

Anhang 2

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Kinds of Islam and policies of inclusion and exclusion: some comparative perspectives from the Sudan and beyond

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As E. E. Evans-Pritchard pointed out in *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, Sufism started as a reaction to scripturalist and ritualistic tendencies in mainstream Islam, which left too little room for religious enthusiasm and the ecstatic dimension of religion. It was also, from its beginnings, influenced by non-Islamic forms of religious ascetism, like that of Christian and Buddhist monks, and possibly by Yoga¹. It is therefore no surprise that Sufism is capable of going a far way in adjusting to local cultures and in responding to the spiritual needs of people of different pre-Islamic origins.

On the other hand, Sufi *tariiqas* have also formulated their methods to reach salvation in mutually exclusive and competitive terms: they have claimed to be the only path to salvation, or at least the one which is a thousand times safer than any other path. Their leaders, especially in 19th century Africa, have demanded an authority short of prophethood only in not calling themselves 'prophet', which would, according to the teachings of Islam, not have been possible after Muhammad, 'the seal of the prophets'. Here we find more and more rigour and an increasingly narrower definition of who is a proper Muslim. This development of Sufi movements can be seen as an intensification process, in the course of which they became ritually more elaborate and rigid and politically more demanding of exclusive loyalty.

I start with a short description of a contemporary Sufi community in northern Kenya which belongs to the first type: it liberally incorporates pre-Islamic beliefs and practices. Travelling in the Sudan and reading about it, I have not encountered there any branch of Sufism which

¹ Schimmel 1995 (1985) on the influence of Christianity and Buddhism: 13, on Yoga: 28.

has developed the same degree of syncretism. The closest Sudanese parallels I can think of are the women-dominated *zar* possession cults (Boddy 1989).

The Sakuye case

Ecstatic religion is by some theorists (e.g. I. M. Lewis 1978) linked to deprivation. The Sakuye example seems to fit this theory. The Sakuye were Oromo-speaking camel herders when they were converted to Islam in the first decades of the 20th century. When the British held a referendum in northern Kenya in 1962, to find out whether its population wanted to belong to Kenya, which was then on its road to independence, or to the newly independent and newly united Republic of Somalia, the Sakuye preferred Somalia, a country of Muslim pastoralists like themselves. Although this was the majority position in northern Kenya, the stretch of country was allotted to Kenya, because negotiations with the Kenyan delegation in London had, by the time the referendum was over, reached a stage which left no room for dividing the territory of that future nation. After independence, the inhabitants of the north and their new central Kenyan masters knew from the start, thanks to the referendum, what to expect from each other, and a civil war, known as the *shifita* emergency, broke out immediately. The camel herds of the Sakuye were machine-gunned. The remainder of the livestock perished when the Sakuye were kept in camps ("keeps"), the surroundings of which were speedily overgrazed because these camps did not move. There are tales of atrocities and random killings, when trecks of Sakuye were marched to the east by their enemies, the loyalist Boran.

In the early 70s, impoverished remainders of the Sakuye gathered at Dabel, a group of hills below the escarpment of the Ethiopian plateau on the Kenyan side. There was a little more rain there than in the lower parts of the lowlands, and agriculture was just possible, albeit with low returns and high risks. A holy man found underground water and new wells were dug.

Able bodied younger men earned their livelihood by poaching. Some of them died of thirst on the endless plains, trying to smuggle leopard skins into Somalia. Many young men were unable to pay the bridewealth. Had the parents of Sakuye girls insisted on bridewealth, a high proportion of Sakuye girls would have been given to non-Sakuye suitors and many young Sakuye men would have ended in involuntary celibacy. To avert this situation, the bridewealth was abolished and endogamy was practiced for a number of years.

The camel-oriented rituals, which the Sakuye had practiced before in much the same form as the neighbouring Gabbra and Rendille (cf. Schlee 1994: ch. 4), had become meaningless after the loss of the camels. Their still rather nominal affiliation to Islam (to which they might have converted under pressure by their Somali neighbours) did not satisfy their spiritual needs. The gap was filled by the Husayniyya, a Sufi order named after the legendary Sheikh Hussein (Husayn) of Bale in south-eastern Ethiopia (Andrzejewski 1972, 1974, Baxter 1987, Braukämper 1989).

At Dabel this order was represented by Abba Ganna. This name means “father of the rainy season”, more specifically: of the spring equinoctial rains, the big rains which also lend their name to the ‘year’, i.e. “father of wealth, father of plenty”. It is an allusion or derives inspiration from the title of a hagiography of Sheikh Hussein published in Cairo, *Rabii’ul quluub*, ‘The Springtime of Hearts’.

