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THE PROJECT FOR THE RESEARCH OF ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS (PRISM)

Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center

ISLAM IN AFRICA NEWSLETTER



Volume 1 (2006), Number 2 (June 2006)

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The Islam in Africa Newsletter provides and analyzes information, political, religious, and social developments, events, or documents on Radical Islam and Islamic movements in Africa.

Inside this Issue:

Muslims Persecution of Christians: The Unknown Side of Radical Islam in Somalia

Islamization in Rwanda: A Possible Breeding Ground for Radical Islam?

Islamic Banking in Kenya: A Victory for the Islamists?

The Jihad of Haj Umar Tal and Its Heritage

Muslims Persecution of Christians: The Unknown Side of Radical Islam in Somalia

Somalia is considered to be a country that does not recognize religious freedom, because there is no constitution and no legal provision for its protection. About 99.5 percent of the Somalia population is Muslim. The very small Christian minority comprises of ethnic Bantus, as well as humanitarian workers and expatriates. According to Christian Solidarity Worldwide, a Christian human rights organization, Somalia is the worst persecutor of Christians among all the nations in Africa. Thus, it can mean death to be openly Christian in Somalia. Christians are now the only group having no place to flee in Somalia, and cannot register as refugees to resettle in other countries. Since Muslims control refugee camps, most Christians have fled to the remote areas of Ethiopia and Kenya along the border.

Since U.S. and U.N. peacekeeping forces left in 1995, Islamic mobs have murdered more than 500 Christians in Somalia. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG), created in



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL

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2004, has enacted a constitution, which recognizes only Islam as the national religion. It tried to establish a central government but the two other parts of the country, the Republic of Somaliland and the Republic of Puntland, have declared independence, proclaiming themselves to be Islamic states, and established Shari'ah law. However, regional authorities do not espouse rhetoric against non-Muslims. The Judiciary in most regions relies on some combination of Shari'ah, traditional and customary law, and the Penal Code of the pre-1991 Siad Barre government.

The hatred of the Muslims toward Christians may be caused by the attitude of many toward Christianity, which is regarded as a foreign religion of their historic enemies in Ethiopia and their former colonial masters, Italy and Great Britain. In 1886 the Roman Catholic Mission setup a mission base and established a school at the port town of Berbera in the then British protectorate of Somaliland. About the same time the Franciscan mission of the Roman Catholic Church and the Swedish Overseas Lutheran Mission each setup a mission base in Mogadishu and Kismayu towns respectively. Soon, the church was expanding rapidly to Margarita (Jamame), Mugambo and Alexandra (Jilib). Their missionary brought about a tiny Christian community of up to one thousand people, mainly in the south.

During the 1950s three Christian missions, namely the Swedish Lutheran Mission, the Mennonite Mission and Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) arrived in Somalia and Somali inhabited territories of Ethiopia and Kenya. Small group house churches sprung up in several towns throughout the Somali territory. As the church started to grow, so was the persecution, murdering and forced exile. Church property and institutions were nationalized in 1972 and all mission work was stopped in 1974. Furthermore, during Said Barre's rule, in the 1970s and 1980s, the government banned the printing, importing, distributing or selling of Christian literature in the country. The government and its National Security Services secret police threatened, arrested, tortured, and murdered Somali Christians. Literally, freedom of religion was stated in the national constitution, but practically no one applied it. Many Somali Christians lost their jobs and businesses; others to survive abandoned their faith or immigrated to the western world. Those lucky enough got jobs with western embassies and international organizations in Mogadishu.

When president Siad Barre's government was ousted from power in 1991 and the national government of Somalia fell apart, radical Muslim organizations became stronger and more powerful to do whatever they wish. They set up a committee of several sheikhs to search and identify all Somali Christians, whether they were in or out of Somalia. They also appointed a group of armed young men to execute all Somali Christians. Between January 1991 and December 1995 over two hundred Somali Christian adults were killed in Somalia and the neighboring countries of Yemen, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti. Many more were wounded and either became refugee to other countries or denied their faith to save their lives. Thousands of Somali Christians left Somalia and became refugees and still many more Christians remain underground in Somalia. They followed those who took refuge to Kenya and the neighboring countries. Many are persecuted, beaten or charged with false accusations in Nairobi by the Somali radical Muslims. In May 2001, for instance, Somali Christian man by the name of Bashir was tranquillized by his relatives by force and abducted to Somalia through Wilson airport without the government's knowledge of his being abducted. Later, he was murdered in Burao, Somalia.



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL

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Thus, many Christian Somalis have fled abroad as a result of the wars, chaos, civil strife and instability which followed the collapse of Somalia in 1991, a situation which apparently continued following the withdrawal of American forces in 1994. Christian churches have been driven underground because of persecution and a number of Christians have been imprisoned and martyred over the years. Evangelism is prohibited, and Christians pray on Friday to avoid association with foreign Christianity.

