

THE DECLINE OF ṢŪFISM IN WEST AFRICA: SOME FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO  
THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ASCENDANCY OF WAHHĀBIST ISLAM IN  
NORTHERN GHANA

by

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## ABSTRACT

While most studies of Islam in West Africa have focused on the spread and nature of Sufi Islam, there has been a recent dramatic transformation in the political and social influence of Sufi Islam long-believed to characterize “African Islam.” The forces of globalization and social and economic changes in West Africa and beyond have resulted in parallel transformations across the Islamic world. In northern Ghana, where Sufi Islam has long been the dominant form of religious practice and politics, the advent of a new, more orthodox, form of Islamicization has taken place that has not yet been adequately studied. One reason for this discrepancy is the fact that the study of Islam in Africa has been dominated by Orientalist and reductive notions of a static form of “Islam” in Africa shorn of any history and decontextualized from the important social and economic changes that have impacted West Africa. Moreover, the bias towards the study of political Islam in the Middle East and South Asia has meant that few scholars have focused on the important transformations in West African Islam that are locally rooted, but clearly linked to the global world of Islam. My thesis seeks to make up for the dearth in the literature on the topic by examining some of the factors that have contributed to the decline of Sufism and the rise of a new Wahhabist version of Islamicization in two key fields: education and politics at the level of the state.

In northern Ghana, Sufis have traditionally represented the dominant religious and political class, similar to many other regions in Muslim Africa. However, during the last three decades, there has been a distinct transformation in the political power and social influence of Sufism and an increasing influence of the Wahhabist forms of Islam. While it has not been adequately analyzed, Sufism in northern Ghana has been eclipsed by the conservative,

Wahhabist influence in the fields of education and politics which represent the two arenas of inquiry in my research.

What then are the factors that can account for this clear transformation of Islam in northern Ghana? This is the primary research question of this thesis. In order to answer this question, I conducted extensive research in northern Ghana in order to adjudicate between a number of alternative explanations with the objective of analyzing empirically the reasons, and combinations of factors, that have led to this seemingly surprising religious and social transformation in northern Ghana.

Naturally, these alternative explanations do not need to be mutually exclusive. However, my thesis explores the evidence for each line of argument, and prioritizes some of the most important factors that contributed to the rise of the “new Islam” in Northern Ghana. I argue that the rise of Wahhābism in northern Ghana is in great part a result of political and socio-economic changes that are locally specific. That is, while I acknowledge the role of international linkages in the current popularity in Wahhabist activism, I demonstrate in this work that the role of political party politics and electoral contestation in recent decades has played a great role in the recent success of Wahhābism in northern Ghana. Moreover, building on original field research, I further show empirically that this emerging trend of a more orthodox notion of Islamic identification and political practice is crucially rooted in the ways in which adherents of Wahhābism have influenced and often dominated new and influential educational institutions in northern Ghana.



## RÉSUMÉ

Tandis que la plupart des études sur l'Afrique de l'ouest ont concentré sur l'étendu et le caractère de l'Islam soufi, il y a eu une transformation dramatique récente dans son influence politique et sociale. Les forces de la globalisation et de changement social et économique ont abouti dans des transformations parallèles en Afrique de l'ouest et ailleurs et partout dans le monde islamique. Dans le Ghana du nord, où l'Islam soufi a été longtemps la forme dominante de la pratique religieuse et la politique, un nouveau forme de l'Islam plus orthodoxe a surgi qui n'a pas encore reçu suffisamment d'attention,. Une explication pour cette désaccord est le fait que l'étude de l'Islam africain a été dominé par les notions orientalistes et réductives d'un Islam africain statique, dépourvu d'histoire et décontextualisé des changements sociales et économiques importantes. qui ont eu un impact sur l'Afrique de l'ouest. En plus, le biais envers l'étude de l'Islam politique dans le Moyen Orient et l'Asie du sud a eu pour résultat que de rares chercheurs ont abordés les transformations importantes dans l'Islam ouest-africain qui sont enracinées localement mais liées sans doute au monde islamique en générale. Ma thèse vise à combler cette lacune dans la littérature sur le sujet par une examen des facteurs qui ont contribué au déclin de la soufisme et l'essor d'une vision nouvelle Wahhabie de l'islamisation dans deux domaines clefs -- l'éducation et la politique -- au niveau de l'état.

Dans le Ghana du nord, les soufis ont traditionnellement représenté la classe religieuse ou dominante, comme ailleurs dans l'Afrique musulmane. Néanmoins, pendant les trois dernières décades, il y avait une réduction distincte dans le pouvoir politique et l'influence sociale du soufisme et une influence élargie correspondante sur la part de l'Islam Wahhabi. Malgré la manque d'attention, le soufisme en Ghana du nord a été éclipsé par ce dernier,

particulièrement dans les domaines de l'éducation et la politique – les deux champs d'intérêt capital pour le présent travail.

Quels sont donc les facteurs qui peuvent expliquer cette transformation évidente dans le Ghana du nord? Ceci est la question de recherche principale de la présente thèse. Afin de répondre à la question, j'ai entrepris des investigations approfondies sur le terrain en Ghana du nord pour juger entre un bon nombre d'explications alternatives. Cela m'a permis d'analyser empiriquement les raisons et les concours de facteurs qui ont mené à cette transformation religieuse et sociale surprenante en Ghana du nord.

Naturellement, ces explications ne s'excluent pas forcément. Néanmoins, ma thèse scrute l'évidence pour chaque ligne d'argument et fait un choix entre les facteurs les plus importants qui ont contribué à la montée du « nouveau Islam » en Ghana du nord. Je soutiens que l'ascension du Wahhabisme là-bas est en grande partie le résultat de changements politiques et socio-économiques qui sont spécifiques au lieu. C'est-à-dire, tout en admettant le rôle de liens internationaux dans la popularité courante de l'activisme Wahhabie, je montre dans ce mémoire que le rôle de la politique des partis et la contestation électorale dans les décades récentes étaient déterminants au succès du Wahhabisme en Ghana du nord. De plus, en bâtissant sur des recherches originales entreprises sur le terrain, je montre empiriquement que cette tendance vers une notion plus orthodoxe d'identification islamique et de pratique politique est décisivement enracinée dans les manières dans lesquelles les adeptes du Wahhabisme ont influencé, voire dominé, les institutions éducatrices nouvelles dans le Ghana du nord.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. RESEARCH STATEMENT:

While most studies of Islam in West Africa have focused on the spread and nature of Ṣūfī Islam, little attention has been paid to the recent dramatic transformations in Ṣūfism's political and social influence. In Northern Ghana, where Ṣūfī Islam has long been the dominant form of religious practice and politics, the advent of a new, more orthodox form of Islam has yet to be adequately studied. One reason for this lacuna is the fact that the study of Islam in Africa has been dominated by Orientalist conceptions underpinned by the idea of an essentially static "Islam." Indeed, conventional studies of contemporary Islam in Africa are often characterized by an ahistorical and decontextualized mode of analysis that fails to address the important social and economic changes that have had an impact on West Africa over the last two decades. Moreover, the bias towards the study of political Islam in the Middle East and South Asia has meant that few scholars have focused on the important transformations in West African Islam that are locally rooted, but clearly linked to the global world of Islam. The current study seeks to make up for the paucity of this analysis in the recent literature on the subject by examining some of the factors that have contributed to the relative decline of Ṣūfism and the rise of a new Wahhābist version of Islam in two key fields: education and state-level politics.

## **1.2. RESEARCH QUESTION**

This thesis examines the factors that account for the transformation of Islam in northern Ghana. A number of alternative explanations will be explored, in order to elucidate the reasons, or combinations of factors, that have led to this surprising religious and social transformation.

## **1.3. BACKGROUND:**

### **i. The Decline of Ṣūfism and the Rise of a “New Islam” in Northern Ghana**

In northern Ghana, Ṣūfis have long represented the dominant religious and political class, as they have in many other regions of Muslim Africa. However, during the last three decades, there has been a distinct shift in the political power and social influence of Ṣūfism and an increasing influence of the Wahhābist form of Islam. Though the shift has received little analysis, Ṣūfism in northern Ghana has indeed been eclipsed by conservative, Wahhābist influence in the fields of education and politics, the current study’s two primary areas of inquiry

In terms of the political field, the Wahhābists have proven to be increasingly influential in electoral politics in northern Ghana, a region where their presence is most strongly felt. While the New Patriotic Party (NPP) was dominant in most parts of Ghana for the last eight years, the success of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in the North was and is mainly due to the support it derives from Wahhābi-inspired constituencies. Indeed, the increasing popularity of the Wahhābists in recent parliamentary elections clearly demonstrates that the rise of Wahhābism in a political as well as a social force in the northern parts of the country. Ultimately, in the most recent 2008, election of which was hotly contested and eventually won

by the NDC, the following results were obtained: the NDC won 21 parliamentary seats<sup>1</sup> and 450,564 votes (56.84%)<sup>2</sup> and NPP in the parliamentary won only 4 seats<sup>3</sup> and 303,406 votes (38.27%)<sup>4</sup> for the presidential contest. This pattern, translated into religious cum geopolitical terms, points to the continuing dominance of Wahhābi political activism, which could in turn suggest that their political dominance has given them leverage in the power of disseminating their doctrinal beliefs and acceptance by the people.

The pulpits of the Wahhābi mosques, located in every nook and cranny from the downtown core to the outskirts of Tamale, are being used as launch pads for political activism in favor of the National Democratic Party (NDC). This has resulted in overwhelming victories in the four Tamale constituencies, with even larger margins of votes than NPP. Likewise, prior to the December 2008 elections, during the September Khutba of the 'Id al-Fiṭr prayer, the Wahhābist grand Imām used the beheading of Yaa Naa Yakubu Andani (the overlord of the traditionalist Dagbon area) in 2001 to arouse the sentiments and galvanize the support of the Andani Gate chieftaincy divide.<sup>5</sup>

In the realm of education, the recent ascendancy of the Wahhābis is also obvious. This is especially evident in the influence of the Wahhābis on some decision-makers in the Ghana Education Service (GES), in the Islamic education unit school curricula, the expansion of Wahhābi mosques and charitable associations, in the increasing importance of the Arabic language as a medium of instruction, and the growing emphasis on Islamic conduct based on conservative rather than Ṣūfi heterodox models.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghana\\_parliamentary\\_election,\\_2008](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghana_parliamentary_election,_2008) assessed 2010-09-12

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ec.gov.gh/node/134> assessed 2010-09-12

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit.,

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit.,

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Adam Mohammed Amin Anta, chief executive secretary for Tamale Metropolitan 2008 at Tamale.

## ii. Wahhābism Versus Ṣūfism

The Ṣūfi/Wahhābi dichotomy in West Africa is complex. A useful frame of comparative analysis distinguishes these two Islamic trends along the lines of their historical trajectories, ideational content and modes of practice. Historically, the Ghanaian brand of Wahhābism is a derivative of mainstream Saudi Wahhābism. It is based on a legalistic and iconoclastic perception of Sunni Islam that rejects any practice that has no legal support from the Qur‘ān and Ḥadīth.<sup>6</sup> Ideationally, the founder of Wahhābism in Ghana was not very well versed in their religious doctrines, hence most of what he laid down and identified as the foundation of Wahhābism was later revised by his students who had graduated from the University of Medina in Saudi Arabia. Practices like *sadl* and *qabd*, using the *Masbaha*, organizing the commentary of the Qur‘ān and observance of Tahajjud and Tarāwīh prayers in the month of Ramaḍan, which the founder of Ghanaian Wahhābism declared in the past to be innovations and hence condemned, were reintroduced. Geo-politically, the Wahhābi in a northern Ghana context are typically supporters of the Andani Gate of the chieftaincy divide, and NDC or CPP (Convention Peoples Party) supporters.<sup>7</sup>

The Tijānis on the other hand are those who subscribe to the orthodox Islam that found its way into the area in the 14<sup>th</sup> century with the adherents of Qādiriyya Ṣūfism. When the Tijāniyya order made its entrance into the region in the later part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the local people switched to it. The Ghanaian brand of Tijānism has drawn into its fold many of the cultural practices and traditions of the area, some of which may or may not be inimical to religious precepts. The Tijānis see themselves as the true Sunnis, as characterized by their

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<sup>6</sup> J., L.Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, (Syracuse, N.Y.: University Press, 1994),. 37.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with former M.P for Tamale Central Mr Mohammed Harūn, 12/01/2009 at Tamale.

litanies (*awrād*) after the prescribed daily prayers. Notably, the morning and afternoon *awrād* (termed *lāzim*) comprise recitation of istighfar, *ṣalāt* to the Prophet and *tahfīl*. The evening *wird* (termed *wazīfa*) is recited between Maghrib and ‘Isha prayers. Finally, on Fridays, between Aṣr and Maghrib, the Haylalah al-Jum‘ah is recited. The unique way in which the *wazīfa* and Haylalah is organized and observed is condemned by the Wahhābis.<sup>8</sup> They see it as blatant idolatry, especially the spreading of a white sheet of calico in the middle of the *dā’ira* (circle). The Tijānis also commemorate the birth of the Prophet (mawlid) and have a form of initiation (termed *tarbiyya*) which the Wahhābis vehemently condemn and regard as *bid‘ah*. In the Dagbon social set up they are seen to belong to the Abudu Gate (divide) of the chieftaincy line. Politically, they are traditional supporters of the Danquah/Busia tradition party. Most of their leadership consists of itinerant scholars.<sup>9</sup>

### iii. Alternative Explanations for the Rise of Wahhābism in Northern Ghana:

There are a number of explanations that have been put forth in the literature on the subject having to do with the decline of Ṣūfism and the rise of Wahhābism in northern Ghana. One explanation posits the influence of Saudi Arabia as a regional and Islamic power. Many scholars have argued that Saudi financing and patronage is the primary reason for the ascendancy of Wahhābi support throughout Africa, with Ghana being no exception. This so called ‘petro-dollar’ thesis is routinely utilized by Orientalists [*e.g.*, Richard L. Warms (1992);

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<sup>8</sup> See Hiskett, M., “The Community of Grace,” *African Language Studies* 17 (1980,) 115-116; Stewart, Charles, C. “The Tijaniyya in Ghana: A Historical Study,” (M.A thesis, Department of African Studies, University of Ghana, 1964).

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Dr. Muhammad Ṭahir Dana an elder at the Gbewaa palace Tamale 01/16/ 2009 at Tamale; interview with Alhaji Abdulai Alhassan, an elder and opinion leader in Dagbon, 01/10/2009 at Tamale.



Laremont Ricardo & Hrach, Gregorian, (2006)], but, interestingly, is also quite common among African scholars [*e.g.*, Chipampe, Chibwe Ephraim (1976); Soares, Benjamin F., (2006)].

A second explanation, drawn from work on comparative politics and political economy, argues that given the drastic economic and social conflicts in northern Ghana, the codes of conduct and religious practices of the Wāḥḥābis are actually more relevant to the local population. This is keeping with the theories of social movement theorists like Wiktorowicz, Quintan, (2004) and Moghadam, Valentine, (2009), and political economy experts such as Tessler, Mark, (1980).

A third explanation holds that the Wāḥḥābis have found success because they have a larger presence at the grassroots level, in contrast to Ṣūfis, who are not as locally-rooted as their more conservative counterparts. As the argument goes, the Wāḥḥābists are more legitimate among local populations because they are more present in the people's lives. That is, they resolve disputes, help the needy, and support their constituencies on a daily basis.

Yet another explanation privileges regional and transnational forces. This argument highlights the increasing political, social and religious contest (in the form of doctrinal diversities) between the Tijānis and their Wāḥḥābi antagonists (thus an inter-sectarian conflict) as well as between Tijānis and their fellow Tijānis (i.e. intra-Tijāni differences). In a country with a history of Sufi majority, in light of the global contest between “Sufi-Islam” and “Wāḥḥābi-Islam”, many academics drawing from Samuel Huntington among others, argue that the success and spread of Wāḥḥābi influence in northern Ghana is primarily rooted in this “clash of civilizations,” where Africa represents a “fault line” that few scholars have tread upon (Huntington, 1994).

Naturally, these alternative explanations need not be mutually exclusive. Consequently, I explore the supporting evidence for each and attempt to prioritize some of the most important causal factors that have contributed to the rise of the “new Islam” in northern Ghana.

#### 1.4. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Most studies on the history of Islam in Dagbon, the origins of the Tijāniyya and Wahhābiyya sects, the nature of local religious conflicts and their impact and resolution have been published in Arabic. Ghanaian writers, scholars and poets such as ‘Umar Karachi, ‘Abd Allah Maikano, Afa Yūssif ‘Ajura, and Shaykh Muntaqa are all important sources in this regard. ‘Abd al-Ṣamad Ḥabīb al-Allah al-Mukhtar al-Kashīnī al-Ghānī’s work *Risalat al-Dā‘ī ilā al-Sunnah al-Zājir‘an al-Bid‘ah* is also pertinent. ‘Abd Ṣamad was originally a Tijāni but converted to Wahhābism and died as a devoted Wahhābi. His book was later used as a course book in Saudi universities.<sup>10</sup> Shaykh Abubakr Sa‘īd<sup>11</sup> and Shaykh Sa‘id ‘Umar are of particular importance here. Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wadūd Hārūn’s recently published *Bushrā al-Muhibbīn wa al-Murīdīn fī aqwāl al-Sādat al-Muttaqīn* and the four year Ambariyya strategic plan document are also salient works in this study.

According to David Robinson, three factors have distorted the appreciation of Muslim society in sub-Saharan Africa in terms of the variety of its practices and beliefs. The first of these is, the dominance of the Orientalist approach which is predominantly founded on philological and theological training. This approach lacks an equally important understanding

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<sup>10</sup> Abdulai Iddrisu “Contesting Islam: ‘Homegrown Wahhabism’, Education and Muslim Identity in Northern Ghana, 1920-2005” (PhD Dissertation University of Illinois, 2009.)

<sup>11</sup> He did his first degree at Medina University and proceeded to Riyadh to do his Masters. His thesis, entitled “*Mukaranatu Baina Sufiya wa maz habu Salaf*”- “The Differences between Sufi and Salafiya.” ” according to Iddrisu also takes the stands of Shaykh Mohammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb and Shaykh bin Bāz in declaring the Tijānis to be kuffār (infidels). Iddrisu “Contesting Islam” 172

of the religion's history and doctrines. The second factor is the strict limitation of Orientalist sources to Arabic literature and traditions supports their view that there exists a clear progression of Islam and its orthodoxy. This is particularly exemplified in primary documentation on the Sokoto Caliphate. The repercussion of this distortion is that it reconstruction of religious history is rendered very rigid, if not impossible. A glaring example is the religious history of Hausaland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which defies any Orientalist reconstruction. Lastly, in order to achieve firm control over the leadership and societies in this sub-region, colonial officials and administrators employed their own trained personnel. They worked from the background of a religious geography of West Africa, purported to conserve and control.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.5. METHODOLOGY:

In conducting my research I pursued a qualitative methodology that utilized extensive ethnography research. This involved studying and speaking with ordinary Muslims as well as with local officials, setting up focus groups and, where applicable, conducting household surveys. Much of this groundwork has already been done in the context of a research visit to Ghana in late 2008. The administrative wings of both the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Islamic Education Unit (IEU) were interviewed. Local government officials and others at the national ministerial level were also approached to assess the political impact of Tijāniyya and Wahhābiya dichotomy.

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<sup>12</sup> Robinson, David. "Approach to Islam in West African History," in *Faces of Islam in African Literature*, ed. Kenneth W. Harrow, (Portsmouth, NH; Heinemann; London: J.Currey, 1991), 107-108.

In addition I conducted archival research that involved content analysis of several primary sources related to this topic. Where necessary, secondary materials will be resorted to in order to supplement and contextualize the primary sources. Moreover, in conducting this archival research I carefully reviewed earlier works of historical scholarship in this area, such as those of Nehemia Levtzion, Ivor Wilks and John Hunwick. In this regard prior to drawing a conclusion or making a conjecture with respect to the subject in question, related secondary works will be consulted for clarification and analogy. Modern and up-to-date research methodologies will be used to collect data relevant to the research. Respondents were grouped into seven focus groups. To address various groups' differing perceptions and understanding of the issues at stake, seven different questionnaires were used in gathering information through interviews. About thirty six different people were approached throughout the Dagbon area. Some notable scholars were interviewed in Accra. Stratified sampling method was used, reflecting the division of the population into the seven stratified groups. Since the interviews involved inter-personal contact, it took about four months to make contact with almost all respondents. Considering the socio-cultural nature of the topic, quantitative techniques were used to analyze the data. This approach served to ensure that no factor was held constant, as is often done with quantitative techniques, given the various relevant factors interactive and complementary nature.

#### **1.6. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH REPORT:**

The present research sought to ascertain the veracity of the perception that Wahhābist Islam is on the rise in Ghana, and orthodox Ṣūfī Islam (Tijāniyya) is in decline, as well to identify the factors contributing to this scenario. Hence the primary research question was:

“What are the factors that can account for this apparent transformation of Islam in Northern Ghana?”

In order to answer this question a number of persuasive alternative explanations are postulated to explain the factors, reasons, or combination thereof, that have seemingly led to this religious and social transformation.

The author’s trip was unequivocally successful. While a full slate of research was planned, some portions had to be revised given the reality on the ground. Furthermore, it took the ethics committee some time to give the author the green light.

The research targeted seven focus groups: local scholars (Tijāni and Wahhābi); opinion leaders and members of parliament for the case study area; Ghana education service personnel dealing with the Islamic education unit and the girl-child unit; the current manager and former managers of the Islamic education unit current manager and former managers; women’s leaders for both Wahhābi and Tijāniyya groups; high school students from selected schools in the area; and finally a random selection of people from both the Wahhābi and Tijāni sides. Most members of these groups willingly responded to the questionnaires, which were administered in the form of interviews and group discussions; however, a few respondents had some reservations and were not very open in their responses. This perhaps occurred because the author and interviewer was native to the area and his allegiances were already pretty well known.

Catching up with political and opinion leaders also posed a problem, as the author was in Ghana at a time when they were at the zenith of their electoral campaigns, so most of them were difficult to gain access to. The few who were reached promised the author an audience after the elections; however, at that time the winners rushed to the capital to lobby for

ministerial position, while the losers were uncommunicative after their disappointment. However, the author had managed to talk to a few.

As for the scholars, some were about to depart for the pilgrimage, so the author had to wait until they came back. It was noted that there was a paradigm shift from heavy reliance on older scholars towards younger ones, which convinced the author to mostly target young scholars on both sides of the divide.

Further, the phenomenon of “Munichir-Faiḍa” (Wahhābi-Tijāni) was investigated, but it turned out to be an intra-Tijāni split rather than an inter-Tijāni merger. Interestingly, the emergence of an intra-Wahhābi split called ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā‘a and ahl al-Sunna bi lā Jamā‘a was also noted.<sup>13</sup>

In each category five to ten questionnaires were administered, with appropriate consent forms being signed. In situations where the interview had to be videotaped the respondent’s verbal consent was obtained on camera. It is noteworthy that the author was able to videotape most of my interviews, especially, those of individuals deemed high profile figures in the case study area. It is also worth noting that the local language of the people of the area was used in most interviews.<sup>14</sup>

While some aspects of the research could have been answered through exploration of written sources, a more complete picture was obtained on this trip by research on the ground through the collection of pamphlets, educational materials, grey literature and transcripts of

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Shaykh ‘Isā al-Hassan Abubakr at Tamale 1/11/2009; interview with Shaykh ‘Abd al-Hanān Yussif at Tamale 1/15/2009; interview with Shaykh Sa‘īd ‘Umar Mohammad at Tamale 11/16/2008

<sup>14</sup> As an aside, the author would like to note how unfortunate it is that the widely spoken languages in the area - Hausa and Dagbani – are not being taught at the Institute of Islamic Studies. Those of us who come from the West Africa sub-region (sub-Saharan Africa), including parts of East and Central Africa, consider Hausa to be our Islamic language in addition to Swahili. The author recommends that the Institute consider introducing Swahili and Hausa alongside Arabic, Urdu and Turkish, which are already being taught.

public sermons and speeches. The author managed to lay his hands on an appreciable number of important documents such as the Ambariyya (Wahhābist) four-year strategic plan for the area, etc. He also obtained an old printing of the *Jawāhir al-Ma'ānī* the magnum opus of the Tijānis, as well as a recent publication on current trends in Tijānism in Ghana by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wadūd.

The trip to the Prang to interview Shaykh Maikano’s Khalifa Abul Fayd and his brothers is worth mentioning. The author spent three days in the town. Coincidentally, the Khalifa’s wedding took place during this period. I had the opportunity to participate in the Friday Haylala at the Zāwiyya of Shaykh Maikano.

## **1.7. BACKGROUND OF THE CASE STUDY AREA**

### **i. The Northern Region: Location and Size:**

The northern region, the largest region in Ghana ( $\approx 70,000 \text{ km}^2$ ), is located between  $8^\circ$ - $10^\circ$  N Lat. and  $0.5^\circ$  E-and  $2.5^\circ$ W Long. This region is in fact made up of three regions in one: the northern region, upper east and upper west regions, which together make up one third of Ghana’s land area.<sup>15</sup> To the south it is bordered by the brong ahafo region. The northern region is surrounded by three international boundaries, bordered by the Republic of Togo to the east, the Ivory Coast to the west, and Burkina Faso to the north.

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<sup>15</sup> Oxfam File. “From conflict to conciliation”; by Oxfam F:/PRINT.DOC 22/10/98 12

ii. **Population and Ethnic Composition:**

The north harbors a population of 2.2 million (2007 estimates at 2.7 %) made up of 51% females and 49% males. The population density is 26 individuals/km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>16</sup> The north is multi-ethnic in nature, with sixteen recognized ethnic groups, split into two main categories: cephalous and acephalous. The Anufo, Bassare, Bimoba, Bulsa, Konkomba, Mo, Nawuri, Nchumuru, Tampollensi and Vagla are the traditional ten acephalous groups, while the Dagombas, Gonjas, Mamprusis and Nanumbas form the cephalous group.<sup>17</sup> The Mole-Dagbani ethnic grouping is the second largest in the country and the first in terms of being the single ethnic group in the whole country. The Akan group is the first in the country.<sup>18</sup>

The northern region occupies about 29% of the Ghanaian land mass, but harbors only 9% of the nation's population (1984 census). The four dominant ethnic groups — Dagombas, Mamprusis, Gonjas and Nanumbas — monopolize large tracts of land, leaving the other splinter ethnicities with fringe lands. Of late there has been a call to partition the North as its large area and multi-ethnic population make it difficult or even impossible to administer. In 1997, Alhaji B.A. Fuseini, in his capacity as regional minister, advocated for such a partition. He argued:

Because of its size and complexity, it is also one single region with the most complex problems ranging from chieftaincy disputes, ethnic conflicts, illiteracy, and ignorance, high population growth, high incidence of disease, low enrolment in schools, fewer teachers, doctors and nurses.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Mr. Adam Abdul Karim's presentation on the theme "Food security in a challenging economic environment" at "Global World Conference on Food Security" held in Montreal, Canada, from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> October 2009. 3

<sup>17</sup> Op cit., 17

<sup>18</sup> E. Gyimah-Boadi and Richard Asante in "Minorities in Ghana" Commission on human rights; Sub-Commission on Promotion and Protection of human rights working group on minorities. 9<sup>th</sup> edition 12-16 May 2003 E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2003/WP.4 5 May 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Raymond Bagulo Bening. *Ghana: Regionalism Boundaries and National Integration* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1999), 145-147.



This captures the challenges that this region is confronted with. With the inception of the National Democratic Congress party government, a feasibility study of such a separation is being undertaken.

The country as a whole exhibits a unique peculiarity in terms of its regional administrative partition in terms of ethnicity and existing links between religious affiliation and ethnicity. The three northern regions are peopled by the Mole-Dagbani and Gurma, while the dominant religion is Islam.<sup>20</sup>

The extent of Ghana's Muslim population has been a contentious issue since the publication of 2002 population and housing final reports. The statistics were contested particularly by the Muslim community, represented by "The Coalition of Muslim Organizations in Ghana." The report was declared to be grossly inaccurate or deliberately biased and a lawsuit was threatened.<sup>21</sup> Even prior to these events, Holger had traced what I would term a "politics of census manipulation" to the colonial era. The downward adjustment of Muslims populations recessed in the northern territories has its roots in the country's colonial legacy. Weiss Holger traced and analyzed this process from 1911 to 1931. This quantitative analysis, coupled with qualitative analysis, came to establish that it was an act of deliberate politicking to assuage the "Islamophobia" of European powers. This has been carried over through time and space into the era of independence. Since then, until the present, Muslim populations have been underestimated, resulting into the challenges that have surfaced in recent years. Holger regards it as improvisation of colonial "fiction".<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Op cit., 6

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.,7

<sup>22</sup> Weiss Holger, "Variation in the colonial representation of Islam and Muslims in northern Ghana, ca. 1900-1930" *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 25, no. 1, (April 2005),73-95 82-83.

In the Ghanaian census of the year 2000, 68.8% of the population was identified with Christianity, 15.6% to Islam and 8.5% with African Traditional Religion. The argument put forward regarding the underestimation of Muslims in these figures was that, in comparison, the American Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A) statistical data presented in their 1995 Universal Almanac, showed 30% Muslims, 24% Christians and 38% traditional religions. This claim was counteracted by the argument that the source and methodological approach employed by the CIA to reach the above figures were questionable. This still remains to be properly addressed.<sup>23</sup>

The above argument prompted me to consult a couple of demographic sources which yielded varying figures. Some sources assigned the highest percentage of the population to traditional African religions, followed by Islam and then Christianity. For example in the World Quality of Life Indicators<sup>24</sup> adherents of indigenous beliefs stood at 38%<sup>25</sup>; Muslims - 30%; Christians - 24% and others – 8%.<sup>26</sup> In the World Police Encyclopedia figures given to the various religious groups according to the 1960 census were Christians 41%; Indigenous beliefs 38%; Muslims 12% and others 9%. Figures given for contemporary Ghana are Christians 63%; Muslims 16% and Indigenous beliefs 21%.<sup>27</sup> This is therefore a much contested issue that needs thorough research.

During my field research to Ghana<sup>28</sup> I observed that people have become aware that the Muslim population has been underrepresented since time immemorial. The argument put forward, apart from the figures from reputable international sources, is that the Islamic religion

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<sup>23</sup> Op cit.,15

<sup>24</sup> This is a compendium of current information for all countries in the world, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. of what appeared in 1991

<sup>25</sup> This is another name for the African Traditional Religion (ATR) or in short the traditional religion.

<sup>26</sup> *World Quality of Life Indicators*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.: a compendium of current information for all countries of the world 1991

<sup>27</sup> Dilip, K. Das, ed., *World Police Encyclopedia*, ( New York : ,2000) 324

<sup>28</sup> From September 26<sup>th</sup> 2008 to January 26<sup>th</sup> 2009

allows polygamy, which is being practiced in the north and wherever Islamic communities are encountered in other regions. This will give rise to a rapid increase in the population. Secondly, local traditions in the northern region also sanction a multiplicity of wives, which also brings about a population increment. Apart from this, the north is an agrarian-oriented community, which requires a lot of farm labor, thus encouraging men to produce more children. The recent provisional estimate of the 2010 Population and Housing Census released by Grace Bediako the government statistician justifies the rapid growth rate in the north. The north registered a 34.6% increment in growth rate.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, a political awareness has arisen in the past decades that no party will achieve a wholesale win in national elections without the solid support of Muslims. This presupposes that the northern population is a force to reckon with. Most significantly, in the past two decades Ghanaian politics have shown their dependence on the north as a cardinal recipe for its sustenance. This is made tangible by the major political parties' scramble to find northern and Muslim presidential running mates.<sup>30</sup>

### **iii. Socio-Economic Features:**

Education: The percentage of the educated the secularly educated in the North is only 15%, or about one third of the national average. Enrolment in the primary schools is 48%. Girls' enrolment numbers lag behind those of boys by 20%. As compared to the national

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php>-assessed 28/04/2011

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Mr. Adam Mohammed Amin Anta former northern regional deputy minister and currently chief executive of the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly at Tamale in 2008.

average of 46%, girls' enrolment in the North is less than 20%. Equally the dropout rate is very high amongst girls.<sup>31</sup>

The question of secular education in this region has been met with suspicion since such education is viewed as a relic of pre- and post-independence times, which are still being felt in the region. The Islam-Christianity dichotomy made secular education in the north to be viewed as a vessel of Christianization. Until that perception was defused and combated some decades ago, secular schools did not fare well in the north. This factor has led the north to be labeled an illiteracy endemic area. The author raised this point in his field interviews and it yielded astounding results. A education professional confessed that much as they the secularly educated considered the dominantly Arabic-literate north as illiterates, they could equally be termed as illiterates because they were unable to read and write in Arabic - assuming literacy means knowing how to read and write.<sup>32</sup>

#### **iv. Tamale, the Case Study Area:**

The Tamale district is located in the center of the northern region of Ghana, approximately 175 km east of 9°N lat. and 1°W long. It shares common boundaries with the Savelugu/Nanton, Tolon/Kumbungu, and East and West Gonja districts (see Appendix I).<sup>33</sup>

Topographically, Tamale is located approximately 180 m above sea level.<sup>34</sup> As a result of its location in the Guinea-Savanna belt, the municipality experiences only one rainy season

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<sup>31</sup> Adam K "Food security..." 4

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Mohammed Harun former M.P. for Tamale central and an educationist, 12/01/2009.

<sup>33</sup> "Tamale Municipal Assembly medium term development plan. A district development plan for the period 1996-2000," (Tamale: Tamale Municipal Assembly, May 1996). 1

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.,2

starting in April/May<sup>35</sup> and lasting until September/October. The dry season is usually from November to March, which is influenced by the Eastern (Harmattan) winds. Maximum temperatures range from 33°C to 39°C, minimum temperatures from 20°C to 22°C.<sup>36</sup>

In Tamale most of the people are engaged in the informal sector, which is characterized by low productivity and unstable employment; as a result, the poverty level is very high relative to other parts of the country. At only 922.28 km<sup>2</sup>, the Tamale district is the smallest in Ghana, yet has a population of roughly 232,243 (1995 population estimates), resulting in the nation's highest density (252 individuals/km<sup>2</sup>).<sup>37</sup>

Apart from urban Tamale, which occupies a total surface area of 130 km<sup>2</sup>, the rest of the settlements are small villages and cover less than 2 km<sup>2</sup> each. This, therefore, makes Tamale the most dominant settlement in the district. All the rural areas are dotted with settlements. Density of settlements within the district is very high except in the eastern part, owing to the fact that this part of the country experiences frequent flooding.<sup>38</sup>

## 1.8. HYPOTHESIS:

The dependent (i.e. explanatory variable) is the rise and evolution of Wahhābism while the independent variables, drawn from the literature on the subject, consist of social and economic changes, most notably the role of the institution of chieftaincy in settling disputes, regional and national political instability and economic under-development. Rather than attempt to quantify the relationship between these variables the author will apply a historical

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.,3

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 31

institutionalist methodology consisting of archival research, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis situated within an historical context.

#### **1.9. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

It is intended to hopefully isolate the factors that contribute to the fast growth of Wahhābism at the expense of Tijānism (Ṣūfism), and its ramifications for the development of the people in Dagbon and the nation at large. The main objectives are outlined as follows.

- To evaluate the work of the two religious sects - the Tijānīyya and Wahhābīya — in the spread of Islam in Ghana and its socio-political impact.
- To identify the causes of ascendancy of the spread of Wahhābism.
- To assess the impact made by the Wahhābist in the light of their supremacy in the spheres of politics and education.
- To identify the contemporary need for the two sects, that is, how important the two sects are in modern times.

#### **1.10. POLICY RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS:**

The findings of the research have policy implications in the following ways,

- Creation of awareness about the two sects of the Tijānīyya and Wahhābīya and the role they play in Islam in particular, and in Ghanaian society in general.
- To guide policymakers in the formulation of policies that has religious implications.
- To guide law enforcement agencies in identifying the causes of socio-political and religious upheavals and how to prevent them.

- To prove the need for peaceful co-existence and especially to consolidate the democratic dispensation in Ghana.
- To serve as a reference to those who in future may undertake research into a similar topic.
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#### **1.11. LIMITATIONS:**

The research cannot be complete without acknowledgement of some of the difficulties, both human and material, that are likely to affect the process. Some of these are mentioned below,

- The nature of the study involved a great financial commitment. The limited available funding therefore impacted on the study.
- Many of the respondents, especially the religious leaders, proved difficult to locate since they often travel outside the area under consideration for religious teachings and for other personal commitments.
- Since the topic involves issues of community supremacy, most respondents were reluctant to give ready answers to the questionnaire. The fears of respondents had therefore to be allayed.
- The translation of some of the literature under review from Arabic to English will also pose a problem since it is very difficult to get the exact English meanings of many Arabic words.
- Since most the interviews were done in Dagbani and Hausa it will require time to transcribe them and subsequently translate them into English. The accuracy of the

translation will also be a problem given the insufficiency of these languages when it comes to expressing certain concepts.

#### **1.12. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY:**

The work is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the primary research objectives and most important themes of the dissertation. The chapter also details the empirical research conducted in this regard. Chapter 2 details current trends of Islam in West Africa with special emphasis on Tamale in northern Ghana. The chapter focuses on the areas of Islamicization that are characterized by accommodation and co-existence embedded in the local context of the region. Chapter 3 examines Wahhābism in terms of its genesis and recent relations with Tijāni-Wahhābi (in local parlance Munchire-Faila) phenomena in northern Ghana. Chapter 4 addresses the inter-sectarian factors that have contributed to the rise of a “new Islam” (Wahhābism) in northern Ghana. Chapter 5 examines the intra -Tijāni factor that has given the Wahhābis an impetus to have an apparent accelerated growth. This is followed by the conclusion.



## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. TRENDS OF ISLAM IN WEST AFRICA

#### 2.1. A REVIEW

The focus on the discussion of the history of Islam in West Africa and Ghana in this chapter largely shows the clear prior influence and dominance of Sufism. The discussion, as it unfolds, further shows the local context and the uniqueness of Islam in Ghana in particular and especially in the northern part of the country.

Some scholars say that West Africa has suffered the brunt of marginalization within the continent due to the Sahara desert acting as cultural barrier, which in reality was never the case. The parameters used by the West for analysis of Islamic scenarios in West Africa is often inaccurate due to the frontierlessness of Islamic culture combined with the fact that its scholars were always cosmopolitan and peripatetic.<sup>1</sup>

Africa, and especially sub-Saharan Africa, has long been home to three major religions, which raises the question of co-existence and accommodation in the local setting. Islam and Christianity in West Africa have proven to be a controversial issue for scholars of religion in terms of their not being native to the continent, compared to African traditional religion. Some view them as imported religions and hence as alien. John S. Mbiti on the other hand contends that the current assumption of native status for the two religions cannot be ignored.<sup>2</sup> To buttress this point, he states in his book entitled *African Religion and Philosophy*:

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<sup>1</sup> George Lang, "Through a Prism Darkly: "Orientalism" in European – Language African Writing," In Kenneth W. Harrow's (ed.) *Faces of Islam in African Literature* (Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, 1991), 305.

<sup>2</sup>See Sean, Hanretta. "Muslim Histories, African Societies: The Venture of Islamic Studies in Africa" *Journal of African History*, 46 (2005), 481. In this article we find an agreement between Mbiti's view of Islam and that of David Robinson in terms of its status in Africa. They both agree that Islam has been indigenized in Africa.

Both Christianity and Islam are 'traditional' and African in a historical sense and it is a pity that they tend to be regarded as 'foreign' 'European' or 'Arab'.<sup>3</sup>

Ahmad Hussein, during his visit to Montreal on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2007 from Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, also reiterated this point, i.e., that it is a misconception to consider Islam as a foreign religion in sub-Saharan Africa. He argued that this was born out of sheer ignorance and official policy of Islam orchestrated by the colonialists to downplay the role of Islam in the sub-region. According to Hussein this was always manifested in places where Muslims were in the position of a minority.<sup>4</sup> It is also shown in practical terms by the recent underestimation of the population of Muslims in census, of particular areas.<sup>5</sup> In both cases, the extent of Africanization is a bone of contention that needs to be researched into.

An affiliated issue that could also be raised is whether amalgamation or adulteration with African culture and traditions will impact the two religions negatively or positively, i.e., the enculturation factor. How is this perceived in the macro-religious world of either Islam or Christianity? For example, "Sufi Islam" is considered to be "African Islam" since many of the elements of the traditional belief system have found their way into it.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, "Wahhābi Islam" is classified as "Islam in Africa" since its proponents are said to preach an Islam devoid of any interpolation of traditional elements of any kind.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Edward W. Fashole-Luke, "The Study of African Religion", in *Africana Research Bulletin of Institute of African Studies*, (Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone) 3, no.3 (April 1973), 37. See John S. Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1970).

<sup>4</sup> Ahmed, Hussein. *Islam in Nineteenth-century Wallo, Ethiopia: Revival, Reform and Reaction*. Leiden: Brill, 2001. , xvi-xvii.

<sup>5</sup> I have made reference to this in chapter one of this dissertation and indicated the variation of data given in the case of Ghana.

<sup>6</sup> Westerlund, D; Rosander .E. ed. *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounter between Sufis and Islamists*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.,

In this regard, the scholarly contributions of J. S. Trimingham, who has been dubbed the father of Islam in Africa, are very pertinent. His numerous publications on Islam in various parts of Africa, though laudable, nevertheless contain considerable flaws. He was a typical classical “Arabisant” scholar who fits to Edward Said’s categorization as an orientalist. Trimingham was also a missionary who worked hand in hand with the British colonial administrators and won their trust and confidence. Professor Falshole-Luke describes his writings as solid and scholarly for a Christian scholar, and critiques it thus:

Trimingham is saturated with his subject of study and endeavors to be scrupulously and academically honest in his treatment of Islam. Total objectivity is neither possible nor desirable, for if one knows a person’s standpoint or prejudices, he can make allowances for them. It is therefore not surprising that while some Muslims appreciate Trimingham’s work as a Christian service to Islam, like Ibn Battuta describing Christianity in Constantinople in the fourteenth century, others regard it as the combination of the white man and Christian missionary extending paternalism and colonialism into the field of scholarship.<sup>8</sup>

This analysis seems tenable not only in the case of Trimingham but for almost all colonial writers on Islam in Said’s categorization. According to the scholars in the Afrocentric school of thought, Western scholars, and for that matter colonialist scholars, having exhausted research themes in the West, found Africa a green pasture for their scholarly adventures. Some of them were well qualified scholars and others are just “scholars of convenience.”

The early historiographical sources on African history before the advent of the Europeans came from Arab chroniclers. They had their biases and were interested in predominantly Islamic areas. A typical example is the statement made by Ibn Hawqal in the late tenth century with regard to a visit to the Sudan;

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<sup>8</sup> Falshole-Luke, “The Study of African Religions,” 50.

I have not described the country of the blacks and other people of the Torrid Zone because naturally (loving)? Wisdom, ingenuity, religion, justice and regular government, how could I notice such people as these or magnify them by inserting an account of their countries<sup>9</sup>?

Talatu Mustapha interprets this to be a symptomatic of meanness of some of the Arab chroniclers towards Africa. He reinforces this by quoting Cornevin's remarks in her observation of such chroniclers:

...their value comes mainly from their diversity. But since they were written by educated Muslims who were often fanatics, their judgments are covered by their faith: the good rulers were the good Muslims and the bad rulers those who like Soumi Ali in the fifteenth century persecuted educated Muslims.<sup>10</sup>

These sources were in use until the emergence onto the scene of journals of discoveries and exploration, which were also beset by the same negative outlook towards Africa.

John Hunwick's recent article in *Sudanic Africa* has looked at the geographical and ethnographical perspective of Africa through the lenses of the medieval Arabs'. This exposes the Arab mind set about this sub- region. In this work some of the biases of these writers have been shown glaringly. The Arabs perceptions about the mental capacity of the black race and some of the African's behavioral abnormalities and attitudes as well as the causes of such have been mentioned. Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 728) writes about the African thus:

Genealogist who had no Knowledge of the true nature of things imagined that Negroes are children of Ham and that they are singled out to be black as a result of Noah's curse which produced Ham's colour and the slavery God inflicted upon his descendents. It is mentioned in the Torah that Noah cursed his son Ham. No reference is made there to blackness. The curse included no more than that Ham's descendents should be the slaves of his brother's descendents. To attribute the blackness of Negroes to Ham, reveals disregard of the true nature of heat and cold and influence them upon the air and upon the creatures that come into being in it.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Talatu, Mustapha., "A Historiographical Study of Four Works of al-Ḥāǧ 'Umar Ibn Abī Bakr of Kete-Krachi." (MA Thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies-McGill University, 1970), 10.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>11</sup> Hunwick, John. "A Region of the Mind: Medieval Arab Views of African Geography and Ethnography and Their Legacy," *Sudanic Africa*, 16, (2005), 120.

The medieval Arab writers relied on supposed scientific support, ranging from astronomy to climatic theory, to explain some of the peculiarities found among the inhabitants of the African continent with respect to the skin pigmentation and temperament. Al-Hamdān (d. 945), a typical exemplary of zodiacal/planetary thinker, draws from theories of Ptolemy as his source and has divided the world into four segments of three zodiacal signs each, with each segment dominated by either fire, earth, air or water. In accordance with this model, sub-Saharan Africa is located in the fourth or south-western quadrant made up of Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces under the domain of the element of water. According to al-Hamdān, Ghana and other black-lands are a modular triad of Cancer and therefore succumb to the influence of Venus and Mars;

Because of the joint influence of these two planets it happens that many of the peoples of these two lands are ruled by a king and a queen who are brother and sister, the man ruling the men and the queen ruling the women ... Their temperament is very ardent ... [Their men] like ornamentation and endeavor to make themselves attractive, dressing themselves like women. This is because of the influence of Venus. Nevertheless, they are virile and manly. They plunge into perilous situations and expose themselves to danger and this is because of the influence of Mars. They are men of malevolence, malice, lying, duplicity and violence.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, Ibn Butlan,<sup>13</sup> in his treatise on the purchase and evaluation of slaves with regards to their morality and physique, expresses himself thus;

The blacker they are the uglier they are, the more pointed (filed?) their teeth are, the less use they are and the more it is to be feared they will harm you. They are generally of bad character and much given to running away ---. Their dispositions know no gloom. Dancing and rhythm are inborn in them and natural to them. Because of their inability to speak Arabic correctly (‘ujūmat al-fāzihinna) people turned to them for music (zumr) and dancing. It is said that if a Zanj fell down from heaven to earth he would surely do so to a beat. Their women have the most sparkling front teeth because of the abundance of their saliva produced by their bad digestion. They endure drudgery. No sexual pleasure is to be had from them because of their smelly armpits (liṣunānihinna) and course bodies.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid 124

<sup>13</sup> His full name was Yawānis (al- Mukhtar b. al- Hasan b. ‘Abdūn al Baghdādī).

<sup>14</sup> Hunwick, “A Region of the Mind” 123.

Hunwick echoes some of these fallacies expressed by the Arab writers by virtue of his their reliance on some materials from the prime theorists of European epistemology – the Greeks.<sup>15</sup> In fact the Eurocentric and Arabcentric views of Africa and Africans, as evidenced in some of the scholarship examined thus far, have left materials still has its vestiges prevalent till this day.

## **2.2. ISLAMICIZATION, ACCOMMODATION AND CO-EXISTENCE:**

### **i. Islamicization:**

Among the themes that are repeatedly recurring in the study of the spread of Islam in West Africa is that of Islamicization. There have been two major viewpoints as to how Islamicization proceeded according to the earlier writers in this field. Trimingham sees it as being comprised of a three tier system: first, a period of incubation; then the courtly stage; and finally, the stage of the masses. These to him were the stages that Islamicization went through in Africa and for that matter West Africa. But David Robinson does not concur with this paradigm of systemic stages proposed by Trimingham; he sees the dissemination in a rather different way. He sees it as a process invoked by the admiration of the masses, only later penetrating the elite.

However, Nehemiah Levtzion in his book *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa* and his paper on “Patterns of Islamization in West Africa,” which is among the most cited works pertaining to Islam in West Africa, deals with the aforementioned themes. Levtzion for his part portrays the diverse ways in which the process of Islamization manifested itself in this specific

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 120-1

zone of Africa. He also examined the numerous factors that impacted Islamization under particular circumstances and periods such as “the nature of the introduction of the religion to the sociopolitical structure of the host society”. He eventually ends up by falling in line with the tripartite notion of the dissemination of Islam as opined by the Trimingham at length.

Levtzion also considers the accommodating and tolerant atmosphere that was created between the parties involved as having resulted in the peaceful and harmonious coexistence.<sup>16</sup> Further, the slow incorporation of the Islamic sociopolitical structure into the Dagbon Chieftaincy structure at the time of Yaa Naa Zanjina<sup>17</sup> in the seventeenth century earmarked the culmination of the introduction of Islamic body polity among the Dagombas.<sup>18</sup>

Islamization in sub Saharan Africa that has been going on almost a thousand years ago was through a peaceful process.<sup>19</sup> The Berbers disseminated it to the Soninke and they intend Islamized the Malinke. The Dyula traders then spread it across West Africa especially around the Volta basin. All these were because of the rationality, simplicity and adoptability of Islam coupled with its tradition of scholarship.<sup>20</sup> The resultant of which explains the dual trend of

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<sup>16</sup> See Trimingham, J S., “The Phases of Islamic Expansion and Islamic Culture zones in Africa” in *Islam in Tropical Africa*, ed. I.M. Lewis (London: International African Institute in Association with Hutchinson University library for Africa, 1980). 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 100.

<sup>17</sup> The birth of Yaa Naa Zanjina is shrouded in a mystery. A version that Ferguson has in his “Islamization in Dagbon” has it that Yaa Naa Tutugri the father of Zanjina consulted his “Mallam” in the person of Shaykh Sulaymana Bagayugu to tell him through his spiritual powers as to which of his sons is going to be a future King of Dagbon. Sulaymana told him that none of his existing sons was going to make it to the throne. But the would-be King was yet to be born. He admonished Tutugri to take back a young slave girl he gave to him as arms as a wife. This slave girl was already married to Sulayman and had given birth to two sons She will give birth to a Yaa Naa. She gave birth to Yaa Naa Zanjina. Another version narrated by the same Ferguson says that the Mallam simply pointed to a woman in the village of Sabari and Tutugri took that woman as a wife and she gave birth to Zanjina.[ See Phyllis Ferguson *Islamization of Dagbon* 79-80].

<sup>18</sup> See his *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa: A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-Colonial Period*. (New York: Oxford University Press. 1969), 86;and idem “A Note on the Early Spread of Islam in the Dagomba,” Unpublished paper, Northwestern University, n.d.

<sup>19</sup> Hunwick., *Islam in Africa: Friend or Foe*, An inaugural lecture at the university of Ghana, Legon, on Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1975,( Accra: Ghana Universities Press 1976), 9.

<sup>20</sup> op cit.;

African Islam – compromise<sup>21</sup> and militancy. The rulers were the first to be targeted and then the subjects.

In the same vein the phenomenon of Islamization is perceived by Nehemiah as the dispersal of Muslims rather than the spread of Islam. He echoes the indispensable role of chiefs as conduit through whom Islam was introduced to the people thus the importance of centralized chiefdoms in the Islamization process. However some of the chiefs had vestiges of the traditional religions within them. This aspect of their life gave rise to the nineteenth century explosion of Jihādist movement who wrested powers from the rulers and instituted theocratic states like that Hausa-Fulani emirates of Nigeria. He explicitly outlines his perception of Islamization thus,

My perception of the process of Islamization is of a movement of individuals and groups, departing from any form of traditional religion before it contact with Islam and follows a line which ends with normative Islam.

In contemporary Northern Ghana the process of Islamization took the pattern that has been prevalent in the Savannah-Sudanic zone. This was characterized by being confined to Muslim settlements which was composed of scholars and traders derived from the affinity of their relationship with the local rulers. There was no attempt by any militant movements to establish an Islamic government in the Muslim community kingdoms in the Volta Basin. This peaceful way of Islamization was predominant in the Volta Basin.

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<sup>21</sup> Hunwick puts it thus: “They were thus in no position to impose doctrines and stamp on un-Islamic practices. They could only encourage acceptance and turn blind eye to the many irregularities they observed, hoping by their continued teaching and by the education of the converts eventually to strengthen the faith” In my field interviews, when I raised the point of emulating the methodology of the prophet in banning alcoholism as a model to curb extremism (which often results in intolerance and violence), the respondents often responded by saying that the truth is like human the buttocks - - no matter what the circumstances are one cannot avoid sitting on them. So the doctrines should be preached as taught by the prophet from day one without any compromises. They argued that one’s life span was unknown and in the eventuality of death within this compromised state how can one account for it in the hereafter. See Hunwick, *Islam in Africa: A Friend or Foe*.



...the pre-colonial states of Gonja and Dagomba developed in a fashion similar to that followed by some earlier multi-religious states in the Sudan savannah, such as the Malian Empire or the pre-jihadic Hausa states. The king was perhaps nominally a Muslim, but the political and religious structures remained non-Islamic.<sup>22</sup>

## ii. Accommodation:

Another issue that emanated from the religions that have found their way into this sub-region is that of accommodation of one another's faith. In this regard Robinson and his compatriots have a common fulcrum around which revolve their Islamic themes of Francophone West African resulting in a Senegalo-Mauritanian centrism of most scholarship on Islam. His book *-Paths of accommodation -* is a typological work in this regard. In this monumental work comprised of thematic and biographical work over a specified space and time through personalities and institutions and coming up eventually with a mutually amicable path of cohabitation with one another. Fortunately, Jean-Louis Triaud, editor of the collection work *History of Islam in Africa* has made a constructive contribution to this trend and brings into the limelight the lapses of this Senegalo-Mauritanian centrism. He perceives the brutal suppression of intellectual and spiritual life as a setback.<sup>23</sup>

In consonance with the scholarship of scholars of the Francophone sub Sahara Africa region in the realm of coexistence between the cardinal religions the contribution of Marty Paul cannot be overlooked. Marty Paul is one of the highly recognized authorities in Islamic history of Francophone sub Saharan Africa. He worked with the French Colonial Administration in North Africa and when the need for research on Senegal cropped up he was appointed by the colonial administration to handle the matter. So, it could be said that his mind saw what it

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<sup>22</sup> Holger Weiss, "Variation in the Colonial Representation of Islam and Muslims in Northern Ghana, Ca. 1900-1930". *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 25, no. 1, (April 2005), 74.

<sup>23</sup> Sean Hanretta, "Muslim Histories, African Societies: The Venture of Islamic Studies in Africa," *Journal of African History*, 46(2005), 487,

expected to see, or that his scholarship is perhaps an enlargement of his preconception about events that he might have been confronted with. The unfortunate result of this endeavor was his portrayal of France as a model promoter of Islam or an Islamic power; yet, because of his exhaustive usage of the French sources, he falls short of expectations. This strategy is not strange because even Napoleon Bonaparte used the same strategy when he conquered Egypt in 1789. He posed not as invading force but a friendly force seeking to promote Islam unimpeded by other nefarious forces. Policies that were promulgated by him are practical evidence of his hidden agenda. Paul had this to say towards the promotion of Islam

One of the chief principles of our Muslim policy in West Africa is to win over and turn to our advantage the forces of Islam, wherever this religion has triumphed over local animism, but to carefully avoid helping its development in fetishist societies, much less working ourselves to aid its diffusion and more vigorous implantation<sup>24</sup>...