When I met Abba Ganna in the 80s, he was an old man of enormous bodily proportions. He lived in permanent seclusion behind a curtain and was accompanied by a son who held a large umbrella to shield him from the sun and from sight when he left his hut. The number of his wives was kept at the legal maximum: four. When he divorced one he immediately took a young bride as a replacement.

The souls of saints can travel across time and space and meet other saints, living and dead. This is well known from Sufi legends from all over the Islamic world. In Dabel, however, at least in popular belief, the Arabic concept of *awliya* (sing. *wali*) is mixed with the Boran (Oromo) concept *ayaan* – ‘spirit’ in general, including ‘animal spirit’ (Bartels 1983).

There is a story that once, after the Sakuye had acquired some livestock again, Abba Ganna did not want their camps to move far away from Dabel. Some camps did so nevertheless and were subsequently harassed by lions on the outlying pastures. After they retraced their steps, there were no more problems with large cats. This episode is told as a proof of the ability of Abba Ganna’s soul to communicate with lions or spirit lions.

Abba Ganna’s career fits the classical pattern of a leader of a possession cult. It starts with his own disease which was diagnosed as spirit possession at Anajinna, the holy site of the Husayniyya in Bale. He then developed ways of living with the spirits and finally to communicate with them at will. Thus he also qualified as a healer of others whose diseases were attributed to possession. He became famous, both as a healer and a diviner, and

people visited him from as far as Mombasa. In his final years he rarely participated in any healing sessions himself. He had his “corporals” for that.

The ideas about possession and the practices of its treatment resemble greatly the *ayaana* cults elsewhere in the Oromo speaking world (e.g. on the Waso, 250 km to the south (Dahl)) and the *zar* cults common throughout north-eastern Africa. As in *zar* possession, the afflicted persons are mostly women, but in the healing sessions there is no preponderance of women as in *zar*. Among the Sakuye of Dabel, dealing with spirits is a mixed gender affair.

Some spirits demand blood through the mouths of the possessed. So animals need to be bled and the patient drinks considerable amounts of blood (before their conversion to Islam, blood was a regular element of the Sakuye diet). This is not regarded as a breach of Islamic food avoidances, since the spirit, not the patient, is considered to consume the blood. And the spirit may well be a pagan and thus perfectly entitled to his share of blood. The idea that the spirit, and not the patient, consumes the food it demands, was illustrated to me by the case of a woman whose spirit had just demanded a huge kettle full of coffee which she had emptied. Then the spirit had enough and left her. The woman became herself again. And she was thirsty.

The Sakuye also find other excuses for drinking blood. The slightest health disorder is enough to label blood as ‘medicine’ rather than ‘food’ and thus render it *halal* (lawful) in the eyes of the Sakuye.

Other spirits demand *hadar* dances, as they are also held on Islamic holidays. These are ecstatic drum sessions for which men and women join after dark in large groups, dancing shoulder to shoulder, with numerous participants, mostly women, falling into trance. It is not the type of thing regarded by the bookish type of sheikh in larger towns as orthodox.

This does not mean that there is little knowledge about Islam at Dabel. One of the sons of Abba Ganna is well versed in classical Arabic in which he is also able to converse². Other members of the community have travelled far and received formal Islamic education. When I once donated a set volumes of Bukhari’s and Muslim’s *Ahaadith*, an authoritative collection of tales about the Prophet, to the community, a quarrel broke out between those able to read it. There was even talk of splitting the set and appropriating single volumes individually. What I meant to illustrate here is not the lack of knowledge about Islam, but the fact that Islamic

² Often non-Arab African Muslims master Arabic only in what Owens (1995) by a computer analogy calls ‘the graphic mode’, i.e. they reproduce texts without analysing them, and then, of course, they cannot re-arrange the words to express ideas of their own.

scholarship and syncretic folk beliefs and practices exist side by side among the Sakuye. In the same family one can find a long-haired mystic with a preference for ecstatic practices and a quiet scholar.

Sufism and jihad in Sudanic Africa

Jihaad movements whose leaders were Sufi sheikhs who rose through Sufi networks have occurred all through the Sudanic belt of Africa from the Senegal to the Nilotic Sudan and beyond to Somalia throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They include the *jihad* of Sheikh 'Uthmaan dan Fodio (Shehu Osman dan Fodio, ibn Fuudi and other spellings) which led to the foundation of the Caliphate of Sokoto with its dependency in Adamawa . This movement later merged with the Sudanese Mahdiyya because of the expectation of the Mahdi on the Nile and later, after the occupation of the Caliphate by the infidels, the *hijra* from Nigeria to the Sudan in the first decade of the 20th century. Other such *jihad* movements include that of the Tijaani Sheikh Al Hajj 'Umar Tall between the Senegal and the Niger. Descendants of Al Hajj 'Umar and his followers are today also found in compact settlements in the Sudan and they have preserved their affiliation to the Tijaaniyya *tariiqqa* and their jihadist memories. Such movements which extended their spiritual and military might well into the 20th century include the Sanusiyya in what would become Lybia and the Chad and the "dervishes" of Muhammad 'Abdille Hassan (Salihyya) in the future Somalia and Ogadeen.

