in the general sense of encouraging those who wish to fight the wide spread *bid'a*, but more in the context that al-Maghili used it in the *Ajwiba* to buttress the position of the militant school of *Tajdid*.\(^{41}\)

Barely two years after completing his *al-Idtirar ila Allah*, Seku Ahmadu ran into conflict with the local rulers, the *Ardo'en*, who called in the pagan Bambara authorities to deal with the Seku. With the experience of his mentors fresh in his mind, Seku Ahmadu must have anticipated it. He quickly organized a *hijra* and obtained shaykh 'Uthman's permission from Sokoto and started his *jihad*. One year later the *jihad* was over and the victorious Seku with his *Jama'a* set about establishing an Islamic polity in the fashion his mentors in Sokoto had done a decade earlier. Muhammad Bello who took over the Sokoto Caliphate, following the death of shaykh 'Uthman in 1917, rightly considered Seku's polity of Masina as part of the Sokoto Caliphate, and

\(^{41}\) Shaykh Ahmad Labbo, *Al-Idtirar ila Allah*, (m), P. 20.
accordingly demanded Seku's bay'a. Seku however pointed to shaykh 'Abd Allah's fatwa in Diya al-Hukkam which justified the existence of two Imams in a territory which is so large as to render it ungovernable in some parts. Bello eventually acquiesced to Seku's arguments and hostility was averted.

Thus shaykh Ahmad Labbos tajdid in Masina was an extension of the tajdid in Sokoto. For Seku Ahmadu was intellectually and ideologically part of the jama'a, and accordingly took to teaching, fighting bid'a and reviving the Sunna before taking to the sword. Consequently he reordered his society after the jihad along the same pattern as Sokoto. But his decision to estrange his polity from Sokoto brought him closer to the Kunta shaykhs whose relative forbearance in matters of al-amr bi al-ma'ruf meant that his heirs lost some of the militancy of the jama'a.

The scale of the conflict in Masina, both on the intellectual and physical planes, would appear to be very low compared to Sokoto. But certainly the significance of the jihad is not any less than it was in Sokoto, considering the fact that the Muslims in the Masina area had, since the Moroccan invasion in 1591, been without a state they could call Islamic. That after three centuries, during which the Muslims lived first under secular regime and later under pagan suzerainty, they could once again live under the Shari'a and be led by pious scholars, was certainly a

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significant event not only for the Muslims of Masina but also for Islam in the region.

**Al-Hajj Umar al-Futi**

Al-Hajj 'Umar started his career as a sufi and remained a sufi even after taking the militant option in *tajdid*. He represented a unique blend of sufism and militancy. This interesting mix is not perhaps too difficult to understand. Al-Hajj 'Umar set out from his home in Futa Toro, about the year 1827, as a young Tijani *murid* wishing to accomplish the pilgrimage. Once in Hijaz he met and spent some time with the head of the Tijaniyya order there, who eventually appointed Al-Hajj 'Umar the *khalifa* of the order in Western Sudan. He left Hijaz for Western Sudan full of enthusiasm, determination and a deep sense of mission. In Sokoto where the achievements of the militant school appeared to have impressed him, he spent several years in the company of the *jihad* leaders, during which he imbibed a lot of those militant ideas. Thus he returned to Futa Toro a sufi *khalifa*, with revolutionary ideas and determined to bring about changes.

By the time 'Umar arrived Sokoto after his Hajj, about 1831, well over a decade after the demise of shaykh 'Uthman and since Muhammad Bello assumed full responsibility for the Caliphate, the *jihad* as well as the debate which followed it had long been over and the new Islamic order fully in place. But the *jihad* literature, particularly the plethora elicited by the debate, formed the focus of study and provided the reference and the guidance

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43 It might be worth noting, in passing, that a similar blend of Sufi militancy is also to be found in Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi (d. 1885) of the Nilotic Sudan, ensconced in Mahdism though it was.
for running the affairs of the society. 'Umar's proximity, or better still, intimacy with the leadership of the Caliphate, especially Muhammad Bello himself, and his involvement in the affairs of the state, gave him unlimited access to the intellectual treasure and profound insight into the Sokoto tajdid programme. 'Umar himself became fully integrated intellectually, spiritually and socially into shaykh 'Uthman's jama'a.44

The depth of this Sokoto impact reveals itself clearly in 'Umar's works written after he left Sokoto for Futa Jallon. Most of the works that influenced the vision of at-Futi belonged to the jihad and post jihad period, a period when the militant approach gained wide acceptance among the jama'a and got substantial Islamic legal justification from the scholars especially the jihad leaders themselves. Dr. Omar Jah, following a thorough study of the writings of al-Hajj 'Umar, has identified some specific Sokoto works that, more than others, influenced the thinking and career of al-Hajj 'Umar. These works include, Qadh al-Zinad fi amr hadha al-Jihad of Bello; Diya'al-Hukkam of 'Abd Allah; Hisn al-afham, Masa'il al-Muhimma and Siraj al-Ikhwan of shaykh 'Uthman.45 Bello's Qadh al-Zinad, is essentially an updated and, as the title suggests, more argued history of the whole tajdid process in Hausaland. The work had drawn from Bello's own Infaq, 'Abd Allah's Tazyin, shaykh 'Uthman's Ta'alim al-Ikhwan and made a strong case for the militant school of tajdid.46

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44 Al-Hajj 'Umar was particularly close to Bello who appointed him a judge in his court and gave him his (Bello's) daughter to marry. Their relationship was so close and cordial that some tijanis claimed that 'Umar converted Bello into the tijaniyya tariqa. But this need not necessarily be so. This close and good relationship may simply be a reflection of the fact that for both of them the Islamic link is the most important and tariqa affiliations inconsequential or at best secondary.

45 O. Jah, 'Sufism. and the Nineteenth Century Jihad Movements', pp. 50-5.

46 See Muhammad Bello, Qadh al-Zinad fi Amri hadha al-Jihad, (ms). The contents of the other works had been alluded to earlier.
It was not surprising therefore soon after arrival in Futa Jallon and settling in Dyegonko, near Timbo, 'Umar took upon himself the regeneration of his society, which compared with Sokoto can easily be said to be decadent, and accordingly developed an approach which was unmistakably militant. His approach, typical of the militant school, saw al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar central to the life of the Muslim community as well as the individual and insists that it was thoroughly carried out. 'Umar writes in his Tadhikirat al-Ghafilin, which was originally written about 1831 after his return from Hajj, but which was apparently updated in and after leaving Sokoto:47

You should know that al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar is the basic foundation of Islam. It is the reason for sending the prophets to mankind. Should its application be discontinued, and its function neglected, the office of prophecy would cease to exist. [If] the religious function is neglected (calamity would befall all of life, ignorance and deviation would be rampant. Thus the whole world and the peoples therein would be ruined and virtually destroyed. [The proper understanding and true application of this principle (al-amr bi al-ma'aruf), is weakened, and its name is forgotten. Thus people's minds are preoccupied with subtle and obscurantist arguments (mudahana). Observation of Allah's law has disappeared, and instead, people flock like animals in pursuit of their material desires. It has become very rare to find a sincere believer whose faith in Allah is strong enough to endure threat or to resist temptation in the sabil ('cause) of Allah. He who [under these circumstances tries to fulfill this duty, will definitely be honoured as having revived the Sunna of the prophet which most people at this time try to destroy. ... You should know

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that al-amr bi al-ma'aruf is an obligation in Islam, Its abandonment is condemned and punishable.48

Here then is an interpretation of *al-amr bi al-ma'ruf* which matches only that of al-Maghili, for in this perspective even the revival of the Sunna which shaykh 'Uthman had given a wider meaning had been focused down to the revival of the application of *al-amr bi al-maruf*. In this same spirit al-Hajj 'Umar did not hesitate to point his accusing fingers to those he believed were responsible for this state of affairs, oblivious or perhaps indifferent to the fact that this may alert his potential enemies rather too early. In *Tadhkirat al-Mustarshidin*, another earlier but updated work, al-Hajj 'Umar wrote:

> May Allah curse those people who are entrusted with authority but who do nothing to promote good or eliminate evil within the society they govern and among the people who live under their authority ... no one should be blamed for corrupting religion except the kings and the venal 'Ulama' who have, sold their consciousness for trifling immediate worldly gains”49.