As far as Islamic themes and their placement vis-a-vis other religious themes is concerned, the work of Edward Said, entitled *Orientalism*, is most significant. Sa'id, won a lot of admiration in the third world post-colonialist literary fraternity as well as the audience that he addressed. His revisionist approach and its out look at history were quickly adopted by his compatriots and still inform recent writers of today. He has transcended the racial and religious barriers of colonial historical bias by focusing instead on the bare facts of aesthetic historical trends. His critique of Eurocentric (colonial) writers and their attitudes to the Third World forms the dominant theme of this book. Even some of the Eurocentric writers applauded his bold stand. Though it has won a great reputation among critics and admirers, he has been

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<sup>24</sup> Marty, Paul., *Etudes sur l'Islam au Sénégal*, 2, 122, cited in Ousman Murzik Kobo, "Promoting the Good and Forbidding the Evil: A Comparative Historical Study of Ahl-as-Sunna Islamic Movements in Ghana and Burkina Faso, 1950-2000"( PhD. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison. 2005), 58.

accused of being “Arabcentric”. There is nonetheless a tone of accommodation in his work that conforms to the situation in Africa.

Mervyn Hiskett in his article “The Community of Grace” and in books like *The Course of Islam in Africa* and *The Development of Islam in Ghana* are, among the most often quoted scholars on Islam in Africa and “African Islam” – Ṣūfī Islam. In the article, for instance, he takes an inside look at the genesis of the Tijāniyya Niassiyya in West Africa and its impact on the people, placing special emphasis on the Ghanaian context. His approach is in contrast to those of Trimingham and Levtzion. Hiskett opines that Islamization is most popular with the masses before it manifests itself to those higher echelons in the society through modern mass media. It is moreover the women and youth who form the bulk of its membership as compared to the past. Through religious music (“Wāqa”) and the use of modern musical instruments in their evangelism, a lot of people are motivated to embrace Islam. He concludes this by juxtaposing their activities with the resistance posed by the anti-ṣūfis – munkirūn – in vehemently opposing their activities.

The theme of accommodation is also manifest in the way in which the various Ṣūfī groups cooperate with one another. At the same time these brotherhoods also co-exist peacefully with other religions and the government, which is purely secular. It also suggests that given the globalization phenomenon that has gripped every aspect of Ghanaian society; the brotherhoods’ impact cannot be viewed in isolation.

### iii. Co-existence

The principle of co-existence was the far long the pivot around which Islam revolved in the West African sub-region where the torch-bearers of Islamization were the Juulas of ancient Mali. Their method of Islamization based on the example of Al-Hajj Salim Suwari, a 14<sup>th</sup> century Islamic scholar. Suwari formulated his Fatwa on coexistence based on three Islamic canonical sources: the *Tafsir al Jalālayn* of al Mahalli (d. 1499) and al-Suyuti (d.1505), *al-Muwatta'* of Imām Malik bin Anas, (d.795) and the *Shifa' fi tar'if huqūq al-Muṣṭafa* of 'Iyad bin Musa b. 'Iyad al- Sabti(d.1149). Suwari a Maliki, took to al-Suyuti's exegetical method even though the latter belonged to the Shafi'madhab.<sup>25</sup> It was al-Suyuti's liberal attitude towards non-Muslims that attracted Suwari, who saw relations with unbelievers as crucial to their mutual interest. This position can be stated as follows:

First *kufi*; unbelief, is the result of *jahl* – that is of ignorance rather than wickedness. Second, God's grand design for the world is such that some people remain in the *jahiliyya*, the state of ignorance, longer than others. Third, true conversion can, therefore occur only in God's time and actively to proselytize is to interfere with his will. Accordingly, fourth, jihad against unbelievers is an unacceptable method of conversion, and recourse to arms is permissible only in self-defense should the very existence of the Muslim community be threatened by unbelievers. Fifth, Muslims may accept the authority of non-Muslims rulers, and indeed support it insofar as this enables them to follow their own way of life in accordance with the *sunna* of the Prophet. Sixth, the Muslim have to present the unbeliever with *qudwa*, example, and so, when the time for conversion comes, thereby make possible *iqtida*. And seventh, the Muslim must ensure that, by their commitment to education and learning they keep their observance of the Law free from error.<sup>26</sup>

This formulation has been the basis of flexibility and expediency in the operational versatility of the Wangaras in Islamization in the West African sub-region. This with time has been found to be the soft-pad on which adulterated form of Islam found a fertile ground to thrive. So, presently Wahhabis always point accusing fingers to the Wangaras to be those who

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<sup>25</sup>Wilks, I. . "The Juula and the Expansion of Islam into the Forest," in *The History of Islam in Africa*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 97.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid; 98

sowed the seed of syncretism in Islam in West Africa. The blame I conjecture should not be completely shifted to them for at least they have been able to introduce Islam to this region no matter how rudimentary it was. If not for their early initiatives this region will have all been either subsumed in the Traditional African religion or be completely at the mercy of Christianity and other religions. As the adage goes a journey of a thousand miles begins with a step. Hunwick explains this off by seeing it to be a strategy that is symptomatic of a good will gesture and a wait and see process:

Islam was thus gradually spread to Africa by Africans, largely by peaceful means. The incoming Muslims were tiny minorities in the midst of an environment that was at least potentially hostile. They were thus in no position to impose doctrines and stamp on un-Islamic practices. They could only encourage acceptance and turn a blind eye to the many irregularities they observed, hoping by their continued teaching and by the education of the converts eventually to strengthen the faith.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Hunwick J. *Islam in Africa: Friend or Foe?* 8.

## 2.3. INTRODUCTION OF ISLAM INTO AFRICA:

### i. Islam in The Land of The Two Hijras:

In this chapter, after having given a brief overview of the phenomena and conceptions of various prolific scholars of West African history on Islamization, accommodation and co-existence in the preceding part of this chapter, an attempt will be made to identify those who actually introduced Islam into this sub-region and how Islam was accommodated and co-existed with other faiths.

Africa was the first continent to play host to Islam, even before the cradle of Islam – Mecca and Madina - accepted it officially.<sup>28</sup> This took place in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the Prophet's mission,<sup>29</sup> when the Prophet<sup>30</sup> was forced to send a group of the first Muslims to safety to Abyssinia, and which provided asylum from persecution.<sup>31</sup> The host that offered sanctuary was the King of Ethiopia, Najāshi (Negus). The Najāshi<sup>32</sup> himself, who later

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<sup>28</sup> Ibn Hishām, 'Abd Allāh al-Malik, d.834. *Sīrat Rasūl Allah. Mukhtaṣar Sīrat Ibn Hishām (al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah)* 'idād Muhammad 'Atif al-Zu'bi; Murāja'ate 'Abd al-Hamīd al-Ahdab al-Tab'ah 7 Bayrūt: Dār al-Nafā'is 1987 57, See Hitti P.K. *History of the Arabs* London McMillan, 1937 113-114

<sup>29</sup> K. Ali A *Study of Islamic History* (Calcutta: Mullick Brothers 1971), 32.

<sup>30</sup> Mohammad Ibn 'Abdallah (S.A.W) was born in 570/71 A.D. in Mecca on the Arabian Peninsula. His father 'Abdalla the 11<sup>th</sup> son of 'Abd al Muṭṭalib who 'Abd al Muṭṭalib had promised to sacrifice to the Arabian gods if he was given male children. So, when his wish was granted he cherished the son 'Abdallah so much that he did not want to sacrifice him for the gods. A way was found out and so he had to sacrifice 100 camels in his stead. Unfortunately after a couple of months after 'Abdalla's marriage to Āmina he passed away at Medina on a mercantile trip to Syria. Mohammad was born a posthumous child. The mother also died at al-Abwa when he was six years. An orphan at his formative age and was raised by his grandfather 'Abd al Muṭṭalib and later his uncle Abū Ṭālib '. This upbringing according to Al-Buti Sa-īd. was a prior preparation of the Prophet by Allah to make him face all the intricacies and rigors of life squarely at the appointed time. See Hitti P.K. *The History of the Arabs* London, McMillan 1937 111-112; See *Sīrat Rasūl Allah. Mukhtaṣar Sīrat Ibn Hishām (al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah)* by Ibn Hishām 21-28

<sup>31</sup> According to Hunwick the Arabs' interaction with the African continent predated Islam for a considerable duration of time. The Arabic term *Habashī* is said to have an ambiguous meaning but as Hunwick suggests could mean- an individual who originated from somewhere under the control of the rulers of Axum. Consequently the land was called *Habasha*.

<sup>32</sup> Mohammad Saīd al-Buti in his *Fiqh Sīrah* has it that the Prophet performed a *janāza* prayer for him when he heard of his death. Muslims continued to reside there until Islam gained a surer foothold in the Arab peninsula

converted from Christianity to Islam,<sup>33</sup> refused to repatriate them to Mecca even when a delegation was sent to persuade him with a lot of gifts from the rulers of Mecca.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, during this formative period of Islam Africa was the first continent to send a deputation to the Prophet enquiring about the new faith and subsequently embraced it.<sup>35</sup> Imām Mohammad Awal Sh‘uaibu Imām of Takoradi mosque told me at an interview that he always told his congregation to take the fullest pride in having the Prophet Mohammad as an in-law of the African people by virtue of his marriage to Mariya al-Qibti.<sup>36</sup> This spirit of coexistence between Islam and Christianity has served as a model inter-religious dialogue ever since.<sup>37</sup> The animosity that later came into play between the two faiths can perhaps be attributed to the phenomenon of colonialism that wore the garb of Christianity into this domain and fostered antagonism between the two faiths

However, Hiskett has it that Islam officially made its way into North Africa from Egypt, its first gateway into Africa, in 26 AH/ 647AD.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand Levtzion and Pouwels make mention of two other major gateways, which were from the east and the north. From either direction the Islamizers had to traverse the vast waters of the Indian Ocean and the sea of desert sands of the Sahara.<sup>39</sup> The religion passed through considerable developmental stages in the process of spreading westward,<sup>40</sup> eventually gaining a permanent foothold in present-day Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia up to the Atlantic coast although its progress

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 58

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 74

<sup>36</sup> Interview

<sup>37</sup> This historical incident has been described in Hunwick’s - “A Region of The Mind: Medieval Arab Views of African Geography and Ethnography and Their Legacy”, *Sudanic Africa* 16 (2005), 105.

<sup>38</sup> Hiskett, M., *The Course of Islam in Africa*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994) 1.

<sup>39</sup> Levtzion, N. and R. Pouwels, “Patterns of Islamization and Varieties of Religious Experience among Muslims of Africa,” in *The History of Islam in Africa*, ed. N. Levtzion and R. Pouwels (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 33

south of the Mediterranean coast was minimal.<sup>41</sup> It also went through the process of metamorphosis from its fundamental Sunni state into its well known Maliki madhhab form, experiencing a period of Kharijism -- which was aborted prematurely, though not completely and finally Sh‘ism which in turn was eventually subdued by Malikism.<sup>42</sup>

This was followed by another wave of evolutionary stages in North African Islam that saw the rise of the Almoravids<sup>43</sup> whose ideational inclinations were similar to those of the Wahhābis and the Muslim brotherhoods of the day. They came as reformists to redirect Islam back unto its right course as it had been practiced during the time of the Prophet and his immediate successors.<sup>44</sup> The term Almoravid, according to Peter Clark, has an extended meaning which connotes “holy war”. He therefore concludes that the Almoravid movement<sup>45</sup> was that which promoted and indulged in holy war.<sup>46</sup> This, in my opinion is not completely justifiable. It bears the hallmark of the Eurocentric perception of Islam as a religion that was

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<sup>41</sup> Hunwick J. *West Africa, Islam and the Arab world: Studies in honor of Basil Davidson*, Princeton: Markus Wiener publishers, c.2006 25

<sup>42</sup> Op cit

<sup>43</sup> A corrupt form of the Arabic word al-Murabbītūn

<sup>44</sup> Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam* (London: Edward Arnold (Publishers Ltd., 1982), 13.

<sup>45</sup> This movement was founded by ‘Abdallah b. Yasin in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century. The main motive was to rejuvenate the original form of Islam as it was practiced during the Prophet’s time and his successors among the Sanhaja Berbers who had adulterated it with their customs and traditions. It was Yahaya b. Ibrahim – a chief of the Juddala of the Sanhaja - who orchestrated the invitation of ibn Yasin with the cooperation of some chiefs and scholars of the Sanhaja Berbers to found the movement. This came after ‘Abdullah Mohammad b Tifat aka Tareshna al-Lamtuna took the lead in initiating Islamic reformation among the people of the Sahara. Yahaya on his return from pilgrimage in 1035/36 A.D. with his entourage of chiefs and scholars requested for a student from the citadel of learning at Kairouan in Ifriqiyya (present day Tunisia and a sector of eastern Algeria) from Abu ‘Imran al-Fasi a well known and reputable scholar at the center. Al-Fasi redirected Yahaya to his former student who had established his base at Morocco after graduation named al-Wajjaj b. Zalwi to put forward his request. Al-Wajjaj called upon ‘Abdallullah b. Yasin to take up the responsibility based on his matrilineal lineage coming from the Sanhajas. Ibn Yasin started the movement with sixty people from the Juddala group of the Sanhajas in 1039/40 A.D. They studied in his hands and made pledged of unflinching allegiance to him. This group with time expanded and set its goals and aspirations in motion. As any social organization it had its own weaknesses and strength. However, the movement was able to make a positive impact towards the development of Islam in the 11<sup>th</sup> century West Africa. Its major impact was made in the fields of education and missionary activities. See Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 12-24.

<sup>46</sup> Op cit



spread by the sword, which is a misreading of. The Almoravids were to be followed suite by the Almohads,<sup>47</sup> whom Hiskett describes thus:

The following Almohad dynasty was undoubtedly a milestone in the elaboration of Islamic ideology. While retaining the full orthopraxis of *Sunni* Islam, the Almohads added to this a metaphysical and gnostic dimension. They did not create Sufism but they certainly popularized it in North Africa and nourished its growth.<sup>48</sup>

Hiskett further reiterates the Almohad factor in the centrality of sectarianism in North African Islam:

Yet Sufism, which was the peculiar contribution of the Almohads to North Africa, but was slow to take root in West Africa. Although the *ṭuruq* flourished among the Saharan Berbers from the ninth/fifteenth century onwards, they did not take root in savannah until the eleventh/seventeenth century. However, individuals claiming to be *shurafā'*, Sharifs, that is descendants of the Prophet found their way there somewhat earlier. This may be attributed to Almohads influence.<sup>49</sup>

It was the Almohads who popularized Sufism and provided a fertile ground for its growth. It was they who nurtured homegrown Ṣūfī orders that eventually blossomed and flourished on the African continent, orders such as the *Qādiriyya Shādhiliyya*, the *Daraqāwiyya*, the *Iddrīsiyya*, the *Sanūsiyya*, and the *Tijāniyya*.

Over the course of time, there emerged in the historiography of the region three major axes of the spread of Islam in tropical Africa, all of them via the trade routes. I. M. Lewis describes these routes as follows:

The main routes followed in the expansion of Muslim trade were often those which already linked tropical Africa with the Mediterranean and Arabia, and which in previous ages had carried some Mediterranean influence as far as the Gulf of Guinea, Thus, by the tenth century the interior of the continent lay exposed to trade and to Islam along three principal axis: through North Africa, through the Red Sea coast, and through the ports of the Indian Ocean. From North Africa the caravan routes fanned out in three main directions. In the west of the desert tracks ran from southern Morocco to Mauritanian Adrar, from the present Algerian-Morocco confines to Wagadu and Ghana by way of Taodeni, and from southern Algeria to Timbuctu via Tuat. In the center, Tunisia was connected with Gao by way of Ghadames and Air, and from this route subsidiary tracks led towards Tripoli, and in

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<sup>47</sup> A corrupted form of the Arabic word al-Muwahhidūn (the Unitarians)

<sup>48</sup> Hiskett, *The Course*, 33.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 99

the south towards Chad. To the east, the Nile valley was connected with Dafur through Assiut, and through Darfur with Kanem, while another route led from Cyrenaica through Kufra to Dafur.<sup>50</sup>

## ii. The Introduction of Islam into sub-Saharan Africa

The passage of Islam into sub-Saharan Africa had an altogether different character. Although one or two exploratory probes were made into the Sahara, no Arab army ever crossed the desert. Due largely to their inhospitable character, no attempt was made to bring the Saharan regions within the effective orbit of the Muslim Umma. Although in due time Islam spread among some of the Berber tribes of the Sahara, this did not lead to a militant expansion of the frontiers of Islam, except for the comparatively brief episode of the Almoravids in the eleventh century, and their effect on Black Africa.<sup>51</sup>

The entry of Islam into sub-Saharan Africa was so remarkably peaceful that historians of the region seldom fail to remark on it. Perhaps it was due to the famous legal pronouncement (*fatwa*) of Abi Zayd al-Qayrawan (d.996) declaring the impermissibility of trading with enemy territories - *dar al-Harb* -<sup>52</sup> that preserved the region from infiltration by Arab Islamizers, who seemed to stop at the fringes of the desert. Instead, the Berbers who inhabited the buffer zone between the Arabs in the north and the black Africans who lived in the south took on the active role as the agents of Islamization after having been converted. The Dyulas in turn accepted it from the Sanhaja Berbers and then undertook an expansive and extensive spread of the Islamic faith into sub Saharan African and beyond through their scholars and traders<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> Lewis, I.M. ed., "Agents of Islamization." In *(Islam in Tropical Africa* (Bloomington: International African Institute in association with Indiana University Press, 1980), 21.

<sup>51</sup>J. Hunwick, *Islam in Africa: Friend or Foe*, An inaugural lecture at the University of Ghana, Legon, on Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1975 (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1976), 8.

<sup>52</sup> Nehemiah I., "Islam in Bilad al Sudan to 1800." in *The history of Islam in Africa*, ed. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 63; Hunwick, *Islam in Africa*, 9.

<sup>53</sup> Hunwick, J. *West Africa, Islam and the Arab world: Studies in honor of Basil Davidson*, (Princeton: Markus Wiener publishers, c.2006) 25-26

## 2.4. ROLE OF THE MANDES (WANGARAS), THE HAUSAS AND THE LARBANSI IN THE ISLAMIZATION OF DAGBON

### i. The Wangaras:

The question of who introduced Islam into Dagbon<sup>54</sup> proper is bedeviled by a variety of postulates. The historiography on the origin of the founder of the Dagbon Kingdom in the person of the red-hunter or “light-skinned hunter” – Toha Jie - and his group of warriors who originated somewhere in Mali, has led some historians to suggest that they were Muslims and, therefore, their progeny were potentially Muslims.<sup>55</sup> Another argument posits that the presence of traces of Islamic elements in the cultural heritage of the Dagbamba and their cousins the Mossi and Mamprugu tribes do posit that those elements passed into this area through the founders of the kingdoms.<sup>56</sup> Historians have certified that Muslim traders, who belonged to the Ṣūfī brotherhoods, introduced Islam into northern Ghana. Ivor Wilks gives most of the credit however to the Wangarawa, a tribe heavily involved in commerce with northern Ghana via the northwest trade routes.<sup>57</sup> Levtzion also makes reference to them as the Islamizers of the Dagombas.<sup>58</sup> Peter Clark refers to the Mande-speaking Muslims as well, as those who first introduced Islam among the Dagombas.<sup>59</sup>

The name Wangarawa is an appellation for the Dyula of Mande origin, and it is associated with the ancient Mali Empire. Hiskett says that it came to be used more widely with

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<sup>54</sup> This is the land of the Dagombas in the Northern part of Ghana, who are largely Muslims.

<sup>55</sup> Ferguson, Phyllis. “Islamization in Dagbon: A study of the Afanema of Yendi” (PhD. Dissertation University of Cambridge, 1972), 29-31.

<sup>56</sup> Levtzion, N., *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa: A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-Colonial Period* (New York: Oxford University Press. 1969), 85.

<sup>57</sup> Ivor Wilks, “A Note on the Early Spread of Islam in the Dagomba” (Unpublished paper, Northwestern University, n.d.) 2

<sup>58</sup> Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs*, 86.

<sup>59</sup> Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 95.

the passage of time.<sup>60</sup> The origin of the term is said to be a puzzle, but it was used earlier to designate the Galam, Bambuk and Bure people living between Upper Senegal and the Niger. For the medieval Arabic geographers, it tended to connote gold traders.<sup>61</sup> These Mandes were a people of Sudanese descent who, as a result of the Trans-Saharan trade, interacted with North African Muslims and became Islamized. They played a very significant role in the Islamization of sub-Saharan Africa. Their trade network spanned the whole the sub-region. It was even said that they operated trade cartels crisscrossing the whole region.

Historically, it is said that the trader class of the Wangara accepted Islam earlier than the other professional groups, and that they subsequently, diffused Islam along the caravan routes and to various cities on their trade missions. With time, many of them became literate in the Islamic faith and pursued further learning.<sup>62</sup> The Saghanughu clan of the Wangara especially had an early interaction with Islam. Hiskett speculates that its members may have belonged to the Ibādiyya sect, an offshoot of the Khārijīyya sect that preceded the Almoravid conquest. However, with the inception of the Almoravid conquest, members of the clan accepted the Mālikī school of thought and shouldered responsibility for the proselytization of Islam in the Volta Basin.<sup>63</sup> Aside from the immense impact that the clan had on the economic development of West and Central Sudan, it was also influential in the intellectual realm. First of all, there was its contribution to the diffusion of the Mālikī *madhhab*, although this was of less significance, since the *madhhab* had already been established through the activities of clerics of Saharan and Sūdāni origin.

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<sup>60</sup> Hiskett, M., *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (New York: Longman, 1984), 45.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.,

The Wangara group made their appearance in the Volta Basin as a whole and Ghana in particular, around the fourteenth century.<sup>64</sup> The southerly movement of these Wangara traders, or Malinke, brought them as far down as the Volta Basin. A major trade route was opened between the southern terminus of the Trans-Saharan trade on the Niger Bend, Timbuktu - via Jenne -, to Bobo - Dioulasso (in Volta), Kong (in the Ivory Coast), and Begho (in Ghana). In addition, large trading colonies were set up at these centers.<sup>65</sup>

Having entrenched themselves at Begho,<sup>66</sup> market centers in the whole of northern Ghana were their next target. These traders formed compact communities among the farming populations, later to be followed by Muslim missionaries of tribal background, whose interest lay in Islamization of the people. The Wangara built mosques and established affiliations with families within which profession of faith became hereditary.<sup>67</sup>

Of greater importance, especially in relation to this thesis, was the clan's role in spreading an earlier form of Ṣūfī mysticism that Hiskett postulates to have been of the Qādiriyya variety. According to him, the Qādiriyya were active in North Africa in the seventh/thirteenth century before the emergence of the local orders. The Saghanughu of pre-Almoravid Islamic tradition undertook its diffusion. Their kind of Ṣūfism was of the Junaydī variety,<sup>68</sup> which seeks attainment of *fanā'* (absorption) directly in God through the intermediacy of angels. This notion was later rejected and replaced with the concept of the *al-Insān al-Kāmil*

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 106. Hiskett, in his *Course of Islam in Africa*, attributed the founding of the Islamic states in the voltaic region comprising of present day Burkina Faso Togo and Ghana. The notable states mentioned are Dagomba and Mamprusi in Northern Ghana during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Those Islamic states were in reality quasi-Islamic states because the statehood created was an amalgam of Islamic constitutional practices and the ancestral customs.

<sup>65</sup> Op cit., 3

<sup>66</sup> Begho is located on the fringes of the High Forest; and tends to be a collecting point for gold seekers.

<sup>67</sup> Wilks, I., "A Note on the Early Spread of Islam in Ghana," (n.p, n.d.) 4;

<sup>68</sup> The father of classical Ṣūfism, at whom most of the spiritual chain of the brotherhoods terminates.

(perfect man) mode of *fanā'*, said to be attainable through the Prophet Muḥammad, the true model of 'the perfect man'.<sup>69</sup>

In fact, the role of the Almoravids (and later the Almohads) was of prime importance to the process of making Islam accessible to the non-Muslim populace of the sub-Saharan region. They sent missions to many places including Mauritania and the River Senegal area.<sup>70</sup> The same two movements had some strong Ṣūfī elements that showed in the lifestyles of their leading figures, 'Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn and Ibn Tumart. R.G. Jenkins says:

Indeed, it is interesting to speculate upon the possible Ṣūfī influence at least during the initial phases of these two movements. Ibn Yāsīn certainly seems to have displayed ascetic attributes, consistent with his training in the *ribāt*, and, as Levzion points out, Ibn Yāsīn's shaykh (Wājāl b. Zallū al-Lamī) had been initiated into the *ṭarīqa* of al-Junayd, the leading Eastern mystic.<sup>71</sup>

Perhaps the most influential brotherhood in the whole process would also have been the Qādiriyya, which is said to be the oldest known Ṣūfī order in Africa south of the Sahara.

## ii. The Hausas:

Another group that is responsible for the Islamization of northern Ghana was the Hausas of present day Northern Nigeria, who introduced the new faith along the northeast trade routes.<sup>72</sup> Hiskett dates the involvement of the Hausa and Borno traders in Islamization of the Volta country to around the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They were second to the Wangaras, and their route led through Busa, Nikki and Salaga.<sup>73</sup> They were traders in gold and cola. The Hausas, according to the Kano Chronicle, were initiated into Islam by the Wangarawas of Mele (Mali)

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<sup>69</sup> Hiskett, *The Development*, 46.

<sup>70</sup> R.G. Jenkins, "The Evolution of Religious Brotherhood in North and Northwest Africa 1523-1900", in *The Cultivators of Islam*, ed. John Ralph Willis (London: Frank Cass, 1979), 1-44.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>72</sup> Wilks, "A Note on the Early Spread," 4; I. Wilks, "A Note on the Early Spread of Islam in Dagomba," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, 8 (1965), 88.

<sup>73</sup> Hiskett, *Course of Islam*, 106.

in the latter part of the fourteenth century during the reign of Yeji, King of Kano.<sup>74</sup> This presupposes that the Wangara wave of Islamization found its way into both the Hausa-land and Dagomba-land during the same period. The paradoxical question that needs to be researched is, how did these very Hausas, who were Islamized at the same period in time by the same people, come to be the Islamizers of the Dagombas. This is still unresolved. Similarly, Professor Joseph H. Greensberg contends that, based on linguistic evidence; the Hausas absorbed the influence of Islam from the Kanuri or Borno.<sup>75</sup> Other evidence shows, however that the Wangaras, who settled in the Hausa-land around the 14<sup>th</sup> century, played a major role in the development and spread of Islam in that area.<sup>76</sup> Ivor Wilks states:

An analysis of Muslim communities in modern Ghana reveals the existence of an ancient Wangara substratum and a rather more recent Hausa overlay, the former being economically correlated with the trade in gold, and the latter with that in Kola.<sup>77</sup>

As I mentioned earlier, the second conduit of the Islamic faith in this region was the Hausas, whose influence may have begun as early as the mid-fifteenth century as a result of the development of the cola trade,<sup>78</sup> as reported in the Kano Chronicle. It is said that there was an upsurge of immigration when the cola trade was booming; consequently, Salaga, a new market town, in addition to its attraction for traders, drew a considerable number of clerics. However,

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<sup>74</sup> H. R. Palmer "The Kano Chronicle 1908," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 38 (19??), 58-59.

<sup>75</sup> J.H. Greensberg, "Linguistic Evidence from the Influence of the Kanuri on the Hausa," *Journal of African History* 1(1960) 205-12; Mohammad Saani "Tijaniyya in Tamale" ; Nehemiah Levtzion, "Islam in the Bllad al Sudan to 1800," in *History of Islam in Africa*, ed. .Nehemiah Levtzion and Randall Pouwels (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 82.

<sup>76</sup> Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, 59.

<sup>77</sup> Wilks, Ivor. "The Tradition of Islamic Learning in Ghana," (unpublished paper, n.d.) 2.

<sup>78</sup> The trade in cola gained currency at the time of Uthman Dan Fodio's jihad. During this period the ban on alcohol was very strict. Cola was a stimulant was taken to by the populace in its stead. See Ferguson's "Islamisation"

the Hausas are said to have made their main impact after the great *jihād* of the early nineteenth century.<sup>79</sup> Ivor Wilks writes:

Of more obvious consequence, however, were the Fulani revolutions that began in the Hausa lands with Uthman Dan Fodio's call for Jihad in 1804. A Dagomba Chronicle that yet is to be examined is said to speak of arrival of emissaries from Uthman dan Fodio in Yendi, the capital. A reference to the 'conversion' of the Dagomba King at this time is perhaps to be taken as being to his adoption of the cause of the mujāhidīn.<sup>80</sup>

The Hausa traders had three notable routes to Salaga. The first was the route over Kebbi and Dendi, across the Niger at Gaya, past the sparsely populated region of Gurma to Pama and Sansanne-Mango, and then to Yendi and Salaga. The second route crossed the Niger near Say, over Fada-n-Gurma to Kupela in Moshi territory and then to Ougadougou (both in Burkina Faso) or past Tenkodugu and Bawku to Gambaga and Salaga. The third route went through Nupe and then to Borgu, Djougou, Kotokoli and Dagbon to Salaga.<sup>81</sup> What all of these three routes have in common is that they all passed through Dagbon territory on the way to Salaga.

### iii. The Larabansi<sup>82</sup> (Arab Muslims)

The third wave of Islamization came from the Larabansi (Arab Muslims) who trace their descent from Ayyūb al- Ansari whose role in the formative period of Islam at Madina was tremendous. He gave refuge to the Prophet during the Hijra. These Larabansi came to Dagbon from Gonja area where they had imparted Islam to the people around there. In fact, the mosque that they constructed which bears the architectural hallmark of Maghribian style, still exists in the town of Larabanga in the West Gonja district today. It is a tourist attraction and has a

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 6

<sup>81</sup> Levtzion, *Muslim and Chiefs*, 24

<sup>82</sup> It is the plural of the corrupted form of the Arabic word *al-Arabiyyu* in Dagbanli. The singular is Larabaga. The plural form of it is Larabansi as above.



Qur‘ān in the mosque that is surrounded with a mysterious background. Fergusson says that these same Larabansi went to settle at a place called Larbanga in East Dagomba at a place (formerly Nyeg) now known as Nyegdabari. Its location is twenty-two miles from Zabzugu and twenty miles from Bimbilla in the Nanumba district of Northern Ghana.<sup>83</sup> They are called the Kambaras and played a major role in the establishment of the Muslims structures in Dagbon.<sup>84</sup> .In the West African sub region they are often known by the patronymic Lansar or Lansariyu.<sup>85</sup> Both those Larabansi of East Dagomba and those from the West Gonja used the salutation name Lansariyyu.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ferguson “Islamisation,” 82

<sup>84</sup> Levtzion Muslims and Chiefs ; Fergusson “Islamisation of Dagbon”; Samwini N.

Samwini N., *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950: It Effects upon Muslims and Muslim-Christian Relations*. Berlin: Lit c2006. 29

<sup>85</sup> Ferguson “Islamisation,” 84

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.,

## 2.5. ISLAMIZATION UNDER THE “YANI TRIUMVIRATE”<sup>87</sup>

The growth of the Muslim establishments in the reigns of Ya Na Muḥammad Zangina and Ya Na Andani Sigli continued in that of the Ya Na Jibrīl Bimbiegu. Muslim migration into Dagbon was actively encouraged, and in particular positions were created in the capital for those who were specialists in a number of trades....<sup>88</sup>

Based on this mutual correlation, consistency, and continuity in the establishment of Islam and its structures, in the second Kingdom of Dagbon by the three Yaa Naas, I have chosen to coin the term “Yani-triumvirate” for the purpose of this discussion. This evokes their powerful contribution to Islamization in Dagbon. However, the original meaning of the term “triumvirate” varies from this context in which I have used it.

### i. Yaa Naa Muhammad Zangina (1700 - 1714):<sup>89</sup>

Islamization gathered momentum and accelerated in this region between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when its influence transcended the boundaries of the trading enclaves to embrace the ruling classes of the established centralized Kingdoms. One of the most notable results of this influence was the conversion of the Dagomba King Muḥammad

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<sup>87</sup> The term does not connote the same meaning as in the days of Roman Empire where the three rulers ruled at the same period but shared responsibilities. In my context these rulers that I pseudonym as triumvirate ruled at different periods and not concurrently. I have been tempted to use this terminology because their impact seem to be so closely related and coordinated as if they ruled during the same time. The Kingdom of Dagbon had seen many kings since its inception. The three kings among them who played major roles in the Islamization and the establishment of Islamic structures in Dagbon are those that I refer to as the “Yani-triumvirate”. This comprises of Yaa Naa Mohammad Zangina, Yaa Naa Andani Sigli and Yaa Naa Jibrīl (Ziblim) Bimbiegu. They were all Kings of the second Kingdom according to Phyllis Ferguson’s classification. This is not to say that those of the first kingdom had nothing to do with Islam. They in their own small ways sowed the seeds of Islam and it germinated and blossomed during the reigns of those I describe as the “triumvirates of Yani”.

<sup>88</sup> Ferguson “Islamization” 204

<sup>89</sup> The periodicities of the reigns of the three selected Ya Nas are based on the reconstructed chronology that has been standardized by Phyllis Ferguson in her “Islamisation of Dagon”. This is based on the number of sons that they had. See. Ferguson’s “Islamization” 17

Zangina<sup>90</sup> to Islam,<sup>91</sup> probably in the second decade of the eighteenth century.<sup>92</sup> The conversion of the Naa Zangina was so vital to the history of Islam in Dagbon that both the Hausa and the Wangarawa wanted to claim the credit for orchestrating it. Salifu Abdel, for one, gives the credit to the Wangara.<sup>93</sup> Yaa Naa Zangina, according to one version, was a Zamfara,<sup>94</sup> or Zabarma, sent on a mission of Islamization by Uthmān dan Fodios's son Mohammad Bello. After accomplishing his mission, he Islamized the state of Dagbon, and then, he ruled it.<sup>95</sup> This version shows the extent to which the narrators were willing to go in order to claim this honor, even if it deconstructs history. Habib Chester Iddrisu challenges the extent to which Naa Zangina's devotedness to Islam has been assumed, arguing that since Islam legally permits

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<sup>90</sup> This King of Dagbon developed a close affinity to Muslims who were already present in Dagbon for a couple of reasons as put forward by Nehemiah in his *Muslims an chief in West Africa*. First the humiliating defeat that Dagombas suffered from their next door neighbors – the Gonjas – who were technically inferior in war fair techniques compared to the Dagombas – a two century old Kingdom – but was able to defeat them by the virtue of their reliance on Moslem spiritualists. Secondly Naa Zangina's sour relationship with and isolation from his fellow chiefs and princes drew him closer to forge more amicable relationship with the Muslim clergy than his former royal counterparts had done. This close alliance with Muslims I think can be attributed to his sincere belief in the precepts of Islam. It is said that he was a Muslim before he became a king and used to go on trade mission to Timbuktu and the Hausa land. See Phyllis Ferguson *Islamization* p.107. So his early exposure to the Muslim faith could be the underlying factor for his close affinity to the Muslim clergy and setting the precedence of incorporating Islamic structures in the Nam of Dagbon which some of his predecessors came to build upon. Secondly, for the fact that he abdicated the Kingship at a point in time to Andani Sigli his cousin could also be interpreted in the light of him not being over ambitious and maybe needed to spend the rest of his life in strengthening his relationship with his creator Allah. Though it has been mentioned that it was the menace of the impermanent Gonja attacks and the need for a coalition from the other princes to deal with this situation that made him abdicate the stool as a deal to get situation solved. By this feat Zangina was portrayed as a ruler who has placed the interest of Dagbon above his parochial interest by abdicating the skin to foster unity and security for Dagbon. This act of patriotism is a factor that is lacking in some of the present day royals that has significantly contributed to the ubiquitous "Abudu" and "Andani" gate clashes in recent years. A parallel of this can be found in the Hausaland when a King after several years of being on the throne abdicated it on religious grounds. Thereafter lived a life absolute piety and repented for his past misdeeds. Zangina resettled in Agbandi where he died and was interned.

<sup>91</sup> The drum chants clearly refer to him as the first Muslim to become a king, and not as first king to become a Muslim.

<sup>92</sup> Wilks, "A Note," 4.

<sup>93</sup> Abdel, Salifu Seidu. "The Influence of Islam on the Dagbamba in the Twentieth Century" (M. Phil. Thesis University of Ghana, 1989) 107

<sup>94</sup> Staniland, Martin.; *The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), .3.

<sup>95</sup> Ferguson "Islamisation" 253; Wilks, "A Note on the Early Spread," 89.

only four wives and that he had more than a dozen, then his devotion is doubtful.<sup>96</sup> This single event alone cannot however be used to generalize and, hence, draw a valid conclusion as to the validity of the extent or extent of his devotedness to Islam.

Another version has it that he was called Wumbei and was Islamized by the Kamshe Naa Mohammad al-Kashnāwi, a Katsina scholar considered as the doyen of the “Hausacized” wave of Islam in Ghana. He was circumcised and then given the name Mohammad Zangina.<sup>97</sup> The variations in the above narratives suggest that each contesting groups played an undeniable role in Naa Zangina’s Islamization and that, the pertaining glory to it should be shared rather than be attributed to only one group. This stems from the fact that it is the summation of their individual contributions that was the manifest factor behind what Dagbon became and is in terms of its present religious state and inclination.

As a young prince, he converted to Islam and undertook commercial trips to the Hausaland and beyond. This opened up his horizons internally and externally. It also exposed him to the cultures and traditions of other societies. It, therefore, came as no surprise that, when he was mantled with the skins of authority as Yaa Naa, he made a dramatic impact on all aspects of life in Dagbon, with special emphasis on Islam. A source that discussed his succession to the throne proposed that attributed this to his economic acumen, public experience, and the wisdom that he acquired from his mercantile trips. The competition for the throne was so keen that the competitors, comprised of even Naa Zangina’s elder brothers, his uncles and cousins, ultimately, had to resort to their cousins of the Mamprusi tribe to arbitrate among them.

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<sup>96</sup> Iddrisu Habib Chester “Chieftaincy Disputes in Dagbon-Northern Ghana, c 1400-2003: Polygyny, Colonialism, and Politics” (M.A. thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2004), 22.

<sup>97</sup> Wilks, “A Note on the Early Spread of Islam in Dagomba,” 89.

The enthronement was immediately followed by his trip to Sabari across the river Oti to his spiritual mentor, the Yarsi-naa Yamusa, for a blessing.<sup>98</sup> Naa Moḥammad Zangina then performed supererogatory prayer (*ṣalāt al-taṭawwuʿ*)<sup>99</sup> at the Sabari mosque. This event most clearly, marked the establishment of Islam in Dagbon. The drift towards the Islamization of the Namship of Dagbon, can as posited by Phyllis Fergusson, can be divided into two chronologically. The first phase started during the reign of Naa Luro,<sup>100</sup> the great grandfather of Naa Zangina, and spanned the eras of his grandfather, and his father, Yaa Naa Tutugri, up to the time when Zangina received the skins of authority from the late 16<sup>th</sup> / early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Na Zangina's ascension to the throne was the culmination of the second phase. The drum chant narrates that, having arrived in Sabari, Muḥammad Zangina told Yāmūsa, in response to the question whether the goal of his visit was peace,

My mother's home is in this town, Sabari. And from you I have learned to read the Qur'ān. And God has given me my father's house (i.e. the kingship). That is why I have come to you that you may beg God my Master that my land may remain good.<sup>101</sup>

Yāmūsa, on the other hand, is said to have summoned to Sabari the various Muslim community heads.

Then they all assembled before Yāmūsa, Yari-Na of Sabari. Then Yāmūsa, went and opened the door of the mosque, and told Na Zangina to enter inside the mosque. Na Zangina entered. Yāmūsa, Yari-Na of Sabari took a Qur'ān and put it in the hands of Na Zangina. Na Zangina took the Qur'ān and held it. He worshipped towards Hausa land, and worshipped towards the land of Ashanti, and worshipped towards the land of Ashanti, and worshipped towards Moshiland. At that time all the roads were much used. Then no wild animals caught any travelers on the road any more. Then many travelers journeyed from the different roads to Dagomba. Because he worshipped that the roads

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<sup>98</sup> Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs*, 91.

<sup>99</sup> Probably Ivor Wilks would have been more explicit if he had used the word “Nāfila” for the supererogatory prayer

<sup>100</sup> The invitation of Shaykh Sulaymān ‘Abdallah Bagayogu from Timbuctu by Naa Luro (died.c.1660) to settle in Dagbon is a critical factor in history of Dagbon as noted by Ivor Wilks. Shaykh Sulayman was allocated a piece of land at Sabari (in the river Oti valley) where he erected a mosque and started a school. He was succeeded by his son Ya'muru (probably Yamusa) who became the teacher of the future first Muslim King of Yendi Mohammad Zangina. See “Juula and the expansion of Islam into the forest” by Ivor Wilks This therefore goes to authenticate the stratification of the phases of Islam in Dagbon into two by P. Fergusson, the first phase being during the reign of Naa Luro and the second at the time Naa Zangina.

<sup>101</sup> Wilks, “A Note on the Early Spread,” 90; See Ferguson, “Islamization,” 96.

might remain good for all travelers, that is why people say that he had sought God's assistance in his activities. Then the mallams opened the Qur'ān and began to read ... There were no traders on the main road to Dagomba. Na Zangina prayed to God and the roads opened and many travelled by them, and that is why the Drummers say that Na Zangina made the world wise.<sup>102</sup>

Yaa Naa Zangina prayed thus when the Qur'ān was put into his hands:

I pray to God to build my Kingdom as compact as clay ... My fathers used to offer male guinea fowls as a sacrifice to God. But I am simply going to pray to Him and His Prophet ... I will rule people in the name of Allah and His Prophet Muḥammad ... I pray to God to allow travelers in this area to have safe journeys to their destination.<sup>103</sup>

Muḥammad Zangina introduced massive Islamic structures into the Nam of the Dagomba Kingdom and was emulated by subsequent Ya Nas.<sup>104</sup> Among the structures the most notable was the creation of a *Nayiri* Liman (chief's Imām) and other functionaries, which incorporated into a Muslim hierarchy. Mallams (the Muslim religious clerics) were to have an essential role in the appointment of a king.<sup>105</sup> Other Islamic structures that were introduced were the Yidan Karfa,<sup>106</sup> Mba Malle,<sup>107</sup> Yidan Mole,<sup>108</sup> Yidan Chim and Yidan Kama. These structures and the roles that they play today under the canopy of Islam in are being questioned as to the veracity of their Islamic foundation. Some of these are now branded as innovations that were introduced into mainstream Islam by the earlier Mallams. These kinds of structures come under the classification of what I would term the “*Dagbanbacization*” of West African Islam (or “Wangaracization” or “Hausacization”).

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. The words of this prayer connote the length to which Zangina intended to go with the Islamization of the Kingdom of Dagbon. I am tempted to think that one of the reasons that have been forwarded for his abdication could be his extremism in Islamizing the Namship and Dagbon which might have peeved some of his royal counterparts and the populace most of whom were traditionalists.

<sup>104</sup> Ferguson, “Islamization,” 134-37

<sup>105</sup> The Kamshe na assumed the responsibility providing the garb of kingship of the Yaa Naa

<sup>106</sup> Translated by Ferguson as master of the guardians of the sunna

<sup>107</sup> Staniland, Martin. *The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 28; Ferguson, “Islamization,” 122.

<sup>108</sup> Ferguson, “Islamization,” 113.

The traditional festivals were replaced with Islamic ones -- in other words -- such as in the case of these were Islamized, like ‘Ashūrā (fire festival /Bugum), Maulid al-Nabi (Damba), Laylat al-Mi‘rāj (Kpini) and ‘Īd al- Kabir (Tchimsi). With regards to the festivals, some were placed under the spotlight of scrutiny as to its whether they were really Islamic, specifically, the Damba festival, which is meant to commemorate the birth of the Prophet but is regarded as an innovation. The Bugum (fire) festival is also regarded as un-Islamic. He allowed Mālikī law to displace customary law on issues of marriage, divorce and inheritance. He also permitted invitation to Islam so that the majority of town-dwellers and an appreciable number of villagers came to embrace the religion. There was also an influx of strangers who did the same. All this was attributed to Zangina’s prayer.<sup>109</sup> Ferguson observed that Zangina, by creating numerous Islamic offices, reformatting the local calendar to suite the Islamic one, and Islamizing naming ceremonies, allowing circumcisions and burials, laid the foundation for continual Islamization of Dagbon. The fact that these services were not performed for just the royals but for the masses as well, depicted the Islamic notion of universal equality in the eyes of God. It also showed the precedence of Islamic brotherhood and norms over and above those of traditional affiliations and norms.<sup>110</sup> He encapsulated his opinion thus:

A new model of corporate unity was exemplified in the *umma*, the community of the faithful, whose membership, regardless of status or origins, met together to pray, subscribed to a common ethic, sought to follow the *sunna* of the Prophet, and were all one day to answer for their deeds on earth as equal before the same God.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Wilks “A Note” 91.

<sup>110</sup> Ferguson, “Islamization,” 131.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.,

ii. **Yaa Naa Andani Sigli (1714-1728):**

When Zangina abdicated the throne, his successor Yaa Naa Andani Sigli continued with the Islamization of Dagbon. The Talāmidh of Shaykh Sulaymān whom he had brought back to Dagbon from Moshiland with the permission of the Moshi King (Mogo Naba) during the reign of Yaa Naa Zangina, aided him in his Islamization process and wars in Dagbon which were termed by Ferguson as *Jihāds*. These were called thus because they were similar to the Talāmidh's adoption of a rebāṭ system of organizing their fighting forces (with the exception of the building of fortresses) as the Almoravids did. With ribāṭ ideology, they conscripted non-Dagombas into the army, trained them and indoctrinated them with Islamic tenets for actively spreading the Dagbon kingdom, which at the time was synonymous with Islam. Na Andani Sigli concentrated on the eastward expansion of the kingdom.

Andani Sigli was a cousin to Naa Zangina. Although he vied for the throne and lost it to Zangina through the arbitration of the cousin state of Mamprugu, yet he was encouraged by the same arbitrator to give his loyalty to Naa Zangina, and he heeded this advice. He was born with the insignia of military regalia around him. It is, therefore, not surprising that, when almost all the princes and chieftains turned their backs on Zangina, after little hesitation and with a promise of spiritual support from Mohammad Puusamle and other chieftains, he pledged allegiance to Naa Zangina. Zangina showed his gratitude for this gesture. Naa Zangina, having the interest of greater Dagbon at heart during the state of war meeting with Na Sigle, immediately relinquished the "chieftaincy necklace" and the staff of office to him, and then addressed Na Sigli thus:



My gowns are dry and I have collected together. The things of the chieftaincy are in the basket. This is my daughter, take her and make her carry all your tuma (medicines for war) in order that you may go fight that slave of Gonja for me.<sup>112</sup>

Naa Sigle's response was

You took the Qur'ān and improved the country; I shall take this spear of mine and put the country in order.<sup>113</sup>

Before the launch of the counter-offensive against the Gonjas, who had already encroached on Toma and its surrounding chieftains, Zangina died and was buried at Agbandi. Na Sigli is known for demolishing a lot of the traditional idols of the traditionalists. The idol of Sakpiegu was the most notable and dramatic. Upon breaking it, two birds emerged and flew to two different locations, and the idol continued saying "Sigli *yaa*, *Sigli yaa*"- meaning Sigli's strength, Sigle's strength in Dagbanli. Na Sigli's aversion to idolatry showed the extent to which Islamic iconoclasm had permeated the fabric of his religious life.<sup>114</sup> Na Andani Sigli was regarded as one of the most dedicated Muslims ever to have ruled Dagbon.<sup>115</sup> However, Habib does not mention him as the successor to Na Zangina but, rather mentions him in the context of Naa Ziblim Bimbegu.<sup>116</sup> Staniland also confirms Naa Andani Sigle's succession to the throne immediately after Zangina's resignation.

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<sup>112</sup> Ferguson "Islamization," 135

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 136

<sup>114</sup> Ferguson "Islamization," 147

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 148

<sup>116</sup> Iddrisu Habib Chester "Chieftaincy Disputes in Dagbon-Northern Ghana, c 1400-2003: Polygyny, Colonialism, and Politics" (M.A. Thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2004), 22.

iii. **Yaa Naa Jibrīl (Ziblim) Bimbegu (1728-1733):**<sup>117</sup>

Yaa Naa Jibrīl Bimbegu, the third of what I termed the “Yani-triumvirate,”<sup>118</sup> made a considerable impact on the Islamization drive of the second Dagomba Kingdom. As the eldest son of Yaa Naa Muhammad Zangina, he was given the upbringing of a prince of Yani by being sent for “wubsibu” (fostering) to one of the eunuch’s chiefs, where he contracted yaws. From this point he became dejected, rejected and disillusioned and started moving from one place to another like a recluse until he reached Zakpalsi. Mohammad Puusamli was, at that time the Imām at Zakpalsi, and where he was given the best reception. Naa Bimbegu learnt to read the Qur‘ān in Savelugu under the same Mallam (teacher) as Musa Kambara as his would be spiritual guide.<sup>119</sup>

Naa Bimbegu made it to the throne in accordance with the prophesy – Musa Kambara. He was told that the only way that he would make it to the throne was to take advantage of a situation that would present itself after the death of Na Sigli, namely that two of his aunts (princesses) would try the regalia of kingship on him (due to his unpleasant looks) just for fun, and that he should not wait for the third aunt to appear but instead, dash out with the kingship regalia (when it is tried on him).<sup>120</sup> The elders and other kingmakers would have no choice than to confirm him as such. Tradition and custom demand that as soon as a prince wears the robe and comes out of that sacred room he is declared the King.

Yaa Naa Jibrīl (Ziblim) Bimbegu played a role in catalyzing the expansion of Islam in Dagbon. He too introduced new Islamic structures in Dagbon, especially Yidan Baba (minister

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<sup>117</sup> He was not a pleasant looking person thus his nickname “Bimbegu”. The name means in Dagbanli ugly or unpleasant looking.

<sup>118</sup> This comprised of Yaa Naa Mohammad Zangina, Yaa Naa Andani Sigli and Yaa Naa Jibrīl Bimbegu. It is my own categorization.

<sup>119</sup> Ferguson “Islamization,” 204

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 207

of trade and commerce ),<sup>121</sup> Asachiya (minister of cistern-construction ),<sup>122</sup> and Madaha Naa.<sup>123</sup>

By the end of his rule, there were about seventeen Muslim establishments in Dagbon, dating as far back as Naa Luro's era, thus within three quarters of a century. These establishments were compartmentalized among the Islamizing agents that have assumed the status of Dagombas by either matrification or patrification. They were the Wangaras, especially the descendants of the Talāmidh of Shaykh Sulaymān Bagayugu, the descendants of the Hausa settlers and those from the Larabanga in Western Gonja. Some offices, as enumerated by Ferguson were:

Sabari Yeri Na, Yidan Mole, Mallam Alibarka, Zemole, Yidan Karfa, Yidan Gunu, Kore Mole, Tahi Mole and Na Mole. The position of Kamshe Na linked both to the *talāmidh* and with the descendents of the Hausa settler, Moḥammad al-Kashnāwī ... The post of Waligu Na, Mba Malle and Asschiya ... The Larbanga Na and Kambara Na ...<sup>124</sup>

Some of these offices that were created for the purpose of injecting Islamic tenets into the Dagbon kingdom deviated eventually from the objective for which they had been instituted and assumed functions that had no relation with Islam. Therefore it should not surprise us to see some Muslims beginning to question and declare some of the structures as un-Islamic.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 211

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 209

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 208

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 214

## 2.6. CURRENT TRENDS OF ISLAMIZATION: WANGARAS AND THE HAUSAS CLAIM TO RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS:

### i. The Conflict of the Mosque

The Wangaras and the Hausas both claim the honor of introducing Islam to their regions. This in fact underlay most of the ubiquitous Imāmate (leadership) conflicts that have erupted between the indigenous Muslim tribes and immigrant Muslim communities in Ghana, since time immemorial. Deriving from the fact that Islam was introduced into Ghana by their ancestors, each party deems it as its birthright to exercise leadership.<sup>125</sup> In the Zongos (Muslim quarters), leadership patterns were colored by ethnic affiliation and sentiments. According to Schildkrout, the configuration of the leadership structure in the Zongo takes the following form:

Leadership pattern in the Zongo to some extent follows those of ethnic differentiation; in that each ethnic community has a headman and a group of titled elders...To some extent they represent their communities to outsiders, that is, to government officials or to non-immigrants.<sup>126</sup>

With the passage of time there emerged a shift in the leadership pattern from the old pattern:

The shift in the leadership pattern in the Zongo has meant that politics is rarely a matter of simple interethnic competition. Leaders in the Zongo are united and divided on issues of religious, economic, and political policy and do not necessarily act as representatives of ethnic communities. In a sense we are dealing with two systems of leadership, one based on pattern of ethnic segmentation and symbolised by the tribal headsmen their officials and their Imāms, another based on more universalistic criteria of recruitment to leadership roles, including Islamic education, wealth and length of residence in town.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Ousman Murzik Kobo, "Promoting the Good and Forbidding the Evil: A Comparative Historical Study of Ahl-as-Sunna Islamic Movements in Ghana and Burkina Faso, 1950-2000" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005), 184.

<sup>126</sup> Enid Schildkrout, "Islam and Politics in Kumasi: An Analysis of Disputes over the Kumasi Central Mosque," *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, 52, pt. 2 (1974), 124.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid 124

The 1970 Kumasi central mosque disputes,<sup>128</sup> the Takoradi disputes and the early Tema central mosque dispute after Ghana's attainment of independence are typical examples of this conflict.<sup>129</sup> There were several phases in the Kumasi mosque dispute but here I will confine myself to the 1968-69 phases. The disputes as a rule tend to erupt in the southern part of Ghana which is predominantly Christian. The demographical setup in Ghana is such that the northern sector is predominantly Muslim and the southern principally Christian.<sup>130</sup> In this milieu both the indigenous Ghanaian Muslims and immigrant Muslims from neighboring countries are all considered as immigrants and are treated as strangers.<sup>131</sup> This does not mean that such disputes do not exist in the north. In the northern sector, the mosque disputes that prevails are more the result of sectarian differences.<sup>132</sup> The pockets of Muslims that exist in Christian dominant areas dwell in quarters or settlements known as Zongos. These Zongos are

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.;125

<sup>129</sup> The Tema dispute revolved around my patrilineal distant grandfather named Alhaji Abūbakari Sh'agbā. He was a royal of the Sh'agbā gate of Savelugu, one of the major chieftains of Dagbon who were eligible to vie for *Yanship* of Dagbon. He lived to the ripe age of 120 years and died in the year 2004. On one of my numerous visits to him while I was a student at the University of Ghana Legon in 1996 he recounted to me the incidence surrounding his Imāship which he occupied till his death. The strongest argument that he told me against the immigrant contenders for the Imāmate was that he put it to President Kwame Nkrumah to ask them whether a Ghanaian scholar no matter his standard in scholarship will be considered for a Muazzin's (a person who summons Muslims to prayer) position in their respective countries of origin, precisely those scholars of the Northern Nigerian origin. This set a seal on the meeting that was convened between Nkrumah and Muslims elders to resolve the Imāship dispute. Nkrumah invested him with the authority of taking charge of the Muslims in Tema and the newly built Tema dockyard.

<sup>130</sup> Gymah-Boadi E. and Richard Asante in "Minorities in Ghana" Commission on human rights; Sub-Commission on Promotion and Protection of human rights working group on minorities ninth edition 12-16 May 2003 E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2003/WP.4 5 May 2003. 2 p.6

<sup>131</sup> Muslims are called "Hausa-foo" meaning the Hausa people. To the people of the south the alien Muslims like the Hausas from Nigeria, Mossis from Burkina Faso and Zabarmas from Mali and Niger and the migrant Muslims like the Dagombas and Gonjas are all considered as strangers. The bond of unity within this community is Islam and stranger status attached to them. There emerged a shift in this relationship when credence began to be given to national identity. This situation began during independence but it escalated in 1969 during the Progress Party regime in the government's program of "Ghanaianization" of small capital enterprises and instilling structures to mute out alien competitors. This empowered the Northerners to use that to their advantage by extending it into the religious realms. See Enid "Islam and politics in Kumasi..." 116-21.

