The Development of Wahhabi Reforms in Ghana and Burkina Faso, 1960–1990: Elective Affinities between Western-Educated Muslims and Islamic Scholars

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Islamic resurgence is undoubtedly a modern phenomenon—the product, to a large extent, of modern conditions which ironically enable it to use Islamic symbols to face the new situations. . . . One must perceive resurgence as a socioreligious phenomenon evolving mainly in reaction to Western thrust into the Muslim world. . . .”

——Ibrahim Abu-Rabi’[1]

This essay examines the relationship between Western notions of modernity and Wahhabi-inclined Islamic reform in Ghana and Burkina Faso (Upper

Volta until 1984) during the early decades of independence. I will highlight ways in which Western/secular education facilitated the early diffusion of this genre of reform. Over the past decade or so, historians have explored the extent to which the appeal of the Wahhabi movement in urban West Africa, toward the end of French and British colonialism, can be traced to Muslim attempts to find a middle ground between Western "modernity" and authentic spiritual purity.[2] In what follows, I employ comparative, ethnographic, and historical analyses to draw attention to the pivotal roles Western-educated urban Muslim professionals played in the development of this reform. Despite the active participation of these professionals in transforming the Wahhabi message into urban mass movements, scholars have paid scant attention to the factors that drew them to the Wahhabi doctrine in the first instance.

Most historians of contemporary Islamism will agree with Ibrahim Rabi's observation in the epigraph, and in his further remark, "One cannot forget that a large segment of the leadership of Islamism is Western-trained, and that some use their Westernized education as a means of asserting their tradition in a highly volatile and changing world."[3] This echoes Emmanuel Sivan's comment about the influence of Western education on Said Qutb's theological expositions: "His brand of antimodernism would be, hence, that of someone who came to know modernity and then decided to turn his back, and not that of an al-Azhar Sheikh looking at it from outside."[4] Examining the pivotal roles of Western/secular educated elites in the dissemination of the Wahhabi dogma from a comparative transnational perspective will reveal significant

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[2] See especially, Eva Evers Rosander, "Islamization of 'Tradition' and 'Modernity,'" in Eva Evers Rosander and David Westerlund, eds., *African Islam and Islam in Africa, Encounters between Sufis and Islamists* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997); Roman Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997); Ousmane Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria: A Study of the Society for the Removal of Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003); Ousseina Alidou, *Engaging Modernity: Muslim Women and the Politics of Agency* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005); Muhammad Sani Umar, *Islam and Colonialism: Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria to British Colonial Rule* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005); and Marie Miran, *Islam, histoire et modernité en Cote d'Ivoire* (Paris: Karthala, 2006). Unfortunately, there is no reliable data on the actual number of Wahhabi adherents in Ghana and Burkina Faso. John Pobee's *Religion and Politics in Ghana* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1993) gives estimates for Ghana during the 1970s, but I find it too flawed for my purposes. It is generally accepted that by the mid-1980s at least half of the urban Muslim population in both countries self-identified as "Wahhabi" or Ahl-as-Sunna. Visible evidence of their strength and influence even today is found in the number of mosques and schools built and operated by members of the organizations discussed below, and the many Ghanaian and Burkinabé students trained in universities across the Muslim world who claim at least doctrinal affiliation with Wahhabism.

[3] Abu-Rabi', *Intellectual Origins*, 56.

[4] Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 22. Said Qutb was one of the most profound Islamist theorists.

parallels between the early phase of West African Islamism (of which Wahhabism is considered a variant) and analogous movements in the Arab world, and thus enhance our understanding of contemporary Islamism as a broader global movement that emerged from the impact of colonialism on Islam. Comparing Wahhabism's mutation after Ghanaian and Burkinabé independence is particularly revealing here because the movement followed an identical pattern of development in the two countries during this period, despite their different colonial experiences, levels of economic development, and sizes of their respective Muslim populations. Though Ghana and Burkina Faso are neighboring countries, in my research I encountered no discernible mutual influences across their border.[5]

A relationship between the colonial discourse of Western modernity championed by colonial educators and the construction of a specifically West African brand of Wahhabism seems paradoxical. Indeed, because Wahhabi preachers often argue against religious innovation and for a return to the pristine Islam of the Prophet's era, many scholars see it as an archaic and conservative movement. Yet, careful examination of active participation in the movement's genesis by Muslims trained in secular institutions suggests that the seemingly archaic and conservative Wahhabi dogma also embodied a strand of Western modernity or opportunity for Islamizing modernity. This appealed to Muslims eager for a new form of Islam distinct from that of the Sufi brotherhoods.

For these elites, "modern" represented the antithesis of "tradition" and colonialism, and "modernity" represented a historical shift from colonial rule to independence and from a supernatural explanation of life to a scientific and Qur'anic explanation of religious and natural phenomena. Thus, Wahhabi preachers' dismissal of local beliefs as superstitions, and their emphasis on seeking religious guidance directly from the Qur'an and *sunna*[6] through *ijtihad* (independent interpretation of the legal sources) as opposed to *taqlid* (imitation), both resonated with Western/secular educated elites' conceptions of "authentic Islam" rooted in the original sources. Much as "modernity" was understood in Western Europe during the Enlightenment Era as the substitution of superstition for science and rational reasoning, the Western-educated elites in Ghana and Burkina Faso understood the Wahhabi reformers' message as an attempt to replace Ghanaian and Burkinabé Islamic customs with

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[5] Ghanaian and Burkinabé Muslims are separated not only by colonial languages and legacies, but also by cultural identity and intellectual connections. Burkina Faso often interacts with other francophone states in the region, while Ghanaian Muslims share a cultural identity and intellectual connections with Nigeria. In fact, Hausa, a northern Nigerian language, is the lingua franca of Ghanaian Muslims, especially in the southern parts of the country.

[6] *Sunna*, meaning "tradition" in Arabic, is defined more specifically as the Prophet's tradition, which should guide a Muslim's behavior.

more "authentic" and "rational" religious behaviors.[7] Because they lacked knowledge of nuances of Islamic doctrines, they considered such arguments logical and valid, especially given their European pedagogical backgrounds.

But "modernity" also meant a search for ways to address negative colonial and postcolonial attitudes toward Muslims. During the early decades of independence, Wahhabi discourse was therefore well positioned for deployment in a simultaneous struggle against these attitudes while appropriating Western material culture favoring the growth of Islam. Thus, there existed some mutual, albeit paradoxical affinities between two elites trained in ostensibly incompatible institutions, one religious and the other secular, and between modernity and the ancient traditions of the Prophet Muhammad's era. Exploring these connections surely merits scholars' attentions.

"Elective affinities" is a useful metaphor for explaining this paradox. This term refers to the bonding of chemical properties. Nineteenth-century German literary giant Johann Wolfgang von Goethe first coined the term in his 1809 novel of the same title to define the ambiguity of human relations.[8] Goethe argued that just as opposing chemicals like alkalis and acids may have remarkable affinities, humans are sometimes attracted to each other in ways that defy normative customs and conventions. In the same manner, ideas that appear incompatible may be imbued with elective affinities that challenge conventional expectations.[9] And yet, such affinity also embodies the

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[7] Since the publication of Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff's *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 1: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), the literature on colonial and postcolonial discourse of modernity in Africa has grown significantly. In addition to the short list provided in footnote 1, which deals more specifically with Islam, the reader might find some of the responses to the Comaroffs' thesis informative. For instance, Elizabeth Elbourne, "Word Made Flesh: Christianity, Modernity and Cultural Colonialism in the Work of Jean and John Comaroff," *American Historical Review* 108, 2 (Apr. 2003): 435–59; and David Schoenbrun, "Conjuring the Modern in Africa: Durability and Rupture in Histories of Public Healing between the Great Lakes of East Africa," *American Historical Review* 111, 5 (Dec. 2006): 1403–39. Though these materials do not deal with Islam and modernity directly, they provided important background to intellectual discourse on the issue of modernity. For a broader survey of the historiography on modernity in Western discourse, see Michael Saler, "Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographic Review," *American Historical Review* 111, 3 (June 2006): 692–716.

[8] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Elective Affinities: A Novel*, David Constantine, trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). The novel is the story of an economically successful and amorous aristocratic couple, Edward and Charlotte. Their seemingly harmonious relationship is unwittingly disrupted when they invite Edward's friend, Otto, who had fallen into economic difficulties, to live with them. Realizing her "natural" attraction to Otto, Charlotte invites her niece, Ottolie to join the household in the hope that Edward will be attracted to her. Indeed, Ottolie and Edward become "naturally" attracted to each other, thus freeing Charlotte of guilt. Yet, in the end, none of the characters seems content with the ensuing coupling, and the new amorous configuration collapses from its own artificiality and unconventionality.

[9] In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: HarperCollins Academic, 1930) Max Weber applied this concept to explain the mutual attraction between Puritan ethics and emerging capitalism, and concluded that there was an elective affinity between Puritan ethical norms and emerging capitalism in seventeenth-century England.

potential for eventual separation, in spite of the contextual magnetic attraction, particularly because of the ambiguity embedded in that relationship.

THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE BEFORE THE RISE OF WAHHABISM

At the time of independence, the Tijaniyya Sufi order was the dominant Islamic group in Ghana and Burkina Faso, having virtually displaced the much older order, the Qadiriyya. Founded in North Africa by Sheikh Ahmad Tijani (d. 1815), the Tijaniyya spread rapidly and reached West Africa in the mid-nineteenth century, just when colonialism was expanding into the region.[10] By the early twentieth century the Tijaniyya had reached many parts of West Africa through various leaders under whom new branches emerged. Two of these are important to us here: the Hamawiyya and the Niassiyya.