Here again we find a clear echo of al-Maghili's stance and a total agreement with the position of the *jama'a* in Hausaland. In *Rimah Hizb al-Rahim*, 'Umar's major and perhaps most important work, completed in 1845, about five years after he had settled in Dyegonko, 'Umar took his quarrel with the 'Ulama' and the sultans a little further, albeit in a rather subtle tone, when he wrote:

> Since I am actively involved in *al-amr bi al-ma'aruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*, and (according to the prophet) whoever does this, becomes a khalifa of Allah, of his prophet, and [therefore] the legitimate authority to

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48 Al-Hajj 'Umar al-Futi *Tadhkirat al-Ghafifin*, f. 45. Al-Hajj 'Umar, as usual reinforced his position with numerous verses of the Quean. The translation is Dr. Omar Jah’s, see ibid, p.157.

interpret the Qur'an ... According to Muhammad b. Hamid, there must be khalifahs who represent the prophets in maintaining their Shari‘a and promoting their teachings. In the case of Islam, Abu Bakr was entrusted with the responsibility after the death of the prophet. Now, thanks to Allah, I am myself one of those entrusted with this responsibility.50

Here al-Hajj 'Umar is more than just asserting the fact that he is taking upon himself the responsibility of al-amr bi al-ma'ruf. He is implicitly saying that by absconding from their responsibility of al-amr bi al-ma'ruf, the 'Ulama' have forfeited their rights to interpret the Qur'an and the sultans their rights to rule. These rights, by corollary, now accrue to al-Hajj 'Umar and those involved in the execution of al-amr bi al-ma' a' ruf.51

It is both interesting and significant, however, that this Maghili and Sokoto influence on al-Hajj 'Umar, profound as it no doubt was, did not displace 'Umar's sufi, and specifically Tijani, orientation. 'Umar retained his sufi commitment and incorporated his militancy within a sufi Tijani frame in a rather unique manner. This resulting blend is more vividly conveyed in the Rimah, where 'Umar argued that his position as a wali in the sufi hierarchy, especially the deputy of the khatim al-awliya' entitled him to even more authority than his involvement in al-amr bi al-maruf did. For as he argued, "the shaykh and that is the complete saint (al-wali al-kamil) in his community is like the prophet in an umma. And that giving bay'a to him (al-wali) is

51 It will be recalled that Sayyid Qutb in his Fi Zdal al-Quran had made a similar, if more virulent, assertion, that 'ulama' not involved in Islamic work can not even understand the real message of the Qur'an, much less teach it to others. See chapter two page 53 for details.
like giving bay’a to the prophet (S.A.W.) because of his (al-wali) being the deputy of the prophet.52

Indeed soon after settling in Dyengonko, al-Hajj 'Umar raised a flock of disciples and students, talaba, as he called them, which continued to grow and spread with time. He set up a trade network which was to cater for the material needs of his growing community including the provision of fire arms, the acquisition of which appeared to have been a normal practice in the area at that time. He carried out an intensive sufi tarbiyya training for his talaba, which concentrated on asceticism (zuhd) and self reliance; regimented sufi discipline as reflected on the respect of the murid for his shaykh; and jihad against the carnal soul (Jihad al-nafs). His idea of zuhd, however, very much like that of Sidi Mukhtar al-Kunti, was not one of running away form this world (al-Dunya) nor of denying oneself the proceeds thereof, but rather of emptying the heart of the love for the world. In his words:

The disinterest (zuhd) of the perfect walis, is not to disengage themselves completely from worldly affairs rather it is to free their mind (qalb) from worldly affairs while still benefitting from its wealth]. This is because these walis cannot attain to high rank in the sufi hierarchy until they can dispense with the material wealth of others. .. Among the conditions of a successful reformer is that he should not be completely disengaged from worldly affairs. For he who does not work, and entirely depends upon other people for his life, such a man belongs to the class of women in his society.53

52 Al-Hajj'Umar al-Futi~ Rimah, p. 117.
53 Ibid. p. 40. O. Jahs translation, see his 'Sufism...'P. 169.
Similarly al-Hajj 'Umar urged his talaba to do their utmost to conquer their carnal soul for only then can they be in a position to worship their lord and creator. He asserted that this endeavor is called *jihad al-akbar'* precisely because it is far more difficult and far more dangerous than the physical *jihad* against unbelievers. For as he argued, in a physical *jihad* it may not matter whether you kill or are killed, either way, you will attain felicity. But in the *jihad* against the self it is either you conquer it or you are ruined and it is always easier to fight someone than to fight your very self.  

This kind of training was further reinforced by the regimented sufi discipline where a *murid* is expected to respect, adore and obey his shaykh in his presence as well as in his absence. This must have produced a highly disciplined organization always at the service of the shaykh and the cause he set for the community.

In the *Rimah*, as in his other works, al-Hajj 'Umar often argued his case very strongly and supports his position profusely with verses of the Qur'an, traditions of the prophet and numerous authorities, some of them not very well known in the region especially outside sufi circles. His erudition and rich learning gave him an obvious edge over his contemporaries and drew to him such large following as caused envy among scholars and worry to authorities. The *'ulama* not surprisingly, attacked some of al-Hajj 'Umar's views arguing that they do not conform to the maliki *madhhab*, which was the *madhhab* of the region. The *'Ulama'* apparently claimed that by acting contrary to the maliki *madhhab* 'Umar was committing such sin as will

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54 See Omar Jah in ibid. p. 164.
excommunicate him from the madhhab completely. 'Umar's first reaction was a sufi response, as he states:

You should know that the critic of the walis is dropped from Allah's mercy, and therefore destroyed in this world and in the world to come. On such a critic Allah declares war thus he will forever suffer from the divine curse and condemnation.\footnote{Ibid. p. 47. O.Jah's translation, see his 'Sufism...P.160.}

He then came to the level of the fuqaha and argued:

From this you should know that some of these [critics] who claim to be knowledgeable and still hold the view that who ever disagrees with the opinion of a mujtahid will commit a sin and such a sin will excommunicate him from the madhhab (school) of that mujtahid, is an ignorant and blind fanatic ... such a man belongs to those who study the works of the fuqaha (jurists) without understanding them. ... Neither Allah nor His prophet enjoin any one to follow one specific madhhab ... and none of the founders of these schools themselves tried to impose his opinions upon others ... So he who carefully understands this point, can easily realize that the claim of those who tried to confine the truth within one specific school of law [such as the Malikiyya] and imposes his false ideas upon the Muslims ... will gain nothing from Allah except expulsion from his mercy remoteness form the true teaching of Islam, and above all eventual destruction. Especially if he happens to be a teacher or a mufti or a qadi, whose ambition to gain promotion can force them to claim to be the most knowledgeable men of his time. Such a man is condemned by Allah for his dishonesty, self-deception, bigotry, crookedness, and moral corruption.\footnote{Ibid. p. 63-8. O.Jah’s translation in above, p. 160-1. We find here a clear echo of the position of al-Kunti and 'Uthman b. Fudi on the issue of madhahib.}

Similarly the establishments in the Futa Jallon, worried by the growing influence and number of al-Hajj 'Umar's talaba, started to show their disapproval to al-Hajj 'Umar's activities. Though the French as well as the surrounding pagan chieftains
were clearly worried, it was the Almami of Futa Jallon in whose territory 'Umar was residing that first reacted by prompting 'Umar to leave his territory. 'Umar quickly arranged with the neighboring pagan chief of Tamba, Yemba Sakho, to move into his territory and pay an annual tribute of an agreed amount of gold.\textsuperscript{58} 'Umar appealed to his talaba to make the hijra, using arguments he had already advanced in the Rimah and which his following were already familiar with. His arguments were:

“O Brothers, you should know that emigration from one country under an infidel rule to that under Muslim rule, or from a Muslim country in which there is munkar [wrong or evil] which one has no means to change, to another country where there is possibility of effecting such a change, is obligatory according to the Qur'an and Sunna and Ijma'. ... Nothing can prevent a believer from abandoning the place he is familiar with except nostalgia, but if he can see that every thing other than Allah is ephemeral, which he must leave behind at the time of death, then he will dislike such a thing... He who likes to adhere to the Sunna of the Prophet at this time in which the Muslim community is corrupt, and in which those who try to fulfill the obligation of al-amr bi al-ma'ruf are exposed to hatred, bigotry, and therefore became objects of suspicion and slander, must migrate to a safer place.\textsuperscript{59}

The arguments are powerful, the appeal passionate and the response was, not surprisingly, positive. As his talaba assembled at Dinguiry, al-Hajj 'Umar stepped up his acquisition of fire arms and started some military training for his flocking talaba. It was obvious that al-Hajj 'Umar was preparing for a jihad and this, understandably, frightened the chief of Tamba. It was the

\textsuperscript{58} See O. Jah, Sufism... p. 190
attempt of the chief of Tamba to eject al-Hajj 'Umar and his 
talaba that, however, started the jihad.60

After the conquest of the pagan state of Ka’arta in 1855 and
the unsuccessful attempt to take the French stronghold of
Medine in 1857, 'Umar turned his attention to the powerful
pagan Bambara kingdom of Segu. Segu was the center of idol
worship in the region whose growing military power had been
frustrating the spread of Islam in the region and threatening
Muslim polities especially Masina. Realizing the threat this
kingdom posed to his own venture, al-Hajj 'Umar moved west
determined to conquer Segu. On his way to Segu al-Hajj 'Umar
subdued some of the small chiefdoms on his way like Diawara,
Niyamina and Sansanding, where he camped his forces in 1860.

Ali Munzu, the pagan ruler of Segu was frightened by the
presence of al-Hajj 'Umar and his large army at Sansanding and
so was Ahmadu Ahmadu the Muslim ruler of Masina, the
grandson of Ahmad Labbo. With what they considered a
common enemy at their door step, Segu and Masina decided to
come into some accord which could save them from the eminent
disaster. Since the invading army was Muslim and the objective
was jihad, Ali Munzu and Ahmadu agreed that Masina-declared
Segu its protectorate and al-Hajj 'Umar should be restrained
from attacking another Muslim country. In fact as a preemptive
move Ahmadu sent a letter to al-Hajj 'Umar in Sansanding
asking him to withdraw his forces back as that was part of his
territory. Ahmadu, sounding firm and confrontational, wrote:

60 For the details of the jihad see O. Jak ' Sufism ... 'PP, 186-236. See also Olomfitnehin, Sep Tukolor
Empire, p.
When you receive this letter, you will have to choose between paying allegiance to us which is an obligation upon you, or withdrawing your forces from these territories [Sansanding and its surroundings] to other areas [Nioro] where you can fight against [what you call the enemies of Allah; otherwise I will be left with no alternative but to declare war against you].

In his reply al-Hajj 'Umar challenged Ahmadu's claims and accused him of collaborating with the infidels against Muslims. But he wanted to believe, nevertheless, that Ahmadu was being wrongly advised, as he wrote:

Ahmadu Ahmadu is our grandson, his father was our son and his grandfather our friend, thus we have great compassion for him and expect him to respect us as sons respect their fathers. We expect no evil act from him if he could be saved from the conspiracy of the hypocrites [around him] who are digging graves under his feet without his being aware of it. We do not think that Ahmadu Ahmadu will accept what is written in his name here. We swear to Allah that we love him, and shall therefore do whatever we can to protect him and unite our forces with his in carrying the message of Allah.

The following year, al-Hajj 'Umar's forces met and conquered a combined Segu Masina army in Segu itself and All Munzu took refuge in Masina, as if to confirm al-Hajj 'Umar's suspicion. If al-Hajj 'Umar had no cause to conquer Masina, this provided him with one. Several efforts were made to negotiate peace with Masina, these efforts not only failed but left 'Umar

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62 Ibid. ff. 14-5.
convinced that Masina deserved to be taken over, if only for the efforts they made to subordinate the Islamic cause and masquerade their complacency and selfishness under Islamic garb. One person who played a key role in these negotiations and eventually rose to the defence of Masina against al-Hajj 'Umar was shaykh Ahmad at-Bakka’i, the grandson of al-Kunti and the leader of the Qadiriyya sufi order, based in Timbuktu. The acrimony between al-Futi and al-Bakka’i continued well beyond the conquest of Masina, giving the whole conflict a Tijani - Qadiri struggle for political power and control.

Many scholars appear to have bought this idea of Tijani-Qadiri conflict, but this is an oversimplification of differences that have their roots in the perspectives of the two major figures in the conflict. Since the estrangement of the Masina polity from Sokoto, Masina came to fall back gradually into the sphere of influence of the Kunta shaykhs. This seemed to have encouraged Masina to rest on its oars rather too early, gradually retracting from its militant beginnings and sliding back into its pre-Revolutionary sufi complacency. That by the time of Ahmadu Ahmadu, the Masina leadership was under the spiritual patronage of al-Bakka might even explain Masina’s inability to take a more militant posture towards the spread of paganism and syncretism in the area. For peace with al-Bakkai, as his letter to al-Hajj 'Umar clearly conveys, appeared to have been elevated above jihad, as he wrote:

From Ahmad al-Bakka’i to the Amir -shaykh al-Hajj 'Umar b. Sa’id al-Futi, ... This is to congratulate you for what Allah bestowed upon you ... You must have heard

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63 See O. Jak ‘Sufism...’pp. 230-5.
and therefore known the [spiritual] prestige of my predecessors and mine and our excellent relations with the Sultans and other temporal rulers of the Western Sudan ... I was asked by some followers of Muhammad Bello when I appealed to recover some of our possessions plundered by the 'Kel Ahir' "Why do you not declare jihad against them for you are capable of doing so? And besides, by jihad you will be able to dispense with making such requests from the tyrants and thieves." I said to him that though jihad is of great virtues it eventually leads to temporal power which itself leads to injustice. So we prefer to maintain our present status intact.64

In other words the conflict between al-Hajj 'Umar and Masina is essentially a conflict between two schools of tajdid, the militant and the sufi. Even as with later involvement of the Kunta shaykhs, especially al-Bakkai who defended Masina passionately, in the same way al-Kanemi defended Borno, and this conflict took a Tijani-Qadiri form, it remained at its core a conflict between two approaches to tajdid. Indeed this conflict was bound to occur just as it did between Sokoto and Borno. In a way the conflict that shaykh 'Uthman had with the 'ulama' in Hausaland and the conflict al-Hajj Umar had with the 'ulama' in Futa Jallon; even the conflict al-Maghili had with his contemporaries in Tuwat before them; are essentially conflicts between two perspectives, two approaches and two schools. This issue will be taken up further, in the next chapter.

