Introduction

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Roughly defined, sufi orders or brotherhoods (*tariqa*, pl. *turuq*, "way" or "path") are hierarchically organized mystical organizations. Theoretically, all sufi orders are branches from the trunk of the Qadiriya, founded in the twelfth century by the saint 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (unless they are "neosufi" brotherhoods or Muhammadiya *tariqas* such as the Ahmadiya, Sanusiya, and Tijaniya, founded only about the end of the eighteenth century or just after). These depended on direct inspiration from the Prophet to the founder of the order.

There had already been schools of mysticism and, of course, many individual mystics in both the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds. The creation and spread of sufi orders, however, introduced a collective and organized spirit into mysticism. By later medieval times, sufi orders had thoroughly permeated Islam. At a guess, between 1500 and 1800, perhaps 60 to 80 percent of all Muslims in Egypt, North Africa, and the Muslim portions of West and East Africa belonged to some sufi order. As the numbers of sufis attached to brotherhoods grew, the orders grew increasingly powerful and influential. In particular, certain urban orders developed very fully. Most contemporary orders are descended from brotherhoods originally developed in two main regions: in Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Central Asia, or separately in western North Africa.

In the East, such famous orders as the Qadiriya (founded by 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani or Kaylani, d. 1166); the Rifa'iya (founded by al-Rifa'i, d. 1182); the Chishtiya (so called after Mu'in al-Din Chishti, d. 1236), a famous Indian order; and the Naqshbandiya (named for Baha' al-Din Naqshband, d. 1389), which has inspired a number of suborders, emerged. A famous North African order, which has since had many offshoots, is the Shadhiliya, named for al-Hasan al-Shadhili (d. 1258).[1]

Significantly, sufi brotherhoods cut cross kinship groups, classes, professions, and lineages, serving to integrate these units vertically. Important in maintaining the existence of these voluntary mystical organizations were individual members' experiences in congregational *hadras* or *dhikrs*. In a *dhikr* circle (here *dhikr* means the frequent "mention" of God), the participants commonly sang hymns, recited formulas, and brought themselves to the brink of collective ecstasy by

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techniques of controlled breathing or bodily motion. Hyperventilation, or states of consciousness approaching the threshold of hyperventilation, could be induced by these collective rites. Under these circumstances, the carbon dioxide–oxygen balance in the brain is altered, creating a greater susceptibility to visions or hallucinations.[2]

Owing to the intensity of these emotional experiences in the *dhikr* circle, a brotherhood could generate much love and devotion – not only among the brothers (*ikhwan* or *ahbab*) themselves, but between them and their spiritual director and leader (their *shaykh* or *murshid*). Thus one *dhikr* circle, joined to others in the neighborhood and – in the case of a big order – throughout the land, created a cohesive body of men (women were occasionally admitted to *tariqa*s, but not by the majority of orders). With its members having social and worldly preoccupations as well as spiritual ones, an order could be oriented toward political purposes. This was more the case with the popular orders – where the emotional dependence of the brothers on their director was greater, and where they were politically more passive. Among "intellectual" orders such as Ottoman or Egyptian Khalwatiya, there was less dependence, less coherence of this sort.[3] Loyalty, enthusiasm, and commitment to the order are obvious presuppositions for political activity. Likewise, the degree of control exercised over an order by its *shaykh* was significant. If his control was complete, then the "convertibility" of the organization to political – or even military – roles was the easier. Yet it must be stressed that no brotherhood has any inherent tendency towards political action, no special call to defend Islam, nor to participate in what has been called "primary resistance."[4] Being essentially mystical organizations, orders did not deviate from their original reasons for existing without strong pressure external to the order. Yet at various times in the past, some of them had good reason to do just that.