In Burkina Faso, the Hamawiyya branch, which had emerged under the leadership of Sheikh Sheriff Hamaullah of Nioro (Mali), grew rapidly between the 1920s and the 1950s. This was despite repression by the French, who perceived its followers as militants.[11] Two local scholars, Sheikh Boubacar Sawadogo and Sheikh Abdoulaye Doukouré, combined conversion and initiation of followers into the order, primarily among Mossi, the dominant ethnic group, and Fulbé.[12] Whereas the French in the 1930s estimated Muslims to be under 12 percent of the population, with most of them considered Hamawis, by 1960, the figure had risen to almost 25 percent, with most claiming to be Hamawis.[13] Hamawis were distinguished from other Tijanis by their chanting of *laa-ilah-illah* (there is no god but Allah) before each of the daily prayers, in addition to their daily *zikr* (remembrance of Allah). After a leader's death, his tomb became a spiritual site where followers visited to solicit his spiritual blessing. The annual *maulud* (celebration of the Prophet's birthday), which they established to glorify the Prophet, became an important festival that still attracts followers from Ghana, Niger, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. An early opposition against the Hamawiyya by non-Tijani scholars stemmed primarily from the concern among these non-Tijanis that visiting the tombs of Sheikh Boubacar Sawadogo to besiege his mystical blessings was un-Islamic, equivalent to apostasy.

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[10] The most influential study of the origin of the Tijaniyya is still Jamil Abu Nasr's *The Tijaniyya: A Sufi Order in the Muslim World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965). See David Robinson and Jean Louis Triaud, *La Tijaniyya, une confrérie Musulmane a la conquête de l'Afrique* (Paris: Karthal, 2000); and Jillali El Adnani, *La Tijaniyya 1781–1881: Les origines d'une confrérie religiuse au Maghreb* (Paris: Editions Marsam, 2007).

[11] For the bibliography of Sheikh Hamaullah, see Alioune Traoré, *Islam et colonialisme en Afrique: Cheikh Hamahoulah, homme de foi et résistance* (Paris: Larose, 1983).

[12] Assimi Kouanda and Boubakary Sawadogo, "Un moqaddem hammaliste au Yatenga au debut du xx siècle," in Jean-Pierre Chrétien, ed., *L'invention religieuse en Afrique: Histoire et religion en Afrique noire* (Paris: Karthala, 1993).

[13] Archives Nationales du Sénégal, 2G36/18, Rapport Politique Annuelle, Sudan, Province de Ouahigouya, 1936; Archives Nationales du Sénégal, 2G40/10 Rapport Politique Annuelle, Sudan, Province de Ouahigouya, 1940.

As in Burkina Faso the Muslim population of Ghana (Gold Coast until 1957) was relatively small at the inception of British control, but grew rapidly during the colonial period when labor migrants from other parts of West Africa settled in the colony. These immigrants, especially the Hausa from Northern Nigeria who formed the bulk of the Muslim scholarly community, brought with them the Tijaniyya order.[14] The Tijaniyya became more active after 1952 when a prominent Senegalese Sheikh, Ibrahim Niasse, visited Ghana and initiated many of its scholars into his branch (discussed below). This Niassiyya branch gained followers in the urban centers primarily because of Sheikh Niasse's profound charisma and erudition, his message of spiritual salvation through his personal intercession and that of Sheikh Ahmad Tijani, and his promise to disperse *baraka* (spiritual blessings) to his followers.[15] Like the Hamawis, the Niassiyya and all other Tijaniyya branches observe the Prophet's birthday in grandiose fashion. An early opposition to Niassiyya esoteric litany, which I will address presently, provided a foundation for the development of Wahhabism in Ghana.

Meanwhile, colonialism had produced new elites whose knowledge of English or French offered them social mobility. These elites also shared the colonialists' attitudes toward African traditions and local Islam, even as they claimed to resist European cultural assimilation. In what follows, I examine their search for a new religious identity and ritual practices in the Wahhabi message.

WAHHABISM IN WEST AFRICAN TRADITIONS OF REFORM AND RENEWAL

Generally, scholars who identified with Wahhabism shared a common theological position with the teachings of the eighteenth-century Arabian reformer Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab (1704–1792). Like him, these scholars emphasized a return to the pristine Islam of the Prophet Muhammad's era, and preached against all forms of anthropomorphism in local conceptions of Allah, which they labeled *shirk* (associating others with Allah). Following the teachings of Ibn Abdul Wahhab, those who preached Wahhabism also insisted on practicing Islam exactly as it was known to have been practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and the generation that immediately succeeded him (the *salaf*). Any additions to these practices, deliberate or unconscious, were declared *bid'a* (innovation), which the Prophet had forbidden. The use of these phrases—*shirk* and *bid'a*—came to represent the discursive framework of scholars and preachers associated with Wahhabism even if they did not embrace the totality of the Wahhabi creed and cultural identity.

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[14] Charles Stewart, "The Tijaniyya in Ghana, a Historical Study," (M.A. thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1965).

[15] Christopher Gray, "The Rise of the Niassene Tijaniyya, 1857 to the Present," *Islam et societe au sud du Sahara* 2 (1988): 34–60.

Yet, this discursive framework had also been part of a West African tradition of reform (*tajdid*) and renewal (*islah*) pursued earlier by Sufi-inclined reformers. A classical example is Usman Dan Fodio (1754–1817), the Qadiriyya reformer who founded the Sokoto State in 1804 in what is today Northern Nigeria. He had criticized the oppressive regimes of Hausa rulers, condemned their practices as *bid'a*, and declared them *mushrikun* (polytheists).[16] He also denounced scholars who practiced occultism as venal *maalamai* (teachers in Hausa) whose limited knowledge led them to deviate from authentic Islam. Dan Fodio's reforms, along with those of other Sufi reformers before and after him and like the twentieth-century Wahhabi reforms, sought to replace a Muslim society deemed heretical with one based on the Prophet's tradition. These reforms, including Wahhabism, also addressed issues of social inequity and exploitation of the masses by dominant elites. In this way Wahhabism is a contemporary expression of an old tradition, though one distinguished by its severe criticism of Sufi brotherhoods and its relationship to the new intellectual infrastructure and discourse of modernity that developed under colonialism.[17]

In his pioneering study of the Wahhabi movement in French West Africa, Lansiné Kaba recognized the presence of French-trained Muslims in both the Subbanu Association and the Muslim Cultural Union, two organizations associated with Wahhabi doctrines in Francophone territories during the 1940s and 1950s.[18] Kaba, however, does not identify the precise role these elites played

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[16] Mervyn Hiskett, *The Sword of Truth: The Life and Times of the Shehu Usman Dan Fodio* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994).

[17] For a more general thesis on modern Islamic resurgence, see John Voll, "Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: Tajdid and Islah," in John Esposito, ed., *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

[18] Lansiné Kaba, *Wahhabiyya: Islamic Reform and Politics in French West Africa* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974). The Subbanu Association and Muslim Cultural Union, which Kaba analyzed, were part of a global Islamic reform that emerged in the Muslim world at the turn of the nineteenth century, inspired by the teachings of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839–1897) and later elaborated and diffused by Muhammad 'Abduh (1849–1905) and others. Al-Afghani advocated a combination of modernizing Islamic institutions and reforming Muslim practices to meet the challenges of modern times, especially the struggle against Western imperialism. Muhammad Abduh, whose disciples founded the Salafiyya movement, called for a return to the original sources of Islam for spiritual guidance, but emphasized the use of modern resources to reach that goal. Both Al-Afghani and Abduh emphasized Islamic and Western education as solutions to spiritual regression. See for example, Ibrahim Abu-Rabi''s influential book, *Intellectual Origins*, and his most recent book, *Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History* (London: Pluto Press, 2003). Many leaders of both the Subbanu Association and the Muslim Cultural Union studied in Egypt in the early 1900s, at the height of the Salafi movement. The Middle Eastern connection to the earlier Wahhabi and Salafi movements in Francophone West Africa is thus uncontested. Many in Senegal will not consider the Muslim cultural union a Wahhabi organization since its leader, Sheikh Toure, never explicitly claimed to have abandoned his Sufi affiliations. However, in Burkina Faso, it was associated with Wahhabism. The connection between Anglophone West African colonies and the Middle East is yet to be fully explored. It is important to note that, in terms of doctrine, most West African scholars and preachers who embraced puritanical Islam associated with Ibn Abdul Wahhab and later the Salafi movement made no clear distinction between the Wahhabi dogma and Salafi ideology. During my research

in the movement's development. Mervyn Hiskett published the first extensive exposé of the rise of the Wahhabi movement in Ghana's capital of Accra, but he failed to recognize the leadership of Western-educated Muslims.[19] Similarly, Maimouna Dao, who studied the Wahhabi movement in Burkina Faso's capital of Ouagadougou neglected to explore Western-educated elites' contributions to the movement's development there, even though all available evidence confirms that they formulated the organization and were its de facto leaders between 1973 and 1990.[20] In contrast, scholars who examined the development of Yan Izala, the Wahhabi-oriented movement in Northern Nigeria, have considered the role of Western education there to be self-evident since Abubakar Gumi, its most revered leader, had been trained in both secular and Muslim religious institutions. Gumi and other leaders combined religious and secular knowledge in their discourse and strategies of proselytization.[21]

Oral evidence I collected between 1998 and 2006 through extensive interviews with surviving members of this movement and their adversaries in Ghana and Burkina Faso, along with unpublished documents and audio recordings of sermons, reveal that a younger generation of Western-educated Muslim professionals placed themselves at the forefront of the Wahhabi movement in both countries. These scholars were products of colonial education in mission or secular schools, where Islam was reviled as a superstitious religion that fostered economic and social stagnation. As a result, they found appealing some of the puritanical teachings of young scholars trained in Saudi Arabia and provided them with material and intellectual support to propagate a new version of Islam that could respond to the criticisms of non-Muslims. From this perspective, the polemics between the dominant *ulema* and those scholars inclined toward Wahhabi doctrine can be understood as part of broader local struggles over cultural authenticity and religious orthodoxy. At this time, Westernized

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in Ghana and Burkina Faso, Salafi ideology was hardly mentioned in conversations and when I asked specific questions about the relationship between Wahhabism (or Ahl-as-Sunna as they preferred to be called) and Salafiyya, the responses often tended to conflate the two. More nuanced scholars, though, were careful to add that their teachings had nothing to do with the Salafi movement except that, like the Salafis, they promote a return to the original sources of Islam.