Tajdid in the nineteenth century Western Bilad al-Sudan, therefore, represent a very interesting phenomenon in more than one respect. It was the first time the thoughts and ideas of tajdid gained such a wide application, literally covering the whole

64 Quoted in ibid. p. 229.
region and radically changing its complexion. The level of cooperation and the depth of influence among the scholars of the region has been unprecedented, never before had any Islamic enterprise been such a team work as *tajdid* in the nineteenth century. It also reveals the interaction, cooperation and conflict between the various schools of *tajdid*. Perhaps more profoundly, the phenomenon also demonstrates the resilience of Islam and its tremendous capacity in bringing about social, economic and political changes at such a vast scale.
CHAPTER SEVEN
THE TRADITION OF TAJDID IN WESTERN BILAD AL-SUDAN

That there was a tradition of tajdid in Western Bilad al-Sudan is beyond doubt. We have seen how the thoughts and ideas which made up this tradition evolved from their humble beginnings in the eleventh century and became nourished and developed over nearly eight centuries and brought about the drastic transformation of the complexion of the vast region in the nineteenth century. We have seen how thoughts and ideas moved through the rhythm of history and shaped human societies. We have also seen the role scholars, the repository of these thoughts and ideas, played in the process of change. We have seen how scholars, in this tradition, serve as the beacons of society, rallying a large and loyal following and commanding such awe and respect as surpass that of temporal rulers. How, we must now ask, do these thoughts and ideas retain their potency through the vagaries of time? What is it in the scholar that evokes this confidence of the ordinary people? From where does the scholar derive this power which is conspicuously out of proportion with his physical and material resources? What is it that informs the choice and therefore determines the reaction of scholars to the challenges of tajdid? As Thomas Hodgkin\(^1\) would put it, "When and why do scholars become revolutionary? These are some of the questions we wish to address in this chapter. It would seem

necessary, however, to set the context by considering the salient point of this process of *tajdid*.

The essence of *tajdid* is to return a Muslim community to its pristine purity where the society submits itself totally and unconditionally to Allah in all conceivable aspects of human endeavor. The task of the *mujaddid* therefore involves raising the consciousness of his society, restoring and strengthening its link with its creator and sustainer and making its members better servants of Allah. This is an intricate and arduous process which requires a substantial intellectual prowess, delicate human engineering and shrewd political calculations. In all these, the *mujaddid* must be guided by and operate within the limit of the *Shari’a*, taking the prophet as his model.

This necessity to keep to the bounds of the *Shari’a* and the ardent desire to emulate the prophet is what makes *tajdid* first and foremost a spiritual enterprise. For the *mujaddid* seeks to recreate, as precisely as time and space would allow, the career of the prophet; indeed he is a sort of facsimile, even though of admittedly lower scale, of the prophet, in terms of his role in society. But the prophet’s influence in society stems not from his political power but from his moral and spiritual strength. The astonishing intensity of the indelible and enduring influence of the prophet on the individual Muslim down to this century, and, as all evidence will show, for many more centuries to come, is a conclusive proof about the efficacy and potency of spiritual approach to the transformation of human societies. "It would be difficult" H.A.R. Gibb observed, "to exaggerate the strength and the effects of the Muslim attitude towards Muhammad."
Veneration for the prophet was a natural and inevitable feeling, both in his own day and later, but this is more than veneration. The personal relationship of admiration and love, which he inspires in his associates, have echoed down the centuries, thanks to the instruments which the community created in order to provoke them afresh in each generation." Rev. Kenneth Gragg was even more articulate on this when he wrote:

Muhammad became the norm of true Muslim behaviour and the conscious source of the manners and total conduct of the community as far as a pattern could be ascertained. The whole phenomenon, whose detail illustration might be - as it often was - a life study, is one of the most remarkable of the prophet's legacies ... But however precisely this outcome is associated with the conscious will of Muhammad, there could be no clearer evidence of his stature and uniqueness in his day and beyond. Only a very few so effectively determine the shape of the world after they have left it, and maintain their authority by their example so far, so deep, and so wide. The Muhammad of tradition belongs to all ages of Islam, in as much as each of them returns in some measure to him as its criterion of all that it approves.

The mujaddid walks in the shadow of the prophet and in his endeavor to emulate the prophet acquires some of the latter's moral and spiritual strength and consequently influences his society commensurate to his spiritual and moral strength. Like the prophet, the mujaddid' also attempts to live as a 'total' person, serving as an example in a wide variety of human endeavor. First and foremost he is a scholar, but in addition, he is also a spiritual guide, a community leader, a jurisconsult, a

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politician, a military commander, and still finds time to attend to the individual needs of his community - giving advise on family matters and offering prayers in the event of some specific needs or difficulties. In other words he devotes his whole life to the care and worry of society, and thus tends to leave behind a profound and enduring influence, in his immediate society at least. The name of shaykh 'Uthman b. Fudi, for example, still evokes deep-seated respect and veneration in today's Nigeria, as though he is alive.

The ultimate in *tajdid* is a return to God. By the time the *mujaddid* chose his career, he had delivered himself to God and what remained for him was to deliver, his society to God also. This is what makes *tajdid* essentially a moral rather than a political movement. The *mujaddid* may very often take politics into consideration in his efforts to deliver his society to God, but it is morality and not politics that lie at the core of his thinking. He is often not as keen as it may appear to many, especially Western scholars, in establishing a state and acquiring political power like he would be in satisfying his conscience that he had discharged his moral responsibility. If he should fail to secure an Islamic state, the *mujaddid* would still not consider his efforts a failure. But he would consider it a failure if after getting a state he still failed to discharge his moral responsibility. Perhaps no where has this point been graphically vindicated as in the case of 'Abd Allah b. Fudi, the conscience of the *tajdid* in Hausaland, who deserted his victorious army at a time it was conquering states and taking booty, for the simple reason that worldly
considerations appeared to be surpassing the moral ones among
the *mujahidun*. In his words:

And when God had driven the enemy from us, we
began to raid, and to attack those who had rebelled
against us, until we prepared, in the fourth year of our
*hijra* to raid al-Qadawa. We set out at the end of Rajab,
and the moon of Sha'bani rose while we were on the
road. Then there came to me from God the sudden
thought to shun the homelands, and my brothers, and
turn towards the best of God's creation, in order to
seek approval, because of what I had seen of the
changing times, and my brothers, and their inclination
towards the world and their squabbling over its
possession, and its wealth, and its regard ... I
considered flight incumbent upon me, and I left the
army and occupied my own affairs and faced towards
the East, towards the Chosen One - may God bless him
and give him peace until we arrived the city of Kano.
The people of Kano prevented me from continuing, and
sought from me that I should teach them how they
should act in order to establish religion ... ⁴