Such was the situation at the end of the eighteenth century. At that time, sufi orders throughout the Islamic world could not but share the fear of many Muslims that their society was threatened by Europe. The continuing loss of lands regarded as Islamic territory underlined these attitudes; the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt confirmed them. A trend then came into being that had as its goal the defense of Islam. Brotherhoods proliferated and became more influential, both politically and socially, than ever before. A religious revival simultaneously got under way, triggered by underlying considerations, two of which were a broad social decline and Ottoman military weakness.[5]

The resurgence of organized sufism[6] in the political arena after a long period of quiescence may be matched with another important phenomenon, on which it had some bearing. This was the reemer-

gence – after many centuries – of the idea of the caliphate.[7] When the last Abbasids were overrun by the Mongols in 1258, the caliphate, by some uncertain process, passed into the political armory of the Mamluks of Egypt. When the Mamluks were pushed off the stage by the Ottoman Turks in 1517, Sultan Selim I inherited the caliphate, which was to be of more use to his descendants than to him. Until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the issue remained dormant. At that time, Europeans, basing their views on a series of misunderstandings over the relative positions of the Christian pope and Ottoman sultan, began to see the Turkish ruler as a "Muslim pontiff" – as the religious head of Sunni Islam. Soon after 1800, Ottoman rulers discovered that they could score some minor political gains against their European adversaries as "caliphs," by playing their religious cards.[8]

Without falling into any of these European errors, the Muslim world was also inescapably drawn – as the nineteenth century opened – toward the Ottoman sultan. This happened for the simple reason that about 1825, he was the sole major Islamic ruler who still functioned as such. There were no longer any Great Moguls in India; their rule had been taken over by Britain. The 'Alawi Sharif dynasty of Morocco had only a local impact, though in the eyes of purists, its credentials for the caliphate were better than those of the Ottomans. In Persia, the Safavids had passed from the scene and had been supplanted by Nadir Shah and the uncertain Qajar line, but the Qajar dynasty was not a Sunni one. Like the Sharifs of Morocco, they were too isolated, too feeble to possess much weight on the international stage. Hence the Ottomans were in a class by themselves.

Further, the capital cities and provinces of many formerly independent Muslim states were constantly being invaded or colonized by Europeans. In 1830, for the first time, the French took over a large Muslim population when they commenced the conquest of Algeria. They did the same in Tunis in 1881, then with Morocco in 1912. At the end of the 1870s, the British were well along with their semi-permanent occupation of Egypt. They followed their Egyptian take-over with an invasion of the Sudan in the 1880s and 1890s. Throughout the nineteenth century, greater or smaller Muslim populations were being transferred to European colonial rule, particularly in Africa. Hence it was not surprising that these Muslims, deprived of their normal style of government and cut off from their fellows, should look toward Istanbul for political guidance and, indeed, political help. Istanbul and the Ottoman sultan were the only sources to which they could look and still hope for some as yet unspecified sort of political support against involuntary colonial status. As always, they tended to see their own plight in religious colors, as part of an ongoing

struggle between Christian intruders and the Islamic polity directed – morally at least – by the sultan-caliph.

Within Muslim areas that had been occupied by the French, the British, the Dutch, or by the Russians in the Caucasus and Central Asia, these political hopes and aspirations directed to Turkey were almost universal. The more remote from Istanbul, the stronger the aspirations and the greater the reverence for the Ottoman ruler. Thus the Islamic periphery looked toward the Ottomans at the center – a center that paid little attention to them until the 1850s, after the winning of the Crimean War by the Turks and their allies. The sultan himself and the "Young Ottomans" of a slightly later era discovered the "lost Muslims" beyond the Turkish frontiers and at last began to pay some heed to their cries for political aid. Sultan 'Abd al-Majid (ruling 1839 to 1861) may have been the first Ottoman ruler to consider these issues seriously.[9] In a letter written in 1858 to the Mai of Bornu, far away on the southern side of the Sahara, the sultan's deputy, the Pasha of Tripoli, informed the Mai that, as a Muslim, he would be "gratified" to know of the defeat of the Russian Tsarist regime. In reply, the Mai stated that he "took pleasure" in calling himself the "*Mütevelli* [deputy governor] of Bornu Province," as if it were a remote yet integral part of the Ottoman state.[10] Similar ideas of "attaching" themselves to Ottoman rule circulated among the even more distant Sumatrans of Atjeh, who were at that time fighting the Dutch.[11]