[19] Mervyn Hiskett, "The Community of Grace and Its Opponents, the Rejecters: A Debate about Theology and Mysticism in Muslim West Africa with Special Reference to Its Hausa Expression," *African Language Studies*, 17 (1980): 99–140.

[20] Maimouna Dao, "Le wahhabisme à Ouagadougou de 1964 à 1988," *Islam et sociétés au sud du Sahara* 7 (1993): 223–29.

[21] Muhammad Sani Umar, "Education and Islamic Trends in Northern Nigeria: 1970 to 1990s," *Africa Today* 48, 2 (2001): 127–50; Roman Loimeier, "Islamic Reform and Political Change: The Example of Abubakar Gumi and the Yan Izala Movement in Northern Nigeria," in Eva Evers Rosander and David Westerlund, eds., *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounters between Sufis and Islamists* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997); Ousmane Kane, "The Rise of Muslim Reformism in Northern Nigeria," in Martin Marty and Scott Appleby, eds., *Accounting for Fundamentalism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994).

Ghanaian and Burkinabé Muslims were struggling with the boundaries of acceptable Western modernity, the effects of local Islamic customs on religious purity, and the extent to which Middle Eastern Islamic traditions should be recognized as the model of authentic Islamic culture.

WAHHABISM, COLONIALISM, AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN GHANA AND BURKINA FASO

Wahhabism spread at different rates on each side of the Francophone-Anglophone colonial divide, and its early diffusion also varied with the size of the Muslim populations. In Francophone West Africa for example, local scholars who trained at al-Azhar University in Cairo returned home during the 1940s to combine preaching of puritanical Islam with teaching and trading.[22] In addition to rejecting the local Sufi brotherhoods they avoided gift-giving obligations anchored in Sufi institutions, which they considered both contrary to the Prophet's authentic teachings and economically wasteful. Although these Al-Azhari–trained scholars spread their ideas into Burkina Faso during the early 1950s, especially along the southwestern corridor of the Djula trading network,[23] their influence did not spread to other parts of the colony until the end of the colonial period.

In Anglophone countries, especially Ghana and Nigeria, Wahhabism evolved organically from doctrinal disputes and changing intellectual configurations made possible by a more flexible British rule after World War II. The Yan-Izala in Northern Nigeria, which would become that area's articulation of Wahhabism, began locally when young local scholars challenged the teachings and political leadership of both the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya Sufi orders.[24] In Ghana, what would become Wahhabism evolved from debates among local scholars over the doctrinal validity of *tarbiyya*, a spiritual exercise that Tijaniyya scholars claimed could unveil God's identity to the initiate.[25] Though the debates raged for almost a decade, they did not result in an extensive Wahhabi movement until the early 1970s when new Arabophone elites and young urban professionals discovered their common interest in purging the society of what they considered cultural backwardness and bizarre belief systems.

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[22] Kaba, *Wahhabiyya*; Suleyman Nyang, "Islam in West Africa," in Shireen Hunter, ed., *The Politics of Islamic Revivalism: Diversity and Unity* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988): 204–25.

[23] Kaba, *Wahhabiyya*; Le Dao, "Wahhabism"; Reinhard Schulze, "La da'wa saoudienne en Afrique de l' ouest," in René Otayek, ed., *Le radicalisme Islamique au sud du sahara: da'wa, arabisation et critique de l'Occident* (Paris: Karthal, 1993): 27–36.

[24] Kane, *Muslim Modernity*; Loimeier, *Islamic Reform*; Umar, *Islam and Colonialism*.

[25] Kobo, "Promoting the Good," ch. 2. Unlike francophone countries where early Wahhabi-inclined scholars spread their ideas from one colony to another, a direct link between Yan Izala's teaching and the rise of Wahhabism in Anglophone countries remains to be explored fully, especially for Ghana (then the Gold Coast) and Sierra Leone.

Moreover, both English and French colonial policies toward Muslims' education differed according to the size of the Muslim populations of specific colonies. In colonies with large Muslim populations, such as Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Mali, and Guinea, both the English and the French encouraged Muslims to acquire secular knowledge by establishing new schools that taught Arabic and Islamic studies, in addition to secular courses such as English, French, hygiene, mathematics, history, and geography.[26] While these schools were intended to produce new Muslim cadets to staff colonial administrations, Muslim parents generally remained suspicious of the colonialists' intentions and tended to avoid the schools.

In colonies with Muslim minorities such as Ghana and Burkina Faso, however, neither the French nor the English made any concerted efforts to accommodate Muslim's religious sensibilities in educational matters. Rather, colonial administrators encouraged an educational dualism in which Muslim scholars remained responsible for providing Qur'anic education while Christian missionaries provided secular education in addition to Christian theology. Consequently, the two different educational systems, as Bradley Cook has also observed with reference to Egypt, "evolved independently with little or no official interface."[27] Furthermore, in emphasizing Western notions of rational religious behavior centered on Christian principles, the epistemology of mission and secular schools continued indirectly to promote the idea that local Islam, which the French called "*Islam noir*," was syncretic and thus "impure" compared to Middle Eastern Islam.[28] However, by the time colonialism ended, secular education had emerged as the main source of public employment and social mobility. Muslim parents were thus left with a difficult choice between risking their

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[26] Colonial regimes first applied the name *madrasa* to the Franco or Anglo-Arabic schools they had established intending it as a pedagogical metaphor that would convince Muslims to send their children to these essentially secular schools. The literature is extensive, but the reader might find the following list particularly useful. Louis Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press: 2001); Christopher Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa: 1860–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Bintou Diarra, "Les écoles coraniques au Mali: problèmes actuels," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 19, 2 (1985): 359–67; Corinne Fortier, "Mémorization et audition: L'einseignement coranique chez les maures de Mauritanie," *Islam et sociétés au sud du Sahara* 11 (1997): 85–108; and Lansiné Kaba, "The Politics of Quranic Education among Muslim Traders in the Western Sudan: The Subbanu Experience," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 10, 3 (1976): 409–21. For Burkina Faso, see Issa Cissé, "Introduction à l'étude des médersas au Burkina Faso: des années 1960 à nos jours" (Mémoire de Maitrise, Université de Ouagadougou, 1989). For more recent works, see Rudolph T. Ware, "The Longue Duree of Qur'an Schooling, Society, and State in Senegambia, c. 1600–2000," in Mamadou Diouf and Mara A. Leichtman, eds., *New Perspectives on Islam in Senegal: Conversion, Migration, Wealth, Power, and Femininity* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 21–50.

[27] Bradley J. Cook, "Islamic versus Western Conceptions of Education: Reflections on Egypt," *International Review of Education* 45, 3–4 (1999): 339–50.

[28] Jonathan Reynolds, "Good and Bad Muslims: Islam and Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34, 3 (2001): 601–17.

children's exposure to Christianity by enrolling them in these schools or ignoring Western education altogether.[29] Only a few took the risk. The handful of Muslim students who attended these schools therefore developed distinct and subjective identities that placed them in an awkward position within their communities. While rejecting a wholesale adoption of Western culture, which they considered "neo-colonialism," they accepted some of its ideas, and while they sought to become part of the established Muslim community, they frowned upon its see-mingly backward disposition and resistance to change.[30] They also found the Tijaniyya rhythmic chanting of *laa-ilaha-illa-lah* (there is no God but God) during their group *zikr* and the belief in the mystical powers of the Sufi sheikhs archaic. They also experienced other forms of cognitive dissonance. Sometimes their education brought them respect since it represented an impor-tant source of social mobility, but at other times derision and rejection because that knowledge was also dismissed as "infidel" knowledge. Wahhabism, as a belief system and cultural identity, and as an opportunity for recreating a new Islamic environment, mediated this contradiction by allowing this segment of the Muslim population to feel comfortable about being Muslims. It also opened up an entry into Muslim leadership that was hitherto unavailable to them because they had no training in Islamic theology.

THE RETURN OF SAUDI-TRAINED SCHOLARS AND THE RISE OF WAHHABISM IN GHANA

My focus in this essay is on the development of Wahhabism at the end of the colonial period when Western-educated elites joined young scholars who had just returned from their training in Saudi Arabia to propagate the Wahhabi creed. This second phase of Wahhabism clearly reveals not only its foreign con-nections but also how it gave religious impetus to cultural, political, and social transformations that had begun under colonial rule. The biographical narrative that follows indicates that before Ghanaian and Burkinabé scholars returned from training in Saudi Arabia during the 1960s to preach the Wahhabi

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[29] Muslims' resistance to colonial education cannot be overemphasized. Even when colonial governments assuaged the Muslim population by forcing missionaries to minimize the religious content of their curriculum, only a few parents defied the popular norm and allowed their children to attend mission schools. For instance, in colonies like Mali and Senegal where the French created *madrasas* that offered both Islamic and secular courses, or Sierra Leone and Nigeria where the English established similar institutions, only a few Muslim parents allowed their children to attend these schools. Resistance was stronger still in colonies with Muslim minorities, where the options were more limited (Kobo "Promoting the Good," 264–67). J. H. Fisher's discussion of Muslims' attempt to develop a Western-style Qur'anic school in southern Ghana (then Gold Coast) is particularly interesting for demonstrating British colonialists' indifference to Muslim schooling; "Islamic Education and Religious Reform in West Africa," in Richard Jolly, ed., *Islamic Education in Africa: Research and Action* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969).

[30] For an analysis of this tension among Muslims of Northern Ghana, see Abdullai Iddirisu, "Islamic and Western Secular Education in Ghana," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22, 2 (2002): n.p.

concept of religious purity, Ghanaian and Burkinabé societies, as reflected in the attitudes of urbanized professionals and youths who embraced Wahhabi dogma, were at a crossroads of imminent cultural change. However, they lacked a vehicle to stimulate that change. Wahhabism became that vehicle. Wahhabi preachers brought new socio-religious ideas that were neither Western nor "traditional," and these became the catalyst for creating a new Islamic society. A concrete example is offered by the relationship that developed between Hajj Umar Ibrahim, the first Medina-trained scholar to return to Ghana to preach the Wahhabi doctrine, and a group of Western-educated professionals in Accra.