The challenges of *tajdid*, the return to God and the
restoration of His *Shari'a*, after decades of decay and deviation,
necessarily involve a fresh look at the Qur'an and Hadith and the
arrival at a new consensus or *ijma*. In other words, the gates of
*ijtihad* must necessarily be opened for scholars to address
themselves to new issues. Shaykh 'Uthman b. Fudi took this
quest for *ijtihad* further when he asserted that the best writings
for a community are those of their contemporary scholars, since
they are best informed of the circumstances in which that
community lives.⁵ 'Abd Allah may have taken his queue from

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⁴ Abd Allah b. Fudi, |-Tgain al-Wargga PP. 120-2.
⁵ Shaykh'Uthman made this point in a number of his works including, significantly, *Najm alkhwan*,
which was said to have been written to close the post Jihad debate among the scholars of the jama'a.
The principle itself seem to be at the core of the Shi'a fiqh, in which once a *mujtahid* dies, his legal
opinions need no longer be binding, for he is no longer in touch with the circumstances in which the
community lives.
here when he went ahead to produce a new tafsir, the *Diya' al-Ta'wil*, for the community. The hot debate that ensured between the scholars among the *jama'a*, after the *jihad*, which eventually simmered down, was the way the *jama'a* in Hausaland arrived at their own consensus, following an influx of *ijtihad* on a variety of issues. Indeed the intellectual component in a process of *tajdid* is as important as the moral. For while the latter gives the community the resolve and strength to surmount obstacles and return to God, the former provides the community with the insight and wisdom to remain with Him.

The roots of all the thoughts and ideas of *tajdid*, as has been pointed earlier,⁶ are to be found in the Quraan and Sunnah, reinforced by the *sira* of the *Khulafa’ al-Rashidun* and earlier *mujaddidun*. While the Islamic educational institutions insure the preservation of these ideas, the religious rituals of a Muslim community keeps invoking them with unfailing regularity. The daily prayer guarantees that the Qur’an is constantly recited; the Zakkat checks the worldliness of the rich and provides the community with an index for gauging its closeness to God at the practical level; Fasting, by emphasizing abstinence, develops and sharpens the spiritual dimension of the community; the Hajj, which symbolizes a *hijra* to God and the solidarity of the *umma*, dramatizes the essence of the life of a Muslim and cultivates this yearning to return to God. But it is *Tasawwuf* in its general form, perhaps more than anything else that provides an enduring reservoir as well as a hibernaculum for the seeds of *tajdid*. For *fiqh*, which emphasizes the exoteric aspects of the Islamic

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⁶ See chapter one.
teachings and appeals to the mind with its logic, tends to lose its dynamism with time and becomes rigid and inert. *Tasawwuf*, however, with its esoteric bent, tends to touch the heart and approach the Qur’an and Sunnah not so much as a source of law like a source of light which draws and cultivates closeness to Allah and His prophet, thereby giving power and depth to Islamic teachings. Out of this power and depth and the warmth of its feeling towards the heart, emanates such potent drive for change that the mind finds difficult to comprehend much less to generate otherwise.

Having dwelt on some of the salient points of *tajdid*, we can now begin to address the questions raised. But since these questions are addressed within the specific context of the Western Bilad al-Sudan, it seems desirable to discuss this context also, briefly. Some scholars, apparently with only a casual familiarity with the history of the region, have suggested a direct link between the *jihads* of the 19th century and the Wahabi movement in the Arabian peninsular. F. H. el-Masri has already shown that this is not tenable, if only for the fact that the latter is strongly anti-sufi while the former is unmistakably sufi.7 All these point to the dearth of appreciation of the originality of the educational tradition of the region. The works of Wilks, Hunwick and more significantly Sa'ad's recent *Social History of Timbuktu*, ought to correct this deficiency in our understanding of the history of the region.8 But even these works have not conveyed the depth of this originality and ingenuity.

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8 These works have already been referred to in previous chapters.
To fathom this depth is certainly beyond the scope of this work, but it is essential for our discussion here to catch a glimpse of it by gleaning the frame of mind of only a few of the scholars and *mujaddidun* of the region. Ahmad Baba’s biographical dictionary of Maliki scholars, *Nayl al-Ibtihaj*, which was meant to be complementary to the *Dibaj* of Ibn Farhun, was certainly a very modest way of telling the world that Western Sudan had its fair share of scholars and a tradition of scholarship comparable to North Africa and the Arabian Peninsular. In his exchange with al-Mansur the Moroccan Sultan whose army invaded Timbuktu, Ahmad Baba made it clear that the Islamic credentials of Morocco were not any better than those of Western Sudan, a point vindicated by Ahmad Baba's fame in the scholarly circles of Morocco.⁹ Ahmad Baba seems to be even more assertive on the Islamic credentials of the region in his *al-Kashf wa al-Bayan li asnaf majlub al-Sudan*, in which he defended the region from the blanket judgment of some scholars outside the region on the issue of slavery.

Sidi al-Mukhtar al-Kunti took the matter even further. For he rated very low the Islamic practices in North Africa and the Arabian peninsular, asserting the superiority of the region over these other areas, as far as the practice of Islam was concerned.¹⁰ Similarly shaykh 'Uthman b. Fudi asserted their intellectual autonomy when he concluded an argument against some of his contemporary scholars with a quotation from a *salaf*:

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⁹ For details and sources see chapter three.
¹⁰ See chapter five.
What comes to us from the prophet we take directly without any reservation; What comes from the *sahaba* we take some we leave some; But as for what comes from others (beside the *sahaba*), they are men and we are men.\(^{11}\)

This frame of mind and mood of the scholars of the region clearly reveal not only the originality and creativity of the educational tradition in Western Sudan but also the extent to which its scholars cherish it. The tradition of *tajdid* in Western Bilad al-Sudan being a product of this educational tradition, retain its stamp of originality and creativity. This is certainly not to deny the interaction with the traditions of other regions of the Muslim world as evident in the works of the scholars and *mujaddidun*. Rather, this is to emphasize the fact that the tradition of *tajdid* in Western Bilad al-Sudan has a momentum of its own. And in addressing the questions raised we shall be looking at some of the features of this tradition which gave it this distinct momentum.

Perhaps one of the most important feature of this tradition is the opportune blend of *fiqh* and *tasawwuf*, which echoed the asceticism and militancy of the Murabitun scholars and their mentors in Qayrawan. We had earlier noted that in the Islamic orient where the Sufi - Faqih dichotomy became pronounced, *fiqh* tended to be dry and rigid while sufism drifted away from the *Shari’ah* and acquired a strong propensity to live in a world of its own, where some pantheistic ideas find accommodation - a problem which al-Ghazali sought to rectify through his *Ihya’ 'ulum al-Din*. This mix of *fiqh* and *tasawwuf* is best symbolized

\(^{11}\) Uthman b. Fudi *Hisn al-Afham min Juyush al-Awham*, (ms) f 19.
in the scholars of Timbuktu, who were to set both the tone as well as the pace of scholarship in the region. Until the emergence of the Qadiriyya in the region, no scholar is known to belong to a sufi order as such. But, as almost every page of Ahmad Baba's *Nayl al-Ibtiyah* and al-Bartall's *Fath al-Shukur* bear evidence, the scholars of the region were all ascetics who combined their asceticism with an impressive knowledge of fiqh, among other disciplines. In fact this mix became the whole mark of scholarship in the region. The city of Timbuktu itself, despite the large commercial transactions that went on in it, was known and respected largely for its learning, and owed much of its reverence and political autonomy to its piety.