<sup>132</sup> It often takes the form of Munchire and Nawun-nyeriba fault-line (Wahhābi and Tijaniyya dimension).

reminiscent of the early Muslim settlements that existed in the early days of the influx of Islam into Sub-Saharan Africa.

The importance of the mosque in any Muslim locale cannot be gainsaid. Since the time of the Prophet the mosque has not only served as a place of worship but as the nerve center of all the activities of the Muslim community. In Kumasi, and other areas in the south, this has been the order of the day, especially at the central mosque. The central mosque of Kumasi, according to Schildkrout, functioned as a symbol of unity for the diverse Muslim community. The weekly Friday prayers and the annual 'Īd prayers were also convened there.<sup>133</sup> The 1968-69 conflict over Kumasi's central mosque grew out of the question regarding who should serve in the Imāmship of the Friday prayer and the annual 'Īd prayers. In Kumasi, the Imām and his Nāi'b (assistant) have, since time immemorial, been Hausas. With the introduction of the policy to "Ghanaianize" extending from Nkrumah's rule<sup>134</sup> through the military regime of the National Liberation Council down to Busia's regime, the northern Muslims started their agitation for religious leadership positions, which as I earlier mentioned, were the preserve of the Hausas. The death of Mallam Chiroma in 1968 was pounced upon as an opportune time to implement their demand for the Imamate. The Hausas had, for the past 50 years, automatically crowned the Nā'ib as Imām and, then, installed a new person in the position of Nā'ib. For the first time, this decision was rescinded by the administration. The Hausa community was never the less determined to keep the old order in place. This sparked off deep unrest and the central mosque was closed down. The indigenous population, after careful, consideration, now wanted to take

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 124

<sup>134</sup> In 1962 a faction of the Muslims under the name "indigenous Muslims of Ghana" sent a petition to the ruling government agitating against the dominance of "alien" Hausas in the mouth-piece organization (Muslim Mission) that represented all the Ghanaian Muslim populace. They argued that independence meant liberation of all Ghanaians "from all forms of foreign yoke and domination, including the domination of religious groups by foreigners." See Schildkrout, "Islam and politics in Kumasi..." 128 .

the Nā'ibship and then, the Imāmship would go to the Hausas. This compromise was unacceptable to the Hausas. The conflict, thereafter, assumed a legal dimension and was sent to the courts for resolution. Finally, the courts declared it to be more of a political than a legal issue and so, the parties were advised to withdraw it and to seek an amicable solution between them.<sup>135</sup> The ultimate result was that Shaykh Nāsir Dīn became the first Dagomba to become a Nā'ib and, later, his student Shaykh Muntaqa became the first Dagomba to serve as the Imām of the Kumasi central Mosque. The agitation therefore paid off by relinquishing the Imamship in subsequent years to qualified persons be they of immigrant descent or an indigenous person. This agitation will later on come to create a division within the Tijāni front which will be exploited by the Wahhābi adherents to champion their cause of Wahhabicization.

## **ii. The Sectarian Conflict**

The religious situation in Ghana currently exhibits a number of sectarian divisions. This includes intra-religious conflicts, which has adverse repercussions on all aspects of the relationships of the adherents both with one another and with the society that they live in. In Ghana as a whole and the North in particular, there is a fierce competition for winning adherents between the Muslims of the Tijaniyya sect and the Muslims of the Wahhābi sect. The other Muslim sects, which includes minorities like the Ahmadis and the Shi'ites, are also in the race for winning adherents but although their impact is felt, it is not as strong as those of the two major sects i.e., Wahhābis and Tijānis. These sects have their methods of proselytization and how they go about winning adherents. This aspect will be dealt with in chapter four of this

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 131-34

dissertation; these I will take an analytical look at the claims that one sect is on the ascendancy, while the other seems to be on the decline or stagnant.

## 2.7. CONCLUSION:

The peoples of northern Ghana today practice a variety of religions, including African Traditional Religion (ATR), Christianity and Islam, with Muslims currently forming the majority.<sup>136</sup> As already mentioned Islam first came to this area in the late fourteenth century, and it quickly won converts among the native population. The arrival of the Tijāniyya order during the nineteenth century was late in comparison with the Qādiriyya order, but it quickly became the most dominant and popular of the Ṣūfī groups active there. In fact, within a short period it completely overwhelmed the Qādiriyya order, which had arrived there earlier. Qādiriyya practice, already introduced by the first wave of Islamizers - the Wangaras - could have been reinvigorated by the second wave of Islamizers - the Hausas. Inadvertently, it was the same two groups that introduced the Qādiriyya which also introduced the Tijāniyya Ṣūfī orders in Dagbon in the same order. The Wangaras took the lead and were followed by the Hausas. In the Tamale district, located in the center of the northern region, their chief rival is now the Wahhābiyya movement which was introduced there by returning pilgrims<sup>137</sup> those

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<sup>136</sup> Tamale Municipal Assembly “Tamale municipal assembly medium term development plan. A district development plan for the period 1996-2000” Tamale: Tamale Municipal Assembly, May 1996?

<sup>137</sup> I have a reservation on the efficacy of the role played by returning pilgrims in the dissemination of Wahhābism as opined by some writers on this phenomenon. I have the opinion that the pilgrims who in time past had to do the trip by road within an expanse of a long duration of time could have been influenced. But the pilgrims in this modern era who go by air and undertake the pilgrimage rites within a time constraint would not be capable of being completely immersed and indoctrinated with the Wahhābist religiosity to facilitate them to impart it to others on their return from the holy trip. This is not to say that the host country is not making efforts to capitalize on this unprecedented annual world convergence of Muslims from all quarters of the world to observe this pilgrimage. My concern is about its effectiveness.



scholars who studied in Saudi universities. Ultimately, the Wahhābis would compete with the Shaykhs of the Tijāniyya for the loyalty of the populace.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. PHENOMENON OF WAHHĀBI-TIJĀNI (MUNCHIR-FAILA): THE GENESIS OF WAHHĀBISM IN NORTHERN GHANA.

#### 3.1. NOTION OF WAHHĀBISM AND ITS FOUNDER:

This chapter examines Wahhābism in terms of its genesis and recent relations with the Tijāni-Wahhābi (in local parlance Munchire-Faila) expression of Islam in northern Ghana. It unequivocally shows the characteristics of Ghanaian Wahhābis, known as Munchires, and the considerable effort that their leader went through before he made inroads into planting and disseminating the seeds of Munchirism in a predominantly age-old Tijāni-populated area.

While Wahhābism has long been considered primarily a Middle Eastern expression of reformist Islam, it has a long history in Africa. Wahhābism<sup>1</sup> is a term that refers to the 18<sup>th</sup> century revivalist form of Islam that was born in Saudi Arabia as a result of the Islamic revolution launched by Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, whose aim was to purge Islam of innovations (*bid‘a*), that had been brought into the mainstream. His brand of Islam advocated a return to the basic roots of Islam, a puritanical form of belief imagined to have been espoused by Prophet Muḥammad (P.B.U.H). Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb promoted adherence to the legalistic form of Islam and eschewed all other forms that had been added to it without legal backing

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<sup>1</sup> In the introduction to the book *Kashf al-Shubuhāt fī at-Tawhīd* by Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb edited by the notable Salafi Muhammad Munīr al-Dimashqi al-Azharī used the term Wahhābiyya with reference to the reformation of Shaykh ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb which is mostly regarded as a pejorative term. Refer to *Kashf al-Shubuhāt fī at-Tawhīd ta’līf Shaykh al-Islām Mujaḍid al-Qarn al-Thālīṣ ‘ashara Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Wahhāb; ‘alaqa alaiḥa wa ḍabaṭahā war āj’a uṣūluha wa ṣahahā al-Salafī al-Shahīr Muhammad Munīr al-Dimashqi al-Azharī. Ṭab’at ‘alā nafaqati al-Faqīr lilāhi ta ‘ālā sa’īd ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz āl al- Su‘ūd* n.d 3; Safiullah, Sheikh M. “Wahhābiyya: A Conceptual Relationship between Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and Taqiyy al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymīya.” *Hamdard Islamicus*, 10 (1987), 67-83. The same terminology has been used ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Khatīb in his book entitled; *al-D‘awat al-Wahhābiyya: Mohammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-aql al-Hur wa al-Qalb al-Salīm*. Ma’a t’aqībāt li samāhat al-Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bin Mohammad bin Ibrāhīm Āl al-Shaykh. Hafid al-Imām ṣāhib al-D‘awat. (Cairo:Dār al-Shurūq), 16

from the scripture (*Qur'ān*) or the practices and sayings of the Prophet (*Ḥadīth*). Any practice that did not appear to conform to these two sources was regarded as an innovation (*bid'a*) by Wahhābis.<sup>2</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb drew much of his inspiration from Ibn Taymīyya, his role model.<sup>3</sup> Adherents believe that Wahhābism's doctrinal beliefs are derived from the works of Ibn Taymīyya, and that he set the precedent by opposing and refuting the Ṣūfī orders of his day, even writing treatises in this regard.<sup>4</sup> Hence, to the Wahhābis, Ibn Taymīyya (often referred to as Shaykh al-Islām) is the theologian who laid the foundation stone of their belief.<sup>5</sup> This claim has been disputed, however, by recent scholarship based on the writings and practices of Ibn Taymīyya himself.<sup>6</sup> George Makdisi tries to deconstruct the anti-Sufi characterization of Ibn Taymīyya and reconstructs him as a Ṣūfī of the Qādiriyya order.<sup>7</sup> If that premise is well argued, validated and convincingly defended, then the Wahhābi movement has been dispossessed of a cardinal founding proponent of the movement on whom they lean. In other terms they have been proven by the Ṣūfis to be a “Shaykhless” reform movement. Makdisi, drawing from numerous classical Arabic sources showed the untenability of those who see the Hanābila<sup>8</sup> as completely anti-Ṣūfī, by arguing that they were Hanbalis who ascribed to Sufism, including Ibn Taymīyya himself.<sup>9</sup> There are also documents that contain a list of certain Hanbalis doctors

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<sup>2</sup> Khatīb, *al-D'awat al-Wahhābiya*, 52-53

<sup>3</sup> Safiullah, “Wahhābiyya,”:

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>5</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 37.

<sup>6</sup> Makdisi, G., “Ibn Taymiya: a Ṣūfī of the Qadiriya Order,” *The American Journal of Arabic Studies* 1 (1973), 129

<sup>7</sup> The first attempt at re-considering Ibn Taymīyya as a neo-Sufi was carried out by Henry Laoust. With his critical reading of Ibn Taymīyya he deciphered an inclination of his doctrines towards Sufism. Makdesi credits Laoust Henry for his groundbreaking findings that Ibn Taymīyya's work rarely contains blatant condemnation of Sufism and that what Ibn Taymīyya was explicit and hard against was the pantheism of *Ittihādīyya* as formulated by Ibn 'Arabi.

<sup>8</sup> It is the plural form of the word Hanbali which refers to those who adhere to the Imām Ibn Hanbal's school of jurisprudence.

<sup>9</sup> The Shaykh al-Islam in this instance could be considered as what I will term a “Malāmati-Qādiri”, i.e., an underground or a hidden Qādiri who in order to hide his identity posed as an ardent anti-Sufi in his outlook.

who boasted a Sufi spiritual genealogy but were unknown as such. The list contains seven names showing the Sufi links of notable Hanbalis spanning a period of over three centuries.<sup>10</sup> Ibn Taymīyya in another source has been shown to have appreciated spiritual side of Islam. This was by implication an appreciation of the Qādiriyya order, which was the first and oldest order in Islam. He is even found in the chains of Sufi initiation - - *salāsil* - - of those who were invested with the cloak of Sufism - - *al- khirqa* - - belonging to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlī. Several classical works quote him as having confessed his belonging to several *turuq*, including the Qādiriyya.<sup>11</sup> To crown it all Ibn Taymīyya was buried in the Sufi cemetery in Damascus.<sup>12</sup> All the above evidence therefore called for a re-examination of the doctrinal position of Ibn Taymīyya. The seminal works of Henri Laoust set this process in motion.

### 3.2. Shaykh Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb: Upbringing and Scholarly Exploits

A precise and concise life history of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb has been traced by M.S. Zaharadin. According to Zaharadin, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was brought up a Hanbali and not as a Hanafi, as a few scholars have claimed. His grandfather was a mufti of Najd and his father a Qaḍī, which indicates that he was brought up in a literate environment. Nevertheless, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was discontented with the state of religious knowledge in Arabia at that time. In order to find a solution to this issue and prepare himself to confront this situation, he travel led in search of learning in various fields. He ended up studying with various scholars in several Islamic centers of knowledge, including Syria, Iraq, Iran and the two holy cities of

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<sup>10</sup> Makdisi. “Ibn Taymiya”122-123.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 124

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.,

Mecca and Medina. He spent twenty years on this journey before finally returning to Najd where he started his movement in all earnestness.<sup>13</sup>

Mohammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb began his reformation in Najd through a movement later to be referred to pejoratively as Wahhābi. This Wahhābi movement went through three known stages of struggle before it became firmly established. Firstly, there was a mutual pact between the ruler of Najd, Ibn Su‘ūd and Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, which culminated in bringing together religion and politics. The next stage was the full-scale Egyptian military confrontation with Wahhābi forces, which resulted in the defeat of the latter at Dir‘īya. This brought an end to the first Wahhābi regime in Arabia, but not to the spread of Wahhābi doctrinal beliefs; the battle instead, popularized the Wahhābi religious cause to the detriment of their political power. Finally, there was the much later stage of the discovery of oil in the twentieth century and the diplomatic maneuvers of Ibn Su‘ūd, which saw the resurgence of the Arabian Peninsula prominence for the wahhābi movement.<sup>14</sup>

Wahhābism, as championed by the Shaykh, spread to the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. Next, the movement penetrated Indonesia and Malaysia. At the same time Egypt, Muḥammad Abduh and Rashid Ridā incorporated its doctrinal (as opposed to political) ideas into their Salafiya movement. In Morocco, Sulṭān Mawlay Sulaymān (1792-1822) and the Royal family embraced it, while in Libya, the Sanūsīya Ṣūfī movement established a surprisingly good partnership with the Wahhābi movement; indeed it was the only Ṣūfī order that had not been condemned by the Wahhābis.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Zaharaddin, M.S., “Wahhabism and its Influence Outside Arabia,” *Islamic Quarterly*, 23(1979), 146

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.,151-2

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.,154

As for Wahhābism in West Africa, many consider Dan Fodio's jihad to have been an offshoot of or at least heavily influenced by the movement, although this has been refuted by Melvin Hiskett, who argues that there is no conclusive evidence to support this notion. 'Abd Allah Ibn Fodio, son of Uthmān, is quoted in one of his works as instructing pilgrims to ask for the Prophet's intercession with God and to make visitations to the tombs in Mecca and Medina. However, Hiskett does not rule out the possibility of some Wahhābi influence, since Shaykh Jibrīl ibn 'Umar (Dan Fodio's teacher) made the pilgrimage to Mecca on several occasions and had stayed there a considerable length of time.<sup>16</sup>

As a gateway into the formative period of the Wahhābi movement, Corancez's work is particularly valuable.<sup>17</sup> The events narrated by Louis Alexandre de Corancez occurred only about a decade after the demise of the founder of the movement. He, like most of civil servants in colonized lands, had access to massive and in-depth information about the area in question. Stationed in Aleppo, he is very frank and precise, though Wahhābi apologists express doubt about his credibility. Corancez's account of the internal disunity within the Banū Su'ūd family is an indication of the wealth of information he had at his disposal. He describes Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb as a reformer who tried to revive that version of Islam that had been preached and practiced during the Prophetic era, although, like other reformers, faced strong opposition both internally and externally. Interestingly, Corancez relates the myth about his birth, which is rarely seen in primary works about the Wahhābis. His grandfather dreamt of a wild fire which started from his abode and engulfed the whole of Arabia. This dream was interpreted as

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.,153

<sup>17</sup>De Corancez, Louis Alexandre Olivier. *The History of the Wahhabis*. Trans. by Eric Tabet. (Reading: Garnet Publishing Ltd., 1995)

meaning a reformer would emerge from his family; it became reality in the person of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb.<sup>18</sup>

On Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s scholarly career, Corancez states that he went to study at the two holy cities for a brief period, then went to Syria, Iraq, and Iran where he studied and tried to teach. His ideas were rejected everywhere, and so he returned to his home town of Dir‘iyya, where he began his mission of proselytization. He even encountered opposition there, and so left for another nearby town, where he formed an alliance with Ibn S‘ūd’s father and that gave him leverage in the process. This laid the foundations of the Wahhābi movement.

In today’s literature on Islam, especially after the events of 9/11, the term Wahhābism is seen as synonymous with Islamic fundamentalism or even terrorism. The aberrant usage of the term “fundamentalism” (mostly by western scholars), with regards to Islam has to be carefully examined in the African context. William Shepard, in his presentation “What is Islamic Fundamentalism?” takes an academic approach to this contentious issue. He disagrees with those who use the term in reference to Islam by drawing a parallel between Islam and Protestantism and concludes that the term fundamentalism was used to connote inerrancy in the Bible, but in the case of Islam, it makes no sense to use the term given that the Qur’ān has been seen for 1400 years as containing no single error nor alteration. He therefore concludes that fundamentalism is a misnomer in the case of Islam, and that radicalism or revivalism could be the more appropriate appellation.

There exists an intra-Islamic perception of the term Wahhābism that may be juxtaposed to the view shared in the west. The work of Iḥsān ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Bakari entitled *al-Wahhābiyya fī naẓari ‘ulamā al-Muslimīn*, is a compilation of written responses to, and refutations of the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.,6

Wahhābi movement written during and after the life of the founder Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. Ihsān opens with the rhetorical question: “Do you know the essence of the Wahhābiyah?”; and proceeds to quote letters from Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s Ḥadīth teacher in Medina, Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Kurdi, advising him on his approach to the Muslim umma the question of intercession.<sup>19</sup> Shaykh Jamīl Afandi Ṣidqī al-Zahāwī is also quoted from his book *al-Fajr al-Ṣadiq*, where he says that ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s teachers in Medina – Muhammad ibn Sulaymān al-Kurdi and Muhammad Hayā al-Sindī sensed in him *al-ghawāyah* (extremism) and *’ilhād* (heresy) and therefore concluded that he was destined to go astray and take unlucky ones with him. The father and brother of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb had the same sentiments about the aberrant ideas of the latter, and cautioned people against his religious ideas. This portrayal of Wahhābism and its founder is indicative of sectarian rivalry, which has been a common feature of Islamic intellectual history.

To show how such internal bickering has characterized Islam from long ago, al-Ihsān extrapolates the same arguments used against Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb from reaction to Aḥmad Ibn Taymīyya. He randomly selects some of Ibn Taymīyya’s legal pronouncements on contentious issues and the responses that they attracted. This approach of Ihsān with regards to Ibn Taymīyya stems in part from his identification of Ibn Taymīyya as the pace-setter for Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. He concludes his book with advice for Muslims i.e., to be wary of Wahhābism. This book seems, to the author, to be more or less an apologia for the anti-Wahhābis. However, it gives insight into how Wahhābism was perceived and enables me to contrast it with how it is perceived today by Ghanaian anti-Wahhābis.

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<sup>19</sup> See Ihsān ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Bakrī, *al-Wahhābiyya fī Nazari ‘Uulamā’ al-Muslimīn* (Qum; Maktabat Ayat Allāh al-‘Uzmā al-Mar‘ashī al-Najafī, 2000).



In contrast to al-Ihsān's uncontroversial work we have the study by Mohammad Jawad Balaghi, entitled *al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābīyah*. His approach is scholarly in that the arguments of both the Wahhābis and their adversaries are presented in establishing the authenticity of their respective doctrinal beliefs. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's major justifications for declaring all other Muslims infidels are outlined here, with Jawad dividing his chapters according to the doctrinal themes that he is responding to, beginning with the notion of Tawhīd (unity of Allah) in both its aspects of worship and action. Following this he looks at other issues such as the building of tombs, praying and burning lamps at shrines and, finally, sacrificing and making pledges. This foundation will be useful when we come to examine the caliber of Wahhābi and ṣūfi Islam in the sub-region of West Africa.<sup>20</sup>

It is not only the religious dimension of Wahhābism that has been the focus of contemporary writers. There has also recently been a lot of attention paid to the socio-economic aspects of Wahhābism, which is believed to be among the factors that have given it the leverage to spread to all corners of the globe, especially the developing world. Richard L. Warm's work on "Merchants, Muslims, and Wahhābiyya: The Elaboration of Islamic Identity in Sikasso, Mali" offers an analytical discussion of the socio-economic and religious dimensions of Wahhābism in Sikasso, a strongly ṣūfi enclave, since the entry of Islam into sub-Saharan Africa.

<sup>21</sup> It had been one of the cardinal centers of learning as well as a major stage on the route by which Islam made its way to northern Ghana. The affluent residents of Sikasso now play a major role in the dissemination of Wahhābism because Saudi graduates have begun to infiltrate

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<sup>20</sup> See Muḥammad Jawād Balaghī, *al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābīyah* (Beirut: Mu'assasat Al al-Bayt, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> Richard, L. Warm. "Merchants, Muslims, and Wahabiyya: The Elaboration of Islamic Identity in Sikasso, Mali" *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3 (1992), 485-507.

their ranks. They owe their success to the links they created between wealthy Saudi Shaykhs and local businessmen. These graduates are a window onto a new source of external financing for them, both locally and internationally. The Sikasso Wahhābis also have a unique dress code that sets them apart. They maintain strong links with their fellow Wahhābis in that part of Nigeria with which they share borders. Internal politics are also destabilized, giving a Wahhābi slant to local affairs. These issues will be considered the vis a vis scenario in northern Ghana.

The above review of the literature sets the stage for the rest of this chapter, which deals with one of the most prominent figures of the area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Wahhābi icon in the northern region and, for that matter, Ghana as a whole.

### **3.3. Introduction of Wahhābism into Northern Ghana:**

Wahhābism<sup>22</sup> made its appearance in northern Ghana between the latter part of the 1950s and the early part of the 1970s. Shaykh Ibrahim ‘Abdallah Niass of Kaolakh’s historic visit to the region was made at the invitation of President Kwame Nkrumah in 1962.<sup>23</sup> The Ghanaian version of Wahhābism in fact is termed Munchirism and its adherents are called Munchires, a corrupted form of the Arabic word *Munkir*. It may be classified among the wave of reform movements that flooded the area of sub-Saharan Africa after decades of monopoly by Ṣūfi-oriented Islam in the region.

According to Hunwick, the influence of the radical and anti-Sufi perceptions of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb did not spread to West Africa during the nineteenth century but, rather, made

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<sup>22</sup> The terminology used for the Wahhābis in northern Ghana is “Munchire”. A corrupted form of the Arabic word “*Munkir*” which means someone who denies or refutes something. In the case of Nigeria they are known as Yan Izala a short of the name izalat al-bid ‘a wa iqamat al-Sunna (the movement for the removal of innovation and up keeping of traditions of the prophet).

<sup>23</sup> Hiskett, M., “The Community of Grace,,” *African Language Studies* 17 (1980), 115-116. 107

its debut in the 1950s. Its inception sparked disputes in the area. Meanwhile, it had established itself in Arabia outside the Hijāz.<sup>24</sup> Its introduction gave rise to an upsurge of disputes and divisions in Muslim society: this was also the case in Ghana, Nigeria and other West African countries.

Senegal, a populous predominantly Muslim country in this sub-region, boasts ninety percent of its population as practitioners of Sunni Islam, the latter monopolized by a culture of Ṣūfī fraternities.<sup>25</sup> According to Leichtman, Mara A., the oldest of the orders is the Qādiriyya and the largest the Tijāniyya, while the most popular among the lower classes is the Murīdiyya. With such a culture of variegated Ṣūfī orders Senegal has seen a wave of religious reform movements, although mainly from within the orders themselves. The Senegalese reform movements include Hizb al-Tarqiyya in the Muridiyya order, the Mustarshidīn movement in the Tijāni order, and the Jama‘at Ibadu Rahman among University students in Dakar.<sup>26</sup>

One scholar, Kaba Lansine, has produced a comprehensive work on Wahhābism in West Africa, entitled *The Wahabiyya: Islamic Reform and Politics in French West Africa*. The work takes a thorough look at the stages of development of this movement in the sub-Saharan region. He attributes the upsurge of Wahhābism mainly to the rigorous activism of returnee Azhar graduates<sup>27</sup> and regards the *Hajj* as an important component in the dissemination of Wahhābiyya doctrine. The role played by the West African Abderhaman al-Ifriki (known as

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<sup>24</sup> Westerlund David and Rosander Eva Evers eds., *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounters between Sufis and Islamists*: (Athens: Ohio University Press, ©1997), 31.

<sup>25</sup> Leichtman Mara, A. “Revolution, Modernity and (Trans) National Shi‘i Islam: Rethinking Religious Conversions in Senegal,” *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 39 (2009) 323.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>27</sup> Kaba, Lansine. *The Wahabiyya: Islamic Reform and Politics in French West Africa*, (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 52; 81-2.

Burhane) in the Wahhābicization of African is also cited.<sup>28</sup> The present author does, to some extent, dispute this opinion. This is not to reject the role of the Hajj in the dispersal of Wahhābism, but the pilgrimage might have played a more influential role in the past, when surface transportation to the holy land was the only means of getting there, ensuring a longer, more impressionable stay. Now, air transportation has curtailed this impact. There is not the same time period devoted to the Hajj that allows pilgrims to be effectively Wahhābicized, although, as he correctly observes, there may be some as rudimentary influence at work.

Secondly, as the Hajj is an international forum for all Muslims, there is an equal chance that the Tijāniyya brotherhood might be equally influential, given this opportunity to disseminate Tijānism. Ālfa Ḥāshim, the cousin of ‘Umar Tal, for instance Tijānised a number of West Africans that he met during the pilgrimage season.<sup>29</sup> Another typical example was Shaykh ‘Umar Karachi of Ghana, who was already a member of the Qādiriyya fraternity but was Tijānised by Ālfa Ḥāshim.<sup>30</sup> Nor does this thesis hold completely for all Wahhābi influenced areas in the Sub-region. In Burkina Faso, for example, Ousman, M. mentions some Azhar returnees who championed the spread of Hamawiyya Tijānism. The current Khalifa there is Shaykh Aboubakar Maiga II, an Azhar graduate.<sup>31</sup>

In Ghana as well it was the Azharite graduates that championed the rise of the Tijāniyya Niassiyya. The notable Tijāniyya protagonists, such as Shaykh ‘Abd al-Razāk Ṭahir,<sup>32</sup> Shaykh

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 52

<sup>29</sup> Stewart, Charles C., “The Tijaniyya in Ghana: A Historical Study” (M.A Thesis, Department of African Studies–University of Ghana, 1964), 27-8.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 34

<sup>31</sup> Ousman, “Promoting the Good”, 170.

<sup>32</sup> His father Shaykh Ṭahir al-Hassan was among the first Ghanaians Muslim scholars who studied at al-Azhar University. Shaykh Ṭahir was an Islamic scholar and a very strong adherent of Tijānism. This information was related to me by his daughter Sayyidah Muti‘ah Hassan in Tamale during my interview dated 01/16/2009 Tamale.

Abdullahi Maikano, and Shaykh Jamāl Baba, were all Azharites.<sup>33</sup> The same applies to Senegal, a Francophone country, where the contribution of Azharite graduates towards the propagation of Tijānism is certain, though it cannot be quantified. Almost all the sons of the local Shaykh al-Islam – Shaykh Ibrāhim Niass - graduated from al-Azhar. This evidence debunks his conception of arrogating the spread of Wahhābism to Azhari products. It may hold true in some areas, but not in all.

Much attention on the other hand has been paid to Nigeria by John N. Paden in his book *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*, where he deals with the issue of the Yan Izāla, the Nigerian name for the Wahhābis. One finds common ground that makes the Izāla and Munchires of Ghana look similar, as well as identification of subtle differences that exist between them.<sup>34</sup>

In the case of Ghana specifically, Charles Stewart makes an attempt in his “Tijāniyya in Ghana” to deal with this topic, but unfortunately leaves many gaps. First, his emphasis is more on the external impact of the movement rather than the internal. Secondly, most of the data he cites is currently outmoded. Finally, there is a new scenario altogether, and recent developments need to be revisited. At the time of his research, the issue of full scholarships for young boys to attend the “Kuttāb schools” to Saudi Arabia was not in vogue. It was only in the late 1970s and early 1980s, large flocks of youth from northern Ghana became the beneficiaries of these scholarships, which allowed them to pursue further studies. The graduates, on their

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<sup>33</sup> Bagya, *Tārīkh*, 18.

<sup>34</sup> There is also a book written by Abubakar Gumi, the doyen of Wahhābism in Nigeria, entitled *Kitāb izālat al bid’a wa iqāmat al Sunnah*. In the edited work of Louis Brenner, entitled *Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, there is an article by Mohammad Sani Umar entitled “Changing Islamic Identity in Nigeria From the 1960s to the 1980s: From Ṣufism to Anti-Sufism.” Kane Ousmane’s book on the Yan Izala is also very informative. These books, and numerous other articles, shed light on Wahhābi activity in Nigeria and other parts of sub Saharan Africa, but under different names.

return, stepped up proselytization and brought a big change to the system; still, there is insufficient information regarding these recent changes, and so they cannot be discussed with any accuracy. For instance, there is a new intellectual equation introduced in the northern part of Ghana. Charles Stewart could not have foreseen how the Wahhābīya would become the torchbearers for Muslim intellectualism. But, this has to be substantiated by field research and solid statistical evidence. This is what the present author has undertaken.

### **3.4. Afa Yussif Sualihu Ajura: The Founder of the Wahhābi Sect in Tamale, Northern Ghana**

Though of blessed memory, his role in the development of Anbariyya into a group of disciplined and devout Muslims is not in doubt. His visionary leadership and the spirit of self-denial has resulted into numerous schools, mosques and other properties which need to be managed efficiently for the growth and development of Islam in particular and its membership in Ghana and beyond.<sup>35</sup>

It is of great importance to devote a part of this chapter to Afa Yussif Ajura, for because he was a motive force behind the establishment of Wahhābism and the development of certain practices in northern Ghana. His activism was not limited only to the religious realm but it had socio-politico-economic dimensions as well.<sup>36</sup> In fact it was his platform of political activism that enhanced his religious reputation.

His central role in Nkrumah's political party and his subsequent position as chairman of the northern region branch of the Ghana Muslim Council (1957-1966), for example enhance his reputation as a scholar and a sociopolitical activist.<sup>37</sup>

In the following the present author will briefly look at his birth and upbringing, his educational background, how he founded and promoted the local Wahhābi movement, his encounters with his adversaries and, finally, his achievements. This I hope will provide a

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<sup>35</sup> Tamale, "Anbariyya Sunni Community Strategic Plan 2008-2012" n.d. 1

<sup>36</sup> The Dagombas have a wise saying that one cannot by-pass the landlord in the bid to enter into a house. In other words discussion on Wahhābism in northern Ghana will be incomplete without mentioning Afa Ajura.

<sup>37</sup> Ousman "Promoting the Good" 2005 224

foundation for future research about him. His death in 2005 left a considerable hole in the community, leading to a scramble to fill his position. The NPP government of the day threatened to close down the Wāḥḥābis' central mosque if his followers did not resolve the issue of succession amicably.<sup>38</sup>

Alhaji Yussif Ajura, son of Salifu Adjei, was born in 1913 at Savelugu<sup>39</sup> and died in 2005 at Tamale.<sup>40</sup> As in the myth of the dream of a wildfire attending Mohammad ibn 'Abd al-Wāḥḥāb's birth,<sup>41</sup> Afa Ajura's own birth was interpreted as miraculous due to the story that his mother was pregnant with him for two years.<sup>42</sup> On coming into the world he was not given a Muslim name but was simply called by the name of the place where he was born.<sup>43</sup> Ajura is a corrupted form of the commercial town of Ejura in the Brong Ahafo region.

It was there that he went to pursue further studies after having completed reciting the Qur'ān at Savelugu under the tutelage of Imām Ibrahim of the Savelugu central mosque.<sup>44</sup> He learnt the Qur'ān in the *kuttāb* fashion, i.e., he learned to recite it by heart without understanding.<sup>45</sup>

At Ejura, he studied the other religious sciences from Mallam Baba,<sup>46</sup> an itinerant Islamic scholar from Nigeria who had settled there. As was the norm with Islamic scholars, the

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<sup>38</sup> An interview with Mohamed Amin Anta who was the then deputy northern regional minister but now the Chief executive of the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly.

<sup>39</sup> Iddrisu, "Contesting Islam," 27-8; Abdulai has 1890 as the date of birth and the place being Ejura in the Ashanti region.

<sup>40</sup> Adam "Conflict"

<sup>41</sup> De Corancez, *The History* 6

<sup>42</sup> Iddrisu "Contesting Islam" 28

<sup>43</sup> This indicates that there is an uncertainty as to precisely where he was born. Imoro has Savelugu as his birth place and Iddrisu has Ejura.

<sup>44</sup> Iddrisu "Contesting Islam" 37 Iddrisu has Afa Ajura's maternal uncle at Sabali called Afa Ali as his first teacher, an indication of discrepancy in their narratives.

<sup>45</sup> Adam "Conflict" 13

<sup>46</sup> Op cit., Iddrisu mentions this teacher to be a resident of Kete-Krachi.

instruction focused purely on jurisprudence (fiqh).<sup>47</sup> The books that he studied were: the *Mukhtaṣar al Akhḍariyyu* of Imām ‘Abdul Raḥmān of Malikiyya madhhab, the *Muwatta* of Imam Anas ibn Mālīk and the *tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. After studying for ten years with Mallam Baba, he returned to Savelugu and then moved to Tamale, the northern regional capital where he settled permanently. There he briefly studied tafsīr under my patrilineal grandfather Shaykh Al-Hassan Turzun.<sup>48</sup>

Afa Ajura (his popular name) was aligned with the mainstream orthodox Muslim clerics.<sup>49</sup> This was the dominant Islam that had been introduced by itinerant Wangara and Hausa Muslims and practiced since the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>50</sup> The present author was informed by the colleagues of his youth, whom he met while he was living in Ghana, that Afa Ajura was a very good *maḍīh* (a chanter of the Prophet Moḥammad’s eulogy). Some of his compatriots of that time were Alhaji Mohammad Alāfey-lana of blessed memory and Alhaji Zakariyya Meiwiyya of Kumbungu (a suburb of Tamale). According to oral sources, Afa Ajura was very proactive and radical when young, and had the habit of arguing with and challenging authority and being very skeptical. In fact, Afa Ajura was known more for his political activism in his formative years

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<sup>47</sup> Op cit.,

<sup>48</sup> The present author was told by his father Shaykh Ibrahim of blessed memory that when his grandfather al-Hāj al-Hassan Jibril Turzung returned from the southern Ghana after forty-five years almost all the literary people in Tamale came to study some subjects from him including Afa Ajura. It was al-Haj al-Hassan who was the first to give the commentary of the Qur‘ān in the month of Ramadan (fasting) at the central mosque of Tamale. His twin brother Alhaji Hussein built the first central mosque in Nanton a village situated in the Savelugu/Nanton district where the first Friday prayers were observed.

<sup>49</sup> Iddrisu has it in his dissertation that Afa Ajura’s eldest son Alhaji Alaweih mentioned a lot of ‘Ulama that his father studied from most of who were Ṣūfī scholars. This included the well known Scholar Shaykh Umar Karachi who was Ṣūfī and most if not all his students were Ṣūfis. In this vein, one finds a correlation between Afa Ajura and Shaykh Mohammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in the area of their intellectual acquisition of knowledge. The Shaykh in Medina studied at the hands of Hadīth scholars who were Ṣūfī adherents. A study undertaken by John Voll indicated that among the group of students that Shaykh Abd al-Wahhāb studied with at the hands of the Hadīth scholars all turned out to be proponents of Sufism except Shaykh Ibn ‘Abd al Wahhāb. See, Voll, John. “Muhammad Hayya Al-Sindī and Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd Al-Wahhab: An Analysis of An Intellectual Group in Eighteenth-Century Madina” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, v. 38, no.1 (1975), 31-39.

<sup>50</sup> Ibrahim, “Tijāniyya Order” 9



than his religious activities; indeed, Iddrisu Abdulai's interview with Afa Issa Modow revealed his political activism.<sup>51</sup> Staniland also mentions him in association with his political activism in Dagbon geo-politics.

The cleavage was deepened by a conflict within the Dagomba Muslim community which had begun at least as early as 1958, when Mallam Ajura, of the Bolgatanga Road mosque in Tamale, and Malam Wahabu of Yendi (Alhassani's friend), both C.P.P supporters, had signed the petition demanding the removal of Abudulai III.<sup>52</sup>

Used to the presence of orthodox Muslims and being considered a center of the correct practice of Islam, Tamale, and for that matter Dagbon, experienced no significant intra-religious conflict. The first occurrence of this type of conflict came about was when the Ahmadiyya movement made its way into this part of the country.<sup>53</sup> It was, in fact, introduced into the southern part of Ghana (along the coast) at the request of the local Muslim population, who sought white missionaries like the Christians. Its headquarters is at Saltpond in the Western region of Ghana. sect is a brand of Islam founded by Mirza Ahmad Ghulam in Pakistan, the Ahmadiyya has been condemned worldwide and its adherents widely branded as non-Muslims. They believe, among other cardinal principles, that the Prophet Muhammad was not the last in the line of prophethood, and in fact claim that Ahmad Ghulam was a Prophet. They have even found themselves banished from Pakistan. Consequently when they had already established roots in the south and were trying to get into the Muslim north, they were vehemently opposed and rejected.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Iddrisu "Contesting Islam" 91

<sup>52</sup> Staniland Martin.; *The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975. 156

<sup>53</sup> Stewart, "Tijaniyya," 51.

See Adam Imoro's "Conflict "

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 50. See Tayo Haji Salahuddin P. *Facts about Ahmadiyya Movement*. (Riyadh: al-Nasser press 1978).

Orthodox Muslims in the area nevertheless had a Ṣūfī slant. First, it was the Qadiriyya that was dominant. In fact, the early local Ṣūfī saints, like al-Haj ‘Umar Karachi, al-Haj Tahiru Kumbungu and al-Haj ‘Abd al-lāhi Gomda, were all of the Qādiriyya order. The Tijāniyya order was introduced when the latter’s itinerant Ṣūfis entered in this part of Ghana via the trans-Saharan caravan trade route through Salaga. The second source of infiltration was via the Tijānis belonging to the Nigerian colonial police regiment deployed in Ghana.<sup>55</sup>

### 3.5. The Visit to Tamale of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass:

Tijānism gathered momentum and accelerated with the visit of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass ibn ‘Abdallah of Kaulakh (in Senegal) in 1952.<sup>56</sup> There were even mass conversions. A visit to Ghana by a Muslim cleric would have been incomplete without paying a visit to the Muslim-populated north. The organizational skills and diplomacy of Shaykh Alhassan Nāṣr al-Dīn, the Tijāni Khalifa in Ghana, were rewarded when Niass agreed to go to Tamale (the cradle of Islam in Ghana) by air.

The visit to Tamale was officially in response to the invitation of the King of Dagbon.<sup>57</sup> This is in contrast to Imoro Adam’s opinion that the visit took place in 1950 and that it was the Hausa community that invited Shaykh Ibrahim Niass.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps he might have misconstrued the date of his maiden visit to Ghana as being 1952 which was his second known visit. The

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>56</sup> This was the Shaykh’s second visit to Ghana. His maiden visit as narrated by Shaykh ‘Abdul Razāk Ṭahir was in 1950 in an interview by Shayky ‘Abd al-Wadūd.

<sup>57</sup> Harūn, *Bushrā al-Muhibbīn* .204

<sup>58</sup> Adam “Conflict” .9

Shaykh, according to Abdul Wadūd had made more than twenty eight unofficial visits to Ghana. This information was obtained from Khalifa al-Hāj ‘Isā Kokote.<sup>59</sup>

The visit to Tamale is regarded as a turning point in the religious history of Tamale. As mentioned earlier, it was this visit that exposed the true colors of Afa Ajura (according to Iddrisu, Imoro and Salifu) and heralded the open preaching of Wahhābism.<sup>60</sup> Iddrisu digresses to add a political dimension to the visit by arguing that the Munchire-Andani chieftaincy alliance and the Tijani-Abudu alliance were orchestrated by this visit. He opines that the decision of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass not to make a stopover at Mion to pay homage to the Mion Lana, who had prepared and waited to receive him with full chieftaincy pomp and pageantry, spelled out to the Andanis that the Tijānis were sympathizers with the Abudu gate. The Andanis therefore had no choice but to turn to the Wahhabis for support. He goes further in arguing that the Andanis were victims of injustice, and that Afa Ajura always reiterated his stance on behalf of justice in the society. He even quotes Afa Ajura as saying that he was more of an Abudu than an Andani, but because of the injustice meted out to the Andanis he gave his support to these latter.

Based on the above factors, Iddrisu says that it was the Tijānis who initiated sectarian divisiveness within the Dagbon chieftaincy. This seems to be, however, an over simplification of an intricate issue. If it is generally accepted that it was Sufi-inclined individuals who introduced Islam into Dagbon, and that Islam was officially incorporated into the Dagbon body politic during the time of Naa Zangina,<sup>61</sup> it is therefore a forgone conclusion that the Sufis were non-aligned and gave their support to any reigning King of Dagbon, regardless of the gate from

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<sup>59</sup> Harūn, *Bushrā al-Muhibbīn* 193

<sup>60</sup> See Iddrisu's "Contesting Islam" Adam's "Conflict" and Abdel's. "The Influence"

<sup>61</sup> Wilks

which the King came. Since Shaykh Ibrahim was a continuum of this group of people, then his case cannot be taken in isolation and given a different interpretation. Secondly, as is pointed out by the author of *Bushrā Muhibbīn*, his visit was very short, but action-packed. So, given the activities that he had to transact within that short span of time, his inability to stop over at Mion to pay homage to the chief, was due to time constraints and not apathy towards the Andanis. This is further proven by his objection when he was told that the police commissioner wanted to have a meeting with him. Secondly, the Shaykh chose not to pass the night in Tamale when the Tijānis requested him to do so. So for Iddrisu to base his argument on this occasion is unfortunate.

According to Melvin Hiskett, a report by government officials to the governor of the northern territories in Kumasi stated that the crowds that greeted the Shaykh were unprecedented in the history of the north.<sup>62</sup>

One such reception for Shaykh Ibrahim was in Tamale. Before the Shaykh's arrival there was an advance party of members of the brotherhood from Kumasi.<sup>63</sup> The airport witnessed a massive turnout of Muslims, making it difficult for him to move from the tarmac to the reception area. When he eventually made it there he was completely exhausted, and so he immediately called for a Qur'ān. While he stood reciting it there came a message from the police commissioner stating that he wanted a meeting with him. He rode in the chief of Tolon's<sup>64</sup> car to Tamale town, and ultimately to the police parade ground.<sup>65</sup> The Shaykh told the commissioner that his mission was not to come and meet the police but to go on to Yendi. He

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<sup>62</sup> Hiskett, *The Development*, 287

<sup>63</sup> Harūn *Bushrā al-Muhhibīn* .204

<sup>64</sup> His name is Alhaji Yakubu. He is among the first crop of educated people who made it to the highest position in the government circles both in the pre-independence era through the era of independence.

<sup>65</sup> Op Cit., 205

further said he was not going to pass the night in Tamale. The police commissioner persuaded the Shaykh to say a prayer for him. Afterwards, the Shaykh sent a message to Muslim elders in Tamale that he was heading to Yendi at the request of the King of Dagbon. He thanked them for their display of love and solidarity for the sake of Allah and prayed that Allah would recompense them. He assured them that he would spend time with them on his return from Yendi. This reassured the people and they waited for his return.<sup>66</sup>

At Yendi the Shaykh lodged at the house of Shaykh Abdulahi Gomda. The magnitude of the crowd gathered there, comprised of everyone from chiefs to ordinary people, made the house look small. Shaykh Ibrahim straightaway delivered his sermon. At one point he called for the renewal of faith and everybody in the park responded by chanting out the formula of faith after him and countless people in the crowd embraced Islam.<sup>67</sup>

He returned to Tamale the following day and he delivered a sermon there, as promised. There too the audience was asked to renew their faith and even more people accepted Islam. A lodging place had been prepared for Shaykh Ibrahim and a request was made to him to spend the night in Tamale. The request was, however, once again turned down. After the sermon and prayers for the people, the Shaykh left Tamale for Kumasi.<sup>68</sup>

Although this visit brought a massive influx of new members into the brotherhood, it also served as a starting point for sectarianism and intra-religious conflict. It is said to have been the turning point in Afa Ajura's life. He might have harbored some reservations and

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 206

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 207

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 208

animosities about certain practices of the Ṣūfī brotherhoods that he did not oppose publicly, at least not until after this historic visit.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.6. AFA AJURA’S SOURCES OF WAHHABICISATION:

There is some conjecture as to how he acquired and expressed his anti-ṣūfī mentality. It is suggested by some that it was his nature, that he was a person who liked criticizing and arguing against religious practices (as noted by Mallam Baba of Ejura).<sup>70</sup> This was slowly fermenting within him, waiting to be vented at an opportune moment. Others opine that he was an extrovert and always wanted to be in the forefront of events.

#### i. Afa Ajura’s Relationship with al-Hāj ‘Umar Nyohini:

Al-Haj ‘Umar went to study in Cairo in the early 1940s and proceeded to the Hijāz where he continued his studies at the *Haram al-Sherīf* in Mecca, where he read with Abbās al-Karār,<sup>71</sup> the well-known Egyptian *mutawwaf*. Haj ‘Umar worked as a librarian and also pursued studies in medicine while in Mecca.<sup>72</sup> He also pursued studies in the religious sciences. Given the history of Wahhābism and its sphere of expansion and area of propagation, it is possible that Haj ‘Umar was exposed to the Wahhābis and their doctrines and hence, became a member of the Wahhābiyya movement at that time. He spent several years there.

Another explanation of the source of Afa Ajura’s Wahhabicization may be the influence of Haj ‘Umar. Haj ‘Umar was given a rousing welcome on his return to northern Ghana, the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibrahim, “Tijāniyya Order” 97

<sup>70</sup> Mallam Baba was the teacher he studied with at Ejura.

<sup>71</sup> Interview Shaykh Abdulla Baba Dua Tamale 01/17/2009

<sup>72</sup> Iddrisu “Contesting Islam” 132

land of his birth. He was highly respected as an Islamic scholar who had studied in both Egypt and the Hijāz. With this aura around him, he commanded a lot of influence. He established a very large Islamic school called *Naḥḍa al-Islāmiyya*,<sup>73</sup> intended for children during the day and adults at night, and operated another branch in Kumbungu which was highly patronized.<sup>74</sup> He lived in the area of Tamale called Warijehi,<sup>75</sup> just across the street from the area where Afa Ajura lived, called Sakasaka.<sup>76</sup> He could well have influenced Afa Ajura by his proximity and accessibility to him.<sup>77</sup>

Lansine Kaba asserts that the Wahhābi movement made its way into Sub-Saharan Africa around 1945 brought back by pilgrims from Mecca and African scholars from al-Azhar (in Egypt).<sup>78</sup> They have been responsible for the wave of religious conflict that has arisen in the West African sub-region up to the current date. It is quite possible that Ghanaian Wahhābism,

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<sup>73</sup> The school is presently one of the biggest Islamic schools in the Tamale area.

<sup>74</sup> Op cit. interview

<sup>75</sup> Haj ‘Umar later relocated to Nyohini a suburb of Tamale.

<sup>76</sup> The name Sakasaka is a derivative of a Hausa word *saka* meaning vaccination. It was a point where immigrants from neighboring countries on the western boundary of Ghana received their inoculations. At the time of an outbreak of epidemics people were quarantined there and inoculated.

<sup>77</sup> An interview with his son Shaykh Sa ‘id ‘Umar on 16/11/2008 (who died a couple of months ago, may he rest in peace) confirmed that his father was of the ahl-Sunna inclination. In response to the question whether his grandfather was of the same sect as him his response was that of uncertainty. He gave the author a brief history of his family background in an attempt to respond to his question, thus:

“I did not meet my grandfather, but I was told that he was one of the great olden time scholars. He did not study much, for in those days when one was regarded as a scholar it was different from these days of scholarships. Those ‘ulama of that time were chosen servants of Allah, they were very God-fearing. They were selective in their way of sustenance. They were not so much into studies, but very grounded in faith. But we, the ulama of this era though we have studied much more but are of little faith or piety and are not God-fearing. I heard that when my grandfather was in an angry mood and he was holding a rosary, the strings of the rosary got stripped.”

“We are princes of Nanton. My father bears the name of my great grandfather—Banvim Lana Imoro was gave birth to Alfa Lana Salifu. This Banvim Lana was an ‘ālim and a chief and give birth to Cheko Naa Mahama, and it was the brother of Chekona who gave birth to our parents. Chekonaa Zakari Mahama mounted the throne of Cheko, but our grandfather Chekonaa Mahama refused to take the mantle when it was his turn. Cheko is a divisional chieftain of Nanton. So with us we can identify ourself with royalty or scholars when we wish. You have been born into the system.”

<sup>78</sup> Kaba, “The Wahabiyya” 256

especially the Tamale brand, which has been named Munchirism,<sup>79</sup> may have been an offshoot from the same source.

**ii. Influence of the Pilgrimage to Mecca:**

Salifu Abdel, in his thesis on the Dagombas in the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>80</sup> suggests that Afa Ajura acquired his Wahhābi inclinations when he made his pilgrimage to Mecca. This has been refuted by Shaykh Baba Dua, who maintains that Afa Ajura already had that inclination before his maiden pilgrimage to Mecca. Since childhood Afa Ajura had never embraced any of the existing sūfiya orders despite the fact that his close associates were members of such orders.<sup>81</sup> I too disagree with Salifu Abdel for a number of reasons. In the first place, if the occasion of his pilgrimage coincided with the commencement of his Wahhābi activities, there is an apparent time differential. These activities started in around 1952/3, whereas his first pilgrimage occurred in 1961. Secondly, linguistically, his competence in the Arabic language was not so high as to facilitate interactive religious discussion with Wahhābi scholars, of his day. Moreover, since that time his student's had not yet began studying in the Hijaz, which rules out somebody translating to him the discussions that might have ensued. Therefore, I feel it is unlikely that he communicated with the Wahhābi clerics in Saudi Arabia. Lastly, the Hajj season is a very busy and brief period, which would not have given him enough time to develop adequate interactions with the Wahhābi clerics, for them to make an impact on him.

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<sup>79</sup> This is a derivation from the Arabic word *Munkir* – meaning detester or rejecter. It has been corrupted as Munchire.

<sup>80</sup> Abdel "The Influence"

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Shaykh Abdulla Baba Dua Tamale 01/17/2009



At the same time, Haj ‘Umar, his conjectured mentor, did not initiate him into Wahhābism but only offered him the needed support.<sup>82</sup> Haj ‘Umar was a smart and clever cleric who never publicly condemned the orthodox cum ṣūfī practices of the people. He therefore had no problem with anybody. It was however widely known that he did not belong to the Tijāniyya Ṣūfī fraternity.

### **3.7. The Commencement of Sectarian Disputes and the Role of Polemical Songs by both Groups in Condemnation of the Other:**

The phenomenon of the use of polemical songs in the annals of pre-Islamic and Islamic history has been a common feature. This has commonly been seen in times of religious, scholarly and sectarian dispute. This can be traced back to the annual *sūq al-ukāz* competition in the pre-Islamic period (al-Jāhiliyya), where poets from different clans came to showcase their compositions in praise of their clans and rebuke other clans. This over time led to conflict between clans, which in turn gave rise to the ubiquitous tribal wars that characterized this period of Arabian history. This tradition has survived in of Islam till today, and is particularly evident in the religious sectarian disputes prevailing in northern Ghana.

Afa Ajura began to execute his mission vigorously soon after Shaykh Ibrahim Niass departed on his maiden visit to the Gold Coast. According to al-Haj ‘Abd al Raḥman Ṣālih (Mallam Fari) of Koforidua in the Eastern region, a night sermon was organized during which Ustādh Dā‘ūd Ādam made a pronouncement with regards to knowing Allah (*ma‘rifā*), and this was seen as a provocation. Afa Ajura organized a counter-sermon condemning what had been

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., Baba Dua made mention of one Mallam Nassam of Prang who is said to have been a Meccan returnee and the first to have introduced Wahhabism into Dagbon. At Prang during an interview with Khalifa Abul Fayd the same name came up as the first to introduce Wahabbist doctrines into Northern Ghana.

said the previous day. He capitalized on this to condemn the visit of the Shaykh and the occurrences that transpired during the visit.

This explains the theme of one of Afa Ajura's polemical songs in Dagbani, which is translated as follows:

A human being cannot see the Lord in this world.  
It is forbidden.  
He who says he has seen the Lord, all his worship is in vain. Angels too cannot see the Lord.  
It is forbidden.  
The Prophet Mohammad did not see our Lord.  
It is forbidden.  
How much more would you, a dirty one, see your Lord.  
It is forbidden.  
To enter *Tarbiya* cannot make you see the Lord.  
It is forbidden.  
He who leaves it is free.  
If you refuse and join it, you become a *Kafir*.  
To enter *Tarbiya* is not Islam.  
Get out of it for it is forbidden."<sup>83</sup>

This scenario set the stage for a series of sermons and counters-sermons. It assumed astronomical dimensions when an itinerant cleric from Somali named Nowaihi was invited to preach in one of the series of Munchire sermons and a question pertaining to seeing Allah was put to him; assessing the atmosphere, he answered in the negative. Then within an interval of a few days the Tijāniyya group invited this same cleric to preach a sermon and the same question was put to him; this time his response was in the affirmative. Within a short period after this response, sticks and stones were hurled by people at their opponents, and a free-for-all fight ensued. The Wahhābis claimed that the cleric had been bribed. There were a lot of casualties.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Adam, "Conflict" 15.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 21. This version as narrated by Imoro who is an Anbariyya alumnus has of late been refuted by Iddrisu in his "Contesting Islam" 122-3. He opines that the trend of invitation was rather the reverse, thus it was the Tijānis who invited this itinerant Somali scholar first then followed by the Munchires and secondly that the contentious question was not related to tarbiyya, but rather the permissibility of salat al-Fatih and its location in the Qur'ān. Since the sources are both Anbariyya products, then it will be plausible to go by the first source, which predates the former. The interval between the two sources and its proximity to the time the event occurred, means that it

This violent dimension became the norm from then until the present day. One of the worst occurrences took place in Gumani, a new suburb of Tamale on the Bolga road, in 1998.<sup>85</sup> There was loss of life on the spot and others later died in their homes as a result of bullets lodged in their bodies.<sup>86</sup> Iddrisu Abdulai alludes to the antagonistic nature of the Munchires in the formative years, but argues that this has changed of late since more and more Wahhābis have returned after their studies Saudi Arabia.<sup>87</sup>

Adam Imoro, in his long essay entitled “The Conflict of the Mosque,” states that Afa Ajura and his followers tried very hard to open a mosque at Sakasaka, where the daily congregational prayer could be performed. The Gulkpena<sup>88</sup> refused to grant them permission, because the Zamigu (Central Mosque) was the only authorized mosque where Friday prayers could be held.<sup>89</sup> This seems to be characteristic of the Wahhābi movement, wherever it tries to establish itself. It is evidenced by the fact that Lansana Kaba, in his book *Wahhābiyya*, mentions the same phenomenon in Bamako. He states that the immediate cause of the conflict that had broken out between the Wahhābis and the traditionalists (or orthodox) was the decision by the Wahhābis not to attend the Friday congregational prayer but rather to conduct their own.<sup>90</sup>

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would be more vividly and accurately recaptured through the first source than the second. The former will be more convincing, because the lapse of time occurring before the latter could have introduced a loss of memory regarding the sequence of events and its accuracy. Secondly it could also mean a deliberate deconstruction of the former and reconstruction of the latter to exonerate the earlier generation of Munchires of their aggressive and antagonistic characteristics.