Umar had left Ghana in 1957 in search of Islamic education in the Arab world after barely completing the Qur'an with his teacher in Ghana. After he had received a bachelor's degree in *fiqh* and *hadith* from the Islamic University of Medina in 1968, the Saudi Arabian government instructed him to return home to teach Arabic and to conduct *da'wa* (Islamic propagation) in exchange for a monthly stipend.[31] Returning to his native Nima, an Accra slum with a large Muslim population, Umar introduced himself to the local Muslim scholars and requested a space in the central mosque, popularly known as Masalanchin Sarkin Kado, to teach the Qur'an.

Most of the local *ulema'a* in Nima during this period were affiliated with the Tijaniyya Sufi brotherhood. Unaware of Umar's anti-Sufi ideas, they allowed him to establish a school in the mosque and to preach in the evenings and at other community gatherings. His preaching sessions, which were initially uncontroversial, attracted a group of young professionals curious to find out if Islam in the Arab world differed from that of Ghana. At the end of each session these young men (all were men) lingered and engaged Umar in intense debates on doctrinal and cultural issues such as the validity of Sufi rituals, consulting diviners, the use of the Qur'an for healing, extravagant feasting during naming, wedding and funeral ceremonies, and polygyny. Umar argued that belief in the mystical powers of deceased individuals is un-Islamic. He explained further that Sufi rituals constituted heretical deviations from the Prophet Muhammad's teachings, and that the Prophet also discouraged flamboyant lifestyles and customs. Good Muslims, Umar insisted, should emulate only what the Prophet had done, and be modest in their practices and lifestyles. A Muslim community, he argued, must avoid customs that strain their community's economic resources. His responses convinced these urban professionals with limited Islamic knowledge that Islam was, after all, not as backward and superstitious as the established *ulema* had made it seem, and they grew more interested in Umar's message.[32]

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[31] Hajj Umar Ibrahim, personal communications, 12 July 1998, 20 May 2002, and 13 Aug. 2008 (recorded in Hausa).
[32] Muhammad S. Baba, personal communication, 22 Sept. 2002 (in English).

As this group developed closer relations with Umar and began to show deep interest in his version of Islam, he informed them of his mission to revive local Islam by reemphasizing the centrality of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad's traditions, which, he argued, had over the centuries become submerged in a deluge of innovations (*bid'a*), deceptions, and ignorance. Umar also convinced them that the Qur'an and *sunna* require individual Muslims to engage actively in suppressing reprehensible behavior. By declaring that he had returned to revive the Prophetic traditions, Umar not only distinguished himself from the established *ulema* but also offered these young professionals the opportunity to initiate religious and cultural transformation under his spiritual guidance. A member of this group, who became the new Wahhabi organization's first General Secretary, explained how Umar attracted them:

Hajj Umar's preaching attracted youngsters and Western-educated people like me. I, along with my friends, for example, would occasionally stop by to listen to his sermons. We gradually became interested and therefore attended his preaching sessions more regularly. Prior to discovering him, we had lost interest in listening to sermons. We were tired of hearing about Allah's wrath on the Day of Judgment when the unbelievers would be thrown into hell and gorged on by monster-like angels. For us, the traditional scholars' message was neither progressive nor inspiring, nor did it seem to provide hope for human salvation. Islam seemed too superstitious, gloomy, and pessimistic. Hajj Umar offered us something different, something intellectually appealing and comprehensive. His message was polished, factual, more interesting, and informative. So we often stopped by to listen to him and to ask tough questions that one would not dare ask our traditional scholars. His answers made us realize how easy and appealing Islam was. The more we listened to him, the more we identified with his message. We therefore advanced from [being] a mere audience to active participants in disseminating his message.[33]

Umar's core group of followers, described in this testimony, encouraged friends to join what was becoming a social and cultural movement, and with the group's help he declared a verbal jihad against the established *ulema*, denouncing the Tijaniyya Sufi brotherhood as *bid'a*. This doctrinal indictment enraged local Tijani leaders; after all, they too claimed to eradicate religious innovation and to promote individual spiritual purity through their daily rituals. In response, they organized preaching sessions to refute Umar's charges and then barred him and his followers from praying in the Nima central mosque or preaching in its vicinity.[34] Soon, the mavericks found it difficult to organize public preaching sessions in the city without being harassed by either the police, who sided with the established elites, or by unruly youngsters encouraged by their teachers to disrupt such gatherings.

With the benefit of hindsight, it seems that by rejecting Umar the Tijanis transformed him into a local celebrity. Gradually, his followers began to see

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Hajj Umar, personal communication, 2 May 2002. Also Mallam Sani, personal communications, Nima, Accra, 19 Aug. 1998, 2 June 2002 (in Hausa).

their activities to be ordained by the divine. If the Prophet had endured the persecution of the Meccan aristocrats, then they too were prepared to demonstrate their love of Allah by enduring persecution. Rejection of Umar was thus seen as a source of legitimacy, and because they strived to emulate the Prophet and his immediate followers (al-khulafa'a al-rashidun), they saw themselves as authentic Muslims in contrast to the deviators, or mushrikun (polytheists).

Barred from the public mosque, the mavericks needed their own religious space, and Alhaji M. S. Salley, a Western-educated professional and a retired officer in the Ghanaian Armed Forces, offered them his house for daily prayers, regular meetings, and preaching sessions. This house, next to Nima's main market and near the central mosque from which Umar had been driven, was well placed to be the birthplace of Accra's Wahhabi reform movement.[35] As his popularity spread to other Accra suburbs, Alhaji Salley and his cohorts convinced some locally trained scholars who had expressed disaffection with Tijaniyya rituals to join their group. With their help and the support of some influential Western-educated professionals, the movement began to flourish.[36]

By early 1972, a significant social movement had emerged from Umar's teachings. In addition to religious issues he addressed poverty and other social and economic problems facing Muslims, which the established elites had ignored. Umar blamed poverty among urban Muslims not on the postcolonial government's failure to help the community but rather on customs such as polygyny that encouraged personal irresponsibility and flamboyant ceremonies that wasted resources. To avoid poverty, he argued, Muslims must observe family planning, and parents should invest in their children's education.[37] Umar also blamed the established scholars for perpetuating superstitious practices such as consulting diviners for help with personal problems, which was not only forbidden by Islam but also encouraged individuals to depend on magic instead of adopting lifestyles that would facilitate their social and economic advancement.[38] One of his followers observed: "Though some of us were uncomfortable with those superstitious practices, we had never questioned their doctrinal basis. We frowned upon them but accepted them as the dark side of

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[35] This group developed more rapidly than the earlier movement founded by Sheikh Yussif Afajura in 1952. Kobo, "Promoting the Good," ch. 5.

[36] Personal communications in Nima, Accra: Hajj Umar, 29 July 1998; Ibrahim Baro, 17 Sept. 2002. Most of my informants, including leaders of the Tijaniyya such as Mallam Sani Murtala, who engaged Hajj Umar in intense debate about the doctrinal validity of Tijaniyya rituals, suggested that by the mid-1970s, more than a third of the Muslim population of Accra and its surrounding areas had embraced Wahhabism. This observation is applicable to all the major cities of Ghana, especially Kumasi and Tamale.

[37] "If you do not have a job then you must not marry and have children," one of his followers remembered Umar yelling in response to a question someone had posed regarding religion and family planning. Mallam Abdallah Yunus, personal communication, Abofu, Accra, 21 June 2001 (in Hausa).

[38] Personal communications: Hajj Umar, Nima, Accra, 29 July 1998; Ibrahim Baro, Nima, Accra, 17 Sept. 2002.

our religion. By declaring divination, the use of talismans, and drinking of Qur'anic verses that had been written and washed off wooden tablets as *haram*, Umar revived our trust in Islam and reinvigorated our spirituality. I can say that some of us were disgruntled Muslims who observed the daily rituals but were internally dissatisfied with the religion until Umar offered us a better picture of Islam."[39]

Thus, unlike other scholars who preached exclusively about religious matters, Umar articulated fundamental social issues in his sermons in ways that appealed to a broader segment of urban Muslims. They included exuberant urban youth yearning for some kind of rebellious adventure, and some younger businessmen and women eager to break away from onerous, customary gift-giving obligations that seemed to drain their investments. His followers, though still few in number, saw themselves as pioneers of a new religious "revolution" and enlightenment, as they termed their activities, in contrast to the older era of ignorance (*jahiliyya*). As Tijaniyya scholars persisted in harassing the mavericks, the Western-educated elites formalized the organization and registered it as the Ghana Islamic Research and Reformation Center (commonly called "Research").[40] This allowed them to demand police protection during their activities. Official recognition also allowed them to claim to be an autonomous Muslim community distinct from the dominant community led by Tijaniyya scholars. Other Muslim organizations had no written constitutions, but the Western-educated leaders of "Research" wrote one that defined the organization's objectives, leadership structure, and members' rights and obligations. Registered members were required to pay monthly dues, regularly attend preaching sessions, defend the community against Tijani attacks, and provide financial support for the organization's activities. The constitution also recognized members' rights to vote for officials and stand for election, and to request the organization's assistance during personal difficulties.

The use of a written constitution clearly demonstrates the influence of secular knowledge on the leaders' conception of a modern Muslim organization since, apart from the Ahmadiyya movement and the Ghana Muslim mission, no other Sunni organization during this period used a written document to define members' rights and obligations. But still more revealing was the organization's dual-leadership structure comprised of the Executive Branch and the Council of *Ulema'a*.[41] The former consisted, theoretically, of officials appointed from among the secular educated elites and was responsible for administering the organization.[42] The Council of *Ulema'a* was made up of

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[39] Issaka Salih, personal communication, Nsawam, 30 June 1998 (in Hausa).