This blending meant that the scholars of the region, at least during the period under study, never had to pursue sufism at the expense of *fiqh* or the latter at the expense of the former. But more importantly, it meant that while asceticism restrained the appetite and worldly ambitions of the scholar and gives him the power and resolve to strive against the currents of the time, his fiqh insured that his asceticism did not go beyond the limits determined by the *Shari’a*. It is in the cache of this blend that we find the seeds of *tajdid* preserved in a way that enabled them to retain their potency through the rhythm of time. The survival of the blend in the region meant the survival of the ideas of *tajdid*.

Another feature, which is common to all Islamic traditions of learning, but which seemed to have gained a special place in the region, was yet another blend, this time of intellectuality and morality. This blend in the scholars of the region gave their learning a sense of purpose and endowed them with a great sense
of responsibility. From this emanated a special relationship between the teacher on the one hand and his students and the wider community on the other. The scholar carried on his shoulders the heavy burden of his students and the wider society, always concerned with their individual and collective welfare, ready and willing to give a helping hand. Ahmad Baba’s description of his teacher, Muhammad Baghayogho (1523-94), may give us a glimpse of this burden:

Our shaykh and our [source of] blessing, the jurist the accomplished scholar, the pious and ascetic man of God (al-abid), the mufti, a man among the finest of God's upright servants and practicing scholars. ... he was constantly busying himself in seeing to people's need, even at cost to himself, becoming distressed if they fell into adversity, settling disputes among them and giving them good advice. Add to this his love of learning and his devotion to teaching and study, his love for men of learning and his own total humility'. the aid he gave to scholars and the trouble he took for them, giving out the rarest and most precious of his books ... He had enormous patience for teaching throughout the whole day and was able to get his point across even to the dull-witted never feeling bored or tired ... When I first came in contact with him he was teaching various lessons from the after the early morning prayer until mid-morning; then he would go to his house and offer the mid-morning prayer (salat al-duha) for a while and afterwards go to the qadi to look into certain people's problems and to effect reconciliation between others. Then he would study in his house over the noon period and lead people in the midday prayer. He would then teach until it was time for the mid-afternoon prayer and having performed it, would go and teach in another place until dusk or close to it. After praying the sunset prayer he would teach in the mosque until the evening prayer after which he will
return to his house. I heard that he always used to spend the last part of the night in devotions.\textsuperscript{12}

Indeed we find a similar pattern of life in most of the scholars of the region, particularly the prominent ones, like Sidi al-Mukhtar al-Kunti, shaykh 'Uthman b. Fudi, 'Abd Allah b. Fudi, al-Hajj 'Umar al-Futi, whose students have written extensively about the details of their illustrious careers. It was their simplicity and accessibility that brought these scholars close to their students and the wider society, allowing them to share with their community its worries as well as its aspirations. Their identification with the problems of the ordinary people, with whom they lived and interacted daily, naturally endeared them to their community and earned them deep-seated respect. Above all it cultivated confidence, trust and loyalty among their usually large following.

It is significant to recall, here, shaykh 'Uthman's criticism of his contemporary scholars who stay in their ivory towers and teach their few students while indifferent about the ignorance of their own wives and children much less the wider society\textsuperscript{13}. Even more significant perhaps, is the seemingly trite remark with which al-Maghili opened all the chapters of his book, \textit{Taj al-Dinfi ma Yajib al-Muluk}, written for Muhammad Rumfa that 'the greatest calamity that can happen to a ruler is his seclusion from his subjects'. What al-Maghili seemed to be stressing was that the absence of accessibility erodes confidence, breeds suspicion and


for the ruler it makes it difficult for him to know the level of the application of injustice. 'Abd Allah b. Fudi may have had this in mind when he included in his section on *siyasat al-shar'iyya* in his *Diya'al-Hukkam*, this need for the ruler to make himself accessible to his subjects so that he does not become completely dependant on his advisers, who might wish to hide something from him.\(^{14}\) We can now see the source of this confidence, trust and loyalty the *mujaddidun* enjoyed from their large following.

It should not be difficult, now, for us to see the source of the power these scholars wielded, which, several times, turned out to be more than the more conspicuous one wielded by temporal authorities. In the first place the power base of the scholar tended to be much wider than that of temporal rulers. For while the following of a scholar cuts across and extends very far beyond political, ethnic and even linguistic boundaries, the subjects of a ruler are limited to his state and within this state his power base may be limited to members of his ethnic or language group. A more significant difference may be in the depth of these two contending powers. A temporal ruler may be feared by his subjects, but very rarely is he revered and it is even more unlikely that his subjects would stake much for his cause, especially when he is unjust. As for the scholar the extent of the love and depth of the loyalty of his following, where ever they may be, can only be surpassed by that of the *sahaba* towards the prophet. The closeness the scholar maintains with his society, which gives him

\(^{14}\) Several references have been made to these works in earlier chapters. We may also add that 'Abd Allah must have considered this a serious matter, for in the 'great debate' after the *jihad* in Hausaland, he ferociously fought against allowing the new leadership from using the ostentatious dress of the *Habe* rulers they had just overthrown. He seemed to have nursed the fear that it will alienate the subjects from their rulers.
access to more intimate knowledge of the society, tend to give
him another edge over the temporal ruler. All these combine to
make the scholar potentially many times more powerful than a
temporal ruler.

It is interesting to note that the power a scholar wields,
tended to increase rather than decrease if he maintained his
distance from temporal authorities. Scholars in the region had
always maintained contact, some times quite close, with rulers.
But those that kept good watch on their credibility tended to
maintain some distance even as they discharge their obligation to
advise them and oblige some of their requests for prayers. The
case of al-Maghili and shaykh 'Uthman are good examples in
point. The scholars tended to be guided by the often quoted
tradition of the prophet, to the effect that, the best among the
rulers are those who consult the 'ulama', and the worst among
the Ulama' are those who serve the interest of the rulers. At
certain critical times, however, contacts with certain rulers could
be viewed more seriously. Shaykh 'Uthman, for example, writing
his Masail Muhimma on the eve of the jihad when the
relationship with the Hausa rulers had reached breaking point
was not prepared to excuse any scholar making any contact with
the rulers, under any pretext. Quoting the relevant authorities,
the shaykh wrote:

Ibn al-Hajj has stated in his book al-Madkhal: 'Let (the
scholar) guard strictly against frequenting anyone
belonging to the group of worldly men (abna
al-dunya) ... since the earned man should be the
person to whom people come, not the other way round.
It is no excuse for a learned man to frequent other
people's houses on the pretext of securing advantages
for the masses of the people and warding off harm ...
securing the need of the Muslims lies in total abstention from visiting worldly men, and in reliance upon Allah and recourse to him.