<sup>85</sup> Iddrisu has the date of the event as December 5<sup>th</sup> 1997. His date is inaccurate because I lived the event and it occurred on the premises of the school that I was the deputy proprietor.

<sup>86</sup> Ibrahim, “Tijāniyya Order” 106

<sup>87</sup> Iddrisu “Contesting Islam” 236

<sup>88</sup> He is the traditional ruler of Gupkegu (one of the Kingmakers of the Kings (Yaa Nanima) of Dagbong Kingdom) another name for the northern regional capital – Tamale - used by the indigenous people of the Dagbon.

<sup>89</sup> Adam, “Conflict” 14.

<sup>90</sup> Kaba, “The Wahabiyya” 208

Afa Ajura, according to by Salifu Abdel, was a charismatic and courageous man who was very much dreaded by the leadership of the Tijānis.<sup>91</sup> Every time that he challenged them to an open religious debate, none of the leaders dared to face him openly. This has been confirmed by Iddrisu's finding that Afa Ajura even challenged the Tijānis to come out and defend their doctrinal beliefs, offering both his Mercedes Benz car and his house as a reward to the winner.<sup>92</sup> This decision by the Tijānis to avoid him was born not out of fear for his deep learning in the religious sciences, but out of respect for his power in debate. Afa Ajura had been nurtured religiously by them and they knew his level of erudition and character very well.

Taking a retrospective view of the unfolding of events before his confrontation with Shaykh Maikano, there had been a more serious *wa'az* (evangelical) duel between Afa Ajura and a student of al-Hāj 'Abdulahi Gomdah of Yendi, namely al-Haj Muntaqa. The duel took place over several years in the late sixties and the early seventies and began when Afa Ajura added a political dimension<sup>93</sup> to his religious role, centered largely in the Munchire movement that he had founded.

Charles Stewarts states in his thesis on the Tijāniyya in Ghana that al-Haj Muntaqa openly opposed the appointment of Afa Ajura as chairman of the Ghana Muslim mission for the northern and upper regions. He wanted to replace al-Haj Ibrāhim Gushegu,<sup>94</sup> a Tijāni cleric who had been the chair for some time.<sup>95</sup> Al-Haj Muntaqa, who came from Wulensi in the Eastern Dagomba district, gave Afa Ajura the toughest religious opposition of his life. He was the

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<sup>91</sup> Abdel, "The Influence" 326

<sup>92</sup> Iddrisu, "Contesting Islam" 113

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 90-1. He has a concise exposition on the political exploits of Afa Ajura.

<sup>94</sup> Stewart's work misspells the name, it being written Bushegu instead of Gushegu, which is the name of a town in Northern Ghana. It could be a typographical error

<sup>95</sup> Stewart, "Tijaniyya". 51.

figure that Afa Ajura dreaded the most until his early death (under mysterious circumstances) at the height of his opposition in the mid-seventies.

Shaykh Muntaqa too composed polemical songs, in particular against Afa Ajura and the Munchires, in the local Dagbani language. He adopted the same techniques as Afa Ajura. A verse that was very much hated by the Munchires was:

*Lā ilāha ilal lalā wumiya                      Niri nun jerigi ma nun ndoli munchire*  
*Jerigu noli yibi togra wo bagbu to      Ninkuri jera ma binin ndoli munchire*

This means:

“Hear me o people, there is no god but Allah; it is only the fool who becomes a Munchire. It is very difficult to identify a fool whose mouth is not spilled with spittle. It is the imbecile elderly who support the Munchires”

To show the extent of his resentment against this Tijāni cleric, he organized a sermon a day after the latter’s mysterious death and said that anyone who tried to vie with him would be made to disappear in broad daylight, just like Shaykh Muntaqa. His resentment did not end with the demise of Shaykh Muntaqa but was carried on against Muntaqa’s son, Shaykh Hamza, who was targeted for beheading at the confrontation in Gumani in 1998. He also did not live much longer, dying in 2002.<sup>96</sup>

### 3.8. Encounters with Shaykh Sāni Awal Kafanga and Shaykh Maikano

Neither Abdel, Adam nor Iddrisu mention Afa Ajura’s encounter with Shaykh Sāni Awal Kafanga of Nigeria in the early days of the Munchire movement. This came at a time of fierce opposition to Afa Ajura during the 1970s. Afa Ajura was confronted on this occasion in front of the Rivoli cinema in Tamale, which is now an Agip gas station. In this encounter Afa

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<sup>96</sup> Ibrahim, “Tijāniyya Order”. 104.

Ajura experienced a considerable degree of humiliation. The debate reached its apogee when Afa Ajura was asked to write something, and he refused to do so. It was an open secret that he could not write in Arabic. This incident was later dramatized by the Nūr al-Islām Arabic School and after the show some of the characters were way-laid and beaten up.<sup>97</sup>

Although Dagbon has had a history of itinerant religious people coming in and out, no one had the same impact as Shaykh ‘Abd al-lāh Maikano. In Afa Ajura’s, experiences, Maikano was the most challenging Tijāni cleric to emerge. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, he posed a threat to the consolidation of Afa Ajura’s grip over the Munchire population of Tamale. A jihād was called against him every time that he came to Tamale to preach. He was resident at Prang in the Ashanti region of Ghana. In fact, about ninety-nine percent of the religious clashes that occurred in Tamale were involved him.

We saw earlier how Mohammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb, in the early years of his reforms in Nejd, had sentenced a woman to death by stoning for committing adultery.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, Afa Ajura wielded so much power, authority and influence that he openly flogged his followers who acted wrongly in their religious observations. When a follower’s child committed adultery, both the follower and the ward were flogged. Adam captures the extent of Afa Ajura’s power thus,

He wields so much authority that he has, on a number of occasions, ordered fornicators to be whipped in public, acting in accordance to a Quranic injunction which dictates so.<sup>99</sup>

He drew most of his followers from the Dagbandobba population of the area. These were animist by descent, aborigines of Dagbon and descendants of the Tindānba, with whom

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<sup>97</sup> This is an incidence that I lived because I am an alumna of the Nūr al-Islām Arabic school.

<sup>98</sup> Abuarlrab Jalal., ed. Alaa Mencke, *Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab: His Life-Story and Mission*, Medina publishers and distributors. 2003 85

<sup>99</sup> Adam, “Conflict” 26

the founders of the Dagbon Kingdom had come to meet.<sup>100</sup> His strongholds were Nyanshegu, Dagbandoba fong, Bilpela, Kapkagayili and the surrounding villages. So, with this caliber of supporters, his commands were unquestionably implemented.

He had, within his organizational structure, a council whose members were called the *Ṣahābas*, and each was given the name of a companion, like Sayidnā ‘Ali. Additionally, there was a scholarly group with an appreciable knowledge of the religious sciences. He consulted them before he delivered his sermons and they provided him with ideas in the background. This included Afa ‘Aliyyu Sabliga, who later deserted the group and leaked this information, as well as Afa Sumani Nyinbung.

### 3.9. Relationships With Scholars Who Came to Settle in Tamale:

Afa Ajura was wise enough to always try to win over to his camp any new non-Tijāni scholarly settlers in Tamale. For example, there were scholars like Hāj ‘Isa Bello (from Nigeria), Ustadh Ibrāhim Bāsha (who had problems in both Takoradi and Kumasi in Southern Ghana with his Tijāni teachers), who had come to settle in Tamale, to mention only two.

It can be suggested that he was always hasty in entering into temporary “marriages of convenience” with newly arrived scholars. These scholars, therefore, often broke off from him after awhile, for personal reasons. Some of them joined the Tijāni group, without practicing its rituals, while others went on to form their own neutral group that drew people from both the Wahhābi and Tijāni sides. An example of such a neutral grouping is the Hāj ‘Isa Bello group of Zangoni (settlement for immigrants). Hāj ‘Isa Bello was more pro-Wahhābi than Tijāni. He was

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<sup>100</sup> Mahama, Ibrahim. *Dagbon History* 13

a product of the Nigerian school of Islamic studies.<sup>101</sup> Many Wahhābis frequently attended the special mature students school that he established near his residence. Haj ʿĪsa also organized a regular weekly Tafsīr on the Qurʿān and preaching sessions at his house. Most patronizers of this weekly event were Wahhābi adherents. Later, he became the Imām of the Kaladan barracks mosque and, subsequently, transferred to Apramdu barracks mosque at Takoradi in the Western region (where he later died in an automobile accident).

Those scholars like ʿĪsa Bello and Mallam Bāsha who had stayed briefly with Afa Ajura contributed to laying a solid foundation for his school (Ambariyya). His present day students obtain their motivation from those scholars. In fact, the latter were able to motivate students to seek knowledge not only at home but abroad as well. As such, when the Saudi scholarships began to be offered, many students obtained them and went to pursue further studies in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi graduates that are currently running the Ambariyya Islamic school and espousing Wahhābism owe most of their accomplishment to these scholars. I was even told (by someone who wishes to remain anonymous) that at the time of my research in Tamale there was a cold war between the Ambariyya Saudi graduates and the Nuriyya Saudi graduates, on the basis that some of the current students of Ambariyya claimed that Mallam Bāsha was less than erudite in particular Islamic science, which angered his students, leading to exchanges of insults. Eventually this was solved amicably. As a gesture of reconciliation the Ambaris were invited to the launching of a Qurʿān recital CD by Abu Firdaws, the son of Mallam Bāsha. This gathering was also used as a launch pad to forge unity between some of the scholars in Tamale

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<sup>101</sup> Iddrisu, “Contesting Islam,” 136.



who had grudges with one another. As a gesture of reconciliation Imām Rashīd<sup>102</sup> and Mallam Bāsha embraced each other in front of the crowd. Shaykh Luqmān Bamba<sup>103</sup> also gave Mallam Bāsha an embrace under the same circumstances.

The school currently has more than two thousand students and branches all over northern Ghana. The four-year development plan that it produced indicates that it has about twenty satellite schools.<sup>104</sup> The academic staffing is very good with most teachers are products of Medina Islamic University.<sup>105</sup> It has a large school plot, modern classroom buildings, a boarding house, staff bungalows and a mosque within the premises.<sup>106</sup> This was Afa Ajura's immense contribution towards the development of Islamic education in the north. In the past it was the Tijānis who were known to be promoters of learning, but once a competitor appeared, the zeal for knowledge accelerated. Whatever the social costs of this rivalry, it has at least resulted in a decline in the regional illiteracy rate.

However, Afa Ajura has denied a secular education to all these students. The government did establish a structure to supply all Islamic schools with secular teachers and offered to pay them to alleviate illiteracy in secular education. In addition, the government also

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<sup>102</sup> Imām Rashīd is an Islamic scholar in Tamale who is very popular with the youth. He was a former Imām of the Ghana armed forces. He is a Tijāni of the Hamaliyya branch which is very popular in Burkina Faso. This branch of Tijānism only differs from that of the Niassiyya which is popularly practiced in Tamale and Ghana as a whole in the recital of *Jawhara al-Kamāl* during the recital of the *Wazīfa*. The Niasiyya recite it twelve times while the Hamaliyya recite it eleven times. He is the author of several Islamic books in both English and Arabic most popular ones being the *Quranology* and the *Qawl al-Thābit*.

<sup>103</sup> Luqmān Bamba a young Tijāni scholar who read from Alhaji Mustapha of Bawku. He was nominated to give the commentary of the Qur'ān during Ramadān at the Tamale central Mosque. As a Tijāni scholar there has been doctrinal differences between him and Mallam Bāsha. In my interview with Shaykh Sa'īd 'Umar he mentioned that there were some exchanges of unpleasant insult between Shaykh Bamba and Mallam Bāsha on the FM radio, thus the need for reconciliation which was exhibited at the launch of the Qur'ān recital CD.

<sup>104</sup> Tamale, "The Anbariya Sunni Community Strategic Plan 2008 – 2012" n.d. 1

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 3. The breakdown of the data with regards to their staffing capacity is per the strategic plan document is as follows: (1) Doctor of Philosophy degree (Ph.D.) one (1) Masters (M.A) and four (4) Postgraduate Diplomats. There are also twenty-nine (29) Bachelor degree (B.A), seven (7) diplomats and forty (40) certificated bearing teachers.

<sup>106</sup> Adam, "Conflict" 26.

offered salaries for Islamic instructors at these schools. Afa Ajura however refused this offer, thus denying those students in his school access to secular education. Things have since changed and policies towards western secular education have been revised. Currently the school welcomes secular teachers from the Ministry of Education. The teachers are on the payroll of the ministry. The school, which teaches grades from nursery to the junior high school level, has been able to make a deal with the ministry of education to maintain its old stand, this in spite of the contentious issue of attending school on Thursdays and Fridays. The Sunnis argued that Thursdays and Fridays should be observed as weekend holidays, just as Saturdays and Sundays are for the Christians. This issue previously caused a huge divide between the proprietors of the Islamic education unit schools. Finally the schools had to accept the Ministry of Education's rules by succumbing to the Saturday and Sunday weekend at the expense of Thursdays and Fridays. My informant from the Ministry of Education said that the concession given to Ambariyya School was a local arrangement. In other words, it was not official at the national level.<sup>107</sup>

Afa Ajura built a second central mosque after a long period of agitation. The chief of Tamale Gulkpe Naa, who officially gives permission for the erection of buildings in the municipality, refused to grant permission for this project to go ahead. His order was nevertheless ignored and the mosque was built with volunteer labor. A two-storey building was

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<sup>107</sup> Interview with Mohammad Harūn of the Tamale 12/01/2009. I put it to him that it was an unfair deal since about ninety-nine percent of the Islamic school requested and fought for this deal which was denied them. He explained it off by saying that it was a local and an unofficial arrangement. This in fact shows the strong influence that the Wahhābis hold in governmental cycles which gives them some advantages over their Tijāni counterparts, thereby giving their divide an ascendancy.

erected and attached to it. This was to serve as guesthouse for both foreign teachers and pilgrims who came annually to take their flights to Mecca.<sup>108</sup>

### **3.10. Attempts towards Ending the Endless Sectarian Conflict in Dagbon:**

With these religious issues destabilizing peace in Dagbon, the chief of Tamale made the first bold attempt to reconcile both parties. An open conference between Shaykh Maikano and Alfa Ajura was convened at the police park in 1969, under the auspices of the then Inspector General of Police (Bawa Yakubu)<sup>109</sup> and Gulkpe Naa. This however did not yield the desired result.<sup>110</sup> It is worth noting that, in Dagbon culture, religion is very paramount and religious figures are expected to set an example worthy of emulation.

There were other religious reconciliation attempts including that of Ustadh Shiraz ibn Y‘aqūb.<sup>111</sup> The latter’s reconciliation committee played a role in trying to resolve the endemic Tijāni and Wahhābi crisis. He tried to use his position as president of the northern Muslim student’s representative council (he was elected while a special student at the Bagabaga postsecondary school in 1978, at which time, Ibn Y‘aqūb constituted a committee within the students’ regional executive body). The terms of reference were to try to establish an amicable relationship between the parties in question. At that time, there were basically three interest groups: the Tijānis, the Wahhābis and the Wahhābi-Tijānis. The first category were those found in the central mosque — Zamigu — (a corrupted form of the Arabic word Jām‘a). The second group was based in the Sakasaka mosque established by Afa Ajura. The last group was found at

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>109</sup> He was later crowned as the chief of Gushegu (Gushenaa).

<sup>110</sup> Abdel, “The Influence,” 324.

<sup>111</sup> He became the district chief executive for the Savelegu/Nanton district during the NDC rule.

the Zongo – largely inhabited by the Hausa immigrant community. There two leaders were active: Haj ʿĪsa Bello and Ustādh Ibrāhīm Bāsha.<sup>112</sup>

The last category’s stance was not clear-cut. Occasionally, they condemned or applauded some of the standpoints of the first two groups. Ustadh Bāsha seemed to be more inclined towards the Tijānis, although he did not recite their litanies. He observed his Friday congregational prayers at Zamigu. He even gave sermons on special occasions and at ceremonies. He was responsible for the translation of the Friday khutba (sermon) after it had been read for the prayer in Arabic. It is worth noting that neither ʿĪsa Bello nor Ustādh Bāsha ever saw eye-to-eye. It is not known whether this was based on their personal lives or their religious viewpoints.

### **3.11. International Attempt at Finding a Solution to Sectarianism in Dagbon:**

High profile reconciliation, instigated at the international level, to reconcile the Muslims of the north did not yield the desired results either. In all attempts at reconciliation Afa Ajura has set conditions that make any process difficult to accomplish. Examples of conditions that he sets are as quoted:

1. Leaders of both groups should be assembled and the causes of the conflict spelt out;
2. The holy Qur’ān and Ḥadīth should be used in judging them; and
3. The group that is guilty should be made to accept its guilt and to stop all un-Islamic activities.<sup>113</sup>

These conditions sealed the doom of the Saudi Ambassador’s effort to forge reconciliation.

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<sup>112</sup> I was a member of this reconciliation committee by the virtue of my position as the general secretary for Ghana Secondary School Tamale representative.

<sup>113</sup> Ibrahim, “Tijāniyya Order,” 108.

Afa Ajura has, to his credit, enhanced the political awareness of his adherents. Lansine has identified this awareness as a characteristic of Wahhabism in West Africa. He has always aligned himself with the party opposed to that supported by the Tijānis. The Tijānis, unlike the Wahhābis, were perceived as non-partisan. This was the view stated by C.C. Stewart in his M.A. thesis on the Tijāniyya in Ghana. The stated reason was the most obvious, i.e., a lack of Western education or secular awareness, (which are essential for entering politics).<sup>114</sup> To an extent this is true, but not wholly so, since as early as the pre-independence era in 1954 the first northern Member of Parliament in the Consultative Assembly (Alhaji Osman Yakubu) was a Tijāni. He was the my matrilineal grandfather. In fact, in the north (and to be precise Tamale), politics, religion and chieftaincy have become so intertwined or interwoven that one cannot safely distinguish the trio.

The geopolitics of this area were various enough to allow governments and politicians to manipulate the local people. The Muslim Association Party, which was basically founded along religious lines, and later co-opted into the Unity Party, was from the beginning, aligned to the Danquah/Busia group. The mainly orthodox-Muslim Central Mosque (Zamigu) was aligned with the Danquah/Busia tradition. This group was furthermore inclined to the Abudu gate (Abudu Yilli) of the Dagomba kingdom.

On the other hand, the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), drew its support from the Wahhābi sect and, subsequently, from the other gate of the Nam of Dagbon, i.e, the Andani Yilli. So in Tamale and Dagbon as a whole, Tijāni adherents were generally allies of Danquah/Busia and Abudu Yilli of the Dagbon Nam. Conversely, the Munchire adherents were aligned to the CPP and the Andani gate.

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<sup>114</sup> Stewart, "Tijaniyya," 51.

This polarization continued under other regimes until the advent of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council's (AFRC), which tried to be non-aligned, though the split still remained. Resolving this state of affairs was a priority for the revolutionary government' which had a zero tolerance for such divisions.

Frantic attempts were made to cement the existing rifts that kept the north behind in terms of development. Alhaji Hudu Yahaya, the northern regional secretary responsible for fostering northern unity under the AFRC placed the chief northern religio-politico-ethnic leaders in detention. This group was comprised of Afa Ajura, doyen of the northern chapter of Wahhābism termed (Munchires), lawyer Ibrahim Mahama, former Minister of Information in the National Liberation Council (NLC) regime, MP for Gukpegu Sabonjida during the National Alliance of Liberals (NAL) in the 1969 election, and advocate for the Andani group in their long raging Dagbon Nam crisis, Salifu Tea, an opinion leader for Andani gate. Also included were Alhaji Amadu Sana an opinion leader among the Tijānis, Alhaji Yahaya Iddi, a contractor and opinion leader of the Abudu gate and a recognized Tijani, and lawyer Roland Issifu Alhassan, barrister at law and advocate for the Abudu gate.<sup>115</sup>

This action caused a big stir in Dagbon. The move was unprecedented and took on a historic significance. The mere mention of this event still raises eyebrows in Dagbon.

The detainees were released in batches. For Afa Ajura, it was the grand Imam of the two holy mosques of Medina and Mecca who interceded for him. He was later released. This single act is perceived as having influenced the lives of Afa Ajura and Ibrahim Mahama.<sup>116</sup> The myth

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<sup>115</sup> Abdel, "The Influence," 322.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 333

surrounding these names was finally made clear, showing the extent to which Afa Ajura was involved in politics.

Last but not least, Afa Ajura made his mark on the socio-economic life of the Munchires. Other traditional cultural practices that found their way into the religious life of the people were curtailed, e.g., local customs surrounding marriage, funerals and other ceremonies. These were often performed in an ostentatious manner. Afa Ajura proposed more affordable ways of doing things.<sup>117</sup> For instance, only four wax print cloths and four veils and headscarves were required for the marriage ceremony. In the case of funerals, each funeral, after the burial prayer, was to take place at the cemetery. Money contributed after the return from the cemetery was given to the family of the deceased. There was to be no third day, seventh day, fortieth day or anniversary celebration, which had previously led to great expenses for the family of the deceased.<sup>118</sup>

## Conclusion

Sheik Yussif Sualih Ajura did not relent in ensuring the propagation of Islam in Tamale. Even though a lot of constraints and challenges impinged on his effort to develop Islam in Tamale, he never reneged. Anbariya, which started as a minority Islamic group in Tamale, is today the largest Muslim group in Northern Ghana with the best practices in all their endeavours. This manifests the founder's statement that "Anbariya has taken off".<sup>119</sup>

In conclusion, Afa Ajura's legacy has made a strong mark on a large segment of the Dagbon population.<sup>120</sup> The challenge since his time has been to find a charismatic figure of his caliber to continue the process. There was wide division among the people after his demise as

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 301.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>119</sup> Tamale, "The Anbariya Sunni Community Strategic Plan 2008-2012" n.d. 1

<sup>120</sup> Ousman promoting good," 206; Ousman reiterated that "Afajura's declaration of Sufi beliefs and practices as heretical provided the doctrinal foundation for what would become Ahl-as Sunna in Ghana and defined the Ahl-Sunna agenda as a struggle against Sufism."

to who was to take the mantle of leadership. According to Sayyida Khadija, a fight almost broke out amongst his flock.<sup>121</sup> The then deputy regional minister was sent to quell the unrest and to make them aware that if they failed to resolve the issue of inheritance amicably, the Ambariyya central mosque would be closed down.<sup>122</sup> This instilled some sanity in the Ambariyya community. The author's interview with the current leader of the community, Shaykh Abubakar Sa'īd confirmed his official appointment as the leader of the community. Meanwhile, his counterpart Shaykh Tanko Abubakr, who had vied for the same position, has been assigned other duties in the community.

The solid foundation that Afa Ajura laid for the Munchire community that has adopted the generic name of the Anbariya Sunni community had made it possible for recent generation to mute out the idea of the development of a strategic plan with the aim of sustaining, maintaining and developing the dreams and aspirations of the latter.

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<sup>121</sup> Interview with Sayidda Khadijatu al-Hassan Tamale 01/15/2009.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Adam Mohammad Amin Anta, Tamale Municipal Secretary Tamale 2008.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. FACTORS THAT GAVE RISE TO THE ASCENDANCY OF A NEW ISLAM (WAHHĀBISM) AS AGAINST THE DECLINE OF SUFI ISLAM (TIJĀNISM) IN NORTHERN GHANA:

This chapter undertakes an extensive discussion of the educational and political sectors as crucibles for the growth of Wahhābism. Additionally, it examines the Wahhābist code of conduct and religious practices as a factor in the movement's spread and rise to prominence. The discussion on political party competition shows empirically the rising influence of Wahhābism and the relative decline in Sufism in northern Ghana. The components of the discussion on the educational sector, coupled with the code of conduct and religious practices, demonstrates that the popularity of Wahhābism is not due to global "petro-Islam" but the relevance and expansion of the popularity of Wahhābist doctrinal, socio-political and ideational influence in the educational sector in northern Ghana.

Since the turn of the century there has been a proliferation in Islamic movements across the world that renounce many of the traditions associated with the traditional practice of Islam and that are often at variance with the Sufi ideologies embedded in various Muslim societies. Jamāl Dīn al-Afghani, Hasan al-Banna, Muhammad Abduh and the Islamic movements that they founded were just some examples of this trend towards Islamic reform. They had as their prime goal a return to the pristine Islam practiced by the Prophet and his companions and the generation that followed.

The case of West Africa is not very different. As was shown in the second chapter, Islam was brought by the Sufis and, as such, Sufi institutions were embedded in every aspect of the society. The late 1950s and early 1960s, however, saw the arrival of Wahhābi ideology into the

sub-region. This was not envisaged to be a major threat to the hegemony of an already established and widely practiced Sufi Islam that had been classified by Westerlund as African Islam. These newcomers started as insignificant minorities in whichever region they found themselves, including Ghana. The Munchire movement started as a minority group, as posited in the preamble of the Anbariyya strategic plan:

Sheik Yussif Sualih Ajura did not relent in ensuring the propagation of Islam in Tamale. Even though a lot constraints and challenges impinged on his effort to develop Islam in Tamale, he never reneged. Anbariyya which started as a minority Islamic group in Tamale is today the largest Muslim group in Northern Ghana with the best practices in all their endeavors. This manifests the founder's statement that "Anbariyya has taken off".<sup>1</sup>

The ascendancy of modernist Islamic movements and the decline of traditional Sufi orders are not new issues. However, the variations in this phenomenon depend on the geographical area in question and the prevailing circumstances in that milieu. J.A. Arberry, in his book *Sufism: an Account of Mystics of Islam*, discusses this phenomenon of decline which, according to Egyptian sources, made its début in Egypt in the latter half of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the commencement of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> What we can deduce from his statement that there are two such kinds of Sufi institution: orthodox and heterodox. It is the orthodox that have suffered the greatest decline overall. By orthodox Sufism I refer to those branches of Sufism that have continued to maintain a close association with Shari'ah -- Islamic law -- and have mandated strict observance of Islamic injunctions. The heterodox orders on the other hand were marked in their spirituality by a renunciation of the religious law and inclusion of practices such as amulets and magic, practices strongly frowned upon by the traditional Sufis.

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<sup>1</sup> Tamale., "The Anbariyya Sunni Community Strategic Plan 2008 – 2012" n.d.

<sup>2</sup> Arberry, A. J. *Sufism; An Account of the Mystics of Islam*. (London: George and Unwin 1950). 120.

Arberry opines that Ṣūfism reached the zenith of its accomplishments during the times of Ibn ‘Arabī and Rūmī, from both the theoretical and practical perspectives. During this period, there was expansion and mutation of the religious orders. These orders, thanks to the patronage that they enjoyed from rulers and those in authority, saw their expansion accelerate. Soon after this time, diminishing returns set in and the efficacy of the orders started to decline. Arberry summarizes some of the factors in this decline as follows:

It was inevitable, as soon as legends of miracles became attached to the names of the great mystics, that the credulous masses should applaud impostures more than true devotion; the cult of saints, against which orthodox Islam ineffectually protested, promoted ignorance and superstition, and confounded charlatanry with lofty speculation. To live scandalously, to act impudently, to speak unintelligibly – this was this was the easy highroad to fame, wealth and power.<sup>3</sup>

Arberry, adds further causes by noting that:

The neglect of religious ordinance and moral order was serious enough; even more disastrous for the contempt for all learning, which now masqueraded in the threadbare garb of piety. For whatever the Sufis of old may have been – and many of them were openly hostile to orthodoxy and bold against authority of every kind – they generally maintained a decent respect for study, and constantly had upon their lips the prophet’s injunction to “seek learning, even if it be from China.” The new Sufis, however, made boast of ignorance, which they were indeed interested to applaud in the masses, for it secured them from rational attack and lent credence to their claims of miraculous powers. Meanwhile magic assumed an increasing importance in their repertory. Early Sufism had been refreshingly free of this most mischievous variety of mystification and obscurantism; in this age of decline, as in all similar times, charms and amulets came to acquire a special a special value in the eyes of men no longer confident against the vicissitudes of fortune; cabbalism and witchcraft provided an attractive substitute for defeated reason.<sup>4</sup>

In the above, Arberry is seen to emphasize that older Sufism was the epitome of religiosity par excellence while the heterodox version was quite the opposite. Shaykh Abd al-Razāq Ṭahir, an illustrious and reputable Ghanaian scholar, raised in our interview a similar point, namely, that Ṣūfism was not an end in itself but a means to an end.<sup>5</sup> This opinion was

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.,120

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Shaykh ‘Abd al-Razāq Ṭāhir at Accra 29/11/08.

expressed in the context of our discussion of recent developments within the Tijāniyya order in Ghana.

As outlined by Arberry, the factors that gave rise to this phenomenon of decline in Sufism included the movement to return to the literal meaning of the Qur‘ān and Hadīth. The hadīth scholars of the 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E. sought to synthesize the traditions of the Prophet by using criteria which, when fulfilled, made the tradition authentic. When it failed to meet these requirements, then the tradition was rejected and classified as spurious or inauthentic. This effort gave rise to a whole new science of hadīth studies, termed as *al-Jarh wa al-ta‘dīl*. With these checks and balances in place, a lot of the ahādīth that the mystical brotherhoods depended upon were found to be spurious. The hadith scholars had come to a consensus that whatever could not be traced back to the Prophet by their methodology was an innovation and had to be discarded.

In terms of the Qur‘ān,<sup>6</sup> it was said that the Ṣūfis were reliant on verses with ambiguous meaning -- *mutashābihāt* – which are subject to considerable interpretation (*ta’wīlāt*). The scholars, therefore, argued that in order to be on the safe side, one had to limit oneself to the unambiguous verses – *muhkamāt* – which are very explicit in themselves and can be literally understood without resort to any technicalities. That era was characterized by a desire to subject everything to rationality. In this kind of setting, scholarly argumentation gained currency at the expense of the popularity of the Ṣūfis and hence their acceptability rating among the people decreased. The populace saw the dicta of the Ṣūfis as unfathomable and as blind imitation and regarded the Sufis themselves as members of a largely non-scholarly class.

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<sup>6</sup> See Qur‘ān, 3:7 (Pronouncement on the ambiguous and unambiguous verses.)

This distrust picked up momentum through the ages and is reflected even in the present age of modern science where the language of rationality is the order of the day.

#### **4.1. Phenomenon of Resurgence in the Decline of Sufism in sub-Saharan Africa:**

It therefore came as no surprise when this phenomenon spread into sub-Saharan Africa in the early part of the nineteenth century, taking on diverse forms that eluded clear-cut identification. For instance, it was said that the brand of Qādiriyya espoused by Uthmān Dan Fodio in Nigeria had been tainted with Wahhābist doctrinal beliefs, for which one of his tutors, al-Māgilli, might have been responsible.

A resurgence of this rationalist phenomenon with more defined characteristics began to spread into sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1940s and late 1950s as posited by Kaba Lansine. This was attributed to the return of al-Azhar graduates, pilgrims and, more recently, returnee graduates of Saudi institutions. The issue at stake today is to define and identify the dimensions in which the ascendancy is making an impact and where the decline is setting in. This point was addressed during my field trip to Ghana in September 2008. Shaykh Zakaria al-Hussein<sup>7</sup> the spokesman of the Tamale mosque, as well as Shaykh ‘Abdalla Baba Dua, Shaykh ‘Abdul Mu‘min Salifu, and a host of others, dissented from the views that Ṣūfism was on the decline and Wahhābism in the ascendancy. However, al-Hussein added that there may be a decline in progress.<sup>8</sup> Baba Dua said that it should not be seen as a decline, but rather as a slow down or dormancy,<sup>9</sup> while Abdul Mu‘min said that the apparent decline is supported by the Qur‘ānic verse to the effect that only a small number among mankind are grateful, hence the

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Shaykh al-Hussein Zakaria 01/05/2009 Tamale

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Shaykh ‘Abdalla Baba Dua 01/17/2009 Tamale

ungrateful may be identified as those in the apparent ascendancy.<sup>10</sup> Al-Hussein further suggests that, in terms of numbers of adherents and absolute control over the Ghanaian Muslim Ummah, the Tijānis take precedence. ‘Abd al-Wadūd also states his belief that Tijānis outnumber the Wahhābis.<sup>11</sup> Mohammad Amin Adam, from his perspective, considers the Wahhābis’ apparent rise in fact as a de facto indirect rise in Tijānism since most the practices that the Wahhābis originally condemned are now being practiced by them.<sup>12</sup>

It is said that history always repeats itself. Equipped with this historical background, I will, therefore, try to examine the apparent causes of the decline of Ṣūfism in this chapter and project how the situation may appear in the near future. In my examination of this phenomenon, I will categorize the causes under four sections: political, educational, economic and social.

According to Kaba, Wahhābis in the Western Sudan followed the example of the model 18<sup>th</sup> century Wahhābi community in Arabia. They took to verbal militancy instead of armed struggle, reminiscent of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Islamic current in Egypt. He further states that:

The influences of education and pilgrimage coupled with the internal needs of the West African Muslims have been the driving forces of the Wahhabiyya among the traders and the first generation of the elite. The reform gave a new impulse to the religiosity of these two categories and to the whole issue of contemporary Islamic problems.”<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, their efforts heralded a new stage of Islamization that saw a craving for refined knowledge, a reformulated belief system and an eventual decline of marabout influence. Although the brotherhoods that were targeted did not disappear, their positions were weakened on various fronts during the past decade and a half. Some of this weakness can be attributed, according to Lansine, to religious, educational and political ineptness. This does not necessarily

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Shaykh ‘Abdul Mu‘min Salifu in Tamale

<sup>11</sup> Harūn., *Bushrā al-Muhibbīn* 49

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Mohammad Amin Adam Tamale

<sup>13</sup> Kaba, *Wahabiyya*, 258

imply that the dissenters crossed over into Wahabism, however.<sup>14</sup> Some have relapsed into the old mode of Sufism that Arberry described as the epitome of religious spirituality. Ousman does mention the factor of Tijāniyya Niassiyya liberalization as being behind conversion to Tijānism – thus making it a mass organization highly populated by youth. Most of all, mass indiscriminate conscription into the *Tarbiyya* (esoteric spiritual pedagogy) has long been a lynchpin of the Niassiyya Tijāniyya. Even the adherents of the mainstream Tijānism did not take kindly to it. Shaykh Kamāl al-Dīn, the current deputy national chief Imām, was one of those who opposed the Tarbiyya doctrine.<sup>15</sup> This, may be compared to ‘Umariyya Tijānism, which was the first to be introduced, for which elderly and erudite Muslims were the target, hence, if the age and scholarship requirement were not met, then that person was disqualified from being considered. Younger people were regarded as still being under the influence of youthful exuberance and thus subject to getting carried away, as well as being tools in the hands of satanic forces. Moreover, in older Tijānism, the times for the performance of prayer were very well thought out. For instance, the Wazīfa was recited before the dawn prayer or very late in the evenings when everyone was fast asleep. This created the serene atmosphere that was needed for this devotion. Second, it shrouded it with the secrecy and sanctity that are the bedrock of Islamic religious spirituality. These factors were applicable in the above case, yet the Niassiyya perspectives on that strategy seem to be plausible. For them, religiosity was not the exclusive prerogative of a particular age group or literary class. Hence the right of all to Tijāni spirituality provided the person who expressed interest and willingness with the freedom to pursue it. This is the case in Senegal, where there exists a plethora of Maraboutic and

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 259-260

<sup>15</sup> Ousman, “Promoting the Good” 6

scholarly families where the child is exposed from the cradle to acquisition of Islamic knowledge and practices such that from a tender age the child memorizes the Qur‘ān and is then introduced to the other religious sciences. This implies that the youth are of a mature frame of mind. In some parts of Northern Nigeria, this is roughly the situation. On the other hand, in places where youth do not have the privilege of receiving an education during their early development, it would be inappropriate to implement such a proselytization strategy. We will come to see that this procedure practiced may be a factor in the decline of Tijānism in Ghana and the trends of conversion. I myself always remember the saying of my teacher Shaykh Ṣālih Shawqi, i.e., that before a person is inscribed into Tijānism he should have completely given himself to the five daily prayers in their entirety in congregation and the supportive supererogatory prayers before even being considered. So long as this was not fulfilled, then the person would not qualify for membership.<sup>16</sup>

#### **4.2. Wahhabist Influence in Electoral Politics:**

Religion plays a significant role in the politics of our region. In Tamale where historically partisan politics has been skewed towards religious inclinations, that is it has been the tradition that the Tijāniyya sect has supported the United Party (UP) tradition and the Wahhābiyya sect supported the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) tradition. But when the National Democratic Congress (NDC) came into the political scene, the NDC seem to have overshadowed the CPP and therefore took a lot of the membership of the CPP for which reason the Wahhābi support had shifted from the CPP to the NDC. Today in Tamale if anybody comes

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<sup>16</sup> This is one of the cardinal requirements for one to be given the wird of Tijāniyya as found in the *Jawāhir al-Ma‘āni of al-al-Harāzīm*.



in and wants to go to the mosque which is identified with the NDC, people will point to the Wahhābi mosque and if anybody wants you to point to the mosque that is identified to the UP tradition thus the NPP they will point to the central mosque (Zamigu). It has become synonymous to the names of the two political parties.

The involvement of Afanema (Muslim scholars) in the politics of the region started since the time of the Islamization of the monarchy of Dagbon. Ferguson state about this involvement thus:

...the Muslims began to assume a much more active, and aggressive role in the Dagomba political process: that is, in the affairs of the *nam*. Members of the Alfanema class began to utilize their resources to develop personal 'constituencies', to finance candidates for chiefly office, and indeed in some cases themselves to bid for such offices: a development made possible by the fact that an increasing number of the *alfanema* were sons of women from the chiefly class and could, therefore make legitimate claim to those skins reserved for 'grandsons' or *yanga*, as descendents of Ya Nas through their daughters rather than their sons.<sup>17</sup>

The role that Jibrīl Dobra played in the manipulation of the kingly institution is very noteworthy. He set precedence for the phenomenon of Afanema active involvement of later Afanema's involvement in politics. It can therefore be inferred that Afa Ajura's involvement in the geo-politics of Dagbon was from Dobra's legacy. Furthermore, with the inception of the Europeans into the arena of Gold Coast and later inclusion of the Northern territories in their domain of authority the local politics assumed a national dimension and hence the Western style of politics slowly crept into the system. The colonial rulers started dabbling in this institution since the time of the partition of Africa.

It has been posited that Wahhabis activism gained ascendancy based on the fact that the parties which they give their votes to always wins the majority of the seats in the northern Ghana. In order to substantiate the political factor that I have posited as an indicator for the

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<sup>17</sup> Ferguson. "Islamization" 255

ascendancy of the Wahhābist tendencies as against the decline or stagnancy of the Tijāni tendency in the northern region I will resort to figures of results of five elections and the performances of the parties that both sides have supported in both the presidential and parliamentary elections in the region. My main concern is Tamale which is the focal point of the two sectarian divides.

I draw my figures from the 1992 election through to the 2008 election to establish my supposition. In the 1992 election the opposition parties refused to participate because of their preconceive notion that the incumbent head of state's party had comparative advantage over any other participating party in this election and hence the government could use the state's apparatus in its favor to manipulate the outcome of the election results. To this end the major opposition party which was led by Professor Adu Boahene withdrew from the presidential election and three other parties. This did not hamper the proceeding of the election it continued as programmed. Aryee Joseph summarized it thus:

The outcome of the 1992 and 2004 elections were disputed by the losing presidential candidates and therefore did not exhibit the grace to congratulate the winners as was the case in 1996 and 2000. For instance, in the 1992 presidential elections, the opposition parties made up of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the People's National Convention (PNC), the National Independence Party (NIP) and the People's Heritage Party (PHP) complained against the unfair electoral environment, the Provisional National Defence Council's (PNDC) control over the then Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) and voter registration and manipulation of the presidential elections themselves and subsequently boycotted the presidential elections in December 1992.<sup>18</sup>

It was a landslide victory for the National Democratic Congress (NDC), thanks especially to the north where it received a massive vote. In fact the northern region is considered to be the second strong hold for the NDC next to the Volta region, from which the former president hails. At the time of the 1992 election the religious factor, which I seek to

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<sup>18</sup> Aryee Joseph R.A., "Voting patterns in the 2004 elections" Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. 85

demonstrate was an influential one in other respects, was in this instance less dominant, because during this period both the Wahhābis and Tijānis supported the NDC. The support was based not on ethnicity (as it was in the Volta region) but rather on the fact that the north was one of the neglected areas of the country in terms of development and hence was ready to support a party that would correct this. In this election the NDC polled 63% in the presidential race, while Adu Boahene received only 16.3% of the votes out of 344,008 votes cast. The only opposition that the NDC faced in the northern region was from the Social Democratic Front party (SDF), which had Alhaji Ibrahim Mahama as its presidential candidate. The SDF results in this election analytically might be said to have depended on local politics, in which the struggle for the chieftaincy was a major card. So those who voted for that party were mainly the Andani-gate hardliners. The influence of the religious factor cannot be completely ruled out here because some of the Munchires who were Andani sympathizers voted for the SDF party. Meanwhile, the founder of the Anbariyya community, Afa Ajura, had given his complete support to the NDC, whereas his heir apparent, Shaykh Saʿīd Abubakr, supported the S.D.F.<sup>19</sup> The Afa Ajura factor made the NDC a predominantly Munchire party. In the 1996 election, in which the major opposition party chose to participate, the results for the northern region were as follows: out of the 596,269 votes cast the NDC polled 62.1% in the presidential and won 18 seats in the parliamentary votes, while the NPP had 32% of votes in the presidential and 3 seats in the parliamentary plebiscites. This election took on a dramatic sectarian dimension. Although there were loyalists of the northern development agenda who still defied the religious

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<sup>19</sup> In one of my interviews I was told by Alhaji Mohammed Harūn that the possible reason for Shaykh Saʿīd stance was the chieftaincy factor. I would say it is the lawyer Ibrahim factor that had swayed Shaykh Saʿīd and a host of other Munchires to the S.D.F. Afa Ajura during that period lost his some reputation and authority among the Munchire/Andani block. They saw it as a betrayal of the cause for which they stood for.

and chieftaincy alignment and gave their support to the party, the NPP basically could count only on the Tijānis and the Abudu-gate supporters.

In the 2000 election the NDC had a new flag-bearer in the person of Professor Evans Atta Mills, while the National Patriotic Party (NPP) had as leader Mr. Agyekum Kufour. The latter offered the incumbent NDC a very strong contest and even won the election. Here again the northern region played a crucial role. Out of 564,399 votes cast in the region, the NPP polled 29.56% in the presidential race and won 3 seats in parliament, while the NDC won 50.75% votes in the presidential contest and maintained its 18 seats in Parliament. The Wahhābist support in fact gave the NDC another overwhelming victory in the north, but the Tijāni support for the NPP, while it could not earn the party a win in the north, it was a determining factor in the overall national vote. Purely on the basis of a religious analysis, however, that the political activism and empowerment of the Wahhābis once again bested the Tijānis' efforts in the northern region.

In the 2004 election the incumbent president won the election for a second time. This time one would have expected the voting pattern in the north to change slightly in favor of the NPP, which enjoys the support of the Tijānis. The old pattern still dominated, however, as indicated by the results. Again, this demonstrated the political strength of the opposition party NDC, which enjoyed even more Wahhābist support. The unfortunate incident of the murder of the overlord of the Dagbon Yaa Naa Yakubu Andani in 2001 became the major card played by the NDC. The Wahhābis, in terms of northern geo-politics, were basically Andani supporters. Out of the 756,661 votes cast, the NDC won 56.9% of the votes in the presidential; while in the parliamentary election it won 17 seats. The incumbent NPP party won 36.2% of the votes in the presidential and 8 seats in the parliamentary vote.

Ultimately, in the most recent 2008, election of which was hotly contested and eventually won by the NDC, the following results were obtained: the NDC won 21 parliamentary seats<sup>20</sup> and 450,564 votes (56.84%)<sup>21</sup> and NPP in the parliamentary won only 4 seats<sup>22</sup> and 303,406 votes (38.27%)<sup>23</sup> for the presidential contest. This pattern, translated into religious cum geopolitical terms, points to the continuing dominance of Wahhabi political activism, which could in turn suggest that their political dominance has given them leverage in the power of disseminating their doctrinal beliefs and acceptance by the people.

Based on the election results of 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008, the performance of the Wahhabi-supported parties suggests that, armed with the ability to galvanize public support for the party of their choice and the ability to win and maintain their dominance in the political sphere, the Wahhabi option is on the ascendancy in the religious realm in the region. This should not be generalized in terms of other parts of the country. At the same time one should not rule out the possibility of this trend sending ripples into other regions of Ghana.

#### 4.3. Tijānism and Politics in Ghana:

Shaykh Ibrahim Abdulahi Niass (d.1975), who was the representative of Shaykh Ahmad Tijāni in sub-Saharan Africa, was seen as being just as politically active as his master. He introduced the wave of Niassiyya Tijānism that spread into the West African region in the 1950s. This was later to relegate the Tijāniyya ‘Umariyya and Tijāniyya Hamawiyya, which movement’s were already active in the region, to the background. Ghanaian Tijānism, however,

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<sup>20</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghana\\_parliamentary\\_election,\\_2008](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghana_parliamentary_election,_2008) assessed 2010-09-12

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.cc.gov.gh/node/134> assessed 2010-09-12

<sup>22</sup> *Op. cit.*,

<sup>23</sup> *Op. cit.*,

which is an offshoot of this, is generally considered by most writers to be apolitical.<sup>24</sup> Shaykh Ibrahim's political activism started on the home front and later assumed international dimensions. During the 1950's, for instance, his support went to Lamine Gueye and the SFIO as opposed to Leopold Senghor and the BDS.<sup>25</sup> His membership in the organization *Comite d'organisation islamique*, which was later to form the nucleus of the *Conseil superieur des chefs religieux*, was another indicator of his activism. The latter included all the brotherhoods in Senegal. This was later to lose its hegemony once the members began revisiting their age-old intra-brotherhood rivalry.<sup>26</sup>

Nigerian Tijānism was by contrast very active politically. Aminu Kano's party was seen to be predominantly a Tijāniyya party. The contrast with the Ghanaian Tijāni movement is noted by Gray:

In Ghana the Niassene movement hasn't been very political due to the lack of education of its followers, though Niasse himself had a very close relationship with Kwame Nkrumah. This is an intriguing relationship as it has been reported that Nkrumah viewed Niasse as a sort of spiritual guide ; they were apparently introduced by a well known Gambian politician by the name Jahumpa who was a Niassene representative in Banjul and who new Nkrumah from 1945 Pan-African Conference in Manchester , England. ...Thus by the mid-1960's the Niassene Tijaniyya had a solid international organization, millions of followers and carried a political clout in a number of West African countries.<sup>27</sup>

Muslim activism in politics in Ghana started right from the entrance into the Ghanaian political arena of Nkrumah, whose career straddled both the pre- and post-independence eras. Politics in Dagbon had been infused into the Dagbamba Yanship for some time before that. The Dagbon Kingdom's brand of politics is what Ladouceur describes as rudimentary. The rulers and the Afanema practiced their own brand of politics, so there was a certain level of political

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<sup>24</sup> Stewart, "Tijaniyya" 50

<sup>25</sup> Gray Christopher., "The rise of Tijaniyya 1875 to the Present." *Islam et Societies au Sud du Sahara* , n.2 (Mai 1988), 34-60. 48

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.,

consciousness among the populous Muslims of Dagbon. For Stewart and Gray to say they were apolitical is somewhat inaccurate; the Muslim Association Party for instance was basically a Muslim political party. Of course, since most of the Muslims were Tijānis it would not be wrong to assert that there was some amount of political activism among the Tijānis, no matter how small their forces might have been. The first northerner to be elected to represent the north on the ticket of the Muslim Association Party (MAP) was a Tijāni. He was Alhaji Usman Yakubu.<sup>28</sup> The Tolon Naa Yakubu was another political activist and a Tijāni as well.

According to Ousman, President Kwame Nkrumah invited Shaykh Niass to Ghana to galvanize for him the support of the significant Muslim minority.<sup>29</sup> This implies that the Ghanaian Muslim population, which was predominantly Tijāni, had political awareness as well as being politically active. Other sources ascribe the reason for the Shaykh's visit to a request that he dispel the evil spirits that haunted the newly constructed Volta river hydro-electric dam.

#### **4.4. Islamic Education in Northern Ghana:**

The program of Islamic education in northern Ghana and for that matter the Islamic education unit has come to be considered the hallmark of Islamic education in Ghana. The extensive research made by Iddrisu Abdullai in this sphere, published in the *Journal of Muslim Minority affairs*, attests to this. Furthermore, Abdel Seidu Salifu in his work "The Influence of Islam on the Dagbamba in the Twentieth Century" devotes a whole chapter to this subject. Prior to these two works, Ivor Wilks wrote an article entitled "The Tradition of Islamic

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<sup>28</sup> Stewart, "Tijaniyya," 46

<sup>29</sup> Ousman, "Promoting the Good," 190

Learning in northern Ghana.”<sup>30</sup> However, while Iddrisu considered Shaykh Uthmān Dan Folio’s Jihadist movement of the 19th century as the culmination of the inception of Qur’ānic schools in this area and as a facet of its proselytization drive, I prefer the explanation that Hunwick offers in his *Chiefs and People of Northern Ghana*. There he identifies three conduits through which Islam made its way into Northern Ghana: the trans-Saharan trade caravan route which had Salaga as its main inland entreport, the Ivory Coast route through Begho in around the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the northern Nigerian channel which emanated from Katsina in Hausaland and converged on Salaga – the most recent of the channels. All of these routes facilitated the introduction of Qur’ānic schools as old as the inception of Islam in the area, since the Islamizers established Qur’ānic schools at the same time as preached to would be converts, though they might have been rudimentary in form. These itinerant scholars always moved in convoy with their students and anywhere they set foot and settled, either permanently or temporarily, they left behind their legacy of a mosque or a school for the people.

Islamic education in Northern Ghana underwent three stages of development, each characterized in turn by conservative, neo-conservative and modern approaches. The first stage was when the schools were run at the rudimentary level, with the Mallams using their reception rooms “*Zong*” or mosques as their classrooms. The usage of this space for the purpose of teaching gave the local-generic name “*Karim-zong*” to the present-day classroom. At this stage there was considerable aversion felt towards western education.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See Iddrisu, Abdulai. “Islamic and Western Secular Education in Ghana”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22, no.2, (2002): 335-350; Abdel "The Influence"; Wilks, I. “The Growth of Islamic Learning in Ghana” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 1964 409-417 Ibadan: Nigeria Ibadan University press Nigeria, November 1964

<sup>31</sup>Iddrisu, Abdulai. . “Islamic and Western Secular Education in Ghana”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22, no.2, (2002): 335-350



The second stage was, as proposed by Iddrisu, the second application of the conservative approach, which I would term as the neo-conservative stage. This was instanced by the efforts of J.S Kaleem in the 1950s, then assistant director of education in the northern region, who reached out to notable leaders of the Muslim community by offering them employment on the payroll of the Ministry of Education to give a thirty minutes Islamic lesson at selected schools. This enticed parents to send their wards to regular schools, which they had previously been reluctant to do. This laudable aim and effort did not survive for a couple of reasons, among them being were the fact that the courses were virtually impossible to evaluate and the fact of apathy on the part of the pupils towards the Mallams due to illiteracy.<sup>32</sup>

The third stage resembled the old adage of Muhammad going to the mountain because the mountain would not come to him. This came as a result of sustained efforts on the part of various directors and assistant directors of education in the northern region. This stage is always heralded by the famous saying of Mr. J.W. Abruquah "...Islam can do for the north what Christianity had done for Southern Ghana."<sup>33</sup>

The developmental stages above applied to both the Wahhābicentric and Tijānicentric schools. The importance of these educational establishments and the benefits that the north enjoyed from them is undeniably immense. Therefore, on the contentious subject of the decline of Tijānism and the ascendancy of Wahhābism, the effective use of these establishments undeniably played a role.

In my interviews with scholars from both sides of the sectarian divide it was argued that the emphasis laid on education had influenced their own performance among the populace. In

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 338

<sup>33</sup> Interview Shaykh Ali Fikr Ibrahim of Islamic Education Unit Tamale 2008.

an interview with the current Imām of the Wahhābi community, Shaykh Saʿīd Abūbakr, the latter re-iterated the educational explanation for Wahhabism’s fast spread. He said that, with their very organized educational system, they had been able to create awareness as well as zeal within the populace to convert to the fold of Sunnism.<sup>34</sup>

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Hanān Yussif, the only son of Afa Yussif Ajura, who had the opportunity to study at the Islamic University of Medina, raised the same point. He mentioned that his father once said that the Anbariyya School had taken off in terms of education and would soon be the forerunner in disseminating of knowledge in the region.<sup>35</sup>

Iddrisu, in his thesis on Wahhābism, also quotes Shaykh Mukhtar as re-echoing the same point with respect to the major role played by education in giving impetus to the rapid growth of Wahhābism in the region. Shaykh Mukhtar said that now, as opposed to the past, people did not know why they were adherents of the Sunni path. But lately, even those adherents that had not attended the formal Makaranta School could comfortably explain their doctrines to others. This came as a result of heavy investment made in education, both formal and informal. The informal dimension of education was a more recent addition.<sup>36</sup>

Tijāni scholars like Shaykh Ilyas ‘Umar and Amin Bamba affirmed to me that education was one of the main factors in making Wahhabis popular in the region. Shaykh Bamba pointed to their modern teaching methodology and their exposure to new tools and syllabi as having made their path enticing, thus luring many youth into their fold.<sup>37</sup> Shaykh Ilyas ‘Umar also added that the strength gained by the Wahhābis emanated from the seriousness they attached to

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<sup>34</sup> Interview Shaykh Saʿīd Abūbakar 1/11 /2009 Tamale

<sup>35</sup> Interview Shaykh ‘Abd al-Hanān Yussif 1/15/2009 Tamale

<sup>36</sup> Iddrisu, “Contesting Islam”

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Shaykh Amin Bamba 11/20/2008 Tamale

their education strategy and especially in terms of resources and provision of manpower.<sup>38</sup> The Gulf States provided the resources while Saudi Arabia provided the manpower.<sup>39</sup>

Hajia Aisha Uthmān, recounted to me, that on several occasions during outreach programs on the outskirts they always found a product of Anbaryyya. She explained that they would assemble mostly women-folk in the courtyard of the chief's palace and some of their men as well. After delivering the sermons to the crowd they asked the chief to provide them with an Arabic scholar in his domain to take care of these novices in the faith. More often than not the only available scholars or people literate in Arabic turned out to be an Anbaryyya product.<sup>40</sup>

Sayyida Khadijah al-Hassan narrated a similar experience that she had encountered on her evangelization trips. She said that once she went to the remotest village and was not expecting to find any school there. But as she was approaching the said village she saw in the distance pupils wearing the usual Ambaryyya green uniform. All the above evidence goes to prove that the Anbari's have actually gained from their heavy investment, in the educational sector.<sup>41</sup>

#### **4.5. THE EDUCATIONAL ARGUMENTS INVESTIGATED STATISTICALLY:**

The establishment of the Anbaryyya School and community has been the most important single factor in facilitating Afa Ajura's rise to prominence.<sup>42</sup> The argument advanced for the upsurge of Wahhābism has been the relentless effort put into the educational sector by adherents. This was not limited to formal education alone but extended to the practice of

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Shaykh Ilyas 'Umar 01/13/2009 Tamale

<sup>39</sup> Interview Mr. Mohammad Hārūn Ghana Education Service (GES) 12/01/2009.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Sayyida 'Aisha Uthmān 1/11/2009 at Tamale

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Sayyida Khadijatu al-Hassan 01/15/2009 Tamale

<sup>42</sup> Ousman., "Promoting the Good" 206

passing on the training that the graduates of Saudi Arabian educational institutions had received. Nor was this effort restricted to the formal school atmosphere; it was also implemented in non-formal settings (in the mosque, etc.) as well. Through organization of study circles in the Sunni controlled mosques, especially, they were able to educate adult adherents. Furthermore, by the establishment of Tahafiz circles in those mosques, they have been able to sensitize youth towards memorizing the Qur‘ān. These strategies have given them considerable leverage.