[40] Personal communications: Ibrahim Baro, Nima, Accra, 17 Sept. 2002; Muhammad S. Baba, 22 Sept. 2002 (in English).

[41] "Constitution and By-laws of the Islamic Research and Reformation Center," Nima, Accra. 1972.

[42] The Members of the Executives were: Director Alhaji M. S. Salley (retired military officer); Assistant Director Ibrahim Abdullahi Baro (director of postal service, Nima); Secretary Muhammad

leading Arabic-trained scholars and was to provide moral guidance through regular preaching and private consultations and officiate at all celebrations and rituals.[43] Though this arrangement gave an impression of inclusiveness and equity among members, in reality the leadership was self-selected in ways that allocated more formal power to the Western-educated elites and relegated the Arabic scholars to religious functions. The creation of an executive position that required secular skills also suggests that the Western-educated members saw themselves as "natural leaders" of a modern organization built on modern ideas of bookkeeping and bureaucracy. This power disequilibrium laid the foundation for future power struggles between the two groups that I will detail presently.

THE RETURN OF SAUDI-TRAINED SCHOLARS AND THE DIFFUSION OF WAHHABISM IN BURKINA FASO

In the mid-1960s, a parallel movement began in Burkina Faso when two scholars, Muhammad Malick Sana and Imam Sayouba Ouédraogo, returned after decades of study in Saudi Arabia. Like Umar in Ghana, they attempted unsuccessfully to work through existing Muslim establishments. For instance, on his arrival in Burkina Faso Muhammad Sana, returned to the Hamawiyya-Tijaniyya community at Rahmatoulaye, where his father had lived.[44] Like Umar, he was initially embraced by this Sufi community and allowed to teach and preach, but in late 1965 he was expelled after having condemned the Tijaniyya as *bid'a*.[45] He was forced to return to the capital, Ouagadougou, where the leaders of Communauté Musulmane du Burkina Faso (henceforth Communauté), a national organization that had disassociated itself from the local Tijaniyya leadership, allowed him to preach in the city's central mosque, along with Imam Sayouba.[46]

S. Baba (secondary school teacher); Asst. Secretary Alhaji Labaran; Financial Secretary Husein Zakariah Umar (madrasa teacher and secondary school graduate); Assistant Financial Secretary Issaka Sulleyman.

[43] The Council of *Ulema* was made up of: Spiritual Head Hajj Umar Ibrahim; Deputy Spiritual Head Mallam Hamza; Imam Mallam Kamal Din Ibrahim (the imam). Kamal Din remained a Tijani until he resigned from Research when Umar declared the Tijaniyya a heretical innovation. His brother Hajj Shouab Ibrahim, whom Melvyn Hiskett incorrectly identified as the founder of Wahhabism in Ghana, also studied at the Islamic University in Medina but returned two years after Hajj Umar, and joined Research.

[44] Alhaji Youssif Sana (younger brother of Muhammad Malick Sana), personal communication, Hamle, 19 Apr. 2002.

[45] Personal communications: Salifou Sawadogo, Ouagadougou, 19 Feb. 2002; Moctar Cisse, Ouahigouya, 2 Mar. 2002 (in Morré).

[46] For this organization, see for example, Assim Kouanda, "Les conflits au sein de la communauté musulmane du Burkina Faso: 1962–1986," in Jean-Louis Triaud and Ousmane Kane, eds., *Islam et sociétés au sud du Sahara* 3 (Paris: Edition de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1989), 7–26; René Otayek, "La crise de la Communauté musulmane de Haute Volta:

With this preaching opportunity, Muhammad Sana and Sayouba Ouédraogo intensified their denunciation of local practices, including divination and thera-peutic use of the Qur'an. These Mecca-trained scholars also condemned flam-boyant Muslim festivities as wasteful and contrary to the Prophet's teachings. While their sermons appealed to a segment of the community, especially young government functionaries, Communauté leaders eventually found their radical message and provocative preaching style divisive and barred them from preaching near the central mosque. Interestingly, in Burkina Faso it was the Wahhabi-inclined Communauté that sought to stifle a more radical Wahhabi movement, rather than the country's dominant Sufi group, the Tijaniyya-Hamawiyya. Communauté itself had in the early 1960s embraced a moderate version of Wahhabism introduced by Senegalese members of the Muslim Cul-tural Union.[47] But while Communauté leaders were eager to condone Wahhabi criticism of the Tijanis, they were not prepared to sanction divisive sermons and criticism of established customs and religious functions, which represented the only source of income for their own scholars.[48] For example, Communauté scholars offered elaborate supplication for a deceased or a newborn, and during such celebrations the rich spent lavishly and gave gifts to the scholars, who were otherwise not paid for their services to the community. They also uti-lized Qur'anic verses for healing and divination (*baghre* in Mossi). To declare these entrenched customs un-Islamic would be to deny Communauté scholars a significant source of income and deny the community an important forum for socialization. Moreover, having become the official representative body of all the country's Muslims, Communauté was careful not to sanction any radical activities that might divide the *ummah* (Muslim community).

Though dismissed by Communauté, Muhammad Sana and Imam Sayouba retained the support of the young government functionaries, for whom these preachers' arguments concerning the Prophet's modest lifestyle and criticism of superstitions seemed appropriate for a community in search of its religious and cultural identity in the postcolonial era. Two individuals in this group were among the first to declare their support for the Meccan scholars: Souleymane Ouédraogo, at that time the Deputy Director of the National Civil Aviation, and Amadou Bandé, a public school teacher. They proved crucial to the move-ment's early development as they encouraged their friends and relatives to embrace Wahhabism, and utilized their connections with government officials to seek protection for the preachers and their followers. Just as M. S. Salley vol-unteered his house to the members of Research, Amadou Bandé offered part of

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l'Islam voltaïque entre réformisme et tradition, automie et subordination," *Cahiers d'Etudse Afri-caines* 24, 3, no. 95 (1984): 299–320; Kobo, "Promoting the Good," 136–39.

[47] Otayek, "La crise de la Communauté," 301.

[48] Salifou Sawadogo, personal communication, Ouagadougou, 19 Feb. 2002.

his family's house to the group to use as office space and a mosque. This house, too, was near the city's central mosque where Muhammad and Sayouba had preached earlier, and thus strategically located to be the birthplace of Ouagadougou's Wahhabi movement.[49] In order to demand police protection against constant harassment by members of Communauté, Souleymane Ouédraogo and his colleagues in 1973 drafted a constitution and formalized the movement, which they named Mouvement Sunnite de la Haute Volta (henceforth, Mouvement Sunnite).[50] Like Research in Accra, Mouvement Sunnite in Ouagadougou adopted a dual leadership structure in which the Western-educated elites occupied executive positions requiring bureaucratic skills, while the Meccan-trained scholars served in the Council of Ulema as spiritual leaders and preachers.[51]

In both postcolonial Ghana and Burkina Faso, then, Western-educated professionals, as a social group, became the linchpin of the Wahhabi movement. But rather than remaining followers, they transformed the preachers' messages into national religious organizations and assumed the formal leadership positions in order to create the kind of Islamic system they had long envisioned. Quite clearly, the advent of Wahhabism in Ghana and Burkina Faso, as Max Weber would have predicted, met the needs of modernizing elites who aspired to a more exoteric explanation of religious phenomena and sought change in religious leadership. To understand these Westernized elites' conceptions of their place in the postcolonial state, and how Wahhabism served as the vehicle for seeking Islamic leadership, we must explore other instances in which they attempted but failed to insert themselves into the social hierarchies of Muslim communities. A good case study is Ghana, where Kwame Nkrumah's anti-colonial nationalist discourse encouraged Muslim youths to demand change within their communities and to see themselves as potential leaders of the postcolonial state.[52]

MUSLIMS AND NATIONALIST POLITICS

In the course of the nationalist struggle for independence in Ghana during the 1950s, younger Muslims in Accra and Kumasi founded the Muslim youth

[49] "L'Histoire du Mouvement Sunnite," MS (no author and n.d.), Private Archive, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Imam Sayouba, copy in author's possession.

[50] It was renamed Mouvement Sunnite du Burkina Faso when the country's name changed in 1984. Imam Sayouba, personal communication, Ouagadougou, 24 Feb. 2002; "l'Histoire du Mouvement Sunnite."

[51] An unpublished document, "L'histoire de la mouvement Sunnite" lists the leaders as follows: Executive Council: President Souleymane Ouédraogo Souleymane (deputy commander of aviation stationed at the Ouagadougou Airport.); Vice-President Iddirissa Semde (secondary school teacher at Ziniare'); General Secretary Issaka Kabore (public functionary); Assistant Secretary Moumouni Sawadogo (retired army officer); General Treasurer Amadou Ilboudou (employee at Post Telegraph, and Telecommunication, PTT); and Deputy Treasurer Ousmane Zongo (public servant). The Council of Ulema was made up of Imam Sayouba as the imam, and other scholars. Private archive, Imam Sayouba, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

[52] Alhaji Osman Norga, personal communication, Aladjo, Accra, 3 Aug. 2002 (in Hausa).

wings of Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP), the most pro-
minent nationalist party.[53] In addition to mobilizing Muslims for the CPP, these
local branches provided a forum for urban youth to articulate their dissatisfac-
tion with their elders' alleged political inertia and to seek a new direction for
Muslims. Many youths grew increasingly resentful of their leaders when in
1948 some Muslim clerics and ethnic chiefs founded the Muslim Association
Party (MAP) to challenge the CPP in local elections. Initially the MAP was
effectively competitive and won a significant number of seats in municipal
elections in Accra and Kumasi between 1948 and 1951, but it was also
evident that, given the size of the Muslim population and the configurations
of political parties at the national level, the MAP stood no chance of achieving
any significant victory nationwide.[54] The youth, along with a few elders who
supported the CPP, saw the MAP as a political nuisance capable only of frag-
menting the *ummah*. Yet, while the majority of the youth supported Nkrumah,
most of their elders appeared to lean toward the MAP because of its religious
appeal. At this point, the members of the Muslim Youth Organization openly
criticized their elders for failing to understand the strategic importance of sup-
porting Nkrumah, who was destined to win the election, in order to negotiate a
better position for Muslims in the postcolonial government. Calling themselves
Yankasa, they declared those who opposed Nkrumah "*colo*" (old fashioned, or
remnants of the colonial order).[55]