The peace conference nearly collapsed in February 2003, when three Somali Christians went to Eldoret town and requested to participate on the Somali peace conference and represent the Somali Christian community. The Christians had demanded their right to freedom of religion and assembly, political representation, and free movement. Christian representatives were reportedly "shouted down by Muslim delegates who insisted Somalia had no Christians and who declared Islam to be the official religion of Somalia." Peter Ahmed Abdi, leader of the Mogadishu Pentecostal Church, who is also chairman of the tiny Christian Somali community, said then "we live in constant fear. We have very little rights, since people believe that there are no Christians in Somalia".

On February 9, 2003, the umbrella of the Somali Muslim religious groups, a powerful religious organ, met in Mogadishu and issued a memorandum. They stated in their memorandum and press release which was broadcasted or published by several local and international radio stations, newspapers and websites several articles concerning the Somali Christians. They also asked the participants of the peace conference not to accept any Somali who is claiming that he or she is Christian to participate in the conference and sit with them. According to the articles, Somali Christians abandoned Islam and must be killed; Somali Christians can neither inherit nor be inherited; their marriage to their spouses must be dissolved; Somali Christians forfeited their Somalihood; and once they die, Somali Christians cannot be buried in Somali soil. Fourteen sheikhs representing different major Somali clans signed this memorandum. Some of them are those who authorized and organized the campaign to eliminate Somali Christians from the Horn of Africa region.

Sheikh Nur Barud, vice chairman of the influential Somali Islamist group Kulanka Culimada, claimed on April 22, 2004, that "some Somalis who claimed to be Christians went to attend the Somali reconciliation conference in Nairobi. These Somalis are apostates and they will be killed upon their return to Somalia". The Kulanka Culimada was founded in February 1991. Most of its key leaders are graduates of Islamic seminaries in Saudi Arabia. In an interview to Himilo online held in November 2003, the Sheikh stressed that "all Somali Christians must be killed according to the Islamic law. A Muslim can never become a Christian but he can become an apostate. Such people do not have a place in Somalia and we will never recognize their existence and we will slaughter them". The Sheikh concluded his interview by saying "Somalis are 100 percent Muslim and they will always remain so".

According to the U.S. State Department's 2005 report on international religious freedom, the Christian minority in Somalia is "small" and "extremely low profile". Proselytizing for any religion except Islam is prohibited in Puntland and Somaliland and effectively blocked by informal social consensus elsewhere in the country. Although Christian-based international relief organizations generally operate without interference, provided that they



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL

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refrain from proselytizing, there were several attacks against non-Muslim international relief workers in October–December 2003. On October 5, 2003, the Italian nun Annalena Tonneli—known as Mother Theresa of Africa and who had served in Somalia for thirty years "founding a hospital, orphanages and schools"—was killed by two armed men in front of the hospital. Soon after, on October 20, 2003, a British couple Richard and Enid Eyeington—working for SOS Children's villages in Somaliland—were shot dead by several gunmen in their home inside the school compound. In November 2003 a Kenyan Christian working for the Seventh Day Adventist mission in Gedo, South West Somalia, was reportedly murdered by Islamist radicals.

In addition, in April 2004, thousands of Somalian Muslims marched through the streets of Mogadishu and in the southern coastal town of Merca, protesting at what they said was an attempt by aid agencies to spread Christianity. Muslim scholars organized the protest following reports that school children were given gifts with Christian emblems alongside charitable aid. The protesters set ablaze hundreds of cartoons containing goods, some marked only as gifts from the "Swiss Church". The protesters warned the aid agencies against using relief items to evangelize in the country.

Islamization in Rwanda: A Possible Breeding Ground for Radical Islam?

On June 3, 2006, Sheikh Saleh Habimana was re-elected unopposed as the Mufti of the Rwanda Islamic community for the next five years. During the elections, four other Muslim leaders were elected unopposed by an Electoral College of 85 out of 90 from all provinces of the country. They included the First Vice-Mufti in charge of Religious Affairs, Said Bakare, Second Vice-Mufti in charge of finance and Administration, Yusuf Gatikabisi, Qadi Salim Hitimana and Vice-Qadi Abdul Nsabimana,

The elections took place at the Gadhaffi Cultural Islamic Center in Nyamirambo, Myarugenge District. The Mufti-elect, speaking shortly after the re-election, pledged to promote unity, education, poverty reduction programs, and the emancipation of women in Rwanda. He further told the press that during his last five-year term 65 mosques were constructed around the country, schools were constructed and rehabilitated, training centers for members of the Moslem community were introduced. He added that the only Islamic College in the region is constructed in Kigali's Nyarugenge District. The College is estimated to cost US\$ 150,000, and will host over 500 students from the region. The Islamic Development Bank (IOB) of Saudi Arabia has already approved a grant for this center.

The long marginalized Muslim community in Rwanda—only 1