By 1880, the earlier Ottoman policy of ignoring foreign Muslims was formally discarded. The aspirations of non-Turkish Muslims in Asia and Africa who had come under colonial rule now got a hearing at Yildiz Palace. The new sultan, 'Abd al-Hamid II, sometimes welcomed his visitors personally. He put them up at Yildiz Palace or in adjoining guesthouses so as to pick their brains and consult them about Islamic problems, or rather, Pan-Islamic issues. It was 'Abd al-Hamid, in fact, who discovered just how useful foreign Muslims could be; he had little to do but listen to them and furnish them with minimal financial support. In return he obtained an unexpectedly good stick with which to beat those colonial powers who were always pressing Turkey to make some "reform" or other or to accept yet another politically inspired loan. As much as anything, the Pan-Islamic policy was useful to Turkey because of its scare value. 'Abd al-Hamid was perpetually suspected by the diplomats and intelligence services of the European powers of carrying out constant "machinations" aimed at them – at the French in Algeria and Tunisia, at the British in India or Afghanistan, or at the Russians in Turkestan.

Considerable light is thrown on 'Abd al-Hamid's genuine – yet at the same time, limited – activities in this field by the reports sent to the

Foreign Office in London by the eminent Hungarian orientalist Arminius (or Hermann) Vambéry.[12] A Hungarian patriot who hated both the Austrians and the Germans, Rashid Efendi (as Vambéry called himself on his frequent trips to Turkey) was quite willing to sell information about Turkey to the British (and perhaps about the British to Turkey). Evidently 'Abd al-Hamid had great trust in Vambéry, conversing with him without much attempt to conceal his thoughts. From Vambéry's reports (c. 1889–1902), there was apparently an unbroken stream of Muslim visitors to Yildiz Palace from remote Islamic places. Vambéry claims that he heard about or saw "*sheikhs* from the Sudan and Darfur"; travelers from India, Zanzibar, and Java; "mullas and hadjis"; as well as "eminent *moulwies*" [*sic*] from India coming and going, often staying at two semisecret guesthouses on the palace grounds called Hind Tekkesi and Bukhara Tekkesi. On their departures, they set off for their homelands armed with letters from the caliph to local Muslim rulers or other prominent people. Vambéry speaks of emissaries to the Libyan Sanusis, to the Amir of Afghanistan, to the Sudanese Mahdi, to "Swat, Java, and all parts of India." At the same time that 'Abd al-Hamid II (whom Vambéry described in one report as a "secret-monger par excellence" who "delights particularly in these doings") maintained a network of pilgrims, emissaries, and personal agents, he also tried to enlist the help of intellectuals, publicists, and Muslim clericals for his purposes. Indeed, one of these publicists, Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, editor of *Ceva'ib,* had been recruited before 'Abd al-Hamid's accession. Among Muslim intellectuals, the caliph was aided by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and the South Arabian *shaykh* from Zufar, Sayyid Fadl ibn 'Alawi (who had a long history of opposition to Britain).[13]

More important than these men, however, were heads of certain sufi orders whom 'Abd al-Hamid won over to the Pan-Islamic idea. Here the threads of the caliphate and brotherhood themes intertwine. Crossing with them was another strand, pointed out by Hourani – the use of Arabs (after c. 1880) to influence Muslim political developments, particularly in Arabic-speaking areas in Africa. The two most significant Arab heads of *tariqa*s recruited by 'Abd al-Hamid for his cause in Africa were the Syrian Abu'l-Huda al-Sayyadi (director of the Rifa'iya order, which had many adherents in Africa) and the Libyan Muhammad bin Muhammad b. Hamza Zafir al-Madani, chief of the Madaniya brotherhood.