Given the importance of respecting elders in Ghanaian Muslim culture, such
a direct criticism of them seemed unprecedented.[56] But the youngsters,
especially those with some Western education (mostly high school graduates,
a significant level of education during this period), were energized by the
belief that the society had to be transformed. They anticipated that Nkrumah
would appoint them to strategic Muslim leadership positions after the election
in order to promote this transformation.[57] But after his victory Nkrumah instead
established stronger relations with influential Muslim leaders, some of whom
had opposed him, and with less radical individuals among the secular educated
elites.[58] As one surviving member remembered, "Nkrumah dumped us for the

[53] Kwame Nkrumah led Ghana to independence and was the country's first president.
[54] For the history of the Muslim Association Party and activities during Ghana's pre-
independence party politics, see particularly, Jean Marie Allman, "Hewers of Wood Carriers of
Water: Islam, Class and Politics on the Eve of Ghana's Independence," *African Studies Review*
34, 2 (1991): 1–26.
[55] Yankasa literally means "indigenous" in Hausa, but it implied the younger generation born in
Ghana in contrast to their parents or grandparents who had emigrated from other parts of West
Africa as colonial labor migrants.
[56] Alhaji Osman Norga, personal communication, Aladjo, Accra, 3 Aug. 2002 (in Hausa).
[57] Ibid.
[58] For example, Nkrumah appointed the late Alhaji Awudu Kookah as the president of the Ghana
Muslim Council (1958–1966), but most of the other leaders had no Western education. Alhaji
Awudu Kookah had completed only elementary school and took correspondence courses in
business management and accounting. Nkrumah also recognized Imam Abbass, whom he

very traditional elites whose authority he encouraged us to reject." Clearly, despite his radical anti-colonial rhetoric, Nkrumah preferred the more experienced ethnic and religious leaders to the younger generation at this point in Ghana's history. He seemed obviously concerned that a radical shift from the older to the younger generation would destabilize the already fragmented Muslim community, especially in the south. By the early 1960s, the various branches of the Muslim Youth Organization (or Muslim Youth Association, as it is sometimes called) had withered.[59]

The failure of the Muslim youth to gain leadership of Muslim communities during this period stemmed in part from a combination of Islamic and Ghanaian notions of authority and loyalty that discouraged rebellion against elders without legitimate justification, and in part from Nkrumah's political pragmatism. But after Nkrumah's overthrow in 1966 some young men revived that contest, especially in communities where elders were suspected of embezzling funds intended for developing mosques and schools. They described this new contest as the "Mosque Accountability Initiative" and attempted to impose responsible behavior on these elders by demanding that they account for missing charitable donations (sadaqa). One of the activists recalled:

Our situation was outrageous. Every Friday in practically every mosque, the *mallams* (local clerics) appealed for donations to repair mosques and to pay utility bills. Yet, the walls of these same mosques continued to crack, the roofs leaking and the window-panes rotting. For example, for over twenty years we had been contributing money to rebuild the Accra Central Mosque but nothing was done until Jerry Rawlings pulled it down in 1984 and turned the place into a public parking lot. At Koforidua around 1975, an Egyptian teacher in a *madrasa* solicited grants from his government to build additional classrooms and to renovate the Koforidua Central Mosque. However, the money was squandered.[60]

It was in the midst of these tensions that Umar began preaching his radical doctrine. His emphasis on giving obedience only to authorities that displayed religious piety and social accountability legitimized rebellion against Muslim leaders and those who lacked the courage to embrace change. Many of those who mobilized to impose social and financial responsibility on communal leaders joined Hajj Umar.[61] While the resilience of Islamic and Ghanaian notions of respect for elders' authority had discouraged youth from overthrowing the elders during the 1950s, Wahhabi doctrine, as taught by Umar, reinvigorated the contests during the 1970s by providing religious justification for challenging the authority of "irresponsible" elders.

appointed the first national chief imam and a leading member of the Ghana Muslim Council, though Imam Abbass had earlier supported the Muslim Association Party. Alhaji Awudu Kookah, personal communication, 19 June 1998 (in Hausa).

[59] Alhaji Osman Norga, personal communication, Aladjo, Accra, 3 Aug. 2002 (in Hausa).

[60] Mr. Issaka Salih, personal communication, Nsawam, 30 June 1998 (in Hausa).

[61] Alhaji Osman Norga, personal communication, Aladjo, Accra, 3 Aug. 2002 (in Hausa).

MODERNITY, WAHHABISM, AND MADRASA SCHOOLING
IN GHANA AND BURKINA FASO

Madrasa schooling represented the most enduring institution in Muslims' quest
for modernity. Though in both Ghana and Burkina Faso the *madrasa* was
initiated simultaneously by both members of the Tijaniyya and urban entrepre-
neurs inclined toward Wahhabi ideas, by the 1980s, it had become the hallmark
of Wahhabism and the main intellectual infrastructure for nurturing new gener-
ations of Wahhabi-inclined preachers.[62] Much has been written about the trans-
formation of Islamic education from Qur'anic schools to *madrasa* in West
Africa toward the end of the colonial period and its relationship to the rise of
Wahhabi reform. Therefore, I will only briefly summarize this development,
with a focus on the relationship between modernity and the *madrasa* and
how it facilitated Wahhabism's implantation.

The most important innovations in the *madrasa* concerned their structure,
content, and pedagogical methods, which contrasted sharply with the traditional
Qur'anic schools. Whereas Qur'anic schools emphasized memorization and reci-
tation of the Qur'an, reserving the study of Arabic grammar for advanced stu-
dents, *madrasa* schooling stressed the study of Arabic grammar along with
memorization of portions of the Qur'an even at the entry level. This emphasis
on Arabic grammar allowed students to learn the Qur'an and more advanced
texts quickly, thus reducing the time spent acquiring religious knowledge. But
knowledge of Arabic also exposed students to wider Islamic literature pouring
in from other parts of the Muslim world after the Second World War. This
influx of religious literature reduced the religious experts' monopoly over the
sacred texts. In addition, whereas Qur'anic school students sat on the floor and
wrote their lessons on whitewashed slates (*walaga* in Mossi or *allo* in Hausa),
the *madrasa* appropriated the structure, pedagogical styles, and material
resources of secular Western schools, including the use of furniture, chalkboards,
printed books, and uniforms, and the issuance of certificates to students who
completed their studies. These not only facilitated the learning process, but
also allowed the *madrasa* to compete more effectively with the secular schools
that became increasingly popular among Muslims from the 1960s onwards.

In contrast with Qur'anic schooling, the *madrasa* also accommodated
modern urban lifestyles rooted in the colonial and postcolonial economy. For
example, whereas in most Qur'anic schools students were part of the teacher's
household, offering services in exchange for education, *madrasa* students paid
fees, attended classes at a fixed time, and returned home at the end of the sched-
uled period.[63] The chores students provided to their teachers in Qur'anic

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[62] Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*, 5, 209–10.
[63] Kaba's description of the structure of Qur'anic schooling in Mali holds true for madrasas in
Ghana and Burkina Faso as well. Kaba, "Politics of Quranic Education," op. cit.

schools were considered to be part of the rewards due to the teacher, but the pedagogical culture also emphasized the need to acquire *baraka* (mystical blessings) from the teacher by providing extra services. A teacher's *baraka* was believed to illuminate his students' knowledge and enhance their charisma and public appeal. But to obtain *baraka*, a student was expected to honor his teacher and everyone associated with the teacher—his wives, children, and etcetera—and to offer them services and gifts even after completing their studies. In essence, a student could become a client for life. *Baraka* was therefore a powerful, albeit invisible tool that allowed a teacher total control over a student's life and career. By claiming spiritual control over students' success through the ability to dispense or hold back *baraka*, the established scholars maintained their students' submission and loyalty. And through their control over this spiritual capital, they selected those among their students who would be elevated to a higher stage in the Muslim social and intellectual hierarchies.

The expectation of *baraka*, then, allowed the established scholarly community to reproduce itself and guarantee its dominance. But Wahhabi reformers preached against this belief and insisted that success derived from the student's ability, concomitant with the depth of the teacher's knowledge, and not necessarily from the teacher's blessings. These arguments appealed to Western-educated elites, whose experiences in secular institutions demonstrated that success derived from hard work and not spiritual blessings.

Qur'anic education also included the acquisition of esoteric knowledge such as astrology and secret formulae for healing, upon which most local scholars depended for economic sustenance. Because these spiritual resources were not offered to students at one time, but were rather extended in a deliberately slow, progressive manner, many Qur'anic school students remained bonded to their teachers in expectation that one day they would impart this secret knowledge. Referring to the relationship between Qur'anic schools' mode of learning and *ilmin tibo* (magic formula) in Ghanaian Islamic scholarship, Mallam Basha, a madrasa proprietor and an advocate of Anglo-Islamic schooling in Ghana, observed:

Anyone who started his education through the Qur'anic school method knew the importance of learning secret numerology because without it, the Qur'anic school graduate was useless among his peers. Most scholars trained in the Qur'anic school system prided themselves on their possession of secret formulae, which was seen as a source of prestige as well as economic sustenance. As a result, even those *mallams* who knew that *ilmi-tib* (secret sciences) is *haram*, continued to indulge in it because it helped them feed their families. What separated the *madrasa* from Qur'anic schooling was the absence of secret knowledge in the *madrasa* curriculum.[64]

[64] Mallam Ibrahim Basha, personal communication, Tamale (Ghana), 2 July 2002.