Oral tradition has it that the Anbaryya School was established at the request of the first Ghanaian president on the occasion of his visit to the north on the campaign trail. Nkrumah and his entourage were in Tamale and as per protocol went to the Tamale central mosque (Zamigu) to receive a benediction from the grand Imām – Imām Abdulāhi – in the form of prayer and the recitation of the full holy Qur‘ān at a sitting. However, the Imām told Nkrumah and his entourage that he had already done the reading for the Danquah/Busia party i.e the United Party (U.P). As such he could not do it a second time for their party, called the Convention People’s Party (C.P.P.).

The entourage, led by Mallam Mutawakilu and Sherif ‘Ali (Kumasi-based Islamic scholars), then shifted their focus onto Afa Yusuf Ajura, hoping that he would organize the recitation on behalf of the party. He was at the time chairman of the party. Shaykh Ajura said he did not have students at his disposal to do the recitation and so the visitors organized the recitation by themselves. Afterwards Mallam Mutawakilu advised Afa Ajura to start a school to produce scholars in order to forestall such occurrences in future, for otherwise he might be subjected to future humiliation. Afa Ajura said he did not even have teachers to teach in the school that had been proposed to him. Mallam Mutawakilu offered to send down from Kumasi

Ustādh Rashad to start with the school, and it was at this point that Anbariyya came into being. In a bid to get students he enticed pupils from existing schools in his neighborhood, like that of Afa Sumani Nyimbung. Further, Mr. Issahaku Liman then District Commissioner of Gambaga negotiated for and sent Afa Seidu from his district to the school as a student.<sup>43</sup>

Looking at this oral historical background to the establishment of the school it would not be unreasonable to conclude that the school came into existence as a result of socio-political expediency and only later assumed a religious dimension. The Anbariyya School, according to available written sources, was established as early as the 1950's. It started in the corridors of Afa Ajura and grew over a period of time.<sup>44</sup>

In order to ascertain the authenticity or otherwise of this claim of educational leverage, I have gathered data from the enrolment in both the Wahhābi-oriented and Tijāni-oriented schools and then made a critical analysis of sampled schools for both sides of the divide in terms of enrolment and retention. This will assist in verifying the truth of their respective claim. The claims were made through interviews with Shaykh 'Abd al-Hanān Yusif Salih Ajura, Shaykh Abubakr Sa'īd and Alhaji Haruna Mohammed.<sup>45</sup>

I have not limited my analysis to the Wahhābis schools alone but have juxtaposed it against the Tijāni schools as well; these will serve as a basis for comparison and drawing conclusions. In this case I have selected the traditional, known schools on both sides. Those on the Wahhābi divide are Anbariyya, Nuriyya Central, Nahda and Kamaria. On the Tijāniyya side I examined the data for Nuri Islam, Wataniyya, al-Dīn wa Tahhazīb and al-Adabiyya. Schools

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<sup>43</sup> Interview Alhaji Mohamed Abubakari Gumani Tamale 2009.

<sup>44</sup> Ousman, "Promoting the Good"; Iddrisu "Contesting Islam"; Adam, "Conflict"; Tamale, "The Anbariyya Sunni Community Strategic Plan 2008 – 2012" [n.d.]

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Shaykh 'Abd al-Hanān Yussif Salih Ajura 1/15/2009 Tamale; Interview with Shaykh Sa'īd Abubakr 1/11/2009 Tamale; Interview with Mr. Mohammad Hārūn Ghana Education Service 12/01/2009 Tamale.

allied to both camps were also considered, like Gumani Hasaniyya, an-Wāruduwa, Nāsiriyya and Nā‘imiya on the Tijāniyya side and Fāruqiya, al-Malikiya, Uthmaniya and Darul-Hadis on the Wahhābiyya side. The enrolment and retention figures for a period of four years were taken into consideration, beginning from 2004/5 academic year and reaching 2007/8 academic years. This data was compiled and provided through the courtesy of the Ghana Education Unit of the Tamale Metropolitan area. Secondly, I will also scrutinize the four year Anbariyya development plan drawn up by the Sunni (Wahhābi) community to give validity to my argument on and critical analysis of educational developments, drawing particular attention to some of the biases in their claims.

The data I am considering in this work is only for education at the primary level. I have not included the nursery or secondary levels because of constraints of time. In the data below it is seen that in the academic years 2004/5 to 2007/8 the enrolment figures for the original Wahhābi-centric schools, as opposed to those of their counterparts the Tijāni-centric schools, as shown in table (i), ranges from 200 and rises to above 800. One observes on average, a steady and high rate of enrolment. Taking Anbariyya and Nahdah for example, the total annual enrolment figures from the 2004/5 to 2007/8 academic years were: 620, 596, 605 and 813 for the first school and 462, 468, 502 and 572 for the second.

In terms of the original Tijāni-centric schools the total enrolment figures range from above 100 to slightly more than 300. The observation here too is that the enrolment figures are not as high as in those of their counterparts. Taking two schools, like Wataniyya and Choggu Nuri-Islam in table (ii) that are originally Tijāni-centric and compare the total enrolment figures for the academic years 2004/5 to 2007/08: these numbered 357, 330, 364 and 366 in each year for the first school, and 212, 241, 243 and 214 for the second.

In both cases, when a linear extrapolation is made for the years 2008/9 and 2009/10, the figures for Anbariyya and Nahdah are 805.5 & 864.3 and 592 & 749 respectively, while the extrapolated figures for Wataniyya and Choggu Nuri-Islam are 369.5 & 375.6 and 229.5 & 230.3. This reveals a rate of equal and progressive growth in the Wahhābi-centric schools, whereas in the Tijānicentric schools there is growth but not as high or marked as those in the Wahhābicentric schools.

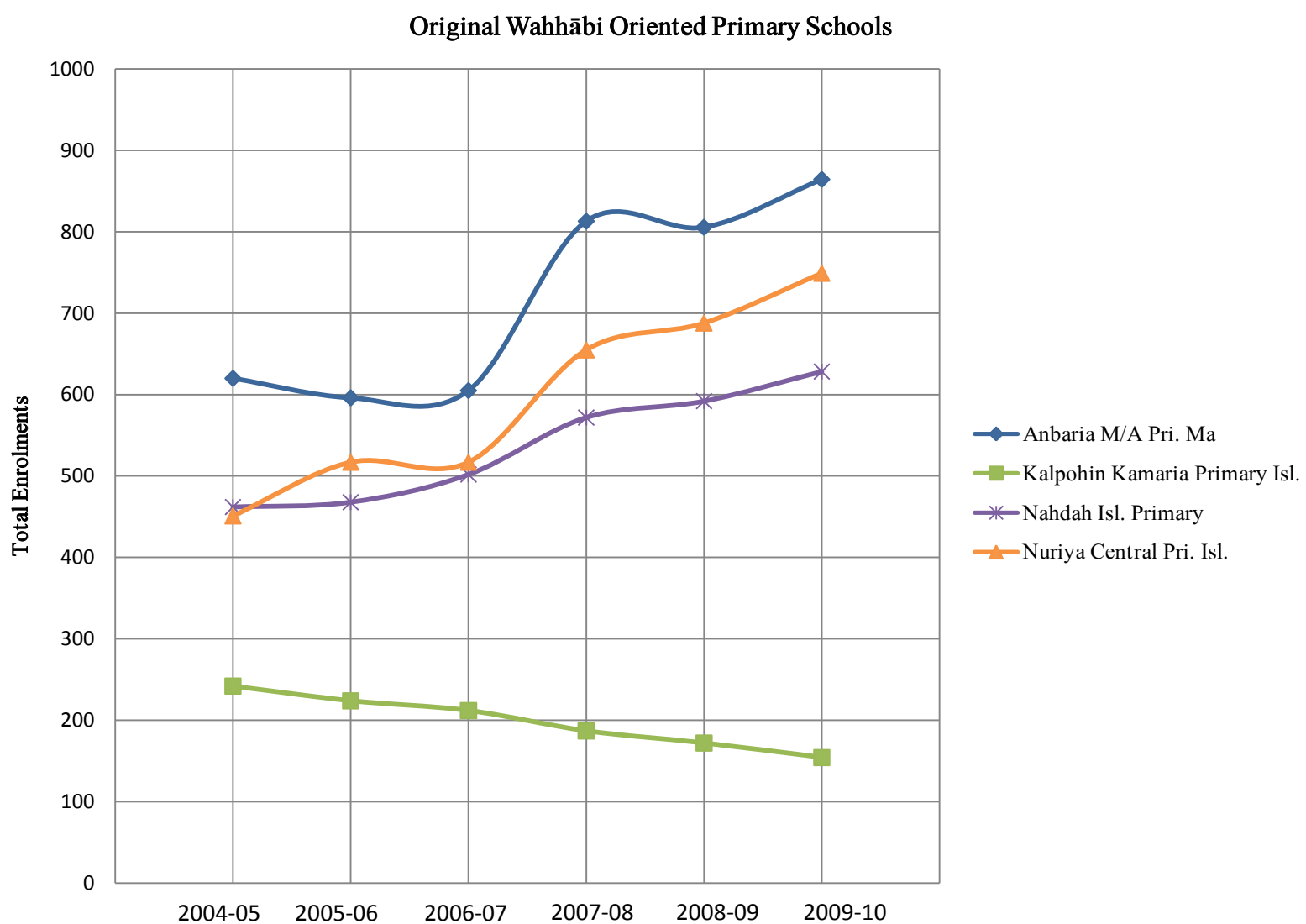
The tables shown in figures (v) and figure (vi), give approximate numbers for the Wahhābi-centric and Tijāni-centric schools in the Ghana education service system. Most of the schools are under the umbrella of the Islamic unit while others are under the municipal assembly. From these two tables it can be found that the number of Tijāni-centric schools is higher than that of Wahhābicentric schools, although in terms of enrolment, the Wahhābi-centric schools supersede their counterparts.

If this trend continues for a couple more years, barring any unforeseen developments, the number of pupils in the Wahhābi-centric schools will outstrip their counterparts in the second and tertiary level systems. In the long run the Wahhābi-centric products will monopolize government offices and become policy and decision makers. These formulated policies and decision, if they have to do with Islam, will have a Wahhābi ideational inclination.

Relying on the data below, it can be deduced that there has been an increment in Wahhābi enrolment in the educational sector, which presupposes an increase in the adherents of Wahhābis in the north. One should bear it in mind that many of the students in the Wahhābi-centric schools are not necessarily Wahhābis, but attend them because of the quality of the education they offer. It is however almost impossible to estimate their percentage of the overall enrolment.

i. Original Wahhābi-Oriented Primary Schools

	Actual Data				Linear Projection	
	TOTAL 2004-2005	TOTAL 2005-2006	TOTAL 2006-2007	TOTAL 2007-2008	TOTAL 2008-2009	TOTAL 2009-2010
Anbaria M/A Pri. Ma	620	596	605	813	805.5	864.3
Kalpohin Kamaria Primary Isl.	242	224	212	187	172	154.3
Nahdah Isl. Primary	462	468	502	572	592	628.4
Nuriya Central Pri. Isl.	451	517	517	655	688	749.2

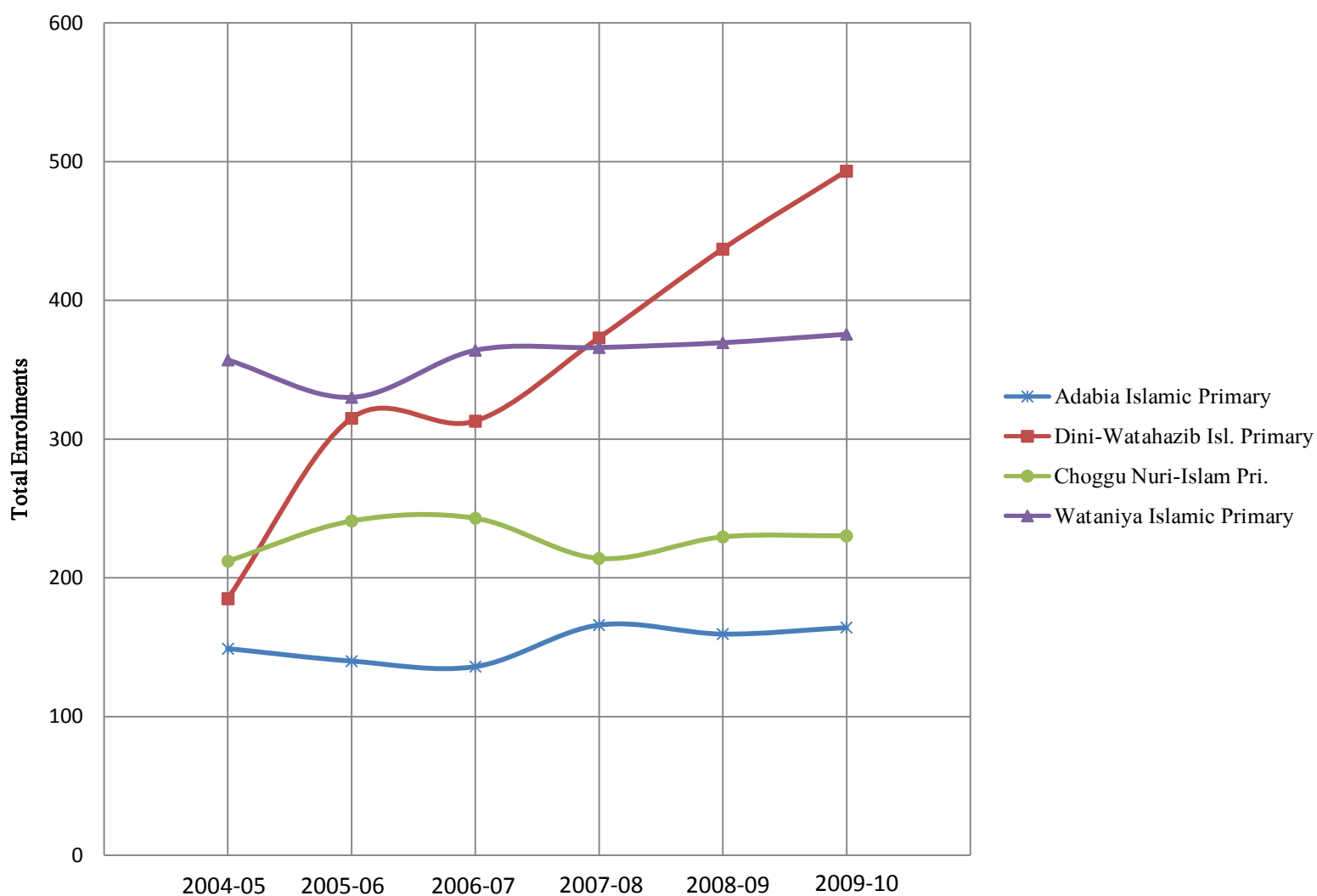




ii. Original Tijāni-Oriented Primary Schools

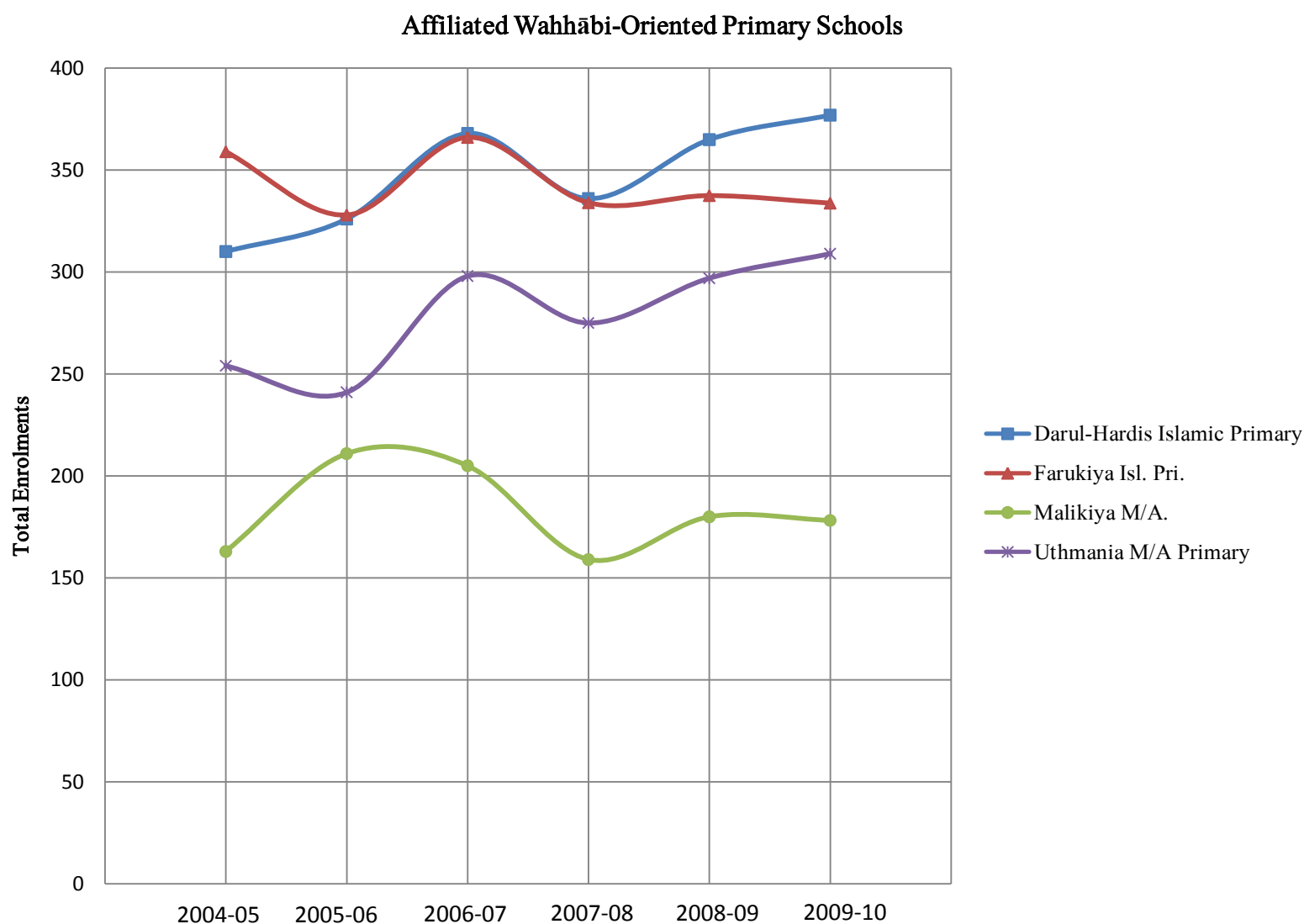
	Actual Data				Linear Projection	
	TOTAL 2004-2005	TOTAL 2005-2006	TOTAL 2006-2007	TOTAL 2007-2008	TOTAL 2008-2009	TOTAL 2009-2010
Adabia Islamic Primary	149	140	136	166	159.5	164.2
Dini-Watahazib Isl. Primary	185	315	313	373	437	493.2
Choggu Nuri-Islam Pri.	212	241	243	214	229.5	230.3
Wataniya Islamic Primary	357	330	364	366	369.5	375.6

Original Tijāni-Oriented Primary Schools



iii. Affiliated Wahhābi-Oriented Primary Schools

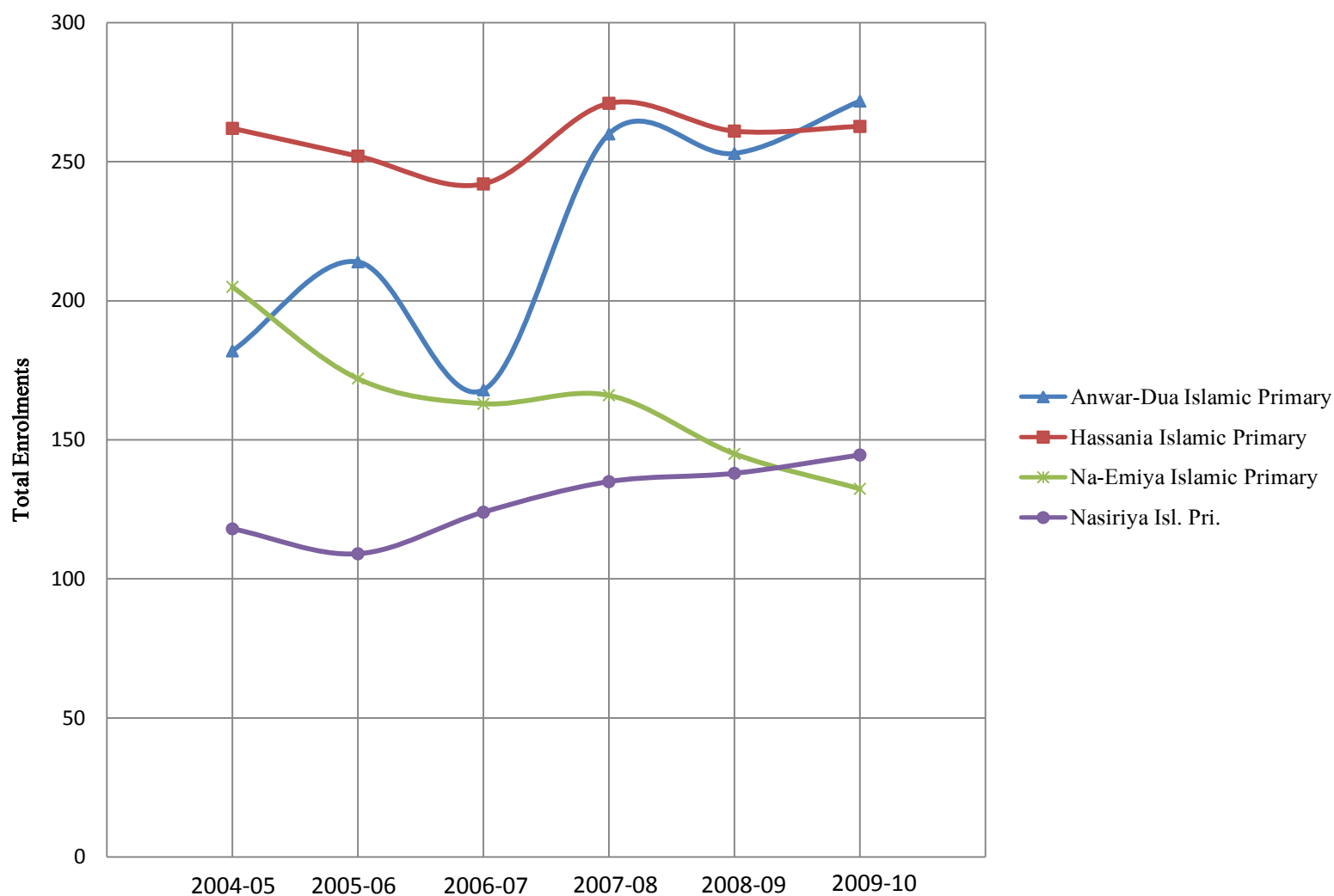
	Actual Data				Linear Projection	
	TOTAL 2004-2005	TOTAL 2005-2006	TOTAL 2006-2007	TOTAL 2007-2008	TOTAL 2008-2009	TOTAL 2009-2010
Darul-Hardis Islamic Primary	310	326	368	336	365	377
Farukiya Isl. Pri.	359	328	366	334	337.5	333.8
Malikiya M/A.	163	211	205	159	180	178.2
Uthmania M/A Primary	254	241	298	275	297	309



iv. Affiliated Tijāni-Oriented Primary Schools

	Actual Data				Linear Projection	
	TOTAL 2004-2005	TOTAL 2005-2006	TOTAL 2006-2007	TOTAL 2007-2008	TOTAL 2008-2009	TOTAL 2009-2010
Anwar-Dua Islamic Primary	182	214	168	260	253	271.8
Hassania Islamic Primary	262	252	242	271	261	262.7
Na-Emiya Islamic Primary	205	172	163	166	145	132.4
Nasiriya Isl. Pri.	118	109	124	135	138	144.6

Affiliated Tijāni-Oriented Primary Schools



v. **Wahhābi-Oriented Primary Schools**

	Actual Data				Linear Projection	
	TOTAL 2004-2005	TOTAL 2005-2006	TOTAL 2006-2007	TOTAL 2007-2008	TOTAL 2008-2009	TOTAL 2009-2010
Anbaria M/A Pri. Ma	620	596	605	813	805.5	864.3
Darul-Hardis Islamic Primary	310	326	368	336	365	377
Farukiya Isl. Pri.	359	328	366	334	337.5	333.8
Kalpohin Kamaria Primary Isl.	242	224	212	187	172	154.3
Kanvilli Nuriya Islamic Prim	200	212	157	168	146.5	131.4
Mahad-Huda Pri. Isl.	95	106	277	78	169	181
Mahad-Tahiliya Isl. Pri.	332	317	87	250	127.5	79.9
Malikiya M/A.	163	211	205	159	180	178.2
Manhalia Islamic Primary	465	534	590	650	712.5	773.6
Nahdah Isl. Primary	462	468	502	572	592	628.4
Nujumul Isl. Pri.	132	138	105	105	91.5	80.1
Nuriya Central Pri. Isl.	451	517	517	655	688	749.2
Riyadh-Quran Karim M/A Prim.	90	105	87	151	149.5	166
Riyahd Soaliheen Islamic	261	276	163	206	157	129.2
Sognayili Rayaniya. M/A	112	114	183	214	249.5	287
Uthmania M/A Primary	254	241	298	275	297	309
Grand Total	4548	4713	4722	5153	5240	5422.4

vi. Tijani Oriented Primary Schools

	Actual Data				Linear Projection	
	TOTAL 2004- 2005	TOTAL 2005- 2006	TOTAL 2006- 2007	TOTAL 2007- 2008	TOTAL 2008- 2009	TOTAL 2009- 2010
Adabia Islamic Primary	149	140	136	166	159.5	164.2
Adabiya/Garibiya Isl. Prim	165	173	146	140	130.5	120.3
Al-Intsuariya M/A. Primary	132	107	130	165	164	176.2
Al-Markazia Islamic Primary	227	238	232	169	171.5	153.5
Al-Saqafat Islamic Primary	95	115	88	99	95.5	94
Ansuari-Deen Isl. Primary	390	390	391	348	348.5	336
Anwar-Dua Islamic Primary	182	214	168	260	253	271.8
Anwar-Rahaman Pri. Isl.	194	218	237	256	277.5	298
Anwar-Rahimiya Pri. Isl.	157	106	91	120	87	74.4
Bulpela Taskif Primary Isl.	131	136	156	160	172.5	183.2
Central Ulum-Diniyat Isl.	180	187	235	268	295.5	326.7
Choggu Nuri-Islam Pri.	212	241	243	214	229.5	230.3
Dabokpa Faiiya Pri. Isl.	165	170	170	137	139.5	131.1
Dini-Watahazib Isl. Primary	185	315	313	373	437	493.2
Gumani Nuri-Islam Isl.	132	58	74	74	45	29.2
Gumbihini Ulum-Diniyat Isl.	120	106	107	100	93.5	87.6
Hairiya Islamic Primary	135	151	147	147	153	156.2
Hashimiya Isl. Pri.	166	209	181	177	184.5	185
HASSANIA ISL. PRI.	262	252	242	271	261	262.7
Hillaliyatul Isl. Pri.	422	444	435	441	447.5	452.3
Hurriya Islamic Primary	151	154	145	161	158	160.1
Jakarayili Saqafat Isl.	197	236	239	271	292	314.5
Jisonayili Islamic Primary	465	511	570	600	652.5	698.9
Kakpagyili Taskif Primary Isl.	365	342	390	357	369.5	371.9
Kalariga Saqafat Isl.	201	213	177	253	241	253
Koblimahagu Sobriya Isl.	206	225	225	279	288.5	310.4
Kogni Taskif Primary Isl.	97	161	152	344	371.5	444.7
Mmanaayili Ulum-Diniyat	220	257	222	207	208	200.6
Na-Emiya Islamic Primary	205	172	163	166	145	132.4
Nasiriya Isl. Pri.	118	109	124	135	138	144.6
Nawariya Islamic Pri.	118	148	132	125	132	132.5
Nuri-Tahazeab Islamic Prim.	110	119	106	120	118	119.7
Rajia Islamic Primary	97	121	139	140	161	175.7
Rashadiya Isl. Pri.	118	129	114	110	108	104.1
Sakasaka Nuri-Islam Isl.	154	135	117	137	118.5	111.6
Shakariya Islamic Primary	201	176	317	292	350	391.4

Suabiriya Islamic Primary	185	210	222	244	262.5	281.4
Ta-Adeeb Islamic Primary	112	127	121	122	126.5	128.9
Tahiriya Islamic Primary	75	100	124	109	133.5	146.1
Tuutingli Nuri-Iman Isl Primary	146	143	191	198	220.5	240.9
Vitting Ansuariya Pri. Isl.	145	148	148	194	195.5	210.2
Wataniya Islamic Primary	357	330	364	366	369.5	375.6
Zogbeli Ansuariya Prim. Isl	187	186	112	194	156.5	151.2
Grand Total	8031	8422	8536	9209	9461.5	9826.3

#### **4.6. The Islamic Education Unit as a Retrogressive Factor in Tijāni-Oriented Schools:**

The long term impact of the Islamic education unit has been seen as having a negative effect overall on the schools of the northern region which are mostly Tijānī oriented. An estimate of the schools that belong to the Tijāniyya would reach approximately 70% to 80% of the total number of Islamic unit schools.

The advantage that the Wahhābi-oriented schools have enjoyed by contrast, is that initially some of their traditional schools did not accept this system. A practical example is Anbariyya. Even those schools that were Wahhābi-oriented and yet accepted as part of this system did not face the full rigors of this adverse impact of such problems as teacher shortages or lack of qualified Arabic instructors, payment to instructors and the committedness of the instructors to their profession. All of the latter contributed in the long run to a diminishing number of prospective Tijāni scholars and hence an ultimate decline in of the adherents of Tijānism, which this work is seeking to account for. Ali Fikr has argued that most of the teachers did not possess the acumen to teach and so to give them even more time with the children was to place their education in peril. He paraphrases a proverb which says that he who does not have cannot give. He goes further, saying that the Islamic unit schools were regarded as being on equal basis with the completely secular schools and were expected to meet the same standards as the latter. In order to achieve this, the Tijani-oriented schools had to forfeit some of the hours needed for religious subjects. He confided in me that he encouraged the idea of giving priority to the secular teachers since Ghana is a secular state. He used himself as an example of a beneficiary of secular education as compared to his colleagues who had graduated from Saudi Arabian universities even with doctoral degrees but could not get employment in the system. This explanation was offered when he was trying to justify the reason why the

secular teachers have been given more teaching time than the Arabic instructors. It is really sad to note that in the Islamic education schools the Arabic instructors are only allocated two hours a day to teach the Islamic sciences in their own schools.

The government, by incorporating its system into the traditional Islamic schools, attached strings to it which eventually played out in favor of the government. Alhaji Baba Dua confided to me in our interview that from the word go, they knew the secularization of their schools meant the surrender of total control over their schools to the government, which was not working in the interests of Islam. So it came as no surprise when, after a couple of years, they started to lose most of the incentives that the government had included in its package for the Islamic-oriented schools. The government for instance used to allow the council to organize a countrywide exam to recruit Arabic instructors to fill the Islamic posts of the curriculum, but it has maintained a ban on this recruitment for the past decade and a half. All attempts to resuscitate this have proven futile. The effect of this on the Islamic schools is that the secular teachers have gained an upper hand in the control of the students as against the Arabic instructors. Subsequently, more emphasis is placed on the study of secular subjects to the detriment of the Islamic sciences for which the schools were established.<sup>46</sup> This impact is more acute in the Tijāni schools, as mentioned earlier.

The Wahhābi-oriented schools have not been affected to the same extent for a couple of reasons. In these schools the Arabic instructors are mostly graduates of Saudi universities who are actually on the payroll of the Saudi government.<sup>47</sup> So the disparity in the ratio of secular

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with Shaykh Abdulla Baba Dua 01/17/2009 Tamale

<sup>47</sup> However, Shaykh Abubakr Sa'id noted that some of the graduates have no payment from the Saudi government but are involved in the D'awa and teaching process as a religious obligation.



teachers and Arabic instructors is not quite so great in this case. The four year Anbaryyya strategic development plan gives the numbers of the teaching staff as follows:

The staff strength of the Anbaryia schools can be compared with any other public or private tertiary institution by any standard in Ghana. This is an important resource that can be used in facilitating the “take off” of the Anbaryia Sunni Community. Per the data at hand, thus, one (1) Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD), one (1) Masters and four (4) Postgraduate Diplomats are at post. Bachelor Degree holders are twenty nine (29), Seven (7) Diplomats and forty (40) with Certificates in other areas.<sup>48</sup>

Shaykh Saʿīd Abubakr told me in our interview, when I raised this issue, that if the Tijāni-oriented schools were willing to accept Islamic teachers from Anbaryyya, they were ready to supply them. Further, he said there was no Islamic school in the metropolis that did not have an Anbaryyya teacher on its staff even if only unofficially. This all goes to show that they have comparative advantage over their counterparts in this system. Consequently they produce the manpower to enhance or champion their way of thinking, thus favoring the apparent surge of Wahhābism over Tijānism, especially in the metropolis.

An interview with Shaykh Saʿīd ʿUmar also revealed that the Wahhābi schools have a favorable bargaining power with the government.<sup>49</sup> A school like Anbaryyya has been unofficially permitted to stick to the traditional Muslim Thursday and Friday weekend. Their school week thus runs from Saturday through Wednesday. Anbaryyya also enjoys the advantage of splitting the time table equally between secular and religious subjects. Thus a secular lesson is always followed by an Islamic lesson.<sup>50</sup> This has been denied to 99% of the Islamic Education Unit schools, where only two hours per day are devoted to Islamic lessons. Nahda, a Wahhābi-oriented school, has also been granted permission by the authorities to start their morning with

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<sup>48</sup> Tamale, “The Anbaryyya Sunni Community Strategic Plan” 3

<sup>49</sup> Shaykh Saʿīd ʿUmar Mohammad 11/16/2008 Tamale

<sup>50</sup> Interview Shaykh Abubakr Saʿīd

a Qur‘ān recitation period which has been denied their counterparts. The argument offered by the education authorities is that academic subjects like mathematics can only be effectively taught in the morning period; therefore, the morning session in the IEU schools must therefore be reserved for secular courses.<sup>51</sup>

#### 4.7. Saudi Financing and Patronage a Factor in the Wahhābist Upsurge in Northern Ghana:

Daniel Yergin, winner of the Pulitzer for his book *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil Money and Power*, argues that:

With the end of the Cold War, a new world order took shape. Economic competition, regional struggles and ethnic religious rivalries replaced traditional ideology as the focus of international – and national – conflict, aided and abetted by proliferation of modern weaponry. A new kind of ideology – religious extremism and jihadism – came to the fore. Yet oil remained the strategic commodity, critical to national strategies and international politics.<sup>52</sup>

This echoes the credence given to the petrol dollar as a tool for building a new world order, which has sent its ripples throughout the Islamic world. Oystein Noreng, explains in the introduction the intricate nature of the impact of oil revenue on the Muslims in every part of the Islamic world, but especially those with an Arab identity: “To sum up, Saudi money affects practically the whole Arab world, as do Egyptian ideas.”<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, Fred Halliday reiterates this petro-dollar thesis in the foreword to *The Saudi Enigma*, written by Minoret Pascal. There he states:

Among other myths briskly dispensed with is that there is, in any accurate sense, such a thing as ‘Wahhabism’ a frequently used misnomer for the strict Hanbali variant of Islam that is official in the country and that Saudi money has promoted abroad.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Shaykh Sa‘īd ‘Umar

<sup>52</sup> Yergin, Daniel. *The prize: the epic for oil, money and power*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), xvii

<sup>53</sup> Noreng, O. *Oil and Islam: Social And Economic Issue*, (Chichester ; New York: Wiley & Sons, 1997), 7

<sup>54</sup> Pascal, Minoret. *The Saudi Enigma: a History*, (Beirut: Lebanon 2003), xiii

The above also reinforces the widely held viewpoint that it is the petro-dollar power that is behind the vigorous propagation of what he terms the strict Hanbali variant of Islam, in other words, what is popularly known as Wahhābism.

The petrol-dollar power thesis has been the major theme of authors who have sought to prove the oil power-base of Wahhābi Islam in terms of the export of its doctrines and ideologies and its spread to most and corners of the world. This “black-gold” -- crude oil and other natural resources is explained by reference to the Qur‘ān as being in response to the prayer of Prophet Ibāhim (a.s) when he came to settle his wife Hājara and her son Ismāil, the progenitor of the Arabs, in the desert of Pharan.

And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled; He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the nations." He pleaded: "And also (Imams) from my offspring!" He answered: "But my promise is not within the reach of evil-doers." (124) Remember We made the House a place of assembly for men and a place of safety; and take ye the station of Abraham as a place of prayer; and We covenanted with Abraham and Ismail that they should sanctify My House for those who compass it round or use it as a retreat or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer). (125) And remember Abraham said: "My Lord make this a City of Peace, and feed its people with fruits—such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day." He said: "(Yea) and such as reject faith—for a while will I grant them their pleasure, but will soon drive them to the torment of fire—an evil destination (indeed)!"<sup>55</sup> 1:126

The numerous authors that subscribe to this thesis include Hamid Algar. He opines that if not for the proximity to the two holy shrines of Mecca and Medina and the petro-dollar power of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Wahhābism would have died a natural death.<sup>56</sup> Ousman Murzik has also argued that the petro-dollar power of Saudi Arabia served as a tool in the rapid growth of Wahhabism in the 1970s<sup>57</sup> as well as bait for luring youth from economically under-privileged countries to go there to study. These students learn their doctrines and ideologies and

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<sup>55</sup> Y., Ali Abdullah. (trans.), *The Holy Qur‘ān*, revised edition (Delhi: Adams Publishers, 1996),

<sup>56</sup> Algar, Hamid. *Wahhabism: A Critical Essay*, (Onconta NY: U.S.A. Islamic Publication International, 2002)

<sup>57</sup> Ousman “Promoting the Good” 2

subsequently return to their countries as ambassadors of the Wahhābi faith. Some of these graduates are recipients of monthly allowances from the home country.<sup>58</sup>

Those who reject the petro-dollar thesis credit faith as the basis for this quick spread. Shaykh Saʿīd Abubakar offers the opinion that faith was the driving force behind the fast spread of Wahhābism rather than materialistic gain. He cited to me examples of most of the products of Medina University, who do not receive any remuneration from Saudi Arabia.<sup>59</sup>

Iddrisu on the other hand argues that material gain cannot be ruled out as a factor in the spread of this faith, although it is not the sole aim. He gives examples of conflict between these graduates and the local heads of their institutions. Both Afa Ajura of Anbariyya and Mallam Bāsha of Nuriyya have accused their returnee scholars of using their Saudi-earned incomes to erect comfortable homes for themselves and to purchase luxury items like satellite dishes while not reinvesting in their alma mater to which they owe so much.<sup>60</sup>

Shaykh Amin Bamba also took a neutral stand, saying he had no evidence to prove whether or not it was material gain that motivated the spread and rapid growth of Wahhābism. Since such judgmental statements are subjective, he preferred not to subscribe to it.<sup>61</sup>

#### **4.8. The Economic State of Northern Ghana:**

An overview of the economic background of northern Ghana will give us some data to determine whether the appalling economic state of the people justifies the petro-dollar thesis. At a recent conference on “Global World Conference on Food Security” held in Montreal,

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Shaykh Saʿīd Abubakar

<sup>60</sup> Iddrisu “Contesting Islam”

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Shaykh Amin Bamba 11/20/2008 Tamale

Canada from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>TH</sup> October 2009, Mr. Adam Abdul presented on the theme “Food security in a challenging economic environment” From him we received a vivid picture of the current state of the economy and the people in this part of Ghana.

The Northern Region is one of the poorest regions (in fact the third) in Ghana with about 60% of the people being poor (GPRS II, 2004). Because of this situation it is one of the regions that has attracted many poverty reduction interventions including CIDA funded programs such as the Community Driven Initiative on Food Security (CIFCS), the District Wide Assistance Project (DWAP) and the Northern Region Small Town Water Project (NORST).<sup>62</sup>

The major economic activity of this region according to Adam is farming, which serves as the backbone of the economy. This agro-economy is rain fed and operates in only five to seven months of the year. This implies that half of the year is spent in farming while the other half constitutes a fallow period. Other factors that emanate from this dependency on the agro-based industry leading to spiraling poverty is high dependency ratio, low incomes, poor savings and unavailability of assets to absorb unforeseen shocks.<sup>63</sup>

Given the economic background of the north, one cannot rule out the fact that the atmosphere is congenial to the acceptance of the petro-dollar thesis as an explanation for the rapid growth of Wahhābism. Although in the formative years Afa Ajura started his religious activism without a thought to the need for financial assistance<sup>64</sup> nevertheless, as the Anbaryyya community developed and its doctrinal inclination gained ground, there arose the need to finance its projects; hence the recourse to Saudi financing.

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<sup>62</sup> Adam Abdul Karim. Presentation on the theme “Food security in a challenging economic environment” at “Global World Conference on Food Security” held in Montreal Canada from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>TH</sup> October 2009. 3

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>64</sup> Ousman “Promoting the Good”

#### 4.9. Wahhābist Code of Conduct and Religious Practice as a Factor in its Rise to Prominence:

Another argument offered in explanation is that the code of conduct and religious practice of the Wahhābists is actually more relevant to the local population because of the drastic economic and social conflicts in Northern Ghana. This has been held up as the motivating factor in winning adherents.

Codes of conduct and belief systems begin with a distinctive look to members of the Wahhābi movement. These wear white caps termed the Munchire hat and grow beards.<sup>65</sup> Responses that I had in my group interviews at both the Tamale Senior High School and the Pong Tamale Senior High School pointed to the dress code of the Munchiris as an appealing factor. On Fridays especially, the image of ankle high white Jalbaabs, with a white Munchiri-cap and a well-combed beard gives them a fascinating appearance.

Another distinctive trait consisted in avoiding the practice of putting the right hand on the left above the navel during their daily prayers (*Qabd*), for this was seen as a characteristic of the Tijānīs. They instead adopted *Sadl*, *i.e.* leaving the hands by the sides. This has since been rescinded with the return of the Saudi graduates. Similarly, the traditional ethic of bowing to the elderly was dismissed as *shirk* and worship;<sup>66</sup> so, when greeting the elderly, or someone high

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 26

<sup>66</sup> Hajia Mariyam Alolo made reference to this in my interview with her at her residence on 28/12/08 at Tamale. She clarified the situation as follows:

Traditions vary in our locality respect is showed to the elderly by squatting. This does not imply that you are worshipping that person. God has his own prescribed way of worshipping or paying obeisance to Him and not squatting. He is not physically visible in front of you, for you to squat before him it is the person that you see that you squat to. But some of our scholars misinterpret this gesture by saying that by doing that to any person implies you have placed him in place of God. This is untrue. That is their understanding of it. The tradition on which they rely to come to this conclusion is different. They say that the prophet (S.A.W) during his life time sent some of his (Sahābas) companions to a King who was a non-Muslim. They observed that the King's servants laid down flat on their stomach in front of the king as a sign of respect. On their return, they also did the

in status, Munchires were not to show that respect which was part of Dagbon culture. Hajia Mariyam in my interview dismissed the earlier practice as a misinterpretation and presentation of an incident that occurred during the time of the Prophet. Some companions of the Prophet returned from a mission to a Byzantine emperor and, emulating the way the Byzantines honored their king, they attempted doing the same to the Prophet by lying down on their bellies and putting their foreheads on the ground. The Prophet prohibited them from doing so. Salifu ‘Abdul M‘umin also argued that prostration is not the same as squatting so to prohibit squatting as a sign of respect to our elders by misidentifying it as worship was out of place. This act, when it was implemented by Afa Ajura, became widely acclaimed and practiced.

The counting of prayer beads (*Masbaha*) was also declared to be an innovation,<sup>67</sup> as were supererogatory prayers – thus *Salat al-Tahajjud* during Ramadan was considered *bid‘a*. During Ramadan, the commentaries on the Qur’ān (*tafsir*), done at various Tijānī mosques by learned Mallams, were also said to be an innovation. Even the consumption of foods like unsliced yam tubers (termed *jinjina* in Dagbanli) and corn porridge served with additional cooked and ungrounded corn added (known locally as *kukognyina*) were denounced as innovation, all because they were in excess.

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same to the prophet (S.A.W), but the prophet rebuked them and said that was improper. The prophet refuted it because it was lying flat and not squatting. This is the basis of some people refuting the idea of squatting or respecting the elderly in our society. This element that the Sunnis have instituted into their society has weakened them. Their children have become wayward because they do not respect them. When their children meet and elderly they hit him/her with their shoulders. When they greet they do so in the standing position. In the same vein a woman talks to her husband standing and even to her parent’s standing. This behaviour has resulted into the children that have been brought up this way to have no respect for anyone. Even the scholars that preached these ideas are being victims of these children. They go to the extent of hitting them and insulting them. This does not attract blessing for such children. Even their women who pursue this thought are not pleasant in the society. They do not have respect for anyone and they talk without caution. Allah wants people who are respectful. They even see themselves to be superior. So squatting is a societal norm which does not imply worshipping.

<sup>67</sup> Abdel, “The Influence” 300

Funeral celebrations as practiced by the Tijānīs in Tamale were considered particularly unIslamic for they were seen to be reminiscent of Wangara and Hausa customs. Observation of the third, seventh, and fortieth day prayer sessions in the deceased's house was roundly condemned as innovation.<sup>68</sup>

The practice of spiritual healing (ṭibbu) by some clerics was also vehemently condemned.<sup>69</sup> This took the form of writing portions of the Qur'ān on black slates, which were washed with water that was subsequently drunk by the afflicted. Afa Ajura included the wearing of talismans in this category. Furthermore, wedding ceremonies and naming ceremonies were to be performed at the barest minimum cost. Any additional activities like drumming and dancing were considered *bid'a*.<sup>70</sup> Observation of the celebration of the birth of the Prophet *Mawlid al-Nabi* was also considered to be *bid'a*.

Expressing beliefs of this sort, Afa Ajura managed by 1966 to attract an appreciable number of people into his Wahhābist fold. Armed with numerical power, he defiantly built his own mosque and started to hold Friday and 'Id prayers with a separate congregation. The Gulkpe-Na persistently threatened to demolish the mosque, but nothing was ever done about this.<sup>71</sup>

The challenges posed to the Tijāniyya outlined in this chapter have been crucial to the order's loss of impetus, but they constitute only the external factors. To understand the problem in full, we must turn in the next chapter to the internal problems that have undermined the Tijāniyya's response to the Wahhābi onslaught.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>71</sup> Adam, "Conflict" 20.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. LAPSES IN INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF TIJĀNISM

#### 5.1. THE INTERNAL FACTORS THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE DECLINE OF TIJĀNISM IN GHANA:

This chapter surveys the internal factors that have culminated in the perceived decline of the Tijāniyya movement in Ghana. The components that will be examined include: weaknesses in the education of present-day Tijāni youth; the Shaykh Maikano factor; the Shaykh Maikano and Abd al-Wadūd fracas; the Shaykh Maikano and Mallam Bāsha audio cassette dispute; and finally the “Akwāshirawa” controversy and the “Munchir/Faila” phenomenon. Critical examination has shown that the above factors have in reality impacted negatively on Tijānism in terms of membership, numbers and overall popularity among the masses.

The weaknesses in education within Tijānism cannot be clearly understood without first giving a brief background view of the intellectual history of the movement. In this regard, a selective cross-section of the intellectual history of Tijānism, dating from its founder to the present day, will serve to introduce the notion that the reluctance on the part of some present-day Tijānis towards the acquisition of both esoteric and exoteric knowledge is not a legacy inherited from the founder or earlier adherents of the Tijāniyya.

i. **Shaykh Aḥmad Tijāni:**

The Tijāniyya order has since time immemorial been seen as an elitist order.<sup>1</sup> This dates back to the days of its founder Shaykh Aḥmad al-Tijāni. His biographer ‘Ali al-Ḥarāzīm outlines the founder’s educational background and his scholarly exploits as well as his *Fatwās* in the *Jawāhir al- Ma‘āni*. This book has it that Shaykh Tijāni memorized the whole of the *Qur‘ān* by the age of seven under the tutelage of Shaykh Abī ‘Abdallāh Sayyidi Muḥammad b. Hamū at-Tijānī, a proponent of Nafi’s mode of recitation.<sup>2</sup> The author of *Fath al-Rabbāni* explains that the Shaykh set himself the task of seeking knowledge in the religious sciences and of becoming an icon in the discipline.<sup>3</sup> He was noted for undertaking whatever he intended to do without backing out, pursuing it to its logical conclusion.<sup>4</sup> He then took to teaching and even giving legal opinions (*fatwas*) at a very tender age.<sup>5</sup> He was also noted for strong adherence to the *Sunna* (tradition) of the Prophet and for following its ethical code of conduct very strictly. He was also said to have restrained himself from indulging in what the people of his time were accustomed to and deemed permissible. He is reputed to have responded to questions very cautiously.

Though he lost both his parents at the age of twenty-one in 1166 (1753), and on the same day, as a result of a plague that hit the locality, this did not distract him from his quest for

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<sup>1</sup> Stewart, “Tijaniyya” 49.

<sup>2</sup> Barrāda Ali Ḥarāzīm, ‘*Jawāhir al-Ma‘ānī wa-al-Bulūgh al-Amānī fī Fayd Sayyidī Abī Abbās al-Tijānī*. Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1997), 23

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>4</sup> Muḥammad, al-‘Arabī Ibn al-Sāyih. *Bughyat al-Mustafīd li-Sharḥ Munyat al-Murīd*. (Morocco: Dār al-Bayḍā’, 1973), 140.

<sup>5</sup> Op cit., 7

knowledge.<sup>6</sup> It rather served as a turning point in his life towards treading the saintly (Ṣūfi) path.

**ii. Shaykh Ibrahim Abdullāhi Niass 1900-1975:**

The twentieth century khalifa of the Tijāniyya order, in the person of Shaykh Ibrāhīm Abdullāhi Niass, was likewise considered an epitome of knowledge. Shaykh Ibrāhīm's concern for and emphasis on acquisition of knowledge was proven by his decision to send nine of his children to al-Azhar in the 1960s to be educated. He promised to send six more to make the number fifteen, and said to the Shaykh al - Azhar that he wanted the children to be educated in the Islamic sciences and Arabic language to equip them to render services to Islam in their country after graduation.<sup>7</sup>

His zeal for education was not limited to Senegal alone but was pan-West African in its reach. The *al-Jazīra* newspaper of Cairo reported a detailed plan orchestrated by Shaykh Ibrāhīm Niass to formulate a uniform and pan-West African Islamic education system that would cover the whole sub-region. These schools were to be managed and taught by the specialist scholars of al-Azhar University. This mega project was initiated by the Shaykh by laying the foundation stone for the Islamic institute at Kaolakh in Senegal. The institute was to be composed of a grand mosque and primary and secondary level schools for the study of the Arabic language and Islamic religious fundamentals. The Muslims of this sub-region made voluntary monetary contributions towards this project. Shaykh Ibrāhīm made an appeal for aid

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 7

<sup>7</sup> Ibrahim Tiyaṁ, *Hamsu wa 'Ishrīn sana 'alā rahīl al-Shaykh bi qalam Ibrahim Tiyaṁ taqḍīm Husssein as-Shāfi'i nāib rais jumhiriyya maṣr al-'Arabia al asbaq (al-Nahār lil ṭab'i al-Tawzī 'i 2002)*, 41

to help him establish institutes in all the cities of West Africa towards the realization of this goal.<sup>8</sup>This vision bore fruit before his demise in 1975.

His children and those of his murids committed the Qur‘ān to memory as young as the tender age of eight. Emphasis was not placed on the Qur‘ān alone but on other Islamic disciplines as well. He established schools in the whole of West Africa as he proposed to do. In Senegal the reputable schools that produced qualitative murīd scholars in West African sub-region included the schools headed by Shaykh Aliyyu Sise and Shaykh Ahmad Tiam. The institute operated by Alhaji Abdalla Niass al-Azhari was directed by the late Shaykh Mohammad Nazīr and is presently headed by Shaykh Mohammad Māhi Niass. This institute consisted of primary, middle and secondary levels of education. Shaykh Hassan Sise, the grandson of Shaykh Ibrahim, also established the Afro-American Institute in Senegal in a bid to continue Shaykh Ibrahim’s dream of educating Muslims of all nationalities.<sup>9</sup>

Shaykh Ibrāhīm Niass was reputed to have more than nine million student spread all over West Africa. Nigeria and northern Ghana were home to a large proportion of these scholars.<sup>10</sup> Paden notes that Shaykh Ibrāhīm introduced at the time the usage of mass media in the spread and exposition of knowledge. This was resisted by some early pockets of Wahhābi faith located in Nigeria and headed by Shaykh Abūbakr Gumi. Later, however, this gained general acceptance from the populace.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 39

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 40

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>11</sup> Paden, John N., *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973,).

### **iii. Selected Tijāni Scholars in Ghana:**

On the Ghanaian front, almost all the best known scholars in the Islamic sciences were adherents of Tijānism. This included Shaykh Shehāb ad-Dīn of Nsawam, Shaykh Mallam Attah of Accra, Shaykh Ibrāhīm Hamdu of Koforidua, Shaykh al-Hassan Nasiruddīn of Tamale, and Shaykh Baba Makaranta and Shaykh Hārūn ar-Rashīd, both of Kumasi. In the north the foremost Tijāniyya scholars were Shaykh Abūbākr of Salaga (later to relocate to Karachi), Shaykh Abdullahi Gomda of Yendi, Al-Hassan Maisūna of Salaga, Shaykh Alhassan Jibrīl Turzon and his twin brother al-Hussein Jibrīl Turzon of Nanton, Shaykh Abūbākr of Zeng and Shaykh Khalid of Kumbungu. The above were all first generation of Tijāni scholars.<sup>12</sup>

The second generation saw the likes of Shaykh Abdallāhi Maikano of Prang, Shaykh Abd al-Razzāq Ṭāhir of Accra, Shaykh Baba Jamāl of Prang - relocated to Accra, - (all of them al-Azhar graduate), Shaykh Ṭāhir of Tamale, Shaykh Jibrīl Zakariyya, Shaykh Ibrāhīm Gushegu, Shaykh Bawa, Shaykh Mohammad Bila of Tamale and Shaykh Yaqūb Ishāq. These were scholars who had command of all the Islamic sciences. Most, if not all, of the leadership of the Wahhābi sect studied under them.