The writings of both of these men include fulsome praise for 'Abd al-Hamid II. In a book entitled *Da'i al-Rashad li-sabil al-ittihad wa'l-inqiyad,* Abu'l-Huda describes the Ottoman rulers as the "perfection of the monarchs of Islam," and suggests that they are the direct heirs of

the Prophet. "May God sustain their sultanate in every age and time and [safeguard] it against the schemes of infidels and corrupters," he wrote.[14] Muhammad Zafir al-Madani speaks similar language in his *Nur al-sati' wa Burhan al-Qati'*, where he expresses his hopes for the victory of 'Abd al-Hamid's armies, divine protection for his reign, and the "covering of his state with glory."[15] Unfortunately for the Pan-Islamic idea, Shaykh Abu'l-Huda and Muhammad Zafir's personal rivalry was such that they were unable to coordinate their policies, and their hosannas to the sultan were matched in number by diatribes written by their helpers and allies in the form of polemical pamphlets against each other.[16] Hence the sultan was unable to derive much advantage from what was, from his standpoint, a very good idea. In South Arabia and East Africa at least, the caliph undoubtedly got more help from such sufis and political advisers as Sayyid Fadl ibn 'Alawi, a long-term resident at Yildiz and an adviser who could tell his master much about the politics of the Indian Ocean area. As Hourani says:

> The Arabs were the largest Muslim group in the Empire, and the one most able, by the extension of their language throughout the *umma,* to win support for the Sultan-Caliph in Africa and Asia. In particular, they were the key to Africa: through them, the empire might be able to resist European control of the African territories, perhaps to win new lands where Islam was spreading. The Pan-Islamic propaganda was carried on mainly through the medium of the Arabic language and with the help of men of Arab origin.[17]

Thus we find that 'Abd al-Hamid tried to make contact with the Moroccan Sharifian sultan Hasan I in the 1880s through his *Shaykh al-Islam* and later through diplomatic channels. In East Africa the Yashru-tiya, like the Madaniya a branch of the Shadhili order, had vague ties to the sultan. This was also true of Shaykh Uways in Somalia and his rival, Muhammad 'Abdallah Hasan. The rulers of Zanzibar, particularly Sultan 'Ali, looked to Istanbul. Even the Amir 'Abd al-Karim in the Rif of Morocco, although he had no connection with 'Abd al-Hamid, was nonetheless attracted to Turkey – to the Pan-Islamic legacy – which impelled him about 1914 to join the post-Hamidian "Special Forma-tions" created by the Committee of Union and Progress.

A symptom of serious social dislocation and emergent political dis-turbance in the Islamic regions of Africa (as in the Muslim world generally) in the nineteenth century was the prevalence of the mahdist idea. This was a perpetual Islamic millennial scheme that customarily emerged just before the turn of every Islamic century (e.g., in 1785–6 and 1881–2, or 1200 and 1300 of the Hijra). Of course, the best known of these episodes is the anti-Turkish (really anti-Egyptian, anti-

European) rising of the Sudanese Mahdi Muhammad Ahmad ibn 'Ab-dallah as the Islamic version of the Christian savior, "who will come to fill the world with justice, as it was previously filled with tyranny and oppression." To borrow David Pocock's words, Islamic societies in Africa were:

> being subjected to a gathering flood of external experience which finally increased beyond the "stretch" of the indigenous categories which might render it meaningful. The social forms of communication appear inadequate. The society is as near to atomization as it could be. The last resort is a new stress upon the individual as that society conceives it, an emphasis upon history, upon individual possession by spirits, upon the individually inspired leader.[18]

Hence about the year 1785, there were many such episodes. In Algeria, the careers of Bu Dali and Muhammad ibn Sharif (discussed in Chapter 2) illustrate this point. They exploited the proper date; their movements were grounded in political oppression, famine, and plagues. These two men were certainly "primitive" Darqawis, which provided both of them with some organizational support for their military and political enterprises. There was a similar movement about the same time in the Caucasus, where the Abkhaz Muslim leader Imam Mansur fought the Russians.[19] And there is no doubt that the cause of Usuman dan Fodio was helped along by sincere expectations in Hausaland that he might turn out to be the mahdi.