Mallam Basha's observation is applicable to other parts of Muslim West Africa. The reliance on *baraka* and esoteric knowledge as sources of spiritual power and eminence thus further tied Qur'anic school students to their teachers in a perpetual and unequal relationship. In Ghana, Hajj Umar's experiences in Qur'anic school testified to this "exploitative" relationship. "After several years of studies, I did not even complete the Qur'an," he lamented several times during my interviews with him. This lack of progress, which he blamed on the time spent working to obtain the teacher's *baraka* instead of learning, forced him to seek education in the Arab world.[65] For Arabophone scholars like Hajj Umar, Imam Sayouba, and Muhammad Malick Sana, along with other Muslims trained in secular institutions, the Qur'anic school was an ana-chronistic institution that retarded students' progress. But they also saw the Qur'anic school pedagogy and mode of socialization as the source of religious heterodoxy, since it was rooted in Sufi concepts of *baraka* and belief in mira-cles.[66] Their interest in *madrasa* schooling further demonstrates elective affi-nities between an emerging Islamic epistemology, which had affected the Arab world earlier, and Western pedagogical paradigm, though the latter had to be Islamized.[67]

MODERNITY, WAHHABISM AND THE CONCEPT OF ELECTIVE AFFINITIES

From the discussion thus far, we can tease out the influence of modern dis-course on the Wahhabi movements in Ghana and Burkina Faso between the 1970s and the early 1990s. For the Western-educated elites who embraced Wahhabi dogma and helped to propagate it, modernity was a synonym for per-sonal and societal transformation; it meant adopting lifestyles and beliefs that could enhance personal economic progress and society's development. Local customs and belief systems associated with occultism, especially the reliance on charms rather than hard work for personal success, were seen as the causes of Muslims' spiritual backsliding and socioeconomic retardation. And for them, a progressive lifestyle included economizing rather than squandering one's resources in ostentatious ceremonies and lifestyles. Modernity thus rep-resented the antithesis of the "traditional" (by which they meant the social, pol-itical, and cultural status quo), and "*colo*" remnants of the colonial order. They often used the phrase the "traditional elites," or "*les gens traditionels*," to describe the established Muslim leadership and the older generation that seemed to resist change irrespective of ethnic or doctrinal affiliations. They rejected the older generation, whose leadership was fossilized under colonial rule, while seeking to avoid European cultural norms associated with

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[65] Hajj Umar Ibrahim, personal communications, 30 June 1998, and 19 Apr. 2002.
[66] See Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*, 7.
[67] See, for example, Cook, "Islamic versus Western Conceptions of Education," 340–41.

Christianity. Though this conception of modernity was rooted in local aspirations for individual advancement and communal progress, it also derived from Western ideas of "human progress," which the secular educated elites acquired during their training.

So, at the time Wahhabi-inclined scholars started preaching their doctrine of religious purity the Westernized elites were also seeking change, and although the Wahhabi doctrine was fundamentally puritanical in its religious emphasis, it was sufficiently porous to appropriate new, even Western secular ideas. The adaptation of Western institutional arrangements and democratic processes in Wahhabi organizations in Ghana and Burkina Faso illustrates the movement's openness to modern ideas that is only now being explored. By granting members the right to vote for candidates and encouraging qualified members to stand for election (though in reality the elections were more self-selective than democratic), Wahhabi preachers and their Western/secular-educated cohorts claimed to be modern and democratic, a belief that attracted a significant following during the movement's nascent stage. The use of written constitutions not only symbolized a departure from what these leaders considered an archaic power structure but also demonstrated the leaders' willingness to allow the organizations to reflect an inclusive decision-making process that mirrored a postcolonial political arrangement. But in seeking this shift, they reached back to the Medinan system of *shura*, the Prophet's consultative institution that had long allowed the *ummah* to participate in decision-making irrespective of gender, knowledge, or social status.

Compared to the ways Islamic institutions had been organized in Ghana and Burkina Faso prior to the rise of Wahhabism, the adoption of formal bureaucratic structures in Wahhabi institutions was a novel practice. Before the late 1970s, none of the Tijaniyya groups in Ghana and Burkina Faso had a written constitution or formal bureaucratic structures, since the leadership remained anchored in the traditions of Sufi hierarchy, where a combination of spiritual elevation and esoteric knowledge determined leadership.[68] The adoption of bureaucratic arrangements therefore served to convince followers that the new movement was essentially modern. But these institutions also allowed Wahhabism to utilize secular knowledge to guarantee their existence in competition with the Tijaniyya for followers.

Elective affinities were further embedded in Ghanaian and Burkinabé conceptions of the relationship between secular knowledge and leadership. The dual power-sharing structure in the local Wahhabi organizations allowed secular knowledge to serve the organization's mundane activities while

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[68] The only exception is the Ahmadiyya Movement in Ghana, which was organized bureaucratically, but most Ghanaian Muslims do not consider the Ahmadis true Sunni Muslims. To the best of my knowledge, there is no evidence of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Burkina Faso during this period.

Islamic knowledge served its ecclesiastical responsibilities. Prior to this period, the two types of knowledge had been viewed locally, even if erroneously, as separate and incompatible, one being sanctified by the Qur'an, the other supposedly rejected by the same Qur'an as "sacrilegious knowledge." As early Wahhabi preachers accepted the leadership of Western/secular-educated individuals, most of whom had only limited religious knowledge, that "sacrilegious" knowledge attained some legitimacy even on the religious plane. The dual structures also allowed the leaders to privilege knowledge, including secular knowledge, over family connections as the main criterion for leadership, and thereby further claim to be "modern" in contrast to the status quo, whereby power derived from membership in the scholarly lineages or Sufi affiliations. In other words, an elective affinity emerged between the two types of knowledge that allowed Arabophone elites and their Westernized patrons to share power in a new religious space. Appropriation of modern ideas did not threaten the centrality of the Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions in guiding individuals and the community, as one might expect, but rather allowed these sources to legitimize practical secular ideas to service Islam. In other words, secular ideas were not only appropriated, but also Islamized.

Wahhabism also provided otherwise disenfranchised groups among younger Western-educated Muslims and Arabophone elites with a niche in the larger Muslim religio-political landscape. The organizations' dual leadership structures provided secular educated elites with leadership opportunities in Muslim institutions that had been denied them earlier because of their lack of Islamic knowledge. Secular education, which came with the adoption of Western lifestyles, had made it difficult for them to see themselves fully as part of a community that seemed to them to wallow in social and economic stagnation. But the introduction of Wahhabism allowed them to participate in religious dialogue and to contribute in creating a new Islamic ecclesiastical space.

Like Muslims trained in Western secular institutions, local scholars who had embraced Wahhabi ideas during their intellectual formation in the Arab world felt disenfranchised by the community they had returned to serve. Their uncompromising rejection of some local customs made it difficult for them to accept or belong to a scholarly community that appeared to them to foster heretical religious innovations and customs. Similarly, their reliance on scriptural authority rather than the *ijma* (consensus) of the scholars, their denunciation of Sufism, and their rejection of the authority of the dominant schools of jurisprudence (*madhaahib*), all further alienated them from the mainstream local Muslim scholarly community anchored in Sufi traditions and *maliki* jurisprudence (the Islamic school of thought followed by most West Africans). Their alliance with professionals trained in secular institutions was therefore profoundly strategic in facilitating their own search for religious leadership.

The organizations' official names offer further evidence of the influence of Western/secular knowledge on the local articulation of the Wahhabi religious

mission. In the Ghanaian organization, the words "Research" and "Reformation" were consciously selected to reflect the organization's agenda, which focused on researching authentic Islam in the original sources. But the word "Reformation" was also appropriated from the history of Protestantism in Europe, a popular topic in middle and secondary school history during this period. It is quite possible that the secular educated elites who suggested the organization's name considered the Wahhabi movements as analogous to the Protestant Reformation that transformed the European religious landscape.[69] Just as the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation preached individual spiritual purity and salvation, and in the process undermined the Catholic Church's ecclesiastical hegemony in Europe, Wahhabism preached individualized spiritual purity that sought, though unsuccessfully, to undermine the Sufi brotherhoods' hegemony in West Africa. In Ghana, the first general secretary of Research told me, "We called the organization 'Research and Reformation' because our aspiration was to conduct thorough research to determine what constituted authentic Islam and then reform our society accordingly. That kind of reform is revolutionary; we wanted to free the masses from the oppression of superstitions and religious oligarchy."[70] In Burkina Faso, on the other hand, the word "movement" in the organization's official name suggests that the Western-educated elites saw their mission in the context of a social and religious movement identical with that of Europe and indeed, of the Middle East.[71]

The *madrasa* mode of schooling offers another example of the elective affinity between Wahhabism and local notions of modernity. By carefully adapting modern structures and pedagogical methods to the needs of Muslim children in the *madrasa*, young urban educational and cultural entrepreneurs in Ghana and Burkina Faso offered Muslim children a kind of schooling that was modern in context but Islamic in content. Toward the middle of the 1980s, most *madrasas* included secular courses in their curricula, thus allowing Muslims to acquire secular education in an Islamic environment. From this perspective, the *madrasa* served as the meeting place between Islamic and Western epistemologies.

The above discussion suggests that Wahhabism in Ghana and Burkina Faso, as in other parts of West Africa, encouraged the appropriation of secular

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[69] Roman Loimeier found similar comparisons between contemporary Islamism and "Protestantism" among Muslims from Nigeria to East Africa. See his, "Is there Something Like Protestant Islam?" *Die Welt des Islams* 45, 2 (2005): 216–54.

[70] M. S. Baba, personal communication, 22 Sept. 2002 (in English). For a comparison between this genre of Islamic reform and Protestantism, see Ellis Goldberg, "Smashing Idols and the State: The Protestant Ethic and Egyptian Sunni Radicalism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33, 1 (1991): 3–35.