### **iv. The Decline in Quality of Education among the Present Generation of Tijāni Youth:**

As can be deduced from the brief narrative of the founder of the Tijānism and his successors, the cornerstone of the order has been knowledge. The decline of Tijānism (or the slowdown in activity of the Tijāniyya, as some might like to term it) may be seen in the lack of

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<sup>12</sup> See appendix iv. for a group picture of the early Tijāni scholars of Ghana and a visiting Sharīf from Medina. Starting from left to right, this comprises of Mallam Attah (Accra), Mallam Danfī, Mallam Shihāb dīn of Nsawam Shaykh al-Hassan Jibrīl Turzon of Nanton in Northern Ghana and in the middle is the Sherīf from Medina.

enthusiasm exhibited by the younger generation to acquire knowledge. Present-day Tijāni youth give credence to the study and practice of spirituality at the expense of the Islamic sciences. A saying that circulates among traditional Sufis and attributed to Imām Mālīk goes thus:

*Man taṣawwafa wa lam yatafaqaḥa faqad tazandaqa wa man tafaqaḥa wa lam yataṣwwafa faqad tafassaqa wa man jama‘ baynahumā faqad tahaqaqa.*<sup>13</sup>

This means that he who acquires the esoteric knowledge without the exoteric knowledge is considered a *fāsiq* (deviant), while he who acquires the exoteric without complementing it with the esoteric is considered a *zindīq* (unbeliever or atheist). But he who combines both attains the Haqīqa (reality or truth). So for one to be fully learned in the religious sciences, one has to combine the knowledge of both types of knowledge. This precept has very wide and far-reaching repercussion. The lack of one of the components may be responsible for the chaotic intra-religious disturbances that we encounter today in Ghanaian society.<sup>14</sup>

This issue of apathy on the part of Tijāni youth was identified as a source of concern by most of the Tijāni scholars that I interviewed. The responses I had from some of these scholars pointed to a variety of causes.

Ilyas ‘Umar’s reaction to the situation was thus:

They are not even inclined to the Haqīqa, they follow their own whims. In that sense that the Murīd can never be perfect in Haqīqa without a leader. You must have a leader. If you have no leader you can never be directed. Our youth of today have no time for this leadership. So if you ask them it is symbolic leadership “this is my Shaykh” and they can stay a month or two without seeing the Shaykh.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Shaykh Abdulahi Ibrahim Niass, *Kashf al-Ilbās*. (Morocco: Dār al Bayḍā‘, 1335.) 13

<sup>14</sup> This issue requires an in depth research on its own merits.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Shaykh Ilyas ‘Umar 01/13/2009 Tamale

Shaykh ʿIsā Alhassan a Wahhābi scholar made this observation about the attitude of Tijāni youth:

I will also say that we realize the ‘ulamā’ of Tijāniyya movement are dying. Their demise and the lackadaisical attitude of the youth to study the actual movement has been a contributory factor. The youth are not making any efforts to keep the torch of Tijānism burning. I told some of them that “look you people are cheating yourselves because you believe you practice something that you cannot defend”. We are not blaming you. Try to come out and convince us. So that is why I am telling you that just take a look at them, ... the Sunni movement is fortunate to have affiliate countries that they travel to study. Tell me the country that the Tijāniyya are affiliated to, where they go to broaden the horizon of their knowledge. And also laxities: just look at the dances that they have introduced. Can you combine between moral life that is dancing and studies? So that is it. So I believe it is on the decline.<sup>16</sup>

Shaykh Ibrahim Niass foresaw this and therefore mentioned in one of his letters to the Tijānis in Niamey in Niger that two categories of Tijānis are not among his flock nor have anything to do with the Tijāni path - - “al majzūb<sup>17</sup> lam yasluk wa sālik<sup>18</sup> lam yajzib” - - so long as thee remain in this state.<sup>19</sup> He further noted in one of his annual Mawlid addresses in Kaolakh that the future of any state was in the hands of the educated youth who have laudable character and high aspirations, but as for those youth who lack those characteristics, they are like fruitless plants (*fagaras bilā thamar*). The youth should therefore go into all fields of knowledge.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Shaykh ʿIsā Alhassan Abubakr 1/11/2009 at Tamale.

<sup>17</sup> al-Qashāni ‘Abd-al-Razzāq in his “Glossary of Sufi Technical terms” trans. Nabil Safwat, (London: Octagon press, 1991.), defines as: “Someone whom Truth has singled out for himself and selected for his own intimate companionship, purifying him was sacred dater. Thus, by dint of all these favours and gifts, he has attained what is achieved in all the various stages and degrees of development without himself going to the trouble of acquiring it.”

<sup>18</sup> According to Wehr, Hans., in his “*A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*,” (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1966) he defines it as someone who treads the path.

<sup>19</sup> Shaykh Ibrahim Niass “Jawāhir al-Rasāil” 11

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pt. .ii 28-29

## 5.2. The Khalifate Crises in Kaolakh after the Demise of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass:

While Kaolakh served as the scholarly and spiritual center for the Tijāniyya Niassiyya, Kano on the other hand served as geographical centre for the movement's dynamic expansion.<sup>21</sup> The death of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass at St. Thomas Hospital in London on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 1975 impacted on the stability of the exuberant fraternity of Tijāniyya Niassiyya that he had managed, within a short span of time, to set on the road to rapid expansion. His death, according to Christopher Gray, created a vacuum which was hard to fill with an apt and immaculate candidate. On the home front in Kaolakh it created a parallel power base. Abdoulaye Niass was considered by some sources as the Khalifa. As the eldest son of Shaykh Ibrahim, he had a natural claim. Other supporters put forward pose Shaykh Aliyu Cisse as the Khalifa.<sup>22</sup>

It therefore came as no surprise when the movement to combat innovation and establish Sunna emerged in Nigeria, largely to fight the spread of Tijānism. Similarly, in Ghana Afa Ajura also formed the Munchire movement to curtail those same phenomena

This lack of unified central command can be considered an important factor in the upsurge of Muncherism in Northern Ghana. As I suggested in my Master's thesis with the clarity of hindsight, the joyful and tumultuous welcome that graced Shaykh Ibrahim's maiden visit to Ghana showed that Ghana was one of the most populous Tijāni base in West Africa.

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<sup>21</sup> Gray "Niassene Tijaniyya" 46

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 52



### 5.3. Tijānism as an Acephalous<sup>23</sup> Order:

The lack of a structured leadership in Tijānism as reiterated by Shaykh ‘Isā of Qamariyya<sup>24</sup> and Samwini<sup>25</sup> has impacted adversely on Tijānism. Al-Hussein disagrees.<sup>26</sup>

A critical comparative study of the organizational structure and implementation within the three main Islamic groupings in Ghana has rated Tijāniyya movement as the last. This organizational ability is led by the Ahmadis and then followed by the Wahhābis.

Shaykh ‘Isā of the Tamale technical university asserted to me in his interview that Tijānism was always reinvigorated or rejuvenated in the past by occasional visits of leaders or *mashāyikh* of the order to Tamale. He cited the examples of Shaykh Aliyu Sese, Hassan Dem and Shaykh Abdul Razak Ṭahir. Yet for quite a time now these activities had ceased or slowed down. Absence of this component militated against the normal spread of Tijānism. The general populace used also to be initiated into the order at open preaching sessions that these itinerant Tijānis organized on their visits. A concern expressed to me by Sayyida Khadijah relating to this point was that the visitors still trickle in but their presence is not felt due to the internal divisions among members of the fraternity. Visitors are seen as guests of either the Nāsiriyya or Jallowiyya clique. The Nāsiriyyas are those who still have strong allegiance to the Tijāniyya Niassiyya, whereas the Jallowiyya are those who are more loyal to Shaykh Maikano’s legacy who may be termed as neo-Niassiyya.<sup>27</sup> She even said that these days we do not hear honorific

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<sup>23</sup> Stewart “Tijaniyya” 55.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Shaykh ‘Isā al-Hassan Abubakr 1/11/2009 at Tamale

<sup>25</sup> Samwini, N., *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950: Its Effects upon Muslims and Muslim-Christian Relations*. (Berlin: Lit c2006.)

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Al- Hussain Zakariyya 01/05/2009 Tamale.

<sup>27</sup> This is my coinage based on the reforms that this faction has introduced into Tijānism like the drumming and dancing during Mawlid and the recitation of the wazīfa over the corpse of a Tijāni before internment.

terms like “An-Niass” but rather it is “Jalloo” that is heard. These factors have all played a role in reducing the popularity and population that the Tijānis once enjoyed.

Shaykh Zakaria al-Hussein expressed a different view in that in this modern era no organization can function without a paper existence. If a researcher like Samwini approaches such an organization to acquaint himself with how they operate, this will be provided in black and white in a document. Yet the ready provision of information like the constitution does not necessarily imply that in reality the outfit operates in that manner. There are some organizations that are even termed ghost organization. These organizations live on paper but have no real physical existence. An effective public relations approach can also convince people of viability. The Wahhābis for instance are more divided and splintered in reality as compared to the Tijānis. The intra-Wahhābi split is even stronger than is envisaged. He gave as an example the meeting that brought together the Anbariyya group and the Nuriyya group: this occasion was a kind of reconciliation in disguise. It had been ages since the two factions had come together in such an occasion. To al-Hussein the organizational factor is a contentious matter.<sup>28</sup> I

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<sup>28</sup> In a similar vein Shaykh ‘Isā’s interview confirms the divisions within the Wahhābi network on the local and nationwide scale, although he began by denying it. He digresses on the forms of division thus:

They are not divided. It is worldly affairs that have set in. What brought about Ah al-Sunna wa al-Jamā‘ah? They were all under the bigger umbrella of Majlis al-‘Aalā. At a point in time say around 1992 some of them decided that now that we have the chief Imām that chief Imam we know belongs to the Tijāniyya movement why can we not have our own Imām - chief Imām. Some of the Sunnis said that, no. You people are aware of a prophetic tradition that says that whenever we have an Imām in place and somebody comes to claim the Imāmship help that Imam to fight against the new person who has come to claim the Imāmship. We cannot have two Imāms at the same time as long as we Muslims are concerned we can only have a single person occupying that chair at a time. So they said let us exercise patience until after the demise of the current chief Imām we can agitate and call for the leadership to put in place somebody who is Sunni if we want to balanced movement So that Tijani/Sunni and Tijani/ Sunni should be the way it should alternate They were very hasty. They said that “no we could not wait so they went and sat elsewhere and picked somebody to be the leader of the Sunnis. So they were saying now that we are all Sunnis. Now that we have picked somebody let us call ourselves Ahl al-Sunna. It is the word Jamā‘ah that they have introduced. Nobody except these people that we are having combed round the world and see anybody who is calling himself as ahl al-sunna wa al-Jamā ‘ah. They call themselves ahl al –Sunna (they are said to be the extremist

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and will not follow the Tijānis in prayer) The ignorant among them. If you know that some of the companion of the prophet stood behind some of the (thuwār) uprisers after Uthmān bin Afān was killed ‘Ali the fourth Khalifa and others they stood behind Abd al-Rahmān and al-Ashtar and they prayed. So if the companions could follow somebody who was seen as an innovator to pray - so who are you to say that you will not follow a Tijāni to pray. I am very sure that some of the Tijānis have prayers and some of the Sunnis have our prayers to be null and void. Simply because we do not practice the basic tenets of that somebody who is praying is suppose to do it. It is nonsense, it is something that in uncalled for to say that you will not follow such a person to pray. We know that sometimes some of them might do things that are unislamic. If you say you will not follow that person that you may have an explanation to it.

I strongly believe that ahl al – Sunna wa al- Jamā‘ah - is just a term they have coined it . It is a term they have coined but doctrinally it is one practice they are the same - but I am telling you that it is the worldly affairs. Go and see they have started fighting among themselves simply because of the worldly gains. They want to see where the proceeds of the Zakat fund goes. They sometimes go round the country and realise up to the tune of sixty million where does it go. So it is worldly affairs. The love for the worldly has affairs that have set in. It is not, it is not a Godly movement; it is for position. They were scrambling for position. That is why you saw the division that came up. And even I will tell you that sometimes in Tamale here we have a sect that used to call itself Munchire and now maybe they are trying to re-transform it. They are now rejecting the name and are now calling themselves Sunnis. And then you maybe surprised to hear that even in northern region itself we have division. among the Sunnis. In Northern region we have division among the Sunnis. And we have division among the ahl al - Sunna wa al Jamā ‘ah itself. We have ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā‘a an we have ahl al-Sunna especially politics has its role and chieftaincy also has set in. So we have Sunnis who belong to the Munchire movement. They themselves belong to one chieftaincy gate and a very different political inclination then also those who do not belong to it. So division, yes they are there but we should have a mystic eye to be able to read into those. So expect division in all set ups that you can find especially religious movements have divisions.

.....the Bayānism (Mallam Bāsha) sect will belong to Ahhul- Sunnas wa al Jamā ‘ah, simply because he is their representation in the region. He is their regional Imām. Ambariyya is divided into two some of them belong to the ahl al-Sunnas wa al-Jamā‘ah and some of them belong to Bayānism. The larger part of the Ambariyya community belong to the ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā‘ah. I will tell you that Shaykh Tanko’s faction or aspect – he belongs to the Sunni – that is the ordinary Sunna by the fact he is the general supervisor as well as the regional representative of the Majlis. So the Majlis claims to be the Sunni thus the orthodox Sunna. Whiles the majority comprising of Afa Issa modow, Shaykh Abdul Manān and all those they will call themselves the ahl al – Sunna wa al-Jamā‘ah. They have the secret, periodic meeting with Al- Bayān. So now you will see some of the difference and cracks among them too. When it comes “seeing and fasting” during the month of Ramadān - fasting following Saudi Arabia sighting of the moon - they have their difference there as well as the friction there too. But by and large they incline themselves to the Bayāns or Bayānism [Saudi scholars should have been following Saudi Arabia in fasting and festive prayers because they have studied there and ...] I will tell you the peculiar problem here, we worship our leadership to the extent that even if the leadership went wrong we should follow the leadership in that direction. We see him who (dares correct the leadership) to be a social divient or religious divient if anybody comes to correct the wrong path the leadership took. So, that is the problem we are faced with here. Though some of us who claim we belong to the ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā‘ah, we saw that a particular leader had strived and in his hands Sunni- grew I mean the Sunnism grew, and it expanded. But some of the things that he might have practiced, some of us will see that if want, to maybe do something different from it we might be seen to be people who are not loyal to him. So therefore we would appreciate and will always want to be on his path whether it was right or wrong. That is why you see some of our mallams, though before they would have gone to Saudi Arabia, they and their leader were on a particular path. They went to Saudi Arabia and have appeared to have changed their path. But after they returned the followers are those who are now the leaders and those who are supposed to be leading the way are now the followers – they have taken the back seat are they are now the

presuppose that the ability of the Wahābis to agree in the eyes of the public and to disagree when they are within their ranks and file portrays them as a unified entity. Secondly the monitoring mechanism that has been put in place by their employers in Saudi Arabia also makes them always to appear to stick together. Through the explanation given by al-Hasssan it could be deciphered that their differences stems from their bid to appear in the eyes of their employers as hard working missionaries.

#### **5.4. THE SHAYKH MAIKANO FACTOR:**

##### **i. Birth, Genealogy and Upbringing**

A brief history of Shaykh Maikano and his role in the Tijāniyya order in Ghana will be offered here. Like the stereotypes that are often common in writings dealing with the biography of leaders of mystical orders, Shaykh Maikano's is no exception. His birth was surrounded with a mystery. The 10<sup>th</sup> great grandfather on his patrilineal lineage was told the Prophecy that a saint would be born to his lineage. Shaykh Mohammad ibn Muhammad Amin was the name of the tenth grandfather and a disciple (murid) of Shaykh 'Umar al-Futī of Futa Jallon. This glad tiding was passed down from one generation to the other until his second great grandfather. This second grandfather migrated to Niger and settled at Sayi (one of the Zabarma towns), where he established an Arabic school. He had another vision that the saint would not be born in Fata Jallon so he had to relocate to Niger. His sojourn in Niger was short lived because the vision recurred showing that Niger was not to be the place, and so he went to the then Gold,

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followers. They are being pulled here and there. Though he might have had his stance different what the leader would have preached but he fears to loose the loyalty of the people and he will always want to please them. That is the difficulty we have found ourselves in.

Coast which is the present-day Ghana. In Ghana he moved from one town to the other until he settled in the north, which was then called Gonja. He settled at Kumbungu and married a princess of the town. This marriage was blessed with a son and a daughter named Abubakar<sup>29</sup> and Maimūna gogo, respectively. This was a very important link in the family lineage Shaykh Maikano. It was from this linkage that he derived his Dagomba nationality, which most of his chroniclers downplay.

The great grandfather, Shaykh Mohammad Jabbo, left Gonja for Kintampo in the Brong Ahafo region, where he established a school and then married another woman who gave birth to Imām Abdul Mu'min. Imām M'umin grew up here and married and had a son named Ahmad Badawi. This was during the colonial era. The great grandfather Shaykh Mohammad Jabbo relocated to Dunkwa where he established another school. Sixty of his students succeeded in memorizing the Qur'ān. It was here that he died. His elder son by his Dagomba wife moved to Cape Coast, where he built a school and a mosque.

Imām Abdul Mu'min, on the other hand, relocated to Aborso where he and his family were confronted with a lot of challenges from enemies who fought him spiritually. He therefore sought for assistance from his half brother Abubakar, who came to put an end to the spiritual duel with prayers. Imām Abdul Mu'min died in 1942 and Ahmad Badawi was enskined the chief of Abosso Zongo.

Shaykh Maikanos' mother served the then Ṣūfī Qutb of the area – Shaykh Abūbākr Karachi (r.a), who had come to visit his friend Chief Mallam Khalidu in the city of Prang for the sake of those refugee Muslims that had been expelled from Atebubu as a result of intra-

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<sup>29</sup> My father also narrated the Dagomba lineage of Shaykh Maikano by linking him to his half brother Afa Abubakari "Anḥrinina" of Nanton. This Maikano linkage has won him a massive support and admiration from most Dagombas.

Muslim conflict. The Shaykh prophesied that the lady would give birth to a Wali who would serve the cause of Islam and this prophecy was seen as fulfilled in the person of Shaykh Maikano, the only son born to the mother. A confirmation of his being the promised one was confirmed by the Shaykh Karachi himself when he came back to Prang for a second visit. He was ushered in to see the baby Maikano and he confirmed him to be the prophesized wali.<sup>30</sup>

## ii. Maikano's Educational Exploits:

Born at Aborso in Ghana on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1928 (he was to die on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2005),<sup>31</sup> Maikano memorized the Qur'ān at a tender age under the tutelage of his grandfather Imām 'Abdul Mu'min. On the demise of Imām 'Abdul Mu'min he continued his studies with Mallam 'Abdul Lāhi Makāfu and Mallam Mustapha on the majālis pattern of studies. He sought knowledge of the Islamic sciences at Aborso<sup>32</sup> before proceeding to Kumasi to continue his studies with Shaykh Harūn Rashid.<sup>33</sup> Among the books studied included Badamasi, al-Hamziyya, the Burdah of Busiri, Ibn Duraid, al-Dāliyya, the Maqāmāt of al-Harīri and Shu'arā' al-Jāhilliyya.<sup>34</sup> One of his biographers called him as a Qur'ān maniac.<sup>35</sup> He was among the early Ghanaians to study at Azhar in Cairo. He returned to Ghana in 1956 to step up his sole mission of spreading Islam and the Tijāniyya Sufi order. He began his missionary work before interacting with Shaykh Ibrāhim Niass.

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<sup>30</sup> Mohammed Salisu aka Jalloo Baba Nyars. *Knowing more about Sheikh waliyullahi Ahaji Abdulahi Ahmad Maikano*. (Kumasi: Amen Press, n.d.) un-paginated chapter 1

<sup>31</sup> Muqaddam Masoud Hassan. *Book of Waliyullah: The legacy of Sheikh al- Azhariyy, al-Futi, Imam Alhaji Abdullahi Ahmed Maikano Baaba Giwa (ra)* (Germany [n.d]) 8

<sup>32</sup> Musa Sa'id Musa Bagya. *Tārīkh Shaykh Abdallah Maikano*. [n.d.] 4.

<sup>33</sup> Harūn, *Bushrā al-Muhibīn*, 425-26.

<sup>34</sup> Bagya, *Tārīkh*, 4.

<sup>35</sup> Mohammed Salisu, *Knowing more about*, un-paginated.

### iii. Role in the Spread of Tijāniyya:

Maikano was conscripted into Ghana's armed forces as the chief Imām in 1964.<sup>36</sup> He impacted on the Muslims in the forces as well as on the wider Ghanaian community.

He promoted the observation of the Mawlid of Shaykh Ahmad Tijāni in various parts of the country, seeing these celebrations as a forum for making the acquaintance of fellow Tijānis in other parts of the country. It also served as an opportunity to formulate for the advancement of Islam. This still goes on. Maikano began the practice of initiating young men and women into Tijānism, whose membership was initially limited to the elderly.<sup>37</sup> In Tamale and Kumasi he accomplished great tasks, such as combating ardent Wahhābi leaders like Afa Ajura and Mallam Abdul Samad.

On the international scene Maikano is reputed to have been the teacher of Shaykh Ibrāhim Niass's children and those of Shaykh Aliyyu Sisse at Kaolakh in Senegal. His encounter with Shaykh Bin Bāz came about as a result of a report made about him by Ghanaian Saudi students as a promoter Tijānism. All these were hallmarks of the first part of his life.<sup>38</sup>

In the second part of his life some of his activities generated an intra-Tijāni conflict. This brought about a split in loyalty among the membership of the order, which I speculate gave the Wahhābis leverage to turn things around in their favor. This I will describe as the negative aspect of "the Maikano factor."

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<sup>36</sup> Harūn, *Bushrā al-Muhibīn*, 427.

<sup>37</sup> Salisu, *Knowing more*, chapter (unpaginated).

<sup>38</sup> Bagya, *Tārīkh*, 43-44.

**iv. Shaykh Maikano as De-Facto Khalifa of Tijāniyya**

To the chroniclers of Shaykh Abdulahi Maikano, “the Maikano factor” was the motive force behind the spread and rise of Tijānism not only in Ghana but for the sub-region’s Tijāniyya order. In fact Shaykh Maikano is considered the de-facto Khalīfa of Shaykh Aḥmad Tijāni after the demise of Shaykh Ibrahīm Abdulahi Niass, at least according to his faction of Tijānis. The basis for this conception is derived from a narrative of one Sayyida, Halima as-S’adiyya a Ghanaian from Ejura in the Ashanti region. When she was in Senegal during the last days of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass, she paid a visit to him and found him lying on a bed and surrounded by many people. All of a sudden Shaykh Ibrahim beamed with smiles and laughter, and this behavior on the part of the Shaykh was usually taken as a sign of either something that was to happen immediately or that would happen in future. After she greeted the Shaykh, he sent for his khādim al-Hāj Ishāq and his son Mohammad al-Amin to come with the car. They were sent pick up a special visitor from Ghana at the airport in Dakar the capital of Senegal. At the airport they met none other than Shaykh Abdullahi Maikano and his companion al-Haj Hassan “Maitābo” (vendor of lumber)<sup>39</sup> who had come from Tamale, and so they picked them up and headed towards Kaolakh. On entering the precincts of Kaolakh people came out in great numbers to see who the guest was and to their surprise it was Shaykh Maikano, seated in the car where Shaykh Ibrahim normally sat. The crowd followed the car to its destination where Shaykh Maikano alighted. When he entered into Shaykh Ibrahim’s residence the Shaykh ordered that Shaykh Maikano should be made to sit in the place where he, Shaykh Niass usually sat, identifying Abdullahi Maikano as his blessed son and his successor. Shaykh Maikano after having taken his seat, presented to Shaykh Ibrahim the usual gifts to earn the blessings of the

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<sup>39</sup> This is a Hausa word. This language is largely spoken in Nigeria and the West African sub-region.



Shaykh. Shaykh Niass received the presents and set them aside due to their enormity. After a while Shaykh Niass invited Shaykh Maikano to come and open the presents because he thought they were from various people. When the presents were opened he found out that they were from Shaykh Maikano alone. At that instance Shaykh Niass declared, “You inherited such and such a prophet”, rubbing his hands over Shaykh Maikano’s head and body and showering prayers on him and saying “my blessed child and successor.” According to some, there transpired between Shaykh Ibrahim Niass and Shaykh Maikano what the eye never saw nor the ear heard. After this eventful welcome session, Shaykh Niass called for a sheep to be slaughtered as a gesture of welcome to Shaykh Maikano. Shaykh Maikano after this event left Senegal for Fez in Morocco and ordered Sayiddah Hafīma S’adiyya to return to Ghana. At this juncture Shaykh Maikano knew that these were the last days of Shaykh Niass. A month after the return of Shaykh Maikano to Ghana, Shaykh Niass passed away in the middle of the month of Rajab in London in 1975.<sup>40</sup>

The events that occurred during the pilgrimages of al-Haj Ṭahir Ejura and Shaykh Maikano have also been cited as evidence for the conviction of the Jallos<sup>41</sup> as to the Khalifatehood of Shaykh Maikano. Al-Hāj Ṭahir had been on the pilgrimage with Shaykh Maikano on four different occasions. The first was in 1973, then 1974, 1975 and lastly 1983. Al-Hāj Ṭahir said that in 1973 he and the Tijāni’s who were at the pilgrimage that year recited the Wazīfa with Shaykh Maikano on the mountain of Arafat. Just before the zikr, a delegation came to Shaykh Maikano bearing a letter from Shaykh al-Islām (Ibrahim Niass). Among the delegation were Shaykh Mohammad Sāni Awwal, ‘Ubārīnġi, Mohammad Sāni and Sayyida

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<sup>40</sup> Bagya, *Tārīkh*, 40-41.

<sup>41</sup> An appellation used to refer to Tijānis that are supporter Shaykh Maikano. This terminology came to be used after the intra-Tijāni division of Faila and Munchire Faila.

Mariyam. On their arrival, Shaykh Maikano was preparing to recite of the wazīfa with the congregation. ‘Ubarinji asked Shaykh Maikano “are you reciting wīrd in Mecca and at Arafat?” Shaykh Maikano responded in the affirmative. ‘Ubārinji repeated the question. “Will this not arouse pandemonium?” Shaykh Maikano told him to sit down and then started the zikr in peace and tranquility. ‘Ubarinji took his seat and Shaykh Thāni sat besides him, while Sayyida Mariyam went to sit among the women and they recited the wīrd. After the wīrd, ‘Ubārinji confessed that he had performed the pilgrimage fifteen times in the company of the Shaykh al-Islam (Ibrahim Niass) and that he had never on any occasion recited the wazīfa even once with the latter. Shaykh Sāni Awwal confirmed this, excepting only a supplication that the Shaykh would recite and that they read after him. Shaykh Maikano then implored Shaykh Sāni Awwal to recite the supplication for them to follow. It was here that ‘Ubārinji decided that after the pilgrimage he would go to Senegal to inform Shaykh Ibrahim Niass that he had a successor and a Khalifa before his death and then narrate to him about what transpired.<sup>42</sup>

These two incidents among others have been cited in justification of the Khalifatehood of Shaykh Abdullāhi Maikano. Just as Shaykh Ibrahim Niass had received the recognition of Shaykh Sukairiji and the Mashāyikh of his time that consolidated his ascent to the position of de facto Khalīfa of Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijāni (and undisputed qūṭb al-Aqtāb as well as qūṭb al-Zamān of his era), so did the followers of Shaykh Abdullāhi Maikano seek to justify his Khalifatehood. Maikano’s chroniclers cite the incidents at Mecca,<sup>43</sup> his last meeting with Shaykh Ibrahim Niass and the sanctioning of his position by Shaykh Ṭahir Abubakar Bauchi as

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<sup>42</sup> Bagya, *Tārīkh*, 33-34.

<sup>43</sup> Mallam Abd Samad disputes the claim of performing the wazīfa and other awrād of Tijānis at Mecca openly. In his book *Risālah ad-Dā’ir ‘ilā al-Sunnah az-Zāgīr ‘ani al-Bid‘ah* he argues that the Tijānis use the cat and mouse techniques in doing their awrād there. They either go to reside in areas where the authorities do not patronize or do it in their tents and when they sense the approach of the authorities they quickly fold up their white sheet of calico and pretend to be praying. [refer to the above book page 44-43]

further justification This has not gone down well with all the Tijānis in Ghana, hence the internal disputes and squabbles within the order. This has been exploited by the strict Sunnis who use it to champion their course.

## **5.5. SHAYKH MAIKANO AND MALLAM BĀSHA AUDIO CASSETTE BRAWL IN NOVEMBER 1993:**

### **i. Introduction:**

This was another landmark in the historical development in the Tijāniyya fraternity that dealt a devastating blow to its reputation. It also offered another opportunity to Mallam Bāsha to quickly discredit Tijānism and its leadership. This momentous event took place in November 1993 at the premises of J.B. Kanton a cigarette dealer and distributor popularly known as the “Shigāri- dūgbini”. Meetings of where religious evangelists and political rallies in the Tamale metropolis were often convened there. The remote cause of this gathering was the firing of three rounds of gunfire try in commemoration of the annual celebration of the birth of Shaykh Ibrahim Niass at Tamale. The immediate cause however was the pronouncement of Shaykh Maikano at the annual anniversary of Shaykh Aḥmad Tijāni at Prang. According to the organizers of the Tamale function they were unaware of the gunfire being integrated into the celebration, which had been going on for a couple of years. A man named Jahanfo was paid to undertake this firing by one of the Tijāni leaders based in Salaga called Shaykh Zū al-Qarnayn.

Gunfire is a traditional mode of recognition given to people who in one way or other have made remarkable contributions in any sphere of human endeavor. This is a universal tradition that permeates local and international boundaries. The Arabs also do subscribe to this in their tradition, just as do the Dagombas.

This momentous gathering was given the widest publicity. An attempt to abort the gathering was successfully countered. The then Imām of the central mosque, Alhaji Adam, admonished Mallam Bāsha to put a halt to this event, but his request was not heeded. So, the gathering took place as was planned. It was opened officially by Shaykh Mas‘ūd, one of the Saudi graduates and a student of Mallam Bāsha, who began by saying that they had worn their shrouds and were ready for death, so fear was out of the equation. After a lengthy interlacing of Qur‘ānic quotations with traditions of the Prophet in the Saudi-trained fashion, he ended by passing his verdict of bida on the Tijānis, a bida needing to be fought and eradicated.

Mallam Bāsha was the next to speak and he began his speech without following the protocol of making an opening khutba. This he justified on the assumption that Mas‘ūd’s khutba had been enough and stood for his as well. He started by blaming and insulting the Imām of the central mosque, the leadership of the Tijānis and the adherents of the Tijāniyya in Tamale.<sup>44</sup> Those that were targeted included Shaykh ‘Abdalla Jābir, Shaykh Hamza Muntaka, Shaykh Ṭamim and most of all Shaykh ‘Abd ar-Rahmān Abūbakr.<sup>45</sup> Mallam Bāsha then came down heavily on Shaykh ‘Abdullahi Maikano who had just celebrated the anniversary of the founder of Tijānism - Shaykh Aḥmad Tijāni. He replayed an audio cassette of Maikano’s sermon at the celebration where he picked on his words “*Haraka da Allāh*” as his theme. This he said was blasphemous and finally condemned it with the popular Wahhābic verdict of “*Takfīr*”.

The pronouncements at the Mawlid in 1993 at Prang sparked off a wave of criticisms and condemnations from the rank and file of the Wahhābis. This event was the last straw that broke the camels back. As a result of the open criticism and insults of the Imām, the leadership

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<sup>44</sup> Extracts of the transcription of his sermon - termed by the Tijāni panegyric ‘Abdalla tailor as a rally - is included in the appendix.

<sup>45</sup> See appendix i for the transcribed audio-cassette sermon of Mallam Bāsha

of the Tamale central (zāmigu) and most of all Shaykh Maikano, Mallam Bāsha was excommunicated from the Tamale central mosque community.

**ii. Mallam Ibrahim Bāsha:**

Mallam Bāsha, now known popularly as Shaykh Bayān, though not a Tijāni, hesitated to condemn Tijānism openly for a couple of factors. He had in fact been brought up with it. In the first place as a child his first teacher Shaykh Shu‘aibu Kwarafiri was a staunch muqaddam of the Tijānis. He even joined a group of Tijānis that went to the annual Tijāni Mawlid at Kaolakh in Senegal. He is often quoted by other Tijānis to have said that, even if the founder of Tijānism were to come back to life and tell him to forsake Tijānism, he would not forsake it. This shows the extent to which he believed in the Ṭarīqa al-Tijāniyya.

This teacher, Shaykh Shu‘aibu Kwarafiri, was born at Kumbungu in the Northern region but domiciled at Takoradi in the Western region of Ghana. He established a very large Islamic school in Takoradi which produced a number of scholars, some of whom studied in Saudi Arabia and emerged as Wahhābis, such as Shaykh Sualih Aswad, Shaykh Abubakar Sa‘īd and Shaykh Sualih “Zee” of Kumbungu, to mention only a few. Most of his students were sent from the north by their parents to attend his school. Mallam Bāsha was born in Takoradi, and so it could be said that his association with Tijānism in his formative years made him more amenable to it. Eventually, he parted company with his first teacher for reasons that speculatively could include the “Tariqa factor”.

Leaving Takoradi he went to Kumasi, which was then the seat of Islamic learning in Ghana and the hub of Tijānism. In Kumasi he studied under Shaykh Nurudīn the founder of the

original Nuriyya Islamic school. Kumasi at that time was a stronghold of Tijānism. A Tijāni eulogist of the Prophet (maddah) captures this in a popular couplet in Hausa which says:

Munyi ṣalāti jidin Ka‘ba      Munyi ṣalāti firin arfa  
Balley Kumashi ‘īdin Faila<sup>46</sup>

[We have recited the Ṣalāt at the precinct of the Kaba and have equally recited it at the plain of Arafat not even to talk of reciting it at Kumasi which is the festive place of the Failas.]

His sojourn in Kumasi exposed him to a lot of Tijāni activities. Nevertheless, after a couple of years another rift grew between him and his second teacher Nūrudīn and so he left for Tamale, where he is now permanently based. The cause of the rift speculatively emanates from his personality trait embedded in his attitudinal superiority complex syndrome whereby he feels he has outclassed his teacher.

At Tamale his premier host was Afa Ajura, who was known for his anti-Tijānism stance, founder of the Wahhābi sect in northern Ghana in particular and the country as a whole. His association with Anbariyya brought about some reforms in the school. For the first time in the life of Anbariyya the school celebrated the Mawlid. Secondly, Anbariyya observed the performance during graduation of the Qur‘ān ceremony, which was termed the walīma. After a couple of years he left Anbariyya<sup>47</sup> to join up with the central mosque community (Zāmigu), who were known to be predominantly Tijānis. He then established his own school and named it interestingly, after his second alma mater, Nuriyya.

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<sup>46</sup> This stanza is from the zikr that was composed by Mallam Gariba of Kumasi (Nāsiriyya) in the late 70’s. He was one of the early Madaha’s (eulogists).

<sup>47</sup> The same superiority complex issue would be the underlying factor for his breakup again with Afa Ajura. The exception here is that the ṭariqa factor would be exclusive.

### iii. The Mawlid at Prang

Some of those who attended that memorable Mawlid of 1993 could have been non-Tijānis or Tijānis who did not subscribe to some of the utterances of the Shaykh, and so when they returned with an audio cassette recording of this sermon, they made it available to Mallam Bāsha and others. He played it and analyzed it and finally decided to come out openly in condemnation of it at a night sermon that he organized. This decision came to the notice of the then Imām of the central mosque, Alhaji Adam. The latter summoned Mallam Bāsha to his house and advised him to retract his condemnation of Shaykh Maikano's pronouncements. Imām Adam's reason was that the action would generate a crisis (*fiṭna*) which a Muslim must always try to avoid.

Mallam Bāsha rejected the Imām's admonition and fixed a date and came out to do what he intended to. The cassette was played to the crowd, after which he translated it into *dagbanli*<sup>48</sup> and analyzed it word by word and sentence, follow this up with his commentary and condemnation. The aftermath of this sermon was just as unpleasant as the Imām had foreseen. On the following Friday there was a mob action against Mallam Bāsha at the central mosque. He was denied access to the mosque and there were threats to kill him.

This incident brought about the expulsion of Mallam Bāsha from the central mosque and an end to commissioning the mosque on his school premises at Bilpela as his venue for the Friday prayer. Subsequently he started observing the annual ʿId prayers there. This certainly reduced the numbers of those who patronized the weekly Friday prayer at the central mosque.

At the same time, the spread of the message on the audio cassette impacted on the confidence level that some of the Tijānis had in Shaykh Maikano. It was realized that the

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<sup>48</sup> Dagbanli is the language spoken by the single most populous ethnic group in Ghana.

following year's Mawlid in Prang was not as well attended as in the previous year. This was in fact another respect in which Maikano dampened the popularity of Tijānism in the northern sector.

#### iv. Similarity of Mallam Bāsha's Reaction to the Morocco Context:

This action and reaction against Sufi pronouncements has been seen before in the Maghrib and so the reaction of Mallam Bāsha cannot be taken as an isolated phenomenon. In his book entitled *Juhūd al-Ulamā'u al-Maghrib fī al-Difā'I 'an 'Aqīda Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāah*, Ibrahim al-Tihāmī raises some of the same points raised against the Sufis of Morocco as those raised against Shaykh Maikano by Mallam Bāsha. Al-Tihāmī addresses the issue of excessiveness in worship that most of the Sufis adopted, which he considered to be out of place and therefore branded as innovations. Among the issues he raises are the practices of those who committed themselves to offering endless supererogatory prayers, fasting continuously for the whole year round, constantly reciting of the Qur'ān, and denying oneself things that Allah had made permissible to his servants, etc. All these practices that the Maghrib Sūfis had burdened themselves with were to bring them closer to their creator, at least as they saw it. He cited the example of Abū Hafs bin 'Abdalla al Fatāl who denied himself the act of laughing, refused to sleep lying down, and never consumed fatty or oily foods until his death.

Tihāmi also cites the example of one Abū al-Siriyy Wāsilun al-'Ābid al-Jumayyi (d.202 A.H.). He was a man who spent forty years free of accumulating any worldly effects. He passed several days without eating and when he became very weak and exhausted he emerged from his place of prayer and fed on anything he found on the ground before returning to his devotion.



Among them were those who fasted continuously all their lives, as in the case of Yūssuf bin Masrū (d.325 A.H.). It is said that for forty years he never kindled fire under his cooking pot. Nor did he drink honey for thirty years or eat any oily food. He is quoted to have said that “He who craves to remain in this world is the person who derives pleasure from eating, women and sleep and I have made eliminated these three.”<sup>49</sup>

These activities, according to Tihāmi were condemned by Shaykh Ibn Taymiyya in his book *Mukhtassar al Fatāwi al- Maṣriyya*. Ibn Taymiyya says that a person who worships by being quiet or not talking or by standing in the sun or by sitting or by being naked or the like should be repudiated because he is on an aberrant path. He goes further to state that he who denies himself bread or drinking water for the sake of forsaking this world and to seek closeness to God is an ignorant, aberrant innovator and disobedient to Allah and his Prophet as well as being intellectually deficient and deceptive to others. This sets a precedent for Mallam Bāsha’s act of 1993.

#### v. Synopsis of the Contents of the Audio-Cassette:

The content of the audio cassette declared to be blasphemous consisted of several points contested by Mallam Bāsha. The first was Shaykh Maikano’s statement that the issues of neither paradise nor hell were of any importance to him; rather, proximity to and an amicable relationship with Allah was his ultimate goal. This he summed up in his famous statement – “*Mū da Allah Muchei Haraka*”. Mallam Bāsha opined that this was a blasphemy and that Shaykh Maikano could never be so closely associated with Allah in his activities. It implied

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<sup>49</sup> Tihāmi, *Juhūd*, 383.

that Shaykh Maikano was elevating himself to the status of a demigod and was therefore a ṭāgūt. Mallam Bāsha considered this to be blasphemy at its extreme, comparable to that of Salman Rushdie the author of *The Satanic verses*.<sup>50</sup>

The second issue was Shaykh Maikano's contention to have read the entire Qur'ān more than the number of times that the holy Prophet had read the Qur'ān during his lifetime, and that he read the entire Qur'ān in a single rak'a. Mallam Bāsha condemned Shaykh Maikano for lying, claiming that he could not or cannot recite the whole Qur'ān in one rak'a. This was seen by Mallam Bāsha as an affront to and diminution of the status of the Prophet Muhammad. He drew an analogy of this by comparing a rich Tamale based man who possessed two-storey buildings and a Kumasi-based man who claimed to own ten-storey buildings, making himself seem richer than the Tamale man. There was also the issue of Shaykh Maikano's comparison of the crowd gathered around him to be more than the population of Muslims at the time of the Prophet. This was also not well-taken. Another of the other statements of Shaykh Maikano on the tape was one in which he spoke of the K'aba. He is quoted, by Mallam Bāsha as having said that an idol-worshipper was better than the Ka'ba.

At the end of his sermon, Mallam Bāsha pronounced Shaykh Maikano to be an infidel, in the Roman democratic fashion thus with popular acclamation. Maikano therefore, had to repent or, if he failed to do so before the eventuality of death, then he would die as an infidel. Some Tijānis were convinced by Mallam Bāsha's arguments and contentions; others were not. They saw it in the light of Shaykh being in a state of intoxication and, as such, he was not accountable for the statements that he made in this state. They rested their case there. Some of

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<sup>50</sup> This book was considered to be an orchestrated attempt to vilify and slander the Prophet Mohammad. The Khatatollahi Rūhu Lāhi al -Khomeini therefore passed a verdict of death sentence on him.

the Tijānis noted that many of the points that were held against Shaykh Maikano were taken out of context. In evaluating such statements, they said, it takes a person who has deeper Sūfi understanding. In the corpus of Sufism he was not certainly the first to have made this statement.

This occasion did however attract some of the “floating Tijānis” to the side of Mallam Bāsha, who reiterated that the audio cassette would be transcribed into English and Arabic and distributed to the Muslims world-wide. At the same time it discouraged most of the Tamale Tijānis from attending subsequent celebrations of the mawlid of Aḥmad Tijāni in Prang. Mallam Bāsha’s criticism may therefore be regarded as a factor in giving an impetus to the rise of Wahhābism in the north in particular, and in the country as a whole.

After a couple of years, Mallam Bāsha seem to change tactics, and refrained from attacking Tijāni adherents. On returning from the 2008 pilgrimage, he confided in Shaykh ‘Isā al-Hassan that he would never again attack personalities or insult them. Shaykh ‘Isā said in this regard:

I visited Shaykh Basha (Mallam Ibrahim Basha) four days ago and he told me that “look I did not know. I will never mention Shaykh Tijāni and insult him”. That was what Shaykh Bayān was telling me “I did it in the past and I have repented. I am seeking for forgiveness I will never do it again”. “It is the ideology we have to put on table and criticize but to mention individuals and castigate them I am not going to do it”. “Say whatever you want to say about me that I have converted or I have changed my mode or methodology I do not care but I want now to do the right thing”.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Shaykh ‘Isā al-Hassan Abubakr 1/11/2009 at Tamale

## 5.6. THE SHAYKH MAIKANO AND ‘ABD AL-WADŪD ENCOUNTER

### i. Introduction:

This event can be viewed as an example of history repeating itself. Charles Stewart, in his “Tijāniyya in Ghana”, points to longstanding scholarly rivalry between itinerant (or immigrant) scholars and Ghanaian scholars. He illustrates this with the case of the sour relationship that later developed between Shaykh ‘Umar Karachi and Shaykh Abdullahi Tano of Kumasi. Tano was a student of Shaykh Abubakar, though both were deeply grounded in knowledge. Tano eventually renounced his membership in the Tijāniyya as a result of their rivalry. Initially, ‘Umar Karachi was a Qādiriyya adherent and as a result of interacting with Shaykh Hashim during the pilgrimage he became convinced of the efficacy of Tijānism and therefore embraced it.<sup>52</sup>

On ‘Umar Karachi’s return, Shaykh Abdallah Dantano heard that it was material reasons that lured him into Tijāniyya. Based on this hearsay, Dantano renounced Tijānism. Another version has it that his renunciation was for the reason that he was a profuse chain smoker and because Tijānis strongly proscribe smoking, he had to renounce the order.<sup>53</sup> The fracas between Shaykh Maikano and Shaykh Abd al-Wadūd that I wish to discuss can be seen to have been triggered by similar circumstances. Some Kumasi ‘Ulamā have the feeling of supremacy over non-Kumasi scholars. The same scenario may have led to Wahabization of ‘Abd Samad. It is said by elderly Tijānis that it was rivalry for the Khalifate of Tijānism that triggered the dispute between Shaykh Maikano and Abd Samad that degenerated into the latter taking up to Wahhābism. Bagya has it that in the 1960’s, at one of the grand Mawlid of

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<sup>52</sup> Stewart, “Tijaniyya,” 34.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 35-36.

Shaykh Ibrahim at Kaolakh, where Shaykh Maikano was consensually nominated to deliver the address and was honored for an excellent performance with a turban by Shaykh Ibrahim Niass, ‘Abd Samad went crazy with jealousy. According to Bagya, he felt he was the deserving candidate to deliver that address on behalf of Ghanaian Tijānis.<sup>54</sup>

‘Abd al-Wadūd, in his recent book *Bushrā al-Muhibbīn*, indirectly deals with some of these incidents. Most of the respondents to my field interviews also touched on some of these facts. Reading the above book against the background of the author, one can make a lot of deductions and draw conclusions.

ii. ‘Abd al-Wadūd al-Hāj Harūn:

Abd al-Wadūd bin Shaykh Harūn al-Rashīd is a young and a promising Tijāni scholar who was being groomed by Shaykh Maikano. The latter gave his daughter to him in marriage. He was given the honor of delivering the key note address during the annual Mawlid of the founder of Tijānism at Prang after the demise of his father who used to play that cardinal role, and was seen as the heir apparent for the Khalifate. There was however a misunderstanding between the shaykh and his murīd that led to a split. It degenerated to the extent that ‘Abd al-Wadūd divorced the daughter of Shaykh Maikano, and even refused to attend the burial and funeral of Shaykh Maikano. The ‘Abd al-Wadūd faction consequently became known unofficially as “Sisse” and Shaykh Maikano’s as the “Jallos”.

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<sup>54</sup> Bagya, *Tārīkh*, 17. The Ghanaian Tijāni delegates for that year were Shaykh Baba Makaranta, al-Hāj Hārūn, al-Hāj Gariba Hākīm, al-Ustādh Baba al-Wā‘iz, al-Hāj Nāsir ad-Dīn, al-Hāj Shu‘aibu and al-Hāj ‘Abd Samad who Wahnābīcized.

### iii. **Bushrā al-Muhibbīn**

In his book *A'bd al-Wadūd* devotes a chapter to his master Shaykh Maikano. He discusses into depth the controversial marriages of Maikano, which numbered as many as nine. This was the first issue that broke the front of the Tijānis in Ghana. It contributed to Shaykh Maikano's loss of reputation among notable Tijānis of Kumasi and elsewhere in the country. As a murīd whose conduct is supposed to have been based on the principle of *Husn al-Zanni*, this should have been the last issue to be talked about publicly.

Wadūd also mentions the counseling that his father in particular and other Tijāni muqqadams in general gave to Shaykh Maikano with regard to this issue, to which he paid no heed.<sup>55</sup> All these reactions towards Shaykh Maikano were geared towards winning the sympathy of Maikano's loyalists who blamed him for the split. A reaction to his book in one of my interviews with a Maikano loyalist (a "Jallos") ran as follows:

Now, before the year 2000, we as Tijānis will all go to Prang for the celebration of the birth of the founder of the Tijāni order. Suddenly around the year 2000 or 2001 or 2002 a well known student of Shaykh Abdallah decided to go against him openly. I can offend you and secretly without anyone seeing me I can then come back to seek for forgiveness. But this man came out openly renouncing and refuting and saying things that a Murīd should not say to his Shaykh. It was against this our illustrious Shaykh (Maikano). All the Tijānis in Ghana were looking at him and they never spoke a word. But later on some Shaykh did their best to talk to him into going and asking for forgiveness, so that we could all be one again. But this man refused, he did not do that. That is Abdul Wadūd.

They are trying to infuse certain things into Tijāniyya. That fellow, he just wants to be like Mohammad Ibn Abdul Wahhāb. You see people spoke of him a lot. I can make mention of Shaykh 'Ali Akuetemah. He called him and talked to him. Mallam Ahmad al-Azhari of Bawku called him and spoke to him. Even some of the people in his household talked to him: "The way you are trying to go about things is not good. You are going to cause a lot of division." They joined themselves to Shaykh Uthmān<sup>56</sup>. From there they moved to Kaolakh to Imām Hassan and joined themselves to him. Interestingly, nobody said a word. That is the beginning of the groupings. Allah made the youth more aggressive. He asked as to why their illustrious Shaykh was treated that way and nobody uttered a word—hence the Jallos started. For him to throw more dust into people's eyes he earned the name Sesé, meaning he is for Imam Hassan—this just to bring more confusion between these two leaders. Imām Hassan did not take it up as he expected. Shaykh Maikano went to Kaolakh in

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<sup>55</sup> Harūn, *Bushrā al-Muhibbīn*, 429-30.

<sup>56</sup> The national chief Imām of Ghana

1947, when Imām Hassan was only two years old. Imām Hassan was born in 1945. Mallam Maikano was Imām Hassan’s teacher. Even he taught his uncles, he even taught their mothers.<sup>57</sup>

‘Abd al-Wadūd appears in the above to take a subtle deconstructionist approach towards the achievements that had been arrogated to Shaykh Maikano. To cite a few examples: one major achievement of Maikano as conveyed by his biographers was his indefatigable effort in establishing Mawlid all around the country, especially the largest one at the Holy city of Prang.<sup>58</sup> ‘Abd al-Wadūd maintains instead that this was the initiative of one Alhaji Sa‘īd alias Alabira who held the position of Faila chief in Prang. Apparently, Chief Alabira on one occasion came to Shaykh Harūn al-Rashīd and consulted him about holding a similar Mawlid at Prang that had been already established in Kumasi, suggesting that it be patronized by such luminaries Tijāni as in Kumasi. Shaykh Harūn directed him to consult Shaykh Maikano to spearhead that idea and oversee be the leader in its implementation. Two years after the death of Shaykh Harūn, Shaykh Maikano took charge of this event and arrogated it to himself. His successor, Shaykh Harūn Aḥmad al-Kabīr, patronized the Mawlid for only a year.<sup>59</sup>

A second instance of the deconstructionist nature of his work is his narrative of Shaykh Maikano’s great achievement in Tamale: his long struggle with the most famous and feared Tijāni adversary in Tamale – Afa Ajura. ‘Abd al-Wadūd highlights Maikano’s defiance of his own father’s incessant advice to abandon the Tamale mission. Maikano’s father had to solicit the assistance of Shaykh Harūn Mohammad (Wadūd’s father) in persuading Maikano to abandon the mission. He first resisted, but finally took the advice.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Interview with Shaykh Mohammad Mutawakil a Tijāni Imām 01/03/2009 Accra

<sup>58</sup> Bagya, *Tārīḥ*, 24. Outlines dates and places of establishing the Mawlid around Ghana

<sup>59</sup> Harun, *Bushrā Muhibbīn*, 259-260.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 430.

The other high ranking achievement of Shaykh Maikano downplayed in *Bushrā al-Muhibbīn* is the victory of Shaykh Maikano in Kumasi over Mallam ‘Abd Samad who intimidated all the Tijāni scholars and even posed an open challenge to any scholar to engage him in an open debate in his sermons. This challenge according to Maikano’s chroniclers was answered by Maikano, and Mallam Samad himself has confessed that if not for the timely intervention of Maikano he would have demolished Tijānism in Kumasi. The position of Kumasi for Tijānism in Ghana is like the position of Kaolakh for Tijānism in Senegal. All these internal disputes, power struggles and double standards within Tijānism nevertheless contributed to the decline of the order.

This same scenario reared its head in the form of a proliferation of Tijāni networks in Northern Nigeria, a situation that weakened their front giving the Yan Izala the upper hand to surge ahead in winning adherents. Roman Loimeier has this to say of the matter:

As a consequence, a multitude of locally competing networks developed the Tijāniyya in the 1970’s. No scholar within the brotherhood since the withdrawal of Ibrahim Niass in 1963 has been in a position to achieve a similarly uncontested authority as leader of the whole ṭarīqa in Nigeria. By the mid-1980’s the Tijaniyya presented the picture of an accumulation of numerous quarrelling networks, and only some of them have gained regional importance.<sup>61</sup>

There was also a breakup of centers of power around the Mallams in the case of Ghana much as in the case of Nigeria. On the national scale we had the Shaykh Sharubutu faction, who rallied around the national Chief Imām with his deputy Shaykh Kamal al-Dīn. There was also the Shaykh Salisu Sh‘abān group, which had the unflinching support of the Kotokoli community, and the Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir group, who received its support from the Nāsiriyya of Kumasi and Tamale. All the above mentioned groups are based in Accra. In Kumasi, the

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<sup>61</sup> Loimeier, Roman. *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997) 51.



breakaway Shaykh ‘Abd al Wadūd group also had its network with its popular adage of Sisse. There was also the Nāsiriyya faction that drew its support from the Dagomba community of Kumasi and the north. This faction however has less than full confidence in their fellow Tijānis in Kumasi ever since the Imāmship mêlée that took place in the seventies between the aboriginal Ghanaian Tijānis and immigrant Tijānis. This continued through the Imāmship of Shaykh Muntaqa and its ripples can still be detected in their relationships.

In the north the Andani/Abudu crisis, which saw the dethroning of Ya Naa Mohammed Abdulai (a ṭariqa adherent), caused a split in the Tijāni front that gave the Munchires an upper hand. Ferguson states:

At the time of writing (1972) the issue of succession to the *nam* or Ya Naship is *sub-judice*, and the *alfanema* are bitterly divided between the party headed by the Friday Imām al-Hājj ‘Abdallah b. al-Hājj al-Hasan, supporting Andaniyili, and that headed by the Ya Limam Muḥammad supporting Abuduyili.<sup>62</sup>

Abdulai saw his support melt away to Mion Lana Andani, who was crowned Yaa Naa, and later to his son, Yaa Naa Yakubu. In the initial stages of the crisis Shaykh Ibrahim Kaolakh sent a special envoy to Shaykh Abdulahi with regards to the issue at stake. Shaykh Abdulai stuck to his position and therefore the majority of Tijānis who were Abudus formed their own network, led by the Imām of Zohe Shaykh Ahmad Hussein.<sup>63</sup> This was a major blow struck at the heart of the Tijāni caucus in Yendi. The result was a serious rift within the leadership and this impacted on the solidarity of the movement.

This breakup of the Nigerian Tijāniyya into splinter groups had disastrous consequences. To quote Loimiere:

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<sup>62</sup> Ferguson, “Islamisation,” xxviii-xxix.

<sup>63</sup> Ferguson, “Islamisation,” xxviii.