The year 1300/1881–2 not only brought the messianic movement in the Sudan but also saw great hopes aroused in Libya by the Sanusi leader Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Sanusi – one of whose names was surely given him by his father in anticipation of the use he might have for it. If circumstances were right, he could proclaim himself a mahdi. This he never did. Another episode, in northern Nigeria in the 1850s (where the timing was thirty years off), was the case of Ibrahim Sharif al-Din (also known as *al-Dabbaba* or *Abu Sha'ir*), who created wide-spread millennial disturbances and counseled the population to follow him – like the Pied Piper – to the East to await the appearance of the "Expected Mahdi."[20]

Such revitalization movements, to use the terminology of Anthony F. C. Wallace, can easily be broken down into multiple episodes. To describe them, Wallace uses the phrases "equilibrium, increasing stress, and cultural distortion" followed by a second "equilibrium," or "steady state."[21] His ideas and terminology are quite as applicable to Islamic Africa as to his original example, the Iroquois of eastern North America. Brotherhoods might or might not participate in "revitalization movements." But they often did so, as in the episodes of Bu Dali and

Muhammad ibn Sharif or in the case of the Rahmaniya brotherhood's 1871 eastern Algerian uprising (now known to have had Ottoman support) against the French. (The millennial component of this uprising was not very evident.)[22]

I

The eight sufi brotherhoods and their leaders discussed below can be separated into three categories. Category One includes a pair of militant resisters and ideologues, the Somali chief Muhammad 'Abdallah Hasan and al-Hajj 'Umar from Futa Toro in Senegal. Category Two comprises five moderates, who taught mysticism, carried on jihads, and instituted social reforms. They are Usuman dan Fodio (of northern Nigeria); the Algerian Amir 'Abd al-Qadir; a Libyan reformer, Muhammad 'Ali al-Sanusi; Shaykh Uways al-Barawi, of the East African Banadir coast and Zanzibar; and Shaykh Ma'ruf, of Moroni in the Comoro Islands, between Madagascar and Mozambique. The final category includes a Mauritanian, Shaykh Ma' al-'Aynayn, a conservative sufi leader very little affected by the changing world of the nineteenth century. The first and second categories show interesting differences within their ranks, whereas the third stands apart from the others.

Muhammad 'Abdallah Hasan (erroneously named the "Mad Mullah"), who was endowed with much force and authority, fully shared these characteristics of leadership with al-Hajj 'Umar, the West African Tijani leader. In Somalia, the Salihi dervishes of Muhammad 'Abdallah Hasan fought first against Ethiopians and recalcitrant Somalis and then, on a bigger scale, against the British and Italians. Al-Hajj 'Umar fought an incidental conflict with France and then attacked the Bambara, in a war of revenge and conversion. In both cases the adherence of local Muslims to the Salihi or Tijani orders was stressed, and the internal organization of the two orders had some military relevance. However deep the commitments of both men to mysticism at the beginnings of their careers, they became increasingly politicized, more devoted to their own ideologies (which can be traced in both cases from their Arabic writings), and more and more despotic and authoritarian with their own followers. With al-Hajj 'Umar, departure from sufism caused serious psychological troubles to emerge. Both men were well educated and versed in Islamic theology and can be described as intellectuals and writers of distinction.

Like the majority of the moderate sufis noted here, Muhammad 'Abdallah Hasan was influenced by the eighteenth-century Egyptian sufi revival – through the reformer Ahmad ibn Idris al-Fasi and,

separately, by the Wahhabis, another facet of the same religious re-birth. Al-Hajj 'Umar was likewise touched by this revival, but through a different channel – that of the Khalwatiya, the parent order of the Tijaniya. Neither man was much affected by millennial factors, although the Somali chief was often wrongly called a mahdi in the European press of the time – a tag that has been picked up by a careless Egyptian writer.[23] Al-Hajj 'Umar had millennial qualities foisted on him by some of his extreme followers (who named him "the *Wazir* of the *Mahdi*"), but he never espoused this idea himself.[24] Both al-Hajj 'Umar and Muhammad 'Abdallah Hasan employed their sufi orders as tools to mobilize their own societies either against the Bambara or against the Italians or British, attempting to create secure enclaves where their distinctive kinds of Islam could function undisturbed.