The devout servant of Allah, 'Abd al-Wahab al-Sha'arani has stated in his book, *Lawaqih al-Anwar*: Sufyan al-Thawri has said, Beware of princes O my brother! You must not go close to them and mix with them in any way. It is said to you: 'Intercede and save someone oppressed and restore his rights to him'. This is nothing other than satanic deception. The deluded merely takes that as a ladder to acquire some worldly gain. 'Abd al-Aziz al-Andalusi has said: 'If you should claim that there are some people, the weak and oppressed in the hands of oppressors, and that frequenting kings and getting acquainted with rulers, with a view to intercede on behalf of those seeking such intercession, is a means of rendering great service to Allah... we should reply by pointing out that, that is the essence of satanic deception. Besides such an action is the real perdition ... due to what it entails of degradation for the guardians of the Shari'a (i.e. scholars) who represent the honour and sanctity of Islam, in every country.' That is so because fraternising with oppressors is a great sin, a hypocrisy and is tantamount to waging war against Allah and his Apostle.15

It should be easy to see why Islamic scholars are revolutionary. They are the heirs of the prophets, the guardians of the conscience of their societies, and above all they have a mission to establish justice in society, as symbolized by the *Shari'a*. But when exactly they become revolutionary may be difficult to say. The question of which means they use to achieve their objectives seem to revolve around the famous hadith on *al-amr bi alma'ruf -wa nahy 'an al-munkar*. The hadith has

15 *Uthman b. Fudi, Masail Mihimma*, f 7-9. The translation of this passage had been done by A. Bello Daura and used by I. Sulaiman in 'Worlds Apart' an unpublished paper for an international Seminar on the role of 'ulama in the Sokoto Caliphate, University of Sokoto, 1986.
stipulated that the wrongs in society should be corrected by the hand when and wherever possible, failing that, it should be corrected by talking, writing, education, etc, and failing that, the wrong should be loathed pending the ability to correct it. Scholars have elaborated extensively on this hadith, but at the core of its application lies the question of ability (*istita’a*). The differences among the different schools of *tajdid* essentially revolves around this question of *istita’a*. Even the militant al-Maghili, when advising al-Hajj Askia Muhammad on the militant course in removing the wrong and establishing Justice, he did add the proviso of *istita’a*.

While there doesn't appear to be an objective criterion for determining what constitute this ability, perhaps because of the complexity of the issues involved, there are guidelines developed by scholars,16 the discussion of which is however beyond our scope here. It should suffice our purpose here to appreciate that the decision to remain silent, speak or fight against a wrong in society is informed and determined by a number of factors, moral, social, political and of course military. But given the moral nature of *tajdid* and the wholesome changes it aims at bringing about in society, the moral factor seems to be by far the most important.

Scholars generally and *mujaddidun* in particular, seem to have a deep appreciation, more than their following, of the fact that *tajdid* is not only a moral movement but it is also an evolutionary process nourished by ideas. They try to maintain a

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balance between the speed at which ideas spread and the rather slow pace of societal evolution. There was a conscious effort by the mujaddidun we have examined in this study, to gage the moral tone of society, rather than the political mood before making any major move. Thus shaykh 'Uthman resisted confrontation with the Hausa establishment for several years despite the urging of the jama'a, the members of which thought they were ready. The shaykh must have perceived that the society was not morally ripe for revolution despite the large number and apparent zeal of the Jama'a - a point vindicated by 'Abd Allah's desertion from the army in the middle of the jihad. Similarly 'Umar al-Futi insisted that the talaba must master the Qur'an and imbibe the deeply aspect of sufi tarbiyya before venturing into armed struggle. These mujaddidun feared that pure political action which is not motivated by the desire to please God is misguided and unworthy in the final analysis, even if it may lead to spectacular material success. In fact, as one can glean from their writings, they must have felt that material success not backed with adequate moral development, could lead to a disaster much worse than the one they wanted to flee from.

It was also part of the moral consideration that scholars ensure that whatever choice they made was supported by the Shari’a. Thus when ever they chose to make the hijra, and also, when the momentous decision for jihad came they all had to evoke the authority of the Shari’a. Even when they thought it wise not to react they still have to show the validity of their action on the scale of the Shari’a. Indeed every step they took on the
path of *tajdid*, sometimes including silence, had to be justified by the *Shari’a*. Such were the constraints of the *mujaddidun*.

Admittedly there was a considerable measure of subjectivity in some of the decisions taken especially in the interpretation of *istita’a*. Thus two scholars given the same situation could arrive at two different, even opposing views. The practices in Borno for example, while admittedly wrong, did not, as far as al-Kanemi’s *ijtihad* goes, warrant a *jihad*. But the *jama’a* in their *jihad* felt it did, hence the conflict. Luckily some consensus was reached and hostilities ceased. In the case of Masina, however, where consensus could not be reached, one took over the other. Such were the hazards of *tajdid*.

It might be appropriate to close our discussion on the tradition of *tajdid* with the reflections of a *mujaddid* who had the rare opportunity of living through all the stages of *tajdid*. He was born into a society in decline, he was brought up in the core of the *tajdid* movement, taking part in the long and arduous process which culminated into *jihad*, having survived the *jihad* he shouldered the full weight of *islah*, for nearly three decades and became the main architect of the new Islamic order. This was Muhammad Bello, one of the triumvirate that led the *Tajdid* in Hausaland, and his reflections on *tajdid* are contained in a work he wrote at the tail end of his life, titled simply *al-Dhikra*. Ibrahim Sulaiman, who was perhaps the first to draw attention to this, surprisingly obscure, work, described it as "a philosophy of history, written by a maker of history."

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In *al-Dhikra*, Muhammad Bello was lamenting that barely three decades after the *jihad*, the tempo of the revolution and the spirit of the *jihad* was already waning. He was deeply worried that the Sokoto Caliphate was resting on its oars rather too early and that the future of the Caliphate may not therefore be bright. Bello was, in other words, worried about what Toynbee\(^\text{18}\) called the 'intoxication of victory' and the 'victor's pride, which always spells the victor's ruin. Bello was particularly disturbed by the rate at which the society was reverting to the very practices which elicited the *jihad* in the first place. Referring to these practices, Bello wrote:

It is utterly amazing that (some of) the people have (soon afterwards) reverted to the ways of the unbelievers who had ruled these countries before them, and are now taking what those unbelievers used to take themselves: bribery, illegal taxes and seized goods. They appropriated women's dowers, collect levies from traders, and falsely and unjustly enrich themselves. They have also reverted to much injustice, arrogance, lying and treachery ... and they revel day and night in vanities. They turn away from the study of the Qur'an and learning and remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*) ... As for enjoinning the right and forbidding the wrong – they do not take recourse to it, but follow reprehensible customs.\(^\text{19}\)

Though evidently disturbed, Bello was not all together surprised for he identified the root cause of all these excesses and deviations as the human crave for comfort and luxury, which he admitted is inherent in man, "*la budda li al-nas min tanfis*" he stated. He thus dwelt at length on the issue of materialism and


\(^{19}\) See ibid.
the threat it posed to the umma. Quoting the relevant *ayat* of the Qur'an and *ahadith*, Muhammad Bello argued cogently that the first casualty of this human crave for comfort is the *jihad*. For this crave erodes the resolve to fight *munkar* and the determination to establish *al-ma'ruf* and in time seeks to rationalize this position. Once this resolve to strive and fight is lost, the very perception of *munkar* and *ma'ruf* becomes blurred and the conscience of society becomes blunt until it gradually sinks into the quicksand of pervasion and corruption. The worst stage, however, Bello seemed to imply, is when this crave catches up with the *ulama* and they "fall into dispute, mutual rivalry, and enmity, resulting from their competition for worldly things, power and authority."\(^{20}\) For then the society would have lost its fight against evil and oppression, tyranny, perversion and corruption will let lose, engulfing the whole society.