The break up of the Tijāniyya-Ibrahimiyya since the late 1960s into numerous networks has thrown the tariqa into serious crisis. This crisis had disastrous effects especially after the foundation of the 'Yan Izala-movement, which concentrated its attacks on the Sufi ("La contrée ... ) brotherhoods after 1978 exclusively on the Tijāniyya. In the light of the obvious weakness of the tariqa, the 'Yan Izala were for a longtime very successful in their efforts to fight and destroy the Tijāniyya.<sup>64</sup>

It came as no surprise that, at this strategic moment, there emerged Medina graduates like Adam Baba and Shaykh Ibrahim Tawfiq who, through evangelism and open confrontation, challenged Tijānis vehemently and won a lot of converts. Shaykh 'Umar Sa'īd of Tamale, in our interview, referred to Tawfiq and his colleagues, including Hāj 'Umar of Nima in Accra as the founding members of the Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a faction of Wahhābism. According to my interviewee they formed the nucleus of the hardliners of the Saudi returnees. They stood firmly by the Takfir pronouncement of the founder of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and thus maintained the infidelity of all Ṣūfī adherents.<sup>65</sup> Haj 'Umar's in effect revived a chapter inaugurated at Wa in the Upper West region of Ghana by revamping and reinforcing its somehow neglected Wahhābi principles.<sup>66</sup>

How to interpret the standing ovation given by 'Abd al-Wadūd's father Shaykh Harūn to Shaykh Maikano at one of the latter's open air sermons is much discussed in the publications of both 'Abd al-Wadūd and Bagya. The two authors vary in their interpretations of the ovation. Bagya sees it as a well deserved honor. He says that after the event when Shaykh Harūn was questioned about it, he responded by affirming that even before Shaykh Maikano came to him he had already committed forty well known books to memory. This implies that he was a knowledgeable person in his own capacity before their acquaintance.<sup>67</sup> This tends to refute the

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<sup>64</sup> Op cit.,

<sup>65</sup> See Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab., *Kashf al-shubuhāt fī al-tawhīd* Al-Matba'ah al-Salafiyyah: [1970] 26

<sup>66</sup> Shaykh Sa'īd 'Umar Mohammad 11/16/2008 Tamale

<sup>67</sup> Bagya, *Tārīkh*, 44.

notion disseminated by ‘Abd al-Wadūd that Maikano had acquired most of his knowledge from his father.<sup>68</sup>

‘Abd al-Wadūd on the other hand gave several reasons for the ovation that his father gave to Maikano, one of which alludes to a statement by Shaykh Harun. The father, on being accosted for standing up, laughed until tears flowed from his eyes. Then he explained his action by quoting a philosophical anecdote to the effect that when Allah creates *darajāt* He divides it into three portions. Allah takes two and gives them to younger and the remaining one to the older; if the older one is content with his share the younger will be satisfied with his portion. But if you the elder take your portion and give it to the younger, the younger will add it to his share and give all to the elder. This silenced the people and they never mentioned the event again. ‘Abd al-Wadūd gave his own analysis of the event however by quoting a couplet:

If you honor the honorable you will get control of him  
But if you honor the downtrodden he becomes stubborn

‘Abd al-Wadūd also cited the example of Shaykh Tijāni, who always stood up when he was visited by Muhammad al-Ṭayyib al-Sufyāni. He also points to the case of the Holy prophet standing up for his daughter Fātima.<sup>69</sup>

The relationship between ‘Abd al-Wadūd and Shaykh Maikano was still at a crossroads when Maikano died. I asked one of my interviewees as to what Shaykh Maikano would have done had ‘Abd al-Wadūd repented and asked for forgiveness and the response was as follows:

Of course yes, why not? Shaykh Abdallah said so. Since this incident happened nobody came to him to say that I have done this or that, so forgive me. “I am like a father, so I have the heart of a father. Any son or daughter can offend me and ask forgiveness. If even you do not ask, it will come to a point that I will forgive you.” Now when Shaykh Maikano went to Kumasi and delivered a sermon on Friday it that was the last Friday he delivered a sermon on Earth thus his fair well sermon. After

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<sup>68</sup> Harūn *Bushrā al-Muhibbīn* .425-426

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.,442

the Khutba he said “I have no problem with anybody. I have forgiven you, whether you come or not, but it is left to you to rectify the anomaly that you have created. It is left to you to improve on your conditions, to improve all your relationship with other people because a lot of my lovers are hurt.” In fact we were all deeply hurt about this. You can see from his utterance that he had opened a way for you. Just make your way in to repent. So those of us who are observers realised that this fellow wants leadership. He wants to raise himself high up. He wanted to create his own tariqa - this we cannot tell? You can go ahead and do it, but leave us in peace and not in pieces. Such that after you have fortified your tariqa, then you can come to us so that we co-habit.<sup>70</sup>

## 5.7. THE INTRODUCTION OF “AKWASHIRAWA” INTO TIJĀNISM: THE PROMISE AND THE PERIL

The *mawasīm* were annual celebration where members of the different orders got together and celebrated. In Morocco the practice involved dancing, juggling and drumming in the streets. Shaykh Ahmad Tijāni refused to allow Tijānis to be party to this occasion.<sup>71</sup>

The inclusion of drumming and dancing (akwāshirawa) as an integral part of Tijānism and the incorporation of recitation of the Wazīfa before interring the dead were other factors that worked against the spread of Tijānism.<sup>72</sup> These two factors gave rise to the division of Tijānis into two distinct groups. Those in support of these new elements came to be called the Failas and their opponents called the Munchire/Failas.<sup>73</sup> This division further weakened the Tijāni front to the advantage of the Wahhābīs who preferred to be called Sunnis.

### i. Sayyida Khadījatu’s Point of View:

Sayyida Khadījatu gave me vivid first hand information on the formation of the Akwāshirawa phenomenon and the reactions of both the Wahhābīs and the orthodox Tijānis:

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Mohammad Mutawakil 01/03/2009 Accra.

<sup>71</sup> Riahi, Malek. “The Tijaniyya Order in the Magrib” (M.A Thesis University of New York, 1982) 37

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Shaykh Amin Bamba 11/20/2008 Tamale

<sup>73</sup> Interviews, Shaykh Amin Bamba; Shaykh Ilyas ‘Umar; Shaykh Mohammad Mutawakil; Al- Hussain Zakariyya

I told them that we were the pioneers of the Akwāshirawa phenomenon. It all began when Shaykh Maikano traveled to Bawku and lodged with Kankan More. On his way back home he made a stop over at Bolgatanga. Shaykh Ṭahiriyya informed Shaykh Maikano that the chief priest of Tongo has expressed his wish to islamise. The reasons for this decision being that, of late, he had seen a lot of deaths in his family. His livestock were dying as well as his sons and daughters. So he wanted to be initiated into Islam that very Friday. This coincided with Shaykh Maikano's arrival in Bolgatanga. Shaykh Maikano gave them permission to go with the following orders: (i) to demolish all the idols, (ii) give the priest a purification bath and then shave his head. Tahiriyya then mobilized his students; those with machetes or cutlass took them and those with clubs took them. They started to march on Tongo with Zikr songs, until they reached the village. The priest sat in the courtyard and gave them permission to destroy all the idols - that he no longer believed in them. They did the deed of destruction. While this was being done the inmates of the village observed these deeds from within the walls of their compound-house and said that the priest was surely going to die for this act of blasphemy against their gods. They also said that Shaykh al-Tahiriyya would also die.

He and his entourage, after the destruction of the idols gave the people under the priest the purification bath. This was followed by clean shaves and clean garbs to wear. Afterwards, the priest and his people, amidst the Tahiriyya entourage were led to Bolgatanga Central mosque. Shaykh Maikano then addressed them. He clearly stated that the drums and local violins – gonje- they had used previously in praise of their idols could equally be used in praise of Allah. He, Allah, is even more worthy of praise than the idols. That is the beginning of the “Akwashirawa” syndrome. He went further on to say that if a person is in the fold of unbelief and you want to win him over, you have to use a tactful approach. This was what Shaykh Maikano told them. So they were introduced to prayer. The priest gave up his sons to be Islamized. Shaykh Maikano then told them to send them back home after the initiation into Islam amidst their own drumming and singing. Therefore Shaykh Maikano never taught them the negative aspect of their Akwashirawa, they are the ones who have misconstrued it that way.

After that deed Shaykh Maikano left Bolga and stopped over in Tamale at the house of Yahaya Iddi. Amongst the shaykh's entourage were four Bawku women. I was the person in charge of boiling the shaykh's tea. The Bawku women were recounting the events in Bolga and how interesting they were. They took cooking pans to demonstrate to those around. The lyrics were “Madinatul Kaolakh...Allah, Allah; Tizāwāna La ingla tūba; Tipūsi Mallam Maikano.” We drummed and danced to the tune. The shaykh called my name and said: “Yes, if people have a way of life that they are used to, you do not completely deny them from doing it—even God wants praises. So I told them yesterday to use the drums in praising Allah in the form of Zikr - they can continue with their drumming. We just demonstrated in front of the Shaykh in the form of a “fan play.” That is the beginning of the episode.

When it was started, a time came when my husband got involved in it and was even summoned to the Central mosque to meet the Imām (alhāji Adam). He addressed him and others and said that the Shaykh had done the deed to win people over to the religion. Those who want to do so should exercise restraint till they go to Prang, and there they can do it, for that is part of the traditional practices of the Hausas. If they intend incorporating it into our Tijāni activities, then they will be inviting fresh insults from the anti-Tijānis here in town. Half of those gathered in the mosque decided not to pay heed to his advice. One of them asked whether recitation of Zikr was permissible or not? The answer was “It is a practice that we have already indulged in.” A second person got up to say that, “Zikr cannot be recited or sung without the accompaniment of drumming.” The Imām questioned them: “What do you say when it was done without drumming? For when drums accompany it, then dancing must follow up.”

When my husband returned from the meeting and reiterated it, I said the Imām was right because it is the mere recitation of the Zikr with a rosary that has made us objects of insults. So if we add this component that will make the women uncontrollable, and will not augur well for us. My husband said that the women have been much attracted to it, so he does not know what they can do. I advised him to put a stop to it as if it never existed, and the women will comply with it. One pursues a thing in order to reap its benefits and perfect his or her religion, but when I followed it and I realized it was not geared towards teaching us knowledge, but rather dancing, then I withdrew from

their fold. Of late some have gone to Kaolakh and seen that this drumming is not practiced there so they have now withdrawn themselves from it. Even Salmān Fāris has withdrawn from it.

The young lads used not to have any appetite for going to Kaolakh, but when they started and found out how it was, they started frequenting it. Those who have taken akwashirawa so seriously are the young lads that have acquired this “new knowledge” and have taken it to unprecedented levels. You can’t be born and trained in a thing and then someone comes with something new to try, and tells you that you have to leave yours and follow his. This is not appropriate. I even told the women that some of you even know that I have undergone the Tarbiyya (initiation). I was initiated into Tarbiyya some years back. So a person of Tarbiyya having known his object of worship will not tend to play with Him. The moment you get to know Him, He becomes your blood and in every moment your heart palpitates in Him. So I advised them to take things seriously regarding knowing God and how to approach and worship Him.

Those who have taken to it strongly are the youth with the new brand of knowledge. I told them that I was born and grew up in Tijanism, so I will not leave what my mashāyikh taught me to follow you of the new guard. I also told them I did the Tarbiyya training.

The rosary you are holding onto should not only be used as an adornment around your arm or neck, but rather concentrate on Allah to whom you have committed yourself to serve in having this rosary. Whether you do service to Him or not that adds nothing to Him, it is for your own sake. You cannot be indulged in seeking for forgiveness and indulge in sins. I told them that Shaykh Tijāni never taught us that.

They have even gone to the extent of wanting to abrogate the teachings of Shaykh Tijāni and Shaykh Barhama in their activities. This still instills fear in some of us. In the past when the Mashāyikh were praised we used to shout “Anyass” and “Haskee,” but now it is no longer prevalent. Now what we have here is Jallo and Maikano. It is even a lie; they do not have it deep down in their hearts. Who is the initiator of the Ṭarīqa? It is he who is to be praised as someone else who is a follower. Shaykh Aḥmad Tijāni made it explicit to his followers that when someone comes out with a practice and attributes it to him, one should refer to the Qur’ān and Ḥaḍīth. If it is in accordance with it, one should take it up, if not one should discard it. The drums that they encourage, which have a source in welcoming of the Prophet to Medina, could be upheld, but strengthening religious practice should be the uppermost to be held. There should be a place and time when the drum is used. It could be used during a weddings and outdoorings. But if it comes to a religious activity, tell the people about their religion, let them know their prayers and the religion they have chosen and the ins and outs of what they are involved in. At this juncture whatever they are going to undertake will be built on a solid foundation. Their activities have no bearing on us, but the fact is, they do not uphold or encourage you as he does, they tend not to help in that direction. It implies that he or she is luring them towards a different objective and not to knowing their religion.<sup>74</sup>

This is a typical Munchire/Faila woman’s perspective of the element of drumming and dancing that was later introduced into Tijānism. From her narrative one can discern real discontent as regards the phenomenon in the rank and file of Tijāni adherents, especially with Imām Adam himself cautioning the Tijāni adherents to be cautious of it. This particular event seems even to have undermined the image that Shaykh Maikano had created for himself in his fight against Wahhābism in the northern sector.

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<sup>74</sup> Interview with Sayyida Khadijatu 01/15/2009 Tamale.

ii. **Shaykh al-Hussein Zakariyya's Perception:**

A Faila devotee's account of this same phenomenon was provided by Shaykh al-Hussein Zakariyya in our interview held at his office in Tamale:

There has been peace negotiation and the term has been dropped for the past few years now. When there was a peace deal between the Failas and Munchir-Failas that was the past few years ago. But given that we still have this connotational view. The difference is that we the Failas and Munchir-Failas continue to share activities. They continue to do a lot of things together except that Failas happen to be the majority. The so-called Muchir-Faila was a few individuals but significant individuals. Significant in the sense that they are personalities people respect in the Tijāniyya set up so they are significant. So a few of them who oppose particularly to drumming and dancing that is the only aspect and we all understand that it is the drumming that makes the difference. I do not know the particular thing that makes the difference between Ahl al-Sunna and Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā 'ah. What I know is that when the Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā 'ah is running a program in town here the Ahl al-Sunna do not participate. But there is no such a thing that the Faila and the Munchir-Failas did not do together. There is no such thing. The drumming, when it comes to the program where all the Tijānis participate, the drumming is much reduced to a minimum. Except of course if it is the Failas who are organizing and who are going to be drumming. They will go ahead and do their things normal so that they do not pretend anything about it. Those who are not interested in the drumming, if they must come, they just bare it at least for that moment. But that does not mean that they believe in it but the law of the circumstance is just all that they are obeying. Obeying the law you know if I must be here and they will be drumming lets just hear it for a while. So you see that is the law. But there is no event that you will not find the two sides mixing to do. No such event. But we have witnessed several events where the ahl al-Sunna is celebrating something-even just the recent event a few months ago less than six month or five or so, there was a huge Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'ah meeting held which the Ahl al-Sunna did not participate. So we cannot have a thing like this. Let us take for example to find the national chief Imām coming here with a program and the rest of the Tijāniyya will not sit back. This cannot happen so we may not have an express or constitutionally written up structures- organization but still spiritually we are quite grounded than the other side. First of the drumming is not an essential part of our spiritual beliefs. No but we are making allowances for social expression of the group. Shaykh Tijāni will not ask for drumming it is not part of it. When we are doing our awrād which is what makes a person a Tijāniyya drumming is not part of it. When we have Hailala or Wazīfa we do not The drumming comes when we make it a social event. There is a social event maybe some sermons will be given not rituals. In the social environment we allow dancing and drumming. Now critics of that will not be able to say in the life of the prophet he had never seen drumming and dancing. They also know the traditions that describe the environment in which the prophet experienced drumming and dancing. Even if he did not drum and did not dance but there was this social expression right under his nose and he did not condemn it. So that is true. And if we had this in the life of the prophet and that what point will be stronger to say that should not happen in subsequent Muslim life. Once upon a time that there was event in the life of the prophet that he did not act to condemn. He accepted it either expressly or not but once that is established then we can no longer argue that event is criminal<sup>75</sup>

The Wahhābis capitalized on this phenomenon to make inroads into winning more adherents. The December 4, 1998 attack on Tijānis at Gumani was justified on the basis of

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<sup>75</sup> Interview with al-Hussein Z. 01/05/2009 Tamale

counteracting this phenomenon in Tamale. Many lives and belongings were lost in its aftermath.<sup>76</sup>

Al-Hussein's response gives one an insight into the levels of disagreement that ensued at the wake of this particular phenomenon. Whiles this issue was being pursued the Wahhābis were working assiduously in their taw'īya drive (awareness) to win people over to their fold. In an interview, Shaykh Sa'īd Abubakr emphasized that the secret for the rapid spread of the Munchires was based largely on their taw'īya drive including dedication and willingness on the part of their adherents in their outreach programme.

It all begins with the faith that the scholars have in Allah. For if it is said that the scholars are being sponsored, yes but they have a limit to it. Those that receive grants from Saudi are countable. It is the scholars had the realisation that preaching was a trust (amāna) on them. Because when the Saudi authorities selected them and granted them scholarships, taught them and gave them allowance while they were studying the Saudi graduates felt that it was due to the preaching of the religion that they had all those treatments. So failure to execute it means Allah will hold them accountable on the day of judgement. That is the propelling force. On the issue of the construction of mosques it is secondary. It is the efforts of the scholars that make them do it. Some do use cars and motor bikes as means to go to village to spread the faith. In reality Saudi Arabia has not purchased these means for anybody. On Fridays, the village that we have instituted this ceremony is uncountable. They go there lead them observing the prayer and then they return. They even established schools in some of the villages. Summarily it is these scholars that have faith in Allah and are conscious that they will be accountable to Allah on the day of judgement. So therefore things that Saudi grants them are not enough to have urged them to do what they are involved in.

... but it appears the villages are accepting the Sunnah even more than the town dwellers. Because there were a lot of known towns that Sunnism could not penetrate nor mentioned there. But today these towns have mosques for Friday prayers belonging to the Sunist Places like Gushegu Sunna could not have been mentioned there but currently Sunnis have two mosques where Friday prayers are observed. At Savelugu as well Sunna could not have been mentioned but as at now the Sunnis at Savelugu have four mosques that observe Friday prayer. So it is people of the outskirts that accept it more than the town dwellers.<sup>77</sup>

Other Tijānis took a liberal stand on this issue like Shaykh Bamba who perceived it as a strategy employed by Failas to win adherents over to Tijānism, especially youth. Though he

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<sup>76</sup> Ibrahim, "The Tijāniyya order," 104.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Shaykh Sa'īd Abūbakar 1/11 /2009 at Tamale



would not condemn it, he stated that he would not use that method. He has his own way of attracting people into the order.<sup>78</sup>

### iii. Shaykh Mohammad Awal's Perception:

Shaykh Mohammad Awal described the phenomenon to me as a recreational misunderstanding:

As a matter of fact, I think this to be rather unfortunate. This is why I was just telling you, I think they lack the education of Tijāniyya. Of these things that bring different names, Shaykh Naa Aḥmad Tijāni said: If you claim to be a Muslim and a Tijāni, then you must know me alone, and he further said: If you hear my quotation or my deeds try to measure it, let it reflect in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth if it does not tally. leave whatever I said and take to the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. Now these things that are happening are so unfortunate, they have nothing to do with the true Tijāniyya. To the true Faila, it is just what I call a recreational misunderstanding. Yes, because they all meet together and do the ṭarīqa, they all come together and do the ṣalāt, and when it is janāza you will be surprised the Jalloos and the Sisses are all together, they forget all these differences, and they do everything in common together. And after that, when they come to these recreational activities, these are during Mawlid. This one will be drumming and singing and saying things in condemnation of the other. So they are recreational activities, it is there that you will see all these lose dresses and the differences. It is so unfortunate, but I think we need to get some institutions to educate our people more deeply about ṭarīqa al Tijāniyya, for them to realize that they are really lucky to be Tijāniyūn.

### iv. Shaykh Mutawakil's Opinion on the Issue:

Shaykh Mutawakil, in an interview held at his house in Accra, had this to say concerning the Munchire/Faila issue:

All these things are also to be very honest with you this work that you are doing, I will pray to Allah to strengthen me and you, to give you greater courage for this work that you are doing to be published and get into more hands so that they will read it and understand more about Ṣūfism. To be very honest and sincere with you, we are not very happy about these things that are cropping up. Why are we not happy? The essence of Tasawwuf is to become closer to your God, to have more of the Rasūl (S.A.W.), to love your people, to become useful and fruitful to your religion. For the entire society to benefit from you, your least service to mankind is service to God. Now if you indulge yourself in these frictions, these Sesés and the Munchire/Faila, what time do you have to make Zikr. Why did you go in for the Azkār. You just put the Azkār somewhere and you sit at the base drinking "Attire" etc., shouting Sisé this and that. Condemning this Shaykh and praising this Shaykh, what will you get out of this? You are wasting your time. At least, the Shaykh who has gotten to that throne or position that you are condemning has become a Shaykh what are you? Why do you not concentrate on things concerning yourself? "[Quote in Arabic]" Why do you not concentrate on lifting yourself up? Tasawwuf is not a joke, which is why many people cannot go by it. Even the way

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<sup>78</sup> Interview with Shaykh Amin Bamba 11/20/2008-Tamale

you eat must be designed by your code of Tassawuf. The way you dress, eat, talk to your people, and sleep. A Ṣūfī has only eight hours to rest. The rest of these hours are to be in service of God. Now, even this eight hours, as Imām J'afar al-Ṣādiq stated must be resting in God.<sup>79</sup>

#### **v. Shaykh Ilyasu's Perception of the Munchir/Faila and Akwāshirawa Phenomenon:**

Shaykh Ilyasu, a Nāsiriyya Tijāni, who like most of the members of this branch is adverse to the dancing component introduced into Tijānism, had the following observations to make:

What is happening is that the Faila and Munchire/Faila are all Tijānis, as you have mentioned. The Munchire/Faila is a claim or accusation voiced by those who go far to do certain things which are not included in the doctrines of Tijāniyya. They claim they are the Faila proper. Those who say such innovations are not acceptable within the Faila are seen as Munchire/Faila. The issue came up with the late Mallam Maikano (R.A.).

Mallam Maikano was a pious man of God. He did a great deal in Tijāniyya. In Islam we cannot quantify his efforts because he did a lot in the propagation of Islam and the protection of Tijāniyya. He had great foresight; he could perceive things ahead of his colleagues, so it was difficult for people to understand him. So when he suggested something it was always difficult for people to digest, but later on the people saw the truth in what he had said.

On the issue of drumming people think that he adopted it from his grandfather who was once a Zongo chief and in the Zongos the chiefs used to beat drums. That could have been the reason why he introduced this thing into Tijāniyya. But the other issue which we had information for which he introduced the drums was that he realized the youth were moving far from the teachings of Islam and they were following the dictates of modernization, where people go to take part in dancing competitions, "Zangalewa" and discoteques. They waste their time and the better part of their integrity in doing such things. He said: "if it is the issue of drumming and dancing, we would rather incorporate the words of God into a musical phenomenon, with regards to the drums, to enable us to get our children closer to us. So that if we organize the sitting for them, anytime we need them they will be available. They came back to serve and they go to play. But if we do not bring them closer and allow them to decide for themselves, they will not be closer to us, and neither will they join to do the Tijāniyya activities. So this is why, when they are making the Zikr they play drums. It is introduced to attract the children and to be able to maintain them in the faith.

This view again is not so new in the Tijāniyya, in the sense that even in Senegal the Muridiyya of Shaykh Bamba play the drums. So that is not so foreign. Others want to even believe that that was where it was borrowed from and brought into the Faila of Ghana or Ghanaian Faila. But for Shaykh Ibrāhim Kaolakh they do not do it. So when it was brought in, people said that it was wrong. Those who see this as unacceptable within Tijāniyya are seen as making "Inkar" of Mallam Maikano, and therefore they are Munchire/Faila. They are in Faila, but they are Munchires.

In fact, personally, before I moved down to Tamale here, I was defending that fact, because I know some Ṣūfī prayers used to play drums like the Naqshabandiyya and Rūmiyya (whirling Dervishes), and other groups, they beat drums. But the issue of the drum is not itself the Issue, but it is the music of the drum which sends the message into them. The music of the drum is where they get the message, just like the music of Zikr can let somebody dance, but not the drumming. There was a Ṣūfī who said that he does not see the difference between the drum and the call to prayer (azān) that he hears the Mu'azzin say "Allah, Allah" and the drum is also saying "Allah, Allah." Not until you have that training you will not have the mystical ear. In the sense that the training is supposed to be there,

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<sup>79</sup> Interview with Shaykh Mohammad Mutawakil 01/03/2009 Accra.

because in the Qur'ān almighty Allah said: That there is nothing on this planet unless that thing mentions the eulogies of Allah. Therefore you will see something and you will think it is in vain, but it is remembering God. So that is the view there. So that everything that you see, it is not in vain. Imām Ghazālī will say that telling human beings that: “Oh, son of Adam, should the rooster be not be considered more reasonable than you, where the rooster will be praising God and you are snoring in your bed around four o'clock.”

So the spiritual understanding in them makes them see things beyond ordinary human beings. So the analysis will obviously differ, since those Sufis do not see anybody as having a reality, but that your reality is God. That is your physical existence is not you, but what makes you to be you, is your reality. That which makes you to be you is the power of God. Therefore it is God.<sup>80</sup>

## 5.8. Conclusion:

These internal issues that divide the movement have been and will always be issues of considerable debate among the Tijānis, until a unanimously agreed upon solution is found, it will remain an Achilles heel of the Tijānis. An answer may be found in the Hadīth of the Prophet, which describes the variety of opinion within his Umma as a source of mercy. This would allow the various parties to respect each other's point of view and stop their habit of mutual condemnation, which gives their adversaries the upper hand. Another Hadīth that admonishes a believer to leave aside what is doubtful and hold unto that which is not doubtful is another source of solution. Those that see nothing wrong with a practice should be left to their opinion.

The factors discussed in this and the previous chapter have distracted the Tijānis with internal and external squabbles; only when a solution is found can the Tijānis hope to regain their initiative over the upsurge of Wahhābi presence in northern Ghana.

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with Shaykh Ilyas 'Umar at his residence 01/13/2009 Tamale

## CONCLUSION:

There was a mixed reaction among interviewees to the formulation of the research question: it was accepted by some and questioned by others. Shaykh Abd al-Razāk Ṭahir for instance said that compartmentalization of Islam into old and new was just a figment of the Western imagination which manifested in the form of longtime animosity against Islam. This is aimed at undermining the oneness and uniqueness that characterizes Islam, leaving in its wake a disunited faith that can be more easily manipulated. This can be seen to have played out perfectly well in their favor. The reason for this argument is not farfetched. In his mind the unity of Islam can be derived from the shared belief in the pillars of Islam adopted by all Muslims world wide, whether they are in Africa, Europe, or the Arab world. The same old pillars, like the Qur‘ān have not changed for over 1500 years. The problems have therefore been magnified and overblown to create the dichotomy of old and new over minor issues.<sup>1</sup>

Tahir Dana on the other hand confirmed the topic, arguing that:

It is really just exactly as I told you that the religion is dying and a new Islam is being created. The actual Islam is dying and now a new Islam is being created. People move from Ghana, go to Saudi Arabia, and come back with a different type of religion. Because they are killing tradition and bringing a different tradition which no one knows? They are now corrupting tradition and religion; that is where a new Islam is being created.

I still accept that you should maintain this word (new Islam) because I have that problem here up to stage where, we know. Why I said new Islam is being created is that we knew Ibrāhim Alaihi Salām, the son of the prophet Mohammad was born on Thursday and the outdooring was done on Thursday. The day of the child’s birth is the day that the naming is to be made. But right now they have created a different thing. Saying that if a child is born the seventh day should be the out-dooring not the eighth day. Secondly; there are other modifications that have been done which shows that a new religion is being created.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Shaykh ‘Abd al-Razāk Ṭahir

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Dr. Mohammad Ṭahir Dana an elder at the Gbewaa palace 01/16/ 2009 Tamale.

The paradox embedded in the phenomenon of the decline of Sufism and the ascendancy of Wahhābism in this thesis is considerable. The two common characteristics associated with Wahhābism are its rigidity and conservatism, whereas Sufism is characterized by flexibility and orthodoxy. So, it baffles many people to witness this development in Ghana, given that elemental nature of man will always opt for a less onerous situation, especially since Africa is the area of this study. But it is happening nonetheless. One student asked me for the title of my dissertation and, when I mentioned it to him, he exclaimed “This is absurd to say that Islam was introduced into Ghana by the Sūfis, why will the present generation opt for Wahhābism which is very strict and inflexible?”

The same reaction was expressed by my co-supervisor when I mentioned to him the budding phenomenon of “Munchire-Faila,” which I misconceived as the formulation of a common front between the Wahhābis and Sūfis in Ghana as the name seemed to connote. This misconception was corrected when I returned to Ghana to do my field research in 2008. The question that my professor posed was since Wahhābis were known for their hardliner stand on doctrinal grounds and are unenthusiastic to Sufism, what will be the grounds on which they will come to a compromise with their Sufi adversaries? For example, on the concept of companionship (Ṣahāba), what will be their common grounds of agreement? This was a question I included in my questionnaire addressed to the Sūfi scholars, who addressed it.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Shaykh Ilyāssu’s response to this question was as follows:

“No, that is not the issue. The Prophet (S.A.W.), in his tradition has mentioned that there are some angels that al-Mighty Allah has delegated to go around the world. Wherever they see people making Zikr they should join them. Here they are joining, not because these people are angels, but because they are following good practices, that they want to share the reward with. So they come to join them and make the Zikr. That is a tradition of the Prophet with regards to the activities of angels they call Sayyars. They move round and join people to do Zikr. Then there was another issue with respect to Prophet Ilyas, a prophet who never wanted to hear the mention of the issue of death. God asked why he did not wish to hear of that issue. He said: “I want to always remain among those who make Zikr. Wherever they sit to mention your name, I join these people to do it.” Then God said: “Leave

As to whether the ascendancy of Wahhābism is a reality or an illusion, may be left to the discretion of the reader of this work. I have discussed the factors that each of the parties leans on, in order to promote its superiority and, therefore, to win more souls to its side. This is not to say that there are some who take neutral stand and others who play it safe by assuming liberal positions. All of these groups are entitled to their viewpoints, since most of these decisions are subjective. Nevertheless, I have attempted to prove statistically some of the points that confirm the positions of the various groups. For instance, with the electoral statistical data and the educational enrolment data, I have been able to confirm the claim of the Wahhābis that they have made gains in those sectors and, hence, they are on the ascendancy. A further research is required to evaluate the impact of Wahhābism in the other fields. As al-Hussein rightly mentioned, there could be a rise in some sectors and a decline in others.

On the other hand, the Tijānīs have put forward their case by arguing that the gains that the Wahhābis are claiming to have made are just a disguised form of an upsurge of Tijānism on doctrinal grounds. They claim that all the doctrinal positions that were initially condemned by the early home-grown Munchires have since been confirmed, and reverted to by the Saudi

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forever until the last day, so live among the angels and amongst the humans.” So he operated in two worlds, the angelic world and the human world. So was Prophet Ilyas, all because of Zikr. So you will realize that the Prophet (S.A.W.), the soul of the prophet arrives and his companions, join to make that Zikr, and, of course, enjoy the blessing of the Zikr. Of course the Prophet (S.A.W.), according to Shaykh Tijāni, said that “your children are my children, and your students are my students. Those who sit with you are my companions.” So it does not dispute the fact that in the spiritual world we enjoy the company of the Prophet, if that is not the same in the physical world. But in the spiritual world you enjoy that company you enjoy some recognition from the Prophet. Of course those who have grown much in the Tijāniyya or in the Ṣūfī concept. They consider it evil to stay three days without seeing the Prophet in their dreams. So you realize that that attendance of the Prophet and his companions - that is the way we can analyze it.”

Shaykh Abdulahi Baba Dua had this explanation to give:

“Shaykh Tijāni says that our relationship with the Ṣahābas, in terms of our deeds not being equal to theirs is like the similitude of a bird called the river or sea bird; it is a bird that is faster than any other bird. So our relationship is that the Ṣahābas have flown ahead of us and we are like the small ants struggling to make our mark in relation to them. We are not their equals; we cannot even approach their ranks.”

returnees. Examples that were found on the ground included the Tahajjud prayers, the counting of prayer beads (*masbaha*), and the practice of offering exegesis or commentary on the Qur‘ān during the month of Ramadān. Funerals for deceased Muslims, which had formerly been condemned, have now also, been readopted unofficially by the Munchires. So, as expressed by the terminology of Mohammed Amin Anta, they should be seen as “neo-Tijānis” instead of Wahhābis.

Furthermore, liberalism that has found its way into West African Islamic religiosity has made it virtually impossible to conclude that Wahhābism is numerically surging ahead in terms of followers. This is so because both parties that are embroiled in the sectarian conflict do almost the same things; indeed, the Wahhābis used not to practice certain things which they are now quite comfortable with doing. In effect, the principles of Tijānism are winning over those of Wahhābism.<sup>4</sup>

Al- Hussein argues that it is very debatable whether the Wahhābis have been able to catch up in numerical terms with the Tijānis, taking all the factors he has put forward into consideration. He argued thus:

Well, as a researcher it is something for all of us to think about. When Ṣūfism as such in my view has not declined. But the decline described in your title may be understood in some perspective. I rather tend to think that awareness towards Ṣūfism is on the increase. In the years past we had just a few Ṣūfis in some communities that were never even known and only a few that had spiritual magnetic force to attract people towards themselves. We only knew people like Shaykh Abdullahi Gomda at that time. Sherīf Harūn who was another devoted Ṣūfi and a few others in the South. But now people are getting more interested in knowing first of all what these ṭarīqas are about because of the emerging opposition to it. When there is no opposition to status co people do not care. But once there is an opposition then the opposition triggers investigations into the existence of that status co. So you see just like the case of the United States for example after September 11, you know many people have developed interest in Islam by trying to find out what is this religion that seems to be giving people headache. They want to know who was the founder, what was he up to and so on and so forth. You know so with opposition. With a Wahhābi opposition towards Ṣūfism you know people’s interest have been rekindled to finding out what it is about and associating themselves to it. So now there are movements in the country today in many parts of Ghana that never had been exposed to Ṣūfi practices but now there are. At the very rudimental level they are

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<sup>4</sup> Adam interview

doing that. They get involved in all kinds of things but slowly some of them develop the interest into the very core spiritual practices in Šūfism and that is how it goes. So for me the increase in awareness of the existence of Šūfi practice and the substructural organizations that are supporting Šūfi practices like the Faila movement in all the regions and so on, seem for me to be a plus for the Šūfi practice. In my view this will not be the time to draw conclusion. It is a vast field as well as a social phenomenon since it has to do with religion. So it is possible also to see in which dimension the declines could occur. This is why I started by saying that, this is a research and research stimulates interest in investigating social phenomenon like the Šūfi practices. So we are all asking that question. Shall we say at this stage Šūfism is on the decline or it is gaining strength again. This is open to further debate. What I doubt is whether the Wahhābis have caught up in terms of numbers. The religion of Islam was introduced to this part of the country through people who believed in Šūfi practices. So over the years fundamentally almost all the adherents had been either practitioners of Šūfism or they believed in those who practiced it even if they themselves never practiced but they believed in it and they were confident that the practices were genuine spiritual practices. So up to the later part of the 1920's that we were beginning to see how Wahhābism was getting planted in the northern region. So from that time I doubt who have credible numbers suggesting whether the Wahhābis have caught up with the numbers of those who believed in Šūfism or who believed in the traditional Islam. Well that one because it has to do with data is difficult to quantify. But then when you look at the system just like the Christian church majority of the supporters of the Wahhābis in our area has always been from the rural setting. Now also when you go to the rural areas you will find that predominantly all the Imāms or the absolute majority if the Imāms believe in Šūfism are on side of the Sufis. So I can say that may be to be a bit conventional. Now lets even propose that they have up to about 50% of the Imāms who have been either given the leadership by the chiefs or they are there because they have the knowledge and the leadership capability lead the Muslim Ummah in those communities. What you will find in going from one community to the other not just in the Northern region go round throughout the country you will find that majority of the Imāms in the Northern region subscribe to the central mosque in the Northern region which is Tijāni. Majority of the regional Imāms in Ghana subscribe to the National chief Imāms office which is Tijāni. So when you look at the trends most of the Islamic leadership in many of the communities are still headed by the Tijāniyya. You may have Wahhābi present but still the leadership structure in the region and for that matter in the country, if we are talking about Muslim communities are still in the hands of the Tijāniyya. So it is good to keep looking at the various angles.<sup>5</sup>

Reading between the lines, it could be concluded from the responses of the interviewed Tijānis that, although some of them deny the survival of some form of decline on their part and ascendancy on the other part, they do seem to acknowledge to themselves that it exists. Alhaji Abdulai (one-one) says:

As you know, since I belong to the old Islamic faction, my response will be that it is my sect which is on the increase because I pursue its path. I know pretty well that deceit, no matter how well it appears to be progressing, is heading towards eventual doom.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with al- Hussein Zakariyya 01/05/2009 Tamale.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Alhaji Abdulai Alhassan elder and opinion leader in Dagbon 01/10/2009 Tamale



Shaykh Abdul Mu'min Salifu says there has been a rise but that it is a negative one, in the sense that the Qur'ān states: "And a few of them shall be grateful."<sup>7</sup> Here the few or the minority represent the Sufis, and the majority or multitude refers to the Wahhābis.

Shaykh Baba Dua substitutes the term "slowdown" in place of "decline" thus:

Islam has knowledge as its bedrock. Shaykh Ibrahim Niass says: "Allah does not take an ignorant person to be his friend." The saints, including Shaykh Aḥmad Tijāni were very entrenched scholars in all fields of knowledge. So also were Shaykh Ibrahim Niass of Kaolakh and Shaykh Abdul Qādir al-Jaylāni.

In instances where one finds out there is a slowdown or decline in an activity, it does not imply that it applies to the entirety of the thing, but rather if only certain aspects or areas that is affected. From observation one can come to a realization that in some parts of the region there is a slowdown in Ṣūfī activism. This is natural, even Islam, if we relax in our attitude towards, it will also show the same symptoms. Why does Israel subject Palestine to humiliation and torture, it is simply because we have not adhered strictly to the Islamic principles. Arabs *per se* are knowledgeable and wealthy, but for their lack of enthusiasm about the affairs of their fellow brothers—the Palestinians—have made them to face what they are subjected to today. The Arabs are not only apathetic towards Palestine, but also their divisive stance. Disunity and hypocrisy has cost them all the prevailing circumstances. Some Arabs even act as informants to the Israelis. Such an attitude can bring about laxity, slowness and decline in a person's way of life.

Similarly, the Ṣūfī path in this area seems to be slowing down or on the decline, and this is because of apathy towards the conditions laid down, about the activities of the order and disunity. It still has its vigor and strength, but people perceive it to be on the decline. Secondly, if there is a lack of interest in the acquisition of knowledge, this will make it have the appearance of decline, but in reality it is a path that can never retrogress or decline. Can the remembrance of Allah ever be on the decline? Never—and the saints have always taught us to always remember Allah.<sup>8</sup>

Shaykh Amin Bamba affirms the decline factor based on the modern approach and tabligh methods used by the Wahhābis. Modern man, by nature, will like to subscribe to a phenomenon that is rational to him. He frames it thus:

Sunni Islam is gaining ground because their system of training has been somewhat modernized. The Sunni system of training used to be the same system we have in Tijāniyya. That is, you take a book, go to a scholar, you sit and read and he gives you the meaning. When you finish that book you put it down and take another. Until today it has been done this way in Mecca. In Haramain you go through the eight years of training in Tijāniyya, it is the same.

But the system of training for Sunni adherents has moved to the classroom, has moved to syllabus preparation, has moved to topical issues, subject areas which are lacking in the Tijāniyya sect. So that is giving that one an upper hand, and leading to a decline in this one. This I think is the cause of the decline. So you get people who have through subjects, through the Sunni System come out known in the society. When they preach they preach systematically, so people think that is the best.

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<sup>7</sup> Qur'ān, 35:13.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Shaykh Ilyas 'Umar 01/13/2009 Tamale

The human being appreciates what appeals to his conscience. As against somebody who is learned, but has not been taught how to preach a lapse in the Tijāni training. It is only by Allah's honor that he is able to stand in public and to prepare something for people to appreciate. So somebody who has been trained to do that and another who has not been trained to do that, certainly they cannot be the same.<sup>9</sup>

Shaykh 'Umar Ilyās was affirmative in his response. He began by answering thus:

Really, that is the case, but the issue still goes back to the sponsorship. Wahnābism as an organization which is aimed at ruining the Ṣūfī concept. It is a strategy to ruin the Ṣūfī concept. So if that is the case, what are the organs that they have to be put into the system to enable them to combat it? That prompted the establishment of the Islamic University in Saudi Arabia to train people to go and fight Ṣūfism. So they are given the mechanisms, the tools to use, Ḥadīths that they can confuse people with, and other things...

They open schools in these mosques and provide teachers, so if there is no school for the Tijānis around where you need your child to go, definitely you will send your child there. Of course a student is a photocopy of his teacher, so as they teach them, it gives them their guidelines. Of course children do not know the difference. So they are learning from them, so by the time that they realize they have grown up with that ideology. That is why we see that there is a serious decline of the Ṣūfī concept and the fellowship and the rise of Sunnism.<sup>10</sup>

Shaykh Mohammad Mutawakil's response portrays a disguised affirmation of the decline factor. He reframes the situation thus:

This is an interesting question and timely. I will not say Ṣūfism is declining, I will not say that, I will only say that people like Tassawuf, but they are ignorant about it. So we have larger groups of Ṣūfis who are ignorant about Tassawuf...

To be very honest with you, the ṭarīqa al-Tijāniyya as of now are gaining weight, because the light has shone everywhere. Even now, they, the Wahnābis have realized that what they are doing is nothing. Just a few of their elder gather, and they use them to make money. So some of the youth are aware of this issue, so they are rather running away from the Wahnābis, but, because some of them have gotten too much into it, they cannot back out like that. I will tell you something not a single, two, or three days pass without two or five of them coming here to accept the Ṭarīqa. I have been in this place for three years. I have been in this Medina for ten to twelve years.<sup>11</sup>

Shaykh Sa'īd Abūbakr argues that the ascendancy of Wahnābism is real and says that they have able to make inroads in both the towns and villages because their main motivating force is faith. He offered the following argument in support of his viewpoint.

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Shaykh Mohammad Amin Bamba 11/20/2008 Tamale

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Shaykh Abdulla Baba Dua 01/17/2009 Tamale

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Shaykh Mohammad Mutawakil an Imām 01/03/2009 Accra

By Allah as at now Sunna seem to be outweighing any other sect. The reason is that, the youth have acquired a lot of knowledge and are still acquiring. Secondly those who have acquired it and returned back home have not relaxed. They are persistently preaching it and teaching people. Currently, there is no FM station that has no religious program included in it. They are the scholars. In Ambariyya as at now we have about seventy-two scholars and all of them have degrees. We have those with doctorates, masters, first degree holders and post-graduate Diplomas. If all these are to disseminate knowledge as well as preach what do you expect to see?

At both places - the towns and villages – but it appears the villages are accepting the Sunna even more than the town dwellers. Because there were a lot of known towns that Sunnism could not penetrate nor mentioned there. But today these towns have mosques for Friday prayers belonging to the Sunnis Places like Gushegu Sunna could not have been mentioned there but currently Sunnis have two mosques where Friday prayers are observed. At Savelugu as well Sunna could not have been mentioned but as at now the Sunnis at Savelugu have four mosques that observe Friday prayer. So it is people of the outskirts that accept it more than the town dwellers.

It all begins with the faith that the scholars have in Allah. For if it is said that the scholars are being sponsored, yes but they have a limit to it. Those that receive grants from Saudi are countable. It is the scholars had the realization that preaching was a trust (amāna) on them. Because when the Saudi authorities selected them and granted them scholarships, taught them and gave them allowance while they were studying the Saudi graduates felt that it was due to the preaching of the religion that they had all those treatments. So failure to execute it means Allah will hold them accountable on the Day of Judgment. That is the propelling force. On the issue of the construction of mosques it is secondary. It is the efforts of the scholars that make them do it. Some do use cars and motor bikes as means to go to village to spread the faith. In reality Saudi Arabia has not purchased these means for anybody. On Fridays, the village that we have instituted this ceremony is uncountable. They go there lead them observing the prayer and then they return. They even established schools in some of the villages. Summarily it is these scholars that have faith in Allah and are conscious that they will be accountable to Allah on the Day of Judgment. So therefore things that Saudi grants them are not enough to have urged them to do what they are involved in.<sup>12</sup>

The responses that were had during the group interviews and discussions in some selected second cycle institution in the northern region if synthesized can give an idea of the reality on ground, although it could be considered to be not all embracing in it self. The following responses were had from Tamale Senior High school (the premier secondary school in the northern region):

- i. Yes it is because the Wahhābis tell us that many of the things that we do are not supposed to be done, because people get touched and follow them.
- ii. It is rising in this part of the country because I can see that in almost every area there is the established T'afim session that teaches the Sunna of the Prophet. This goes on everywhere, especially in the schools that we attend. They try to establish such things, so that that particular sect will spread. As I have observed, their target group is everybody. Because we normally go to communities where the adults and the youth are all mixed together. So they try to get these people

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Shaykh Sa'īd Abūbakar 1/11 /2009 at Tamale

to understand what they are preaching. Most of those that they are able to convince are those that have mixed ideas and do not know which of the sects the best is. So when explanations which are convincing are made to them, they easily accept that sect. Most of those that they are able to convince are from the suburbs, for, if you consider the city, for example Tamale, there are a lot of learned people, who always preach everywhere. Moving to other areas is very difficult for these learned people to do. The others capitalize on this and move to the suburbs.

- iii. I will say no, it is not growing as perceived, because their way of teaching is very strict. As soon as they come to you, they tell you their mission and that if you do not conform to it they conclude that you will go to hell. So many people do not go into it for that reason.
- iv. They are not growing because I do not side with them when they say, for instance, writing God's words on a slate and drinking is haram. How can something created by God himself and drunk into the stomach be Haram?
- v. The compilation of the Qur'ān into one book can also be said to be an innovation, since it was not done within the life time of the Prophet. Hence drinking the writings is equally not an innovation if the Qur'ān is not an innovation.
- vi. I do not think that it is spreading at a faster rate than the orthodox system. I think the Tijāni Islam is growing faster in the cities. It is growing faster in the cities because people are coming to the realization that it is the right path, it is the orthodox Islam, which we had in the Prophet. But from my research Wahabism has an influence from the British who entered into Islam and tried to break it apart.
- vii. The Wahhābist group is growing faster because those in the Tijāniyya sect claim they are Tijānis, but they do not have much knowledge about Tijānism. So they cannot convince people into it. It is very difficult to convince a knowledgeable Tijāni into Wahhābism.
- viii. I think Tijānism is growing faster because most people think Wahhābism is all about wearing of beards and white *jalbābs* but those that dress that way practice Tijānism.
- ix. I will say Tijānism is growing at a faster rate in the suburbs than the cities, while Wahhābism is growing faster in the cities than in the suburbs. In the suburbs they do lots of things that Tijānism does not condemn, so they see it as the right Islam and go into it. Secondly, the Tijānis say Islam is a simple religion that makes things simple, so by hearing this they quickly go into it. In the cities or towns they are highly knowledgeable, when they hear these arguments they conclude by saying that these people are driving us into the wrong path, so they conform to the Wahhābi Islam.
- x. Sunnism is growing at a geometric rate compared to Tijānism, because, if I take Wa for instance, where I come from, four years ago you could count the number of people in the ahl al-Sunna group, but today the number has increased drastically. I admire the way they dress and their strictness—because God is somebody you cannot joke with. Whatever you say about God you have to attach seriousness to it, so that people who are into that will be the serious ones. So I like the strict kind of Islam.
- xi. People making the point that Wahhābis are strict in their practices, I would like to say that it is not that they are strict, but that they believe that the Prophet came and fulfilled his work. So if you are now bringing anything into the religion it is your own thing, and when you die you will face it with your Lord. So they are of the belief that they will not add anything except that which the Prophet practiced. So if you want to follow it, and then do, if you cannot, then you are doing your own thing.<sup>13</sup>

A similar group interview and discussion was held at the Pong Tamale Senior High

School and their responses were as follows:

- i. The Saudi kind of Islam is taking the lead in the communities because during the olden days their way of preaching was quite different from the way the Saudi graduates preach. The way they preach

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Tamale Senior High School students 11/13/2008 Tamale

- these days makes people [shift] their view of life towards the religion. Due to the preaching methodology that has been adopted by the Saudi Muslims, it makes their religion surge ahead.
- ii. I will say the Saudi Islam because it is preaching what our Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.) did. If you call yourself a Muslim you have to do what the Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.) did.
  - iii. It is the Saudi-based sect which is spreading faster because it has more scholars than the Tariqa-based sects.
  - iv. I will say the Saudi one is surging ahead because, although the Ṭarīqa sect brought in Islam, but there were still some errors, like consulting some minor gods. This was accepted in the Tariqa Islam. As of now Sunna has come to tell us that everything that one wants should be sought from Allah, but not through intermediaries.
  - v. I will say the Saudi one is growing fast as compared to the Ṭarīqa one during the time that communication and transportation were very poor, as compared to these days. So due to technological advancement, I will say that Saudi Islam is growing faster than the Ṭarīqa one.
  - vi. I will say to some extent the Wahhābi ones and to another extent the Ṭarīqa ones. In some countries the Wahhābism Islam is growing faster and in others Sufi Islam. With respect to the Northern region, they are both in race or a par. There are things that they both do in common. Based on that they are all equal in winning memberships. The Saudi ones are leading because those leaders in the Saudi Islam have too much knowledge about Islam. These Saudi scholars, as compared to the Tariqa leaders, are able to convince most of those in the Tariqa Islam, as to the best form of Islam.<sup>14</sup>

These group responses clearly indicates the decline factor does exist and paucity in knowledge, lack of technological advancement, blatant complacency,<sup>15</sup> lack of human resources and dedication are some of the underlying factors.

An interesting observation that is noticeable in both cases is that the number of respondents in both groups that supports the ascendancy factor outnumbered those who oppose to it. This suggest that the products of the Wahhābi based schools who make it to the senior high school out numbers those of the Tijāni schools. It also does suggest that the Wahhābi products are more informed about the sect they ascribe to than their counterparts. If these trends continue up to the tertiary level then it can be predicted that in a short span of time the

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Pong Tamale High School students 11/03/2009-Tamale

<sup>15</sup> Prior to my research trip when I visited Ghana in 2005 on the occasion of my father's illness from which he did not recover. I did a pre-emptive discussion of my dissertation topic with Afa Ibrahim "Macheleni" of blessed memory and he also arrogated the fast spread of Wahhābism to apathy and complacency on the part of the Tijānis. He cited the springing up cells for Quranic memorization in all areas of Tamale metropolis as a practical example. His son was lured into it and he had to talk him out of it. He also made mention of hasty reactions of Tijānis to and substantiated issues as another factor. The case of Shaykh Mohammad Ansari (deputy central mosque Imām) was as practical example. He said that when illness rendered this illustrious Shaykh from patronizing the Tijāni litanies in his Zāwiyya it was rumoured that he had renounced Tijānism and has become a Wahhābi. The rumour mongers substantiated this by arguing that his son Abdul-Latif – a Saudi returnee - had persuaded him to renounce Tijānism. This he said and a host of others have weakened the Tijāni front.

secular academic circles is going to be predominantly Wahhābi based in inclination. This has already begun to show in the dominance of the religious program slots in the Ghanaian mass media by their products. In the teaching sector too there would be a Wahhābi dominance and hence the curriculum would be skewed towards Wahhābi doctrinal beliefs and religiosity.

What more the recent article entitled “Self-styled President to vacate Tamale Technical University College” that featured in the Anbariyya website claiming ownership of the Tamale Technical University and outlining their capacity to manage the university in both manpower and resources goes to show the assertiveness of the Wahhābis to take the lead and consolidate their position in the educational sector.<sup>16</sup>

The abundance at the grassroots level of symbols of Wahhābi religiosity in the form of a proliferation of mosques in all corners of the north in particular and other parts of Ghana as a whole, especially in the Muslim settlements in southern Ghana, suggests the Wahhābists’ undisputed presence. A very common sight in the Tamale metropolis is that, at the stipulated time of prayers, the spaces in front of stores in the market area, are occupied by Anbariyya followers who utilize such spaces as temporary mosques.

This same evidence and activity in front of stores has been perceived by Tijānis as not only indicative of Wahhābist activism, which is dubbed as “the parachuting” of mosques, but also as a sign of Wahhābist weakness, for couple of reasons. In the first place politicians go to the Saudi Embassy to solicit for aid projects in the form of mosques, which is often granted.

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<sup>16</sup> [www.anbariyya.com/en/](http://www.anbariyya.com/en/) 30/01/2011 .The tone of the article and those names that it has been copied to do suggest that there is some hidden motives in addition to the educational motive. There is the possibility of the existence of raising of double standards between Dr. Abubakari Al-Hassan who has used his influence and intellect to raise what was supposed to be a vocational school to a university college status and a power out there who is pulling the strings under disguise of championing the Anbariyya cause to undo this laudable achievement of the latter. This pull him down (PHD) that has eaten into the fabric of the Ghanaian society has been vehemently deplored by Kofi Annan the former United Nation secretary general. This does not auger well for the north which is already saddled with a myriad geopolitical problems in the realms of chieftaincy and religion.

Since the constituencies are composed of both Wāḥḥābist and Tijānis and even Ahmadis, this defeats the notion of the spread of Wāḥḥābism. The construction of mosques is only used as a political strategy by politicians to gain Muslim support in the Zongos and the Muslim-dominated areas.

Secondly, this can also be visualized as a mere window dressing to show outwardly what has not been internalized. This, as by elder Alhaji Abdullahi insists, displays the arrogances of the Wāḥḥābi youth and belittlement of the credibility of the Tijāni clerics that have mosques in and around the precincts of the market. It therefore cannot be considered as constituting an accurate measure of growth of the Wāḥḥābis. His response was as follows:

Your analysis goes to show that, it is like you having an outfit (gown) and wearing it to come out and stand in offering prayer without the fear of Allah or faith in your heart—this deprives you from knowing your real position. The example you gave about the prayers in front of stores implies that they feel they are better than the Imāms in the mosques near them. So they will not like to follow that Imam in prayer. On the other hand if you were to be God-conscious and fearing you would have gone to the mosque to offer your prayer, instead of doing it in front of your store.<sup>17</sup>

This arrogance factor has permeated the responses of most Tijāni interviewees as a dominant characteristics of the Wāḥḥābis to the extent that some of the Wāḥḥābi clerics like Shaykh Sa‘id ‘Umar bears testimony to this:

So man being what he is will have strengths and weaknesses. So Tijānis have certain traits that are good. In the first place, the youth that have been trained by the Tijānis have respect for their elders, but the youth that we ahl al-Sunna have brought up or trained makes them to rub shoulders with us. They do not respect us. Our youth come to visit us at the wrong time. I am the secretary to the Majlis in the Northern region and I do write recommendations for those of our youth that are applying for external scholarships in the Arab world. At times these boys come to my house at 6:00 a.m. for me to sign their documents for them. I often ask them if they can go to Alhaji Tamimu’s house at such an early time in the morning to ask him to do that for them. There was even another occasion when someone came to me after 10:00 p.m. to sign his documents for him. I refused to do so. So the following day he (the boy) had to send in people to apologize on his behalf. These are a few cases to show how our youth lack respect for the elderly. It is we who trained them so, because we have condemned a lot of things in the society. For instance, we have

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Alhaji Abdulai Alhassan an elder and opinion leader in Dagbon 01/10/2009 Tamale

taught them that squatting as a sign of respect to the elderly is unacceptable, but there are traditions of the Prophet which permit that.<sup>18</sup>

The timing of organization of the Wahhābi evangelistic activities in all Wahhābi and Tijāni mosques has been immaculately fixed at a time that the Tijānis have traditionally performed their evening litanies (Wazīfa). This can be seen as a calculated move to replace the function of that time with their activity and eventually eliminate it.

Wahhābism is perceived by some as a practice and not as a mere rhetoric. Based on this premise the Wahhabis in the north are in practice Tijānis, because most of the Tijāni practices that were frowned upon have now been incorporated into that way of belief. Based on this, the present day Wahhabis should rather be considered as “neo-Tijanis” or “emerging-Tijānis.” Iddrisu, terms these home nurtured Wahhābis in his dissertation as the “homegrown Wahhabis.” My concern is where to arrogate the source of this impact, whether it is those who might be termed the “half-baked Wahhabis” who still retain relics of their previous devotion. As I already mentioned, the primary devotion in this area was from the Sufis.