The second category includes moderate sufis – leaders of jihads who were forced into that role, social reformers, teachers of mysticism, and theologians. It comprises a number of Qadiris – Usuman dan Fodio, Amir 'Abd al-Qadir, and Shaykh Uways al-Barawi. Not that this sufi order had any monopoly over moderation in political or mystical style; these three personalities had serious commitments to mysticism and were inherently less politically oriented – far less aggressive – than al-Hajj 'Umar or Muhammad 'Abdallah Hasan. Like them are the Shadhili (more accurately Yashruti) Shaykh Ma'ruf of Moroni, in the Comoro Islands, and Muhammad 'Ali al-Sanusi, a teacher and reformer, essentially a pacific figure. All five men were touched by the eighteenth-century sufi revival to a greater or lesser extent. Usuman dan Fodio was influenced by the Khalwatiya through his teacher, Jibril bin 'Umar, whereas the Amir 'Abd al-Qadir met and studied with a Naqshbandi – the Iraqi Shaykh Khalid, of Shahrazur. Shaykh Uways was in touch with Qadiri headquarters in Baghdad, and Shaykh Ma'ruf was in contact with the headquarters of his order in Palestine and subject to similar pro-Ottoman influences from there.

Muhammad 'Ali al-Sanusi was long the leading figure in his own brotherhood, an organization that was part of a cluster of sufi orders (made up of the Mirghaniya, Rashidiya, and Ahmadiya) that was inspired by the great teacher and mystic Ahmad ibn Idris al-Fasi (d. 1836). All of these orders emerged from Arabia in the 1840s or after. Al-Sanusi had the advantage of being taught personally by Ahmad ibn Idris in Mecca and in Yemen.

Endowed with greater sensitivity, greater personal amiability, and more devotion to purely religious matters than al-Hajj 'Umar or Muhammad 'Abdallah Hasan, Usuman dan Fodio could retire from public affairs and his jihad to spend the rest of his life with his students

and mystical practices. In Syria, after 1853, Amir 'Abd al-Qadir did much the same thing, although the degree of his political interests was broader. These same characteristics may be observed in Shaykhs Uways and Ma'ruf, and certainly in al-Sanusi. Their ability to attract students – to evoke respect and even reverence from their contemporaries – was remarkable. Likewise, their independence, moderation, and openness allowed them to promote change in the legal and social arenas. Usuman, al-Sanusi, and the Amir all wanted the old way of juridical imitation (*taqlid*) broken down in favor of a new flexibility (*ijtihad*) – a characteristic which they shared with al-Hajj 'Umar.

Two related issues are those of *hijra* ("migration") and jihad (often translated as "holy war"). In theory, migration must precede a conflict against powers inimical to Islam. These theoretical preoccupations can be seen with five of the eight leaders under discussion. With Usuman dan Fodio, a new doctrine of *hijra* and jihad was given its latest expression by Muhammad 'Abdallah Hasan. Under foreign colonial pressures or attacks from "unbelievers," Muslims must migrate, regroup themselves under their own leaders, then fight back to defend their societies and culture and to prevent their values from being overwhelmed and destroyed by the armed intrusions of non-Muslims.

It is also within this group of five men that millennialism was most common. Usuman's jihad and his prolific writing was heavily influenced by his expectations of a coming mahdi. If 'Abd al-Qadir rejected these ideas, many of his Algerian rivals took them up and touted them to win followers. Here the relation between climatic disasters, wars, famines, and epidemics on the one hand and political action of millennial inspiration on the other is closest.[25] The same cluster of ideas is apparent with Shaykh Uways in East Africa. He called himself "Master of the Time" (*sahib al-waqt*), which hints that he may have considered himself the advance agent of a mahdi; the Mecca Letter Affair also betrays a clear millennial component. Most prominent is the millennial facet of the Sanusi order after its founder's death; that he should have named his son and successor Muhammad al-Mahdi speaks for itself. Al-Sanusi lent his son a political option for the approaching turn of the fourteenth Islamic century in 1882. Like the Sudanese mahdi, he could have announced himself as the "expected savior," but he did not.

If Shehu dan Fodio. Shaykh Ma'ruf, and Shaykh Uways had little or no contact with the Turks, the matter is quite otherwise with al-Sanusi and Amir 'Abd al-Qadir. Contrary to what many European writers have claimed, al-Sanusi had only minor disagreements with the Ottomans, and his successors were fairly close to Turkey. In the era before Pan-Islam, Amir 'Abd al-Qadir had difficulty in interesting Istanbul in his military and political plight. He tried, but he failed to do so because