In the contemporary political situation these movements, often with a political party attached, continue to exert influence. In Nigeria the "northern" emirs still have much political weight. In the Sudan the family of the Mahdi and the rival Khatmiyya are still affluent and powerful religious aristocracies, although in opposition and partly in exile. The Islamist movement now in power, the National Islamic Front, is not derived from a Sufi order. It would , however , be interesting to see how far it resembles a Sufi order structurally in its cell structure and the highly personalized leader-follower relationships.

The Wahabiyya of Saudi Arabia is not a Sufi order. It is quite opposed to any Sufi practices and any religious practices which cannot be directly derived from the Koran and be traced back to the time of the Prophet. It is, however, sociologically equivalent to all the Sufi-based movements which we have just enumerated: it is a politicised form of Islam, it has a ruling family, it was the nucleus of a state which led to state formation. Through Saudi petrodollars Wahabi influence can be felt, and seen in the shape of new mosques, in much of the Islamic world today.

What strikes the reader who familiarizes himself or herself with jihadist movements from Senegambia to Indonesia most, is the frequent similarities of these movements. These are due to two factors: a common pattern and mutual contacts. The common pattern on which these movements model themselves is the life of the Prophet. The mutual contacts have mainly been established through the *hajj* which has united pilgrims from Morocco to the Malay archipelago on a yearly basis for centuries: an instance of globalisation which predates anything fashionable sociological theorists of “globalisation” with their exclusive Euro-American focus appear to be aware of. Wandering saints have also spent months and years, often on the way to Mecca or back from there, visiting each other or worldly rulers, if the two, warrior-king and saint, were not rolled into one. They are linked to each other by the spiritual descent lines between master and disciple and sometimes also by actual kinship by marrying from each other’s families.

Apart from these two modes of transmission of elements to be shared (from a common source and from each other), which, of course, can also co-occur in a variety of mixtures, we can also distinguish two *kinds* of shared features: the direct borrowings and the analogies.

First an example for direct borrowings. When the Prophet had fled from Mecca to Medina, he had two types of followers: the “refugees”, *muhaajiruun*, who had fled with him to Mecca or joined him at Medina from Mecca, and the Medinese helpers, the *ansaar*. Many leaders of later jihads had, at some point of their struggle, to withdraw from some place to some other place, and invariably this was called a *hijra*. Whoever joined the leader on the flight became a *muhaajir* and whoever joined him in the new place a *naasir* (sing. of *ansaar*). This is a direct transfer of names and institutions without much change of meaning. (About the *hijra* of al Hajj ‘Umar from Fouta Jalon to Dinguiray in Guinea v. Abun-Nasr 1965: 112, about the *ansaar* of the Sudanese Mahdi v. Holt 1961: 88)

Borrowing by analogy requires additional steps. Words need to be changed as concepts are taken out of an original context and transferred into another one. What constitutes the resulting analogy is the similarity of the figures of thought in the original and the new context and the identity of a part of the words used, which is sufficient to evoke the original phrase. An example is the description of Ahmad at-Tijaani, the founder of the Tijaniyya, as *khatm al wilaaya* – ‘the seal of sainthood’. This phrase is, of course, coined after the designation of Muhammad as *khatm an anbiya* – ‘the seal of the prophets’, meaning the last prophet. A strict reading of ‘the seal of sainthood’ by this analogy would imply that there would be no saints after Ahmad at-Tijaani. Since later personalities, like as-Sanusī, could not be denied

sainthood, this position became gradually modified. Followers of the Tijaaniyya, however, would still regard Ahmad at-Tijaani as the perfect model and complete embodiment of *wilaaya*. Later saints will derive their inspiration from him. “There may be other *walis* after him, but none would surpass or supersede him.” (Abun-Nasr 1965: 30-32)

Metaphors of sealing and closing point to the exclusivist element of politicised Sufism. Only one way is the true way or at least the best way, so much better that no other way is worth going. This is reflected also in numerical calculations about the efficiency of Sufi ritual formulae. About one such formula, the *salaat a faatih* of the Tijaaniyya, it is claimed that the Prophet who appeared to Ahmad at-Tijaani had informed him “of its great efficacy in the remission of sins [...] The Shaikh of the Tijaaniyya also claimed that the Prophet informed him that the merit of reciting it once was ‘equivalent to that of the recitation of all prayers of glorification to God (*tasbih*) that have ever been said in the universe, all Sufi prayers of remembrance of God (*dhikr*), every invocation (*du‘a*) long or short, and the [recitation of the] Qur’an six thousand times’.” (Abun-Nasr 1965: 51) While the numbers involved are reminiscent of astronomy, the type of reasoning resembles Business Administration. If one is conscious of costs and benefits, why should one recite long texts with little efficacy of salvation instead of short texts with a many times higher salvation impact? All other forms of Muslim piety appear as rather futile in comparison with the irresistible magic of the Tijaani formula, if one accepts these numerical proportions.