‘Isā, Sa‘īd and ‘Abd al-Hanān argued that Wahhābism is not the name for their sect, for it was purported to make a mockery of the sect. If there was any name they should by it should be “Muhammadiya,” since the founder’s name was Muhammad not ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. ‘Isā even goes further to refute the appellation Muwahiddīn,<sup>19</sup> which some Wahhabis prefer, even the founder himself subscribes to this in his *Kashf al-Shubhāt* by arguing thus:

I will recommend Sunni Movement. When you say Muwahidūn the term Muwahidūn refers to somebody who believes in the oneness of Allah. It may fall short of some of the key prophetic traditions. I believe in oneness of Allah I do not associate partners with Allah. Some of the Sunnas of the Prophet (S.A.W.) I am supposed to practice I am not practicing it so you can call me Muwahid but you cannot call me Sunni. But What Mohammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb brought about was both

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Shaykh Sa‘īd ‘Umar Mohammad 11/16/2008 Tamale

<sup>19</sup> See *Kashf al-Shubhāt*



Tawhīd and strictly abiding by the prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.). Anybody who is Sunni is supposed to be Muwahid and not anybody who is Muwahid is a Sunni as the Universal, call it the generic term.<sup>20</sup>

The issue of those who promote and sponsor it has attracted variable responses. Some attribute it to the gulf countries with a special mention of Saudi Arabia as the chief promoter, sponsor and overseer. The extreme nature of the methodology employed in spreading this Wahabbist belief system has been the concern of some respondents. It raises the question of the Islamicity of the system since Islam by its name and nature in both spirit and body epitomize peace.

I think that the gulf countries played some significant roles, they are largely also responsible for the resurgence of the “new-Islam”. Unfortunately, the line it is taking is actually questionable as to whether it is Islam that is spreading or terrorism that is spreading because you will find so many people being fanatic now they almost will do things which Islam itself condemns. I do not believe Islam encourages people to go and kill. I do not believe in Islam making people terrorist going after innocent lives. If that is the kind of religion that is spreading then I think it is not Islam.<sup>21</sup>

The proliferation of mosques is not necessarily an index to the rapid spread of Wahhābism, as opined by some, for several reasons. It is an undeniable fact that the funds for building mosques are largely from the Gulf but the recipients are not necessarily Wahhābis, though that could be the ulterior motive behind it. Politicians go to the diplomatic missions soliciting assistance or the constituencies to gain political points. These constituencies are composed of Muslims from both divides. For this reason to say it is an indicative of the spread of Wahhābism is not tenable.

Shaykh Abubakar Ahmad Ayashi suggested in his interview that the springing up of Saudi-sponsored mosques was not indicative of rapid spread of Wahhabist doctrinal beliefs because it is not a precondition for communities to Wahhābicise before they are allocated a

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Adam Mohammed Amin Anta Tamale 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.,

mosque. He has in past years worked as a project officer for an Islamic non-governmental organization called al-Muntada, and they had built over fifty mosques for Muslim communities irrespective of the sect to which they belonged.<sup>22</sup>

Although recent scholarship has ascribed the 18<sup>th</sup> century neo-Sufi orders as having some traits of Wahhābist elements this has not made both the present generation of Wahhābis to change their stand on the takfir of the orders. The takfir standpoint of Wahhābis against Sūfi orders has not spared the Tijāniyya order. The reiteration of takfir of the Tijānis by the present leader of the Anbariyya Sunni community, Shaykh Saʿīd Abubakr, as expressed in his master's thesis, comes as no surprise to many a Tijāni. This is a replication of the stance of the founder of Wahhābism.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, Abd Samad Habīb al-Lāhi re-echoes the takfir of Tijānis and declares it as aberrant order. He explicitly mentions the Ansār al-Fayd which is an offspring of Tijāniyya that has found roots in Ghana, Nigeria and other countries as practical groups.<sup>24</sup>

The question pertaining to takfir has to be reassessed and readdressed on the part of Wahhābis if there is to be a lasting culture of peaceful co-existence. The irony of it comes up when the position that Shaykh Ibrahim Niass held within the world Muslim league an organ

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Shaykh Abubakari Ahmad (Ayāshi) 15/01/2009 Tamale

<sup>23</sup> The book *Kashf al-Shubhāt* by Shaykh Mohammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb adopted this Takfir stance from the work of Ibn Taymiyya, who is considered the doyen of Wahhābism. Ibn ʿAbd Wahhāb opines that Tawhīd consists of three major components comprised of belief by the heart, pronouncement by the tongue and then manifestation in deeds. If any one of these components is missing, the person in question is not a Muslim. If the person in question is cognizant of Tawhīd but does not manifest it in his deeds he is a complete infidel or rebellious disbeliever (muʿānidun), equivalent in his infidelity to the Pharaoh or the devil (Iblīs). This is a source of error for many people. One often hears such people saying “This indeed is the truth and we understand it and believe it as such but we cannot implement it within our own people except that which conforms to their norms or they give other reasons...” (see Muhammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb *Kashf al-Shubhāt fī al-Tawhid Al-Matbaʿah al-Salabiyyah*: [1970] 26)

<sup>24</sup> ʿAbd as-Samad, Habīb al-Allah al-Mukhtar al-Kashnī al-Ghānī., *Risālah ad-Dāʿī ʿilā al-Sunnah az-Zāgīr ʿani al-Bidʿah*, (Beirut: Dār al-ʿArabiyya lil ṭibāah wa nashru wa tawzīʿi, 1976), 72.

Wahhābis ideology is examined against this takfir factor. Or could it be just a mere rhetoric without any substance. This needs a further investigation.

An additional motive for this research was the promotion of harmonious cohabitation and mutual existence between the two major contending sects in Ghana, both among themselves and with believers of the other religions. The responses from interviewees were indicative of the existence of a culture of tolerance and co-existence. Interestingly enough, this was not prevalent about two decades ago. The relationship used to be very antagonistic and intolerant. This time around it was clear that it was the predominance of overwhelming ignorance that prompted the senseless attacks and killings that inundated the past.

It was also made clear to me that there are common grounds on which both parties tend to agree upon. These are mainly those doctrinal issues that constitute the superstructure of Islam. These consist of the five pillars of Islam and the six pillars of faith. These are the core issues which neither of the contending parties can compromise on. The additional issues that breed rancor, acrimony and discontent among them are but discretionary, optional or supererogatory issues. In this realm too a large portion of each community has come to respect each other's viewpoint, without actually subscribing to it. This has injected some sanity into the one time highly volatile situation which permeated all spheres of life. This transcends the boundaries of religion into political, social economic and cultural aspects of their life. This, if contextualized in the religious milieu, will be seen to be obvious since Islam is broadly defined as a way of life.

The Tijānis and Munchires now share the same prayer space without any confrontation when the need arises. It used to be inconceivable to see a Munchire praying at Zamigu or a Nawunyera praying at Afa Ajura's mosque. This was even extended to the corner mosques or

prayer places arranged out of stones. These parties have expressed the existence of normalization of relations by attending each other's outdoor ceremonies, weddings, funerals and common functions and also by consulting with one another on topical issues for the common good of the society. As for example when there was a call for the prayer session for the promotion of peace nationwide all the factions came together.<sup>25</sup>

Shaykh Salifu is hopeful that this situation will continue:

Personally I feel they can co-exist. The only thing is that there are areas that they agree and areas they disagree. So they live together peacefully from the angle that they all agree. They all agree in the oneness of Allah, they all agree that the prophet is finality of prophets. They all have the same Qur'ān the same prayer the same Qibla, we fast Ramadan and perform Hajj these areas that we all agree. So there are some few areas that we don't agree. So in a matter of respecting the view of the other. When you respect that views you manage that conflicting situation. It is a matter of showing maturity. I use to tell my dear ones to be real and natural and you will really understand what you are doing. Look, your own self and your dresses. So you have one particular type of dress and the color. You have dresses of different types and different colors. Your shoes with different colors and you do not fight with them you accept all. So when it is black you used the black trousers and the black shirt and white. So they don't agree. I use to even further to say look at the earth it accepts all of us it is not rejecting us. We human beings feel we are better than the earth in sight of Allah. So we feel we are much better than the earth and the earth has that patience to stomach all of us and to carry us but we don't have the patience to accept one another. I repeat that we can co-exist but we need to respect the views of one another. They are internal. It starts from inside and bringing it out is easier because the reflection that we see outside is from the inside. So if you are able to have in mind that I respect your view and you also respected my view. So when we meet it is easier to stretch hands and much easier because inside we have already accepted it, so they can intermingle.<sup>26</sup>

Shaykh Sa'īd Abubakr in his reaction to the question of co-existence, agreed that it was now evident in the fabric of the society and was playing out positively. He used the pre-election get-together of the Muslims of the northern region as a practical example. He eluded that:

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<sup>25</sup> In the 2008 elections in Ghana there was an alarming fear that a chaotic situation will crop up nationwide especially in the north which was earmarked as a flash point of eminent instability. This made the government of the day (NPP) to deploy troops there to quell any uprising that might crop up. This assessment was made based on the geo-political and socio-religious situation existing in the area. Especially at the wake of the quest for justice in the high profile murder case of the killing of the Yaa Naa Yakubu Andani the overlord of Dagbon and that of Issah Mobila the CPP chairman for the region. The incumbent government of President John Agyekum Kufour was seen to be an accomplice in it. The leading opposition party (NDC) at the time and now the ruling party used these incidences in its electioneering campaigns and promised to thoroughly investigate the cases when voted into power and to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to face the full rigours of the law.

<sup>26</sup> Shaykh Abdul Mu'min Salifu- Local Scholar Group Tijāni

By Allah they can co-exist. Even now we are experiencing its existence because whatsoever is to strengthen unity of brotherhood and family ties by God is prevalent. I will say presently we are doing it because there are occasions when meetings are called at the central mosques and we go there. We all sit in the same premise and deliberate and agree on a single issue. When the 2008 election was about to be held every Imām was summoned to one preaching ground. The occasion was commenced by the Imām of the central Mosque. We all agreed on a single thing. It was time ago that this never existed but presently it is in vogue.<sup>27</sup>

Shaykh al-Hussein's reaction to the question of co-existence was, by contrast, a defensive one, though he did not apportion blame explicitly. He tried to defend the Sūfī stance of pacifism by forwarding the argument thus:

Well the global view of mystical Islam is that we are non-violent. That is the global view. I am speaking as an inter-religious dialogue person. So we know in every religion those that can be a problem for people and those that are not. In the Christian world we know those strands of Christianity who are prone to violence and those who are not as well as those who love peace and those who do not. We know them. So the global impression about Sūfī Islam is that it is one of the most peaceful brand of Islam. This is because I mean by concentrating on God too much and trying to understand the ways in which God expresses His will, you cannot ignore the fact that God may will somebody to believe in some other things than you believe. So you cannot hate that person because he disagrees with you. Because you can see that God is using that person in another way than the way you are being used. So because of these perception of Sūfī to mobilizes forces and attack somebody because that person differs from your belief is very very rare and uncharacteristic of Tijānis. I know that Tijāni leadership in some countries have led freedom fighters like Shaykh 'Umar of Futa Jallon. Shaykh Ibrāhim Niass during the period of French colonialism wrote a number of books - *Africa for Africans* - if you saw those booklet. So he wrote about Africanism and that was the messages he was giving to the Africans at that time who were fighting at that time for self emancipation. We know that Sūfī leaders have played those roles but that is different from saying these are Wahhābis and we are Tijānis let's show them that they are wrong and that they have no right to exist. This you will not find any Sūfī movement taking that direction.<sup>28</sup>

The position of Mohammad Harūn reflects the reality on the ground. He had this to say on the existing situation:

By family they co-exist, by common Islamic practices they co-exist. But there is a growing polarization these days. A lot of people are now so cautious from the side of the Tijānis and from the side of the Wahhābis. So if the tendency continues the future is inconceivable for the two groups as I see it now.<sup>29</sup>

An overall consideration of the above randomly selected responses indicates that the situation is still unstable, that it has to be viewed and considered with the uttermost care. The

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Shaykh Sa'īd Abūbakar 1/11 /2009 at Tamale

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Shaykh al- Hussain Zakariyya 01/05/2009 Tamale

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Mohammad Harūn a former member of parliament 12/01/2009 Tamale.

least miscalculation and misunderstanding can degenerate from a seemingly affable situation into an unintended inferno. The outcome of this may not be limited to the two contending parties but may become a nationwide problem.

Chapter two of this thesis discussed the salient terminologies related to the diffusion of Islam into the African milieu and how it became internalized in the region in question. The second part of the chapter traced the channels through which Islam percolated into Africa and made its way into sub-Saharan Africa. The diversity in channels through which it accessed the sub-region had an impact on the character it took on in different places. The Islam that came from North Africa had a Mālikiyya slant, that which took the Southern Egypt course through the Nile tributaries to Sudan and its environs had a Shāfi‘iyya inclination and that which passed through the Gulf of Aden into East Africa had a Hanafiyya tilt. Each of the inclinations is of course recognized by Ijmā. However, the Hanbali faction is late to this mix; popular in Saudi Arabia, it has since the export of Saudi graduates into the sub-region is become better known only recently. The chapter also diverged into the discussion of three key rulers of Dagbon and the roles that they played in the Islamization process there, which has been the dominant religion until today. The historicity of Islamic Dagbon is not of a recent creation and it could be said that the sedentary rulers of Dagbon could have brought it along with them from their places of origin.<sup>30</sup> This needs further research to substantiate. What is undisputable about Islam in the area is that it preceded Christianity in Ghana for about a century and more.

The third chapter discussed the pivotal role of Wahhābism in Northern Ghana and the significant role Afa Ajura played in consolidating, spreading and putting sustainable structures in place for an eventual replacement of Sufism by Wahhābism. Close examination has been

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<sup>30</sup> Mahama, *Dagbon History*, 3.

made in this thesis of some of the structures Afa Ajura implanted in the form of educational and religious institutions, socio-political alienation and a sustainable indoctrination mechanism.

Finally, the thesis considered in chapters four and five both inter and intra-sectarian contests that have played against the predominant Sūfi populated Muslim in Ghana, with particular emphasis on the north. It tried to assess whether the claim of the decline of Sufism is a reality or a myth as well as to identify the sectors of the society in which it manifested itself. Is the decline manifest from the perspective of creation of awareness or in numbers of population? The complex nature of the topic demands further research in these diverse realms to authenticate either of the claims.

## APPENDICES:

### APPENDIX I

#### TRANSCRIPTION OF USTAZ BĀSHA'S REFUTATION OF SHAYKH MAIKANO'S SERMON ON AT THE MAULID GROUND IN PRANG AT TAMALE IN FRONT OF CANTON'S CIGRARETTE RETAIL STORE IN 1993 ON AN AUDIO CASSETTE. ("THE HARAKA DA ALLA CASSETTE")

He said to him I dreamt last night that I was in paradise and there was a very nice house which was occupied by a very beautiful and when I asked to know who she was I was told she was your wife. I knowing the magnanimity of the level of your jealousy did not take a second look at the house again when I left the precinct. Every full fledged person has jealousy ingrained him. What a useless man, a man without sense of value (dayyūs). Your wife takes hair veil and walks out of your house to go to Faila ground (to go to take a drink of Faila) and leaves you a bulky and good for nothing man. It is the Prophet who recalled the jealousy of 'Umar .....

Why this occasion is organized is that, there is a cassette tape in this thing (tape recorder or player) we are going carefully play it for all the hear. It is in the Hausa language and those who understand it will hear it and those who do not understand that language we will translate it for them in Dagbanli. Then after listening to it we are going to take each and every letter of it and contrast it with the Qur'ān. The composer of this cassette is of the Fulani tribesman. He has demeaned the Prophet. It comes as no surprise that in this era a man positioning himself as God. Pharoah had already claimed by saying that he was their object of worship. This is the reason why we said we are out on a war path (Jihad). People of Tamale fear God and then know who Bāsha is. God creates his servants and then assigns their action or activities to them. Nothing is our worry except the custodianship of the religion of the



prophet's religion. We are not to digress a lot at least I have lived amongst you for about twenty to twenty-six years. What is worrisome in this issue is that we have what we term as transgression. A person does not become an infidel by transgressing you are still a Muslim. But if you apostacize – may the Lord protect us – there is no God save Allah and Muhammad is his messenger. We are here tonight as the party of Allah and that of the Satan (Hizb al-Allah and Hizb Shaytān).

We Dagombas are reputable people and a people of conscience or wits. I cannot fathom out why things have turned out that way. They are not to blame. Even I have not officially started this occasion tonight with a Khutba. If I mean to talk about those scholars it will divert me elsewhere. There is a Hadith which talks about signs of the end of time and it says that when that time is at hand the worst people amongst them are the scholars.

Scholars of this metropolis – all those who worship at the central mosque remember last Friday's event. A scholar came out to say that the Imām of the central mosques and his elders embarked on a deed which has instigated us to come out openly to confront it. Because that action is an innovative religion and about twenty scholars embarked on some shameful acts. After that acts they came out to say that what they did was not acceptable to their elders and the religion does not sanction it as well. Whiles those who studied in our local educational system know that after expediency in the reciting of the Qur'ān next stage is to learn the book of jurisprudence Kitāb al-Akhḍar. In this book it says that one should not embark on an action without taking cognizance of God's ruling on it. The curse of God be upon you. The book of Akhḍar states do not embark on an action until you find out Allah's ruling on it. A big fat foolish scholar, where have you placed this basic book's injunction? Only Akhḍar and afterwards Zabūr and then one continue with the study of the other books.

Why we term this outing as a Jihad has been addressed by Afa Masoud. Another hadīth says that when one sees an abominable act being committed one should prevent it physically with the hand. If he is unable to do that then with his tongue and if unable to do that as well then by his heart and that is the weakest of level of faith. We have come out today to combat that thing. I want you to tell me by God's name, there is a song sang by the Dagombas on the night of the fire festival which says "He who demeans our chief or king has demeaned God". So if a person by demeaning your king has demeaned the one high up's a finger nail then for he who demeans your Prophet will be demeaning the High one up's thunder or what?

Do I have to begin this sitting with a Khutba or what? Well it is in order. The reason for this gathering is that we are already burdened with sinful acts with these eras' complex issues and we falter about and plead for forgiveness. Is it not some fellow Muslims?, and seeking for forgiveness of Allah for our deeds. "God do not take us to task in the event of our forgetfulness or committing of aggression. We are fumbling with this here and there and the admonishing one another. Every human being as predisposed to err and the best are those who seek forgiveness after the commitment of sin. This issue is undisputedly an act of infidelity. If a soldier commits an offence and he is punished by being incarcerated into the guardroom it is a form of punishment for his act. But if he is stripped off the uniform then it has no remedy. The composer of this cassette is no longer a Muslim. Any one who refutes this pronouncement is no longer a Muslim as well. You have fallen out of the realm of recognition of Allah and his Prophets religion. It is not Bāsha's pronouncement not until you listen completely to the content of the cassette. The Emir of Kano will only show Bāsha of his being a native Hausa and not in the proficiency in the Hausa language. All the books I studied from Ahdari to Lawali were translated to me in Hausa and I transcribed it. In Arabic grammar the book Gbedamāsi and

commentary of the Qur‘ān I studied it in Arabic and transcribed it. If I enter into a linguistic duel with the emir of Kano the victor and vanquished can only be decided by the observer. Everybody should keep quiet and then listen to the cassette. They said if I play this cassette there will be mayhem and pandemonium and I am surely going to do that. This is a final coming out. After all have listened to the cassette – meanwhile you have all observed nothing goes without a replica. A bastardly man made his debut lately by name Salman Rushdie. You were all witness to the chaotic situation he caused among Muslims in the world. The book that he wrote which caused that chaotic situation has been superseded by the contents of this cassette. Until we conclude ... that is the main reason why I have brought reference books. I am not going to quote the books including the Qur‘ān by memory and refer to chapters. We have more than a thousand cassettes we have with us very good recording technicians. After this occasion which is an sermon I am going to play the cassette alone in the room. I will translate every word not only this but we will translate the cassette into Arabic and English and make it available to Muslims all over the world. (Quranic quotation) -Wa badā bainanā wa bainakum adāwatun wa al-Bagḍā’- We are surely going to do that. There is no God but Allah, there is no god but Allah. I played it the day before yesterday in the Mosque and a woman – may God grant her wishes – cried as if the mother had died. Haba! A stupid Fulani tribesman I even wonder who his grandfather is. I do not know his grand father, I wonder if he knows the grandfather’s name.

It is not clear. It was recorded in a crowd like this you all hear how noisy it is. He say that paradise is nothing (of no importance) they are not concerned about paradise nor hell fire which is damned. Also listen carefully to the wording of his language – He does not care about paradise nor hell-fire – hell a useless thing. Listen to this pronouncement – (that they deal with Allah or they have affairs directly with God or they are concerned with relationship with Allah

or what concerns them is their relationship with God). We deal with Allah, we deal with Allah! Mallam Maikano you have lied, your father has lied and your grand father has lied. You are a none-entity to do deal with Allah. You are a none-entity – you do deals with Allah. Take the instance Nana Mariyam she was a lady of high regard and a daughter of an esteemed man of God, a servant of God. She was tested by God and she has a chapter in the paradise ... in the Qur‘ān. God said to her Oh Mary Iqnuṭī lirabiki wa irkaī’... wa isjudī wa irkaī’ ma‘a al-rāqī ṭī‘na. God even sent an angel to her who blew into her the prophet ‘Isā. Imagine the status of prophet ‘Isa, he was blown into her womb Rūhul al-Allāhi – When he came into fold of people with him. What happened? Because he was a fatherless child when she was in this situation what did she say? Now, just look at what is transpiring currently in the world. She said I wish I had been a dead and forgotten person. Though the pregnancy was out of God’s command but after giving birth she was contemplating as to how to explain it to people. She therefore cried out that if she had died and been forgotten it will have been preferable for her than the situation in which she had found herself now. Today just imagine the Islam that we are fumbling with and people impregnate women out of wedlock and then celebrate it with grand out-dooring and dancing. As contrasted with someone who has given birth to a legal son but because it was out of God’s command she wished she had been dead. This is not the point I am trying to derive at. It has not gone the way I liked it. What did prophet ‘Isā say? He said mother send me out and live me to the people. When she came out with the baby she was asked Oh Mary where is this child from? She pointed to baby. The said how do we communicate with a baby in the cradle? ‘Isā responded by saying he was the servant of God. He called himself as the servant of God and a useless Fulani tribesman comes to say that he has dealings with Allah. Not worshipping of God but having dealings with God. Have you heard me?

With his “Kuukinsa ...” if it is based on revelation and all revelations is Qur‘ān, how many times has the Prophet completely read the Qur‘ān? He (Maikano) reads the complete Qur‘ān in a single rak‘at. Meaning that if the importance of the Prophet is derived from revelation and revelation is basically the Qur‘ān. It is true, it is undisputable and the Prophet Mohammad is a human being. I received revelation or it is revealed to me. Yes it is revelation. But listen, that if all that he is, is by the virtue of revelation which is subsequently the Qur‘ān in the life time of the Prophet how many time did he read the Qur‘ān from the chapter of the cow to an-Nas. But he Maikano completes reciting the Qur‘ān in a single rak‘at. That is not a big deal. Pardon me to draw this parallel. Let’s assume there is a wealthy man called Afa Yussuf in Tamale just for example. This man has two storey buildings. Another man comes from Kumasi and says “Your wealthy-man that you keeping on boasting about own only two storey building but I have ten of that”. What does that connote? It means he is better than him. Yes. If the entirety of the Prophet’s aggrandizement is embedded in the Qur‘ān, how many times has the Prophet read the Qur‘ān in his life time? He reads the entire book in one rak‘at. It is people of his caliber that the Qur‘ān addresses as follows “What he has said is bigger than his mouth ... if Allah does not guide him to repent then you will see the manner in which he is going to end up. This is an ongoing phenomenon. The fact is I do not want to open up a new chapter. People have come up with new religions that bare semblance with Islam but have their own divergences yet these are not in Islam. I do not want to name that by that opening a new chapter and closing up this one. Some of them died in the human excreta. That is why the Qur‘ān says that his argument is a lie – In ya qūlū ilā kaziba- . All things being equal the Qur‘ān is composed of sixty hizibs – how excellent is the level of your knowledge of the recitation of

the Qur‘ān and how many hours can you use in recitation of these sixty hizibs – to justify your ability in reciting the whole book in a single rak‘at. What an addicted liar!

Those strangers that they brought ... they are fooling you people. My aunties who are Hajias, I have summoned all my close relatives to my home. I advised them to denounce their membership of that thing. Those scholars are useless. They only deceive our mothers, the Hajias and by that they able squander their monies. They are in fact bordering you. If you deceive a person and squander her money and then guide that person unto the right path – that is fine. But here is the case you swindle the person out of her money and mislead her again. Just consider such a situation.

How many hours can you use in reciting all the sixty hizibs in the Qur‘ān? Again, how does a person consider himself as an Umma of the Prophet Muhammad. You can now see how *fitna* manifests itself if one pursues it, it leads him astray. Why do you tell lies? After such an occurrence ..., I wonder whether there will be enough time ... after such an occurrence you then come to spread a white sheet of cloth and start chanting “ Allahuma Ṣali ‘alā sayyidnaa Mohammad al-Fātih li mā ” Which sayyidnā has been unable to recite the Qur‘ān and you have ... what an ugly mouth! They have said something that they do not do.

As at now we are going to pass judgment – that scholar is undoubtedly an infidel (repeated twice). His belittling the Prophet has put him out of the fold of Islam. Continue ... Because the Qur‘ān is the bases for all the Prophet’s activities and the number of times that he (the prophet) recited it is not much. He reads the complete Qur‘ān in every rak‘at. How many times has the prophet observed the stipulated five daily prayers? He has observed for several years more than the number of times that the Prophet has observed it. “Law kunta Gaḥīzal qalbi lan fadū min hawlika – wa inaka la ‘alā khulqi ‘azīm –” The prophet is not different from the

Qur‘ān. All the good manners that the Qur‘ān has stipulated the prophet never diverged from any. Here comes a person saying “ya nā kūki ya nā kāba” (repeated twice). For God’s sake, a person of this caliber – put up in his village- nothing borders you rather than plain lies.

Those people that he brought and the set this town agog – in a conversation about a week or ten days ago he was narrating how wonderful that man was to the extent that a housefly touched him and died instantly. He has forgotten that two years ago in Kumasi some one hit him and his turban fell and he told the assailant that in seven days time he will die. This sentenced man started counting the days until it got to forty days. The man saddled and mounted a white horse and went round Kumasi to his entire intimate friends and told them that their Walī gave him seven days to die and by his count today was forty one days on the event my death after this day should not be ascribed to his sentencing. A person of this nature that we saw and knew well, and then you come to tell us that a house fly touch him and died is highly preposterous. That the population of Muslims that surround him on this Mawlid ground is more that the whole of the population of Muslims around the prophet during his day before his death. That before the people came to celebrate the Mawlid he and Allah have already dealt with their issues. I want the cassette to get to where he has said about the Kaba because I have already talked about the prophet and when we get to what he says about the Kaba I will stop there and then contrast his utterance with the Qur‘ān. A Hadith of the prophet said “Oh you Safiyyah my aunt and Fatimah my daughter do well to amass good deeds such that you come to me with abundant goods than to indulge yourself with the pride of me being your father or your nephew. And hear comes a Fulani-tribesman with a protruding ogzepus to claim that he and God have finished for a multitude of people ... if you his saying that he has dealings with Allah – it implies that he and Allah have finished deliberating on their issues before they come. So all

those who go there – including the scholars and women since he has finished with their issues on their return from there they do whatever they want to do. They have forgotten about those ten companions of the prophet who were given glad tidings of paradise before death. None of these ten companions did any vices. Just take a look at a human being ... just a moment. That they want to prevent us - people like me ... the Kaba that we go to circumambulate is a mere stone. Even an infidel who offers sacrifices to the idols is greater than the Kaba. A person like this ... do we consider him a Muslim? Is he a Muslim? [A response from the crowd] He is an infidel.

We have come out .... There is a Hadith that a certain companion of the holy prophet used to ask him about bad deeds in contrast to the goods things that other companions ask the prophet about. The other companions asked this companion why he always asked about the bad things. He responded by saying that you need to know the bad thing to be able to be wary of it. That is the reason why we have come out with this cassette and have made this spectacular gathering to point out to our fellow brothers the evil or bad thing for them to get rid of it. You cannot guide on to the right path a person of your choice but Allah directs whom he wants unto the right path. Just imagine a person saying that no one can dare you; The reason for coming with this book is that we want to avoid quoting it by heart. After reading the text we will give you the page number. Probably I know him and I live with him and it is out of mere hatred.



## APPENDIX II

SHAYKH SA-ʿĪD ʿUMAR MOHAMMAD

11/16/2008 - Tamale

### SELF INTRODUCTION

*Q. What is your age and region of origin?*

A. I was born in 1949. I hail from the Northern region of Ghana, specifically from Kumbungu. We are all from the same clan and your father was our grandfather.

*Q. What is your occupation?*

A. I am an Islamic scholar, because we were born and raised up in the corridors of study, and we are still studying. I had the opportunity to study in Saudi Arabia. On my return I continued with my father's legacy that is teaching in the school that he established called Nahda. I am currently the proprietor of the school. I do teach as well. I also teach in a school established by Majlis around the old military barracks called Manhaliyya. I so also go to the suburbs to preach Islam. We want the villagers to know Islam. There are many things that have passed them by. I have a vehicle at my disposal to do this outreach programme on Fridays.

*Q. At what level is Nahda Islamic School?*

A. It has nursery, primary and junior secondary levels.

*Q. How many students do you have?*

A. The primary school alone is about eight hundred pupils and the Junior Secondary School (JSS) about four hundred students.

*Q. What are the calibers of teachers that you have in your school.*

A. We have the secular teachers, who even outnumber the Arabic instructors. Our Arabic instructors are not up to the quota that we need. We have about fifteen Arabic instructors, and the government only sponsors 4 of them. We manage to get allowances for the rest of them.

*Q. The secular teachers are said to have a monopoly over most Islamic unit schools, is it so in Nahda?*

A. They wanted to monopolise it but we have resisted it. We are the only school in town to have instituted the commencement of daily teaching with a Quranic recitation lesson from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m., before the secular teachers take over. The norm in the other schools is that the teacher starts with the students at 7:45 a.m. and continues until noon. Because most parents just want their wards to know how to read the Qur'ān in the event of the absence of this opportunity in our school implies that the schools have ceased to exist. For, the fact is that the Qur'ān is the Muslim soul.

The Ministry of Education authorities have the notion that certain subjects cannot be effectively studied during the afternoon, like mathematics. So do we have this in Islam too. The Qur'ān can likewise only effectively be studied in the mornings. In the school we used to practise the shifting system or alternating system, whereby the secular instructor teaches a lesson and the Arabic instructor goes in to teach the next period, but this system was refused by the Ministry of Education. We therefore struck a deal where we can come early to start the day with the Quranic teachings, until 8:00 a.m., and then the secular teachers take over until noon. The Arabic instructor resumes teaching the other Islamic disciplines like fiqh and the Arabic language. Time will not be on our side if we are going to cram in all our subjects within a short expanse of time. Even the students will be so exhausted as not to learn effectively. With these

reasons the education office has permitted us to continue with our early morning Quranic lessons for the past 25 years. Other schools have not tried to adopt our system.

With those in the JSS level we go to their classes when the secular stream is over, to continue with our teaching process. Those JSS students from other schools have been grouped together and taught at a different level from our products. The fact is that lack of secular education is problematic and if we are not cautious in handling it, it will completely take over our Islamic education.

*Q. How will you identify yourself in terms of the mode of Islam that you practise?*

A. The mode of Islam that I practise is based on the sayings of Allah-Qur‘ān and those of the Prophet-Ḥadīth or his actions. So anything that we have researched into and it has no sanction in the Qur‘ān or the Ḥadīth and Sunna, or the prophet has not done it or commanded that it be done, then we refrain from doing it. That is what we term as Sunna. A person with that attitude is called ahl al-Sunna and the Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ. By that it means that those predecessors who were on the right path, for it is not all the past people who were on the right path. Those predecessors like Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayim and Ibn Kathīr, they are the scholars of ahl al-Sunna. We have complete faith in them. Our scholars for this era are Shaykh Naṣīr Dīn al-Bānī and Shaykh bin Baz. They are our era’s illustrious scholars of Dār al-Ḥadīth.

*Q. How long have you been in the ahl al-Sunna sect?*

A. Before I even went to study in Saudi Arabia, that was my sect and stand. Our stand was that one should do what has been done by the Prophet and what Allah commands to be done, not more than this. In terms of study, I went to study more about this stand and hence our knowledge broadened. On my return I still clung strongly to that. I returned from Saudi Arabia in 1985, so for almost thirty years this has been my position.

*Q. Was your father on the same path?*

A. Yes, my father was.

*Q. Was your grandfather as well?*

A. I did not meet my grandfather, but I was told that he was one of the great olden time scholars. He did not study much, for in those days when one was regarded as a scholar it was different from these days of scholarships.

Those ulama of that time were chosen servants of Allah, they were very God-fearing. They were selective in their way of sustenance. They were not so much into studies, but very grounded in faith. But we, the ulama of this era though we have studied much more but are of little faith or piety and are not God-fearing. I heard that when my grandfather was in an angry mood and he was holding a rosary, the strings of the rosary got stripped.

We are princes of Nanton. My father bears the name of my great grandfather—Banvim Lana Imoro was gave birth to Alfa Lana Salifu. This Banvim Lana was an ‘ālim and a chief and give birth to Cheko Naa Mahama, and it was the brother of Chekona who gave birth to our parents. Chekonaa Zakari Mahama mounted the throne of Cheko, but our grandfather Chekonaa Mahama refused to take the mantle when it was his turn. Cheko is a divisional chieftain of Nanton. So with us we can identify ourself with royalty or scholars when we wish. You have been born into the system.

*Q. Can you describe what makes your path distinct from others’ in the community?*

A. Why I am in it is that from thorough thought and comparative work, I realise that in order to not go astray one has to emulate the Prophet and his companions and Allah’s injunctions. The Prophet says: “He who comes with a new thing which has not been sanctioned by him is a useless venture—it will be completely rejected.”[An-Nawawi 40] He also said his followers

would be divided into seventy three groups. The Jews have seventy one and the Christians seventy two. It is only one out of seventy three that will be successful. So which is the sole, single path? Even those in the Tijāniyya path claim to be Sunna adherents and others also claim so. In this vein it is one's work that can be the parameter for judgment. If you are actually a Sunnist then you will pursue what the prophet commanded. That will prove whether you are or not a Sunnist. It could be done. One can indulge in a deed which he considers being a good deed but in reality it is not good. It is Allah alone who knows the right path. All the enumerated religions shall continue to exist on Earth until the end of time. But the fact is everyone tried to win converts into his/her religion by peaceful means. It is not proper to use war or violence. It is God's wish that they be there till the day of resurrection. The Christian will always be a Christian, so also is the Jew and the Magians. If you think you are on the right path, try to convince other people to come into your fold.

*Q. Why do you say that Wahhābism should not be used, but rather ahl al-Sunna should be the acceptable word?*

A. Originally he was a reformer—that is Mohammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was his name. He started the movement. There was a time after the Prophet that the Arab peninsular became like the previous Jāhiliyya era that the Prophet eradicated. All that the Prophet preached was no more followed to the letter. It appeared as if idolatry had been on the rise. There were instances of people who, when they went to visit the tomb of the Prophet, wrote notes on paper and threw them on the tomb, some passed their hands over the tomb and then passed them over their bodies. The prophet said: “Oh God, do not turn my tomb into an idol to be worshipped.” The Prophet said this before his death. For this reason scholars do not advise that one visits the Prophet's tomb frequently. Once or twice is enough. Some scholars even say that when one

makes a visitation to Medina one should in the first instance pretend to be there for the sake of prayers only then later go to visit the tomb of the Prophet. That is by performing two Rakats of prayer before proceeding towards the tomb. While at the tomb do not become involved in actions that will attract the wrath of God. It was things of this nature that Mohammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb came to rectify. As at that time it was the Uthmanic Empire that controlled both Mecca and Medina. It was the Turks that were in control, and they brought about these innovations. Mohammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb waged war on them. So they misconstrued his efforts to mean that he had brought a new order and hence they named his order Wahhābism—that is Wahhabiyya. They had the intention of calling it so. If the name was to be unintentional, then his sect should have been called Mohammadiyya. They realised that if that name was used it would fall in line with Islam, so they gave him a name that will distinguish him from Islam. He himself did not name his order Wahhābiyya, nor do any of the scholars in Saudi Arabia call themselves Wahhābis. They will not even mention it, but the name has already come to be known worldwide. Anyone who is seen to be rejecting certain things is classified as a Wahhābi. It is even said that every Wahhābi has no love for the Prophet, because he does not elevate the Prophet. So, there needs to be a correction.

*Q. Does the Sunni path have laudable virtues?*

A. Even we, the Sunnis, are divided. We have a branch that I do not belong to, and which seems to be extremist in nature. That brand is headed by Haj ‘Umar in Accra and Afa Bāsha is its representative here in the North.

When we returned from Saudi Arabia we formed an organisation called the Supreme Council for Islamic Call and Research. Haj ‘Umar was the head of this organisation. This was formed through the advice of one of the Saudi scholars who visited Ghana. He said there was a need for

all the Saudi graduates to be under one umbrella organisation. It was not proper to have uncoordinated activities. He formed it and selected twelve members—four were to be the executive body and be in Accra. All the other regions had two representatives each. Afa Tanko and I were chosen to represent the North. Shaykh Ibrāhim Tawfīq and some other fellow were representing the Ashanti region, and the other regions had their representatives. We used to hold meetings. They even gave us the vehicles that we are currently using. There is one in Accra, another in Kumasi, and one here in Tamale. It was to facilitate our activities.

After a while Haj ‘Umar and Shaykh Tawfīq said that we were not undertaking our activities as expected of us, that we are so soft, tolerant and compromising. They wanted us to come out to let the Tijānis know their stand. Even Shaykh Tawfīq took it to the extent that he will not pray behind a Tijāni, for he considered him to be an infidel.

Some of us felt that those stands were not fair. It will bring about chaos. We believe that dialogue was the best method to reach out to people. But to resort to violence was not appropriate. This brought about the breaking up of the mother organisation. They went and formed the ahl Sunna wa al-Jamā‘ah organisation at Wa in the Upper West Region. We secluded ourselves from it but all of us are from the same source. We were all educated in Saudi Arabia and studied the same books. It was the approach which was not the best. It is the same thing that has brought about a breach between Mallam Bāsha and his students who returned from Saudi. They refused to belong to his group, and that sparked a quarrel between them. That has been the situation until today.

Yesterday’s launch of the Qur‘ān was used as a launch-pad to seal the strained relationship between Mallam Bāsha and his students. Everyone was invited, including Imām Rashid, Luqmān Bamba. Luqman Bamba used to exchange insults with Afa Bāsha on the FM stations.

The extreme Sunnis organise conventions every year and they go from one region to the other. These extreme Sunnis even have their roots in Nigeria. It is the Nigerians that sold the idea of extremism to the Ghanaians. Haj Shu'aib belongs to Majlis. He is the vice-president and Dr. Ahmad is the president.

*Q. Have old Tijānism things that are laudable?*

A. A human being cannot be devoid of a laudable attribute. Even Satan has done things that are worthy of praise. One of the prophet's companions was charged with keeping Zakat and he handed the keys to Abū Huraira. Before Abū Haraira left the warehouse he took inventory and stock of things, then he locked it and left for home at the end of the day. The following day, when he came to check, he found out that some things were missing, but he did not realise that someone always came to steal some of the items after he had left. He, Abū Huraira, did not know this thief. One day, after locking the warehouse and on his way home he met an old man who asked him whether he was going home. He said yes. He further asked whether there were some irregularities going on in his warehouse. He said yes. The old man then said to Abū Huraira: "I will teach you an Ayat that, when you recite it, no illicit person will go near the warehouse. He taught Abū Huraira the Ayat al Qursiyu. That was Satan who taught him that. The following day when he came to check, everything was intact. Abū Huraira headed towards the Prophet's home, but before he got there Allah had already informed the Prophet about the incident. The Prophet asked Abū Huraira on seeing him. How did you end up with that old man yesterday? He said: "When I was leaving for home someone asked me to recite Ayat al Qursiyyu and that no one would touch the items in the warehouse." The Prophet then said: "That person spoke the truth, but he is a liar. On the point that he mentioned to you he was right, but he is a liar in nature." The Prophet then told Abū Huraira that the man was Satan.



So man being what he is will have strengths and weaknesses. So Tijānis have certain traits that are good. In the first place, the youth that have been trained by the Tijānis have respect for their elders, but the youth that we ahl al-Sunna have brought up or trained makes them to rub shoulders with us. They do not respect us. Our youth come to visit us at the wrong time. I am the secretary to the Majlis in the Northern region and I do write recommendations for those of our youth that are applying for external scholarships in the Arab world. At times these boys come to my house at 6:00 a.m. for me to sign their documents for them. I often ask them if they can go to Alhaji Tamimus' house at such an early time in the morning to ask him to do that for them.

There was even another occasion when someone came to me after 10:00 p.m. to sign his documents for him. I refused to do so. So the following day he (the boy) had to send in people to apologise on his behalf. These are a few cases to show how our youth lack respect for the elderly. It is we who trained them so, because we have condemned a lot of things in the society. For instance, we have taught them that squatting as a sign of respect to the elderly is unacceptable, but there are traditions of the Prophet which permit that.

*Q. Can the Sunnis and Tijānis co-exist?*

A. They can co-exist, as you saw at the launch of the Qur'ān venue yesterday. We have failed to understand that force cannot be used to rectify an anomaly. Even in Saudi Arabia, which is a known Sunni country, there are events and occurrences there that would not be tolerated here. Even the scholars are aware of these occurrences, yet they keep quiet about it. Events like the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Mawlid. Shaykh bin Bāz used to condemn it but a faction of Saudis observed it. I have lived in Saudi Arabia for twelve years and I attended quite a number of such celebrations. It is even in Mecca itself. Those who do it, do it in secrecy. They

get selected, go there and sing, and afterwards they eat and drink. At Medina too I had the opportunity to attend one such Mawlid, purposely, so as to give an eye-witness account. This event is being organised by some top Saudi opinion leaders including [Former oil minister Zaki Yamani] An example of such a person is Alam al Maliki, who was a scholar in Haram of Mecca. He said there was nothing wrong with such a celebration. With even that, no one will come out openly to fight the other, but we learned it and came to our country and fought one another because of it. That is improper.

*Q. Do these two groups intermingle with each other?*

A. Though we have different aqīdah (beliefs), but a lot of social events bring us together. There was a case at the cemetery during the burial of one of the Tijāni scholars, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahīm. His elder brother Shaykh Mustāpha was officiating the burial proceedings. He asked us to recite Fātiha and Ṣalāt al-Fātih; while that was being recited I substituted Ṣalāt al-Ibrāhimiyya in place of Ṣalāt al-Fātih, while doing this, he (Shaykh Mustapha) overheard me and whispered to me in Arabic: “We have not requested that Ṣalāt from you.” I did and ignored him. If I had responded a scene would have been created at the cemetery. They are both Ṣalāts and all that we wanted was to seek for forgiveness for our dead brother. One does not dictate to another the kind of prayer that he or she wants him to recite.

*Q. What do you think about the present relationship between Islam and the West?*

A. The 9/11 events seem to have given Muslims the feeling that the West has mounted an attack against them. The West claim to be attacking terrorists, but they seem to have gone beyond these bounds. With that it has made Muslims feel that the attack was no more aimed at terrorism, but rather at Islam. They cited examples of the invasion of Iraq on the grounds of Iraq’s possession of weapons of mass destruction, but Iraq disputed it. When North Korea

continued to openly say they had such weapons, it was not attacked. So where lays the justification of the attack. This was a question that the American Ambassador was asked when he visited Tamale. It was asked by Amin Bamba. The Ambassador, though attempted to answer, could not give sufficient reasons for that action.

Even more, President Bush at the beginning of the attack said it was a crusade that was his first utterance. He was advised to withdraw that statement, which he did, but a speech is like a bullet, the moment the trigger is pulled you cannot halt it or call it back. Currently the relationship seems to be better. It is they who have brought that about. They have undertaken a lot of things to give them a good image. Their Embassy organises ifṭār (meal for the breaking of fast) for Muslims. In America Bush extended an invitation to Muslim leaders there The Ambassador has invited us to his place on several occasions and has given us a lot of gifts.

*Q. What is the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Sunnism?*

A. The Saudis follow the path of ahl al-Sunna. Their chosen school of thought is that of Imām Aḥmad bin Hambal, but one will never hear the word Wahhābism uttered by anyone. It is only when one wants to be known by certain name that the name is applicable to him, but if not, it does not apply to him. It is only the name Islam that one should be known by, and no other name one has to be proud of the name Islam, rather than any other name.

In the early days of the inception of the Medina University, most of their professors were from Riyadh, and they were very strict and extremists. They even used to reject a lot of things. The Najdis who came from the Riyadh area took themselves to be so high. For instance, in Medina University instead of the sounding of bells for the changing of lessons, they had someone stand and cry out the Subhāna al-Lāhi several times. They also condemned photographs. Most of them that saw a lot of things to be Haram now modernise their view.

They now say that a picture is like a mirror, it is your own reflection that you see, so now some have legalised photographs. It is the modelling of a thing or the sculpturing that is not acceptable. Their old scholars died with their extremist ideas. Scholars like Shaykh bin Bāz and Naṣir dīn al-Albani died with the notion that photographs were illegal. Those who have modernised and legalised them, I see to be on the right note. Even Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and scholars before him stood by the notion of photography not being illegal.

*Q. Is Sunnism good for Africans?*

A. It is good for us provided we do not want to elongate affairs. It will be very good for us Africans. The difference between us and the Tijānis is that we are not against the recitation of astagfir al-Lāhi — no you can do as much as you can. We are not against the recitation of Tahlil because the Prophet said that it is the best thing that ever came out of his mouth and those of the prophets who preceded him. The Prophet also said that he recited istigfār times daily. All these are not what we consider to be erroneous but the mode in which it is done is what we consider an innovation.

What scholars say is that, when we look back into the era of the Prophet, is there an instance where the Prophet has ever told people after prayer to sit in a group to chant or recite certain things? If there is such a thing then we take to it, if not, we discard it. But in reality the prophet used to recite istigfār, even, wherever he was he chanted istigfar. ‘Abd al lah bin ‘Umar says: that most often when we were at a place conversing if one listened closely to the prophet one heard him saying Astagfir al-Lāh, which is the Istigfār. It is not necessary that after prayer people gather together and spread something in front of them and start chanting. It is this methodology that is considered to be an innovation, but in its origins it is not an innovation. If they stuck to what the Prophet used to do, then we would have no problem with them. For

instance, in my case, every dawn after prayer I sit right here and recite the Istigfār, the Hailala, the Hawqala, the Subhala, and even the Hasbalah, one hundred times each. Then when it is time for the Fajr prayer, I leave for the mosque. I do that every day, except those on which I oversleep. In my case the occurrence of over sleeping occurs once in a whole year. My father used to wake us up for the dawn prayer, which we really disliked when we were kids, but it has become part and parcel of us now—and we are now benifitting from it. When I first went to Saudi Arabia as a student, I was among other foreign students that were not yet assigned a room in residence. So we were made to sleep in a large classroom block. We were there with other students from Jordan and Palestine. When they went to sleep they would tell me to wake them up. They were surprised at the way I woke up so early. At that instance, memories of my father would come to my mind. Any time my father woke us up and we never went to the mosque, he would scold us or give us a beating. I have adopted that policy in the training of my children. When I am going to the mosque at dawn, I wake everybody up and go with them. If I wake you up and you do not get up, I have problems with you.

*Q. Ṣūfī Islam seems to be accommodating unlike Sunni Islam, which is so rigid and inflexible. Talking about back in the Prophetic era the prohibition of alcohol was gradual. So in a way a gradual methodology is encouraged in Islam. How do you respond to this?*

A. Well, with human nature, what man has got himself indulged in and used to, in a bid to dislodge the person from that position one has to go straight to the point without any kind of sugar-coating. In the case of religion, to win a person over into your faith is in God's hands, so just do the right thing and tell the person the bare facts, and Allah will take care of the rest. The truth is like the human buttocks, if you refuse to sit on it today, tomorrow you will obviously sit on it. So if you go to the point today and hit the nail on the head, it is better than trying to

pussy-foot around the point, because we have no control over the soul. A person could die before taking strictly to the faith, so, in case of premature death, and then you will also be held accountable for part of his deeds. Anything that is related to associating partners of Allah, there is no compromise regarding it. Even God addresses the Prophet in the Qur‘ān: “[Quote in Arabic]” “If the Prophet had made a statement one tenth of which was in support of shirk, I, Allah would have punished you in the hereafter.” Allah also says in the Qur‘ān: “[Quote in Arabic]” “It looks as if you, the Prophet, had wanted to incline a little bit towards acceding to their whims, to say things that would please them in the view of their Gods; if you had done that I would have made you taste multiple instances of worldly punishment as well the same in the hereafter.”

*Q. At yesterday’s launching of the Qur‘ān Abū al Firdawsu made a point that, left to him alone, he would have wished that the head of the Ṭarīqa movement was a Dagomba. In this, his utterance has his emphasis been placed on ethnicity or on Islam? Do you think that ethnicity is more important than Islam?*

A. Islam is more important. His utterance was childish. His father is also accused of not being diplomatic in his approach. He is condemned for saying that the Ṭarīqa mashayikh are in hell and insulting the living ones. His father has been vilified on the FM radio by both Luqmān Bamba and Imām Rashid. It even got to the extent that derogatory and personal secrets were revealed on air. So a person should

be thankful to Allah for being a scholar that does not indulge in such things, nor have personal faults. If another person wants to insult you, he will be restricted to your human features, like a long head and ears, but if they accuse you or found you stealing or fornicating, that is improper. Islam should be given precedence.

Islam is above everything. At the wedding grounds we hear a lot of utterances. We want to claim that our Dagbani culture has preceded Islam. That is why we cannot leave behind a number of practices. Islam supercedes everything. If you were to indulge in a certain practice and later Islam comes to condemn it, then you have to leave it, and pursue what Islam says. A case in point is that of the Holy Prophet in the pre-Islamic. There was a prayer that they used to greet each other with: “[Quote in Arabic]” It meant in full “[Quote in Arabic]” “May your morning or afternoon be an enjoyable one.” There was a man who left Mecca with the intention of going to kill the Prophet at Medina. This man was called Ummaya bin Wakh̄b, and had this intention because of the heavy losses that each and every house in Mecca had incurred during the battle of Badr. His problem was his finances. So when he made his intention known, a man named Sufwan bin Ummaya offered to finance him and take care of his family in his absence. He took off and when he got to Medina the companions of the prophet informed him that this man had his sword in a scabbard by his side. Upon seeing the Prophet he greeted him in the old fashioned way by saying: “[Quote in Arabic]” The Prophet responded by saying: “[Quote in Arabic]” “God has charged me with a greeting that is better than your greeting. The new greeting is:” “[Quote in Arabic]” Both were Arabs who used to greet each other with the former. This implies that if you have a tradition and Islam comes with a new one, you abandon yours and then take to that of Islam.

In the first place, the Islamic greeting is a prayer—“May you be peaceful in health, wealth and family. So it is not just a little prayer, because there is nothing more worthy than peace. There is nothing that neither is greater than Islam nor precedes it.

*Q. With the Dagbon scenario, where have we put our emphasis on?*

A. If we had given precedence to Islam, the existing problem would have been solved. For instance, with the chieftaincy dispute, if the upper hand were given to Islam, that should not have arisen. This is because our chiefs are not very true Muslims. Why? because you cannot find a chief who does not give offerings to the idols. That is what God detests most, so is it worth going to die for the sake of such a person?



### APPENDIX III



APPENDIX IV



## **APPENDIX V**

### **INTERVIEWS**

#### **Ghana education service (G.E.S)**

1. Interview with Mr. Iddrisu Yahaya Gado of Ghana Education Service (G.E.S) 11/03/2009  
Tamale (Tape Recorded)
2. Interview with Mr. Adam Iddrisu a retired G.E.S senior officer (TAPE RECORDED)
3. Interview with Mr. Mohammad Harun of G.E.S and M.P (GES) 12/01/2009 (DVD)

#### **Islamic education unit (I.E.U)**

4. Interview with Mr. Salisu former Islamic Education Unit Regional manager
5. Interview with Mr. Abubakr McNamara former Islamic education unit manager
6. Interview with Shaykh Ali Fikri Ibrahim current Islamic Education Unit manager (I.E.U)  
24/12/2008 Tamale (DVD)
7. Interview Shaykh Ibrahim Bāsha first chairman of Islamic unit national council Tamale  
11/20/2008.

#### **Local scholars and ‘ulamā**

8. Shaykh Sa‘īd Abūbakr head of Anbaryyya Sunni Community 1/11 /2009 at Tamale (DVD)
9. Shaykh Mohammad Amin Bamba Tamale Central Mosque 11/20/2008 Tamale (DVD)
10. Shaykh al-Hussein Zakaria of Tamale Central Mosque 01/05/2009 Tamale (DVD)
11. Shaykh Abdul Mu‘min Salifu Tamale Central Mosque (DVD)
12. Shaykh Ahmad Abubakr of Tamale Central Mosque 15/01/2009 Tamale (DVD)
13. Shaykh Abdul Razak Ṭāhir (Accra)
14. Shaykh Mohammed Mutawakil Idris Alfoutiyu 01/03/2009 Accra (DVD)
- 15 Shaykh Awwal Shu’aibu Imām of Takoradi Central Mosque Accra (DVD)

16. Shaykh ‘Abdallah Baba Duah Tamale Central Mosque 01/17/2009 Tamale (DVD)
17. Shaykh ‘Isā Alhassan Abubakr (Qamariyya) 1/11/2009 Tamale (DVD)
18. Shaykh ‘Umar Sa ‘īd (Nahda Mosque) 11/16/2008 Tamale (DVD)
19. Shaykh Abdul Rahman Mallam Fari 10/30/2008 Tamale (DVD)
20. Shaykh Abdallah (Police Service Mosque) 01/17/2009 Tamale (DVD)
21. Shaykh Abul Fayd of Prang (DVD)
22. Shaykh Qalam Allah of Prang (DVD)
23. Shaykh Abdul Hanān Yussif Ajura of Ambariyya Sunni Community 1/15/2009 Tamale (DVD)
24. Shaykh Ilyas ‘Umar 01/13/2009 Tamale

**Women group**

25. Hajia Maryam Alhassan Alolo 28/12/08 Tamale (DVD)
26. Hajia Mutīah al-Hassan 01/16/2009 Tamale (DVD)
27. Hajia Khadijah al-Hassan 01/15/2009 Tamale (DVD)
28. Hajia A‘ishatu Fatimah Zarqā Abubakr 01-08-2009 Tamale (DVD)
29. Hajia A‘ishatu Uthman 01-08-2009 Tamale (DVD)

**Students group**

30. Tamale Senior High School 11/13/2008 Tamale (DVD)
31. Pong Tamale Senior High School 11/03/2009 Tamale (DVD)
32. As-Sa-adi Senior High School (DVD)
33. Tamale Islamic Senior High School (DVD)

**Members of parliament and opinion leaders**

34. Mr. Mohammad Harūn former Tamale South member of Parliament 12/01/2009 Tamale (M.P) (DVD)

35. Dr. Mohammad Tahir elder in Gbewaa Palace 01/16/ 2009 Tamale (DVD)

36 Shaykh Abdulahi A. alias one-one opinion leader in Dagbon 01/10/2009 Tamale (DVD)

37. Mr. Adam Mohammad Amin Anta (TAPE RECORDED)

38. Mr Boniface Abubakari M.P for Salaga former Northern Regional Minister and former minister social welfare and housing.

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