[71] According to one of the founders, the organization first adopted the name Wahhabi Movement (Mouvement Wahhabitte), but was advised to change it to Sunna Movement (Mouvement Sunnite) because the word "Wahhabi" was associated with Saudi Arabia. Mahmud Bandé, personal communication, Ouagadougou, 1 May 2002.

modern discourse in the religious sphere. Colonial secular education, with its emphasis on individual responsibility and leadership based on knowledge, was echoed in the spiritual realm, where Wahhabi preachers insisted on an individualized spirituality in contrast to the communally oriented Tijaniyya Sufi brotherhood. In their search for a new religious meaning, the Western-educated elites also rejected belief in occult powers since these cannot be subjected to rigorous scientific inquiry. Only references to miracles in the Qur'an could be considered authentic; all other beliefs not directly substantiated by the Qur'an and *sunna* fell into the realm of superstition and were rejected. Yet, while condemning local customs, the Western/secular-educated elites rehabilitated Western secular ideas for the purpose of transforming local Islamic culture and religious practices. The contradiction forced them to painfully redefine the concept of *bid'a* (innovation), which was the core of the Wahhabi dogma, to justify the appropriation of constructive foreign ideas that had been accepted in the Arab world earlier.

The aforementioned elective affinities between local Wahhabism and locally constructed notions of modernity allow us to question the assumption that Islamic knowledge and Prophet Muhammad's traditions were incompatible with modernity. Wahhabism, as West African urban professionals understood it, embodied a strand of modernity that highlighted its tendencies toward producing a socially progressive and spiritually "purer" society. For these Western-educated professionals and their followers, human social and economic progress could not be distinct from religious purity. As a former member of Islamic research reminded me, illiteracy generates poverty and both encourage superstitious behavior and its attendant "evils."[72]

THE DISSOLUTION OF ELECTIVE AFFINITIES BETWEEN SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

As suggested by the metaphor of elective affinity, the convenient power-sharing arrangement in Wahhabi institutions could not be sustained. Between the two Wahhabi organizations I have examined here, the earliest friction stemmed primarily from the ultimate incompatibility of religious and secular knowledge and from the conflation of religious and secular leadership. The dual power-sharing structures in these movements seemed, on the surface, an ideal arrangement that not only promoted efficiency but also militated against potential power struggles within the leadership. Yet the formal power actually resided with the Western-educated elites who controlled the organizations' budgets and spoke on their behalf in formal settings. While the Arabophone elites obtained public visibility during preaching sessions, they remained officially

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[72] M. S. Baba, personal communication, 22 Sept. 2002 (in English).

marginalized so long as they did not control the budgets and had no English or French skills to represent the organizations in non-religious forums.

By the late 1980s, the Arabophone elites had become disillusioned; despite their claim to democracy, the leadership had not changed since the founding of Research in 1972 and the Mouvement Sunnite in 1973. Frustrated by this marginalization, the Arabophone elites found ways to drive out the western/secular-educated elites in order to fully dominate the organization's activities. And when they overthrew these elites, the organization began to collapse. In Ghana, "Research" began to disintegrate when the Executive Council attempted to discipline Hajj Umar for failing to consult them before attending a conciliatory meeting with Tijaniyya leaders aimed at uniting the two groups. Umar's followers were mostly second-generation Saudi-trained scholars who had returned home and found their organization dominated by "illiterates," as they now described the Western-educated leaders. They questioned the Executive Council's mandate to reprimand the organization's spiritual leader and primary architect. In the end, they rejected the constitution, dissolved the Executive Council, and restructured the organization to allow Arabophone elites full control.[73] The Westernized elites' attempt to introduce a Western notion of equality into an Islamic ecclesiastical environment seemed cumbersome for the religious elites, whose legitimacy for leadership derived solely from their knowledge of Arabic and theology. The Executive Branch accused Umar and his followers of practicing "Animal Farm politics," alluding to Orwell's satire on pretentious social and political equality, and its members filed a lawsuit to claim the organization's assets. The lawsuit remained unresolved during my research, most of the plaintiffs having passed away.

In Burkina Faso, Imam Sayouba, with the support of younger Saudi-trained scholars also dismissed Souleymane Ouédraogo for not following a consultative protocol agreed to by members. Ouédraogo had invited the Paris branch of the *Jamaat Islamiyya* to mediate the conflicts between Mouvement Sunnite and its opponents. After attending the *Jamaat*'s conference in Paris, he became convinced that his organization had gone too far in criticizing other Muslims and argued that religious reform should not fragment the *ummah*. Souleymane's opponents accused him of affiliating with a covert Sufi group, though *Jamaat Islamiyya* was by no means a Sufi brotherhood, and demanded his immediate resignation.[74] After his resignation in 1988, his deputy assumed leadership, only to be dismissed a few months later by the Arabophone scholars, who claimed the organization was a religious organization and therefore had to be led by people with religious knowledge. By 1990, Mouvement Sunnite had collapsed. As suggested by Goethe's idea that elective

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[73] Ibrahim Baro, personal communication, Nima, Accra, 17 Sept. 2002.
[74] Jammat Islamiyya was by no means a Sufi group. Rather, it was a more liberal organization with significant membership among Western-educated professionals.

affinities tend toward separation, the convenient power-sharing arrangements between Westernized Muslim elites and their Arabophone counterparts proved unsustainable in the long term. This was precisely because of the essential ambiguity of combining religious and secular knowledge, and the difficulties of imposing a democratic process on institutions that required unquestioned religious authority. For the Arabophone elites, appropriation of secular ideas did not mean surrendering religious authority to secular elites, and pursuit of modernity did not imply dismantling religious authority rooted in religious knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The end of European colonialism in the 1960s created new historical dynamics that encouraged younger generations to seek ways of creating a new society that could distinguish itself from both the colonial period and the pre-colonial era. For some younger Muslims, the struggle for independence was not only to rid their society of European rule and cultural influences, but also a struggle against those social, religious, and political systems from before European rule that seemed incompatible with the new world in which Muslims now found themselves. The advent of Wahhabi reform in West Africa marked a major watershed in the region's tradition of Islamic reform that can be explained as a contest between West African Islamic customs, Middle Eastern Islamic values, and Western notions of modernity. This contest favored the proliferation of Wahhabism precisely because the Wahhabi dogma, at least during this period in West Africa's history, and like the early Salafi movement in the Middle East, both emphasized religious purity and accommodated secular ideas rooted in European colonial discourse that had the potential of changing Muslim societies for the better. In his study of the Wahhabi movement in Mali, Lansiné Kaba noted that the introduction of Wahhabism "revealed to many westernized African civil servants that Islam was not a system so reactionary as the attitudes of many *marabu* (Muslim clerics) had suggested."[75] This observation is supported by evidence from Ghana and Burkina Faso. But we must recognize that these "Westernized" elites also revealed to Wahhabi-oriented scholars that Islamic purity did not have to exclude modern Western ideas or confine itself to conservative dogma. Rather, Western or secular ideas could be rehabilitated to serve a puritanical Islam in a modern environment without people having to subscribe to Western culture wholesale.

It is therefore not presumptuous to argue that just as the early Salafi leaders in the Middle East sought to bridge the gap between Western material success and Islamic purity, West African Muslims also engaged in a similar discourse, with

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[75] Kaba, *Wahhabiyya*, 16.

"modernity" as the central trope. In his Foreword to Ibrahim Abu-Rabi's influential book, *Intellectual Origins of the Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World*, Mahmoud Ayoub wrote, "The Arab Islamic modernism has been a long and persistent attempt toward the marriage of reason and religion in a determined effort to recover Islam's past glory." The present comparative ethnographic history of Ghana and Burkina Faso has been an attempt to examine the West African side of this struggle. Focusing on the early generation of Western/secular-educated Muslim professionals in the urban centers, I have attempted to demonstrate how European education affected some Muslims' conceptions of their own religion, and show how these segments of the Muslim community believed their knowledge of European languages guaranteed them access to the leadership of Muslim institutions in the same way that secular education legitimized leadership in other postcolonial public and private institutions.

The relationship between modernity and a return to the Prophet's era seemed ambiguous but not antithetical because some Muslims considered modernity a form of progress sanctioned by the Prophetic traditions. Referring to the Prophet Muhammad's insistence that Muslims pursue knowledge even to distant and distinct places like China, Wahhabi adherents accepted secular knowledge that helped to promote their vision of religious purity. The Prophet's reference to China, a non-Islamic society and conceivably one of the most distant places from Arabia, appeared to endorse any form of knowledge that promotes human progress and spiritual development. On the other hand, in the perception of Western/secular-educated elites', the prevailing local cultures represented the antithesis of modernity in the same way that *jahiliyya*—the period of ignorance before Islam's rise in Arabia—stood for an irreligious era that had to be transformed. Modernization thus became the conduit for recreating in modern times the "pure" Islamic culture of the Prophet's era. In other words, the Prophet's era symbolized modernity in perpetuity. By the 1990s, Western secular ideas and cultural identity became part of the objectionable *jahiliyya*, as both Tijaniyya and Wahhabi scholars sought ways to protect the youth from the pervasive influence of globalization. The search for modernity in this context was not intended to demolish the Western world or to impose Islamic political norms on the society, but rather to ensure Islam's survival and Muslims' progress in a highly competitive religious and political environment.

As Goethe predicts in his analysis of elective affinities, the convenient accommodation between secular and religious ideas was too fragile to sustain a permanent alliance, despite the tendency toward a symbiotic relationship. By the late 1990s, Wahhabism had begun to transform its internal logics. In addition to allowing Arabophone elites full control of their institutions, it also rejected any remaining conservative cultural baggage imported from the Middle East by earlier scholars, which had given Wahhabism its initial revolutionary identity as well as its negative image. This internal transformation also

expressed itself more profoundly in a new alliance between the Tijaniyya and younger Wahhabi-inclined scholars as part of a broader search for Muslim solidarity. In Ghana and Burkina Faso today, Wahhabi scholars accept Tijaniyya leadership, and strategically avoid provocative styles of preaching, which, they argue, contradict approved Islamic methods of *da'wa* (preaching). The Western/secular-educated Muslims now belong to both sides of the doctrinal divide. As with Goethe's characters, dogmatic convenience and emotions eventually had to surrender to social convention and instrumental pragmatism.

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