As the sheikh was in possession of the right formula for everything, followers had to show absolute obedience and loyalty. It was believed that God through His grace would admit to paradise anybody who followed the saint and would lead astray anybody who ceased to love the saint, so that such a person would die as an infidel and thus go to hell. Deviation from the line of the sheikh thus was regarded as deviation from the path to heaven. This comes close to the tendency among leading representatives of politicised Islam until today, of condemning people and making statements about who is going to heaven and who is going to hell, instead of leaving this decision to God, as the Koran would suggest.

This monopolization of the truth and the exclusion of everybody who did not subscribe to it from salvation as well as from worldly resources, was, of course, directed against other Muslims. That non-Muslims would go to hell went without saying. These exclusion strategies against other Muslims however, went beyond marking them as bad Muslims: it contested their status as Muslims. One problem all saint-warriors of the 19th century in the Sudanic belt of Africa faced, was how to declare *jihad* against fellow Muslims, the normal condition for

waging *jihad* being that it is directed against non-Muslims who have rejected a legal summons to convert.

The commonly held view is that anyone who has uttered the two articles of faith, the unity of God and the affirmation that Muhammad is His prophet, is a Muslim. By calling him a non-believer, one might even risk to place oneself outside the fold of Islam, because calling a Muslim a *kaafir* amounts to equating Islam with *kufr*, with Unbelief. How did the *jihad* leaders of the 19th century overcome this problem? 'Uthmaan dan Fodio and his son Muhammad Bello set the precedent when they declared war against the sultan of Bornu, Muhammad al Kanemi. They reasoned that al Kanemi supported the Hausa sultans against them. These Hausa regarded themselves as Muslims as well, but the leaders of the Fulani *jihad* denounced them as unbelievers because they performed certain pagan rights. And anyone who supports pagans against a Muslim ruler is to be regarded a pagan himself.

This model was later followed by al Hajj 'Umar Tall when he declared war against Ahmadu Shaikhu, the king

of Massina, the Defender of the Faith, the third in a line of Muslim rulers who had fought the pagans. Some of the converts made by them were found by al Hajj 'Umar still to worship idols. As these people had fought against him, he constructed the same case of a Muslim supporting pagans against a Muslim ruler against Ahmadu as dan Fodio and Bello had constructed against al-Kanemi. (Abun-Nasr 1965: 122-124)

Narrow definitions of who is a Muslim were also promoted in 19th century Africa by the practice of slavery. As fellow Muslims cannot be enslaved by Muslims, large numbers of converts present a problem of potential slave supply. The further progress Islam has made and the more people have converted to it, the stronger the tendency becomes to separate 'real' Muslims by some set of criteria from nominal Muslims and to declare the latter as unbelievers to be able to enslave them. (Meillassoux 1986)

Conclusion

In the growth zone of the Islamic world along its periphery, one might observe two phases in the history of interaction between Islam and non-Islamic cultures. They might not always be easy to separate and they might co-exist synchronically in neighbouring areas, but they might still make some sense, at least as types of interaction of which one tends to precede the other in time.

In the first phase of expansion Islam tends to tolerate and even accommodate many pre-Islamic elements. Islam is still weak and needs to pay for being accepted. It comes half the way to bridge the cultural gap between the Muslim minority and the host society.

Later, when at least nominal affiliation to Islam has become the rule, more purist and more exclusivist attitudes tend to be adopted. Politically, i.e. in terms of legitimation of claims to power, this makes perfect sense. If everybody is a Muslim, such claims cannot merely be based on being a Muslim. One needs to distinguish different degrees of virtue and claim the higher echelons for oneself.

Sufism illustrates the entire spectrum from a form of Islam which is responsive to ideas and practices from outside to the most rigid and exclusive tendencies. Theologically it may be a special form of Islam –mystical Islam, as it is sometimes called-, sociologically it is not. We may find the same tendencies of inclusion and exclusion in Sufism and in other streams of Islam. Politics seems to be a major determinant of where on a scale of piety Muslims locate themselves or are located.

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