Happily, despite this dismal picture, Bello ended his reflections on a note of hope. Quoting the *ayat* of the Qur'an, "Not all of them are alike: of the people of the book are a portion that stand (for the right); ... They believe in God and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emulation) in (all) good works: They are in the rank of the righteous ... for God knoweth well those that do right."\(^{21}\) Bello recalled the history of Banu Israel and how, despite their perversion and corruption, there endured among them a community which remained steadfast on truth and continued to guide others. This 'righteous portion, Bello strongly believed, are

\(^{20}\) Ibid.
\(^{21}\) See Qur'an, 3:113-5.
the indestructible seeds of regeneration of the *Umma*, provided they eschew materialism and take to asceticism (*zuhd*) for it is in *zuhd* their indestructibility lies. Bello's fears about the Caliphate, if we may add, came to pass, as it gradually lost its grip and fell prey to colonialism and consequently degenerated to levels that Bello might have found inconceivable. But what then has happened to Bello's indestructible seeds of regeneration, the 'righteous portion'? This, perhaps, ought to be the subject of another work. Meanwhile, the tradition of *tajdid* lives on.
CONCLUSION

This study has attempted the arduous and rather cumbersome task of tracing the genesis, development and fruition of the thoughts and ideas of *tajdid* in Western Bilad al-Sudan over some ten centuries or so. Though Islam started spreading into the region as early as the 8th century, it was only in the 11th century with the *Murabitun* movement that *tajdid* could be said to have began. The *Murabitun* movement itself was an extension of the activities of the Maliki *fuqaha* of Qayrawan, with their sufi orientation, militant posture and wariness of establishment. Having been built on the educational foundations of the *Murabitun* movement, the tradition of learning in the region came to imbibe these features of the Qayrawan Maliki scholarship. The tradition of *tajdid* in the region which was nurtured in and nourished by this tradition of learning came, rather naturally, to acquire these features too. Thus while the idea of *tajdid* forms an integral part of the Islamic world-view, in the Western Bilad al-Sudan the tradition of *tajdid* acquired a local pigmentation in which we find the tinge bequeathed by the *Murabitun* and their mentors in Qayrawan. And in time *tajdid* in the region, as the study found out, came to stand for a genus of which a variety of species developed.

By the 16th century the tradition of learning had matured and was at par with many others in the Muslim world. From then on the region interacted with wider world of scholarship more than ever before, giving and receiving scholars and enriching its learning. From the 16th to the 18th century, there developed in the region a variety of approaches to *tajdid*. This study has
identified five such approaches which it has called schools of *tajdid*. For these schools, very much like the schools of *fiqh* (*madhahib*), draw primarily from the Qur'an and Sunnah and their differences in the interpretation of these two fundamental sources reflected the personality as well as the environment of the advocates. There was the 'Fiqh School' which saw decadence and deviation in a Muslim society mainly a result of ignorance, especially of the *Shari'a*, and hence *tajdid* could only come about through intensive education. The 'Militant School' however believed that Muslim society is kept on course only through the practice of *al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*. Hence society could only be restored back on course through the application of this principle using force and specifically fighting *jihad*, so long as there were the means to do so. As for the 'Sufi School', the issue of societal degeneration and deviation is neither the dearth of knowledge as such nor could it be entirely remedied through the use of force. Rather it is all a question of character building (*tarbiyya*). There was the 'Semi-militant School' which shared with the militant school a perspective on *al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*, in considering *jihad* a viable alternative in *tajdid* and in their criticism of the injustices of rulers. But in selling its ideas this school used subtle means and veiled references and implored such caution in implementing these ideas as robs it of a substantial amount of its militancy. The 'Pacifist School', very much like the *fiqh* school, saw education as the main instrument of *tajdid*, and many of its advocates made a career out of teaching, if often combined with trade. It distinguished itself from the *fiqh* school, however, by
taking its quietism further in taking a firm position against \textit{jihad} and giving pacifism a kind of doctrinal status.

The \textit{Jihad} Movements in the 19th century represented the fruition of these ideas of \textit{tajdid} on a scale unprecedented in the region. The study examined the three major movements of shaykh 'Uthman b. Fudi, shaykh Ahmad Labbo and al-Hajj 'Umar al-Futi. Shaykh 'Uthman started off his \textit{tajdid} programme and continued for nearly a quarter of a century along the lines of the \textit{fiqh} school. As events unfolded, however, he found himself in circumstances which, by the arguments of the militant school, warranted the use of force. Though the shaykh was cautious in resorting to force, the way he marshalled his arguments for the militant school once he decided on it, and the resoluteness with which he executed the militant option suggests that the shaykh had all along a soft spot for the militant school. The dramatic success of the militant school in Hausaland seemed to have given it an edge over others. Thus shaykh Ahmad Labbo, essentially part of shaykh 'Uthman's \textit{jama'a}, had no hesitation in going the militant way. Similarly al-Hajj 'Umar had no difficulty in subscribing to the militant school. But he did so without having to abandon his strong sufi orientation. In fact he integrated the militancy into the sufi frame producing a rather unique blend which added to the variety of species of \textit{tajdid} in the region. A careful examination of the arguments around the Sokoto-Borno and Segu-Masina conflicts reveal that it was essentially a result of differences between schools of \textit{tajdid}, rather than territorial ambition or competition between Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya.
Though this tradition of *tajdid* evidently benefited from other traditions in other parts of the Muslim world it remained unique in a number of ways. The opportune blend of *fiqh* and *tasawwuf* gave the ideas of *tajdid* an optimum habitat that retained their potency through the rhythm of time. The rigid tendencies of *fiqh* was tempered by the softness and warmth of *tasawwuf* while the latter's excessive tendencies were checked by *fiqh*. The blending of intellectuality and morality in the scholars of the region and the burden of the ordinary men which the scholars carried on their shoulders, endeared the scholars to the ordinary people and attracted and retained for them large and loyal following making them potentially (and in times of crisis effectively) more powerful than temporal rulers. The supremacy of the moral over the political considerations in *Tajdid* and the keenness to keep within the bounds of the *Shari’a* in a way which echoed the *Murabitun* movement, was yet another feature of this tradition. All these combined to give this tradition a momentum of its own.

The depth of the roots of this tradition in the region is much deeper and its role in the transformation of the region much more central than previous studies have shown. Indeed it is a key component in the understanding of the history of the region. *Tajdid* in Western Bilad al-Sudan, to be sure, is not a mere historical event but a living tradition which our contemporary Muslim communities in West Africa, as indeed any Muslim community worth the name, have to live up to. The tradition lives on, for as long as degeneration and deviation remain part of the nature of human society, because the key ideas are preserved in
the Qur'an and Sunna and the seeds, as Muhammad Bello believed, are to be found in the indestructible 'righteous portion'. How our contemporary Muslim communities are responding to the challenge of *tajdid*, ought to be the subject of serious research, for only then can we begin to understand then excitement and agitation in the Muslim World today, to which journalists have given all sorts of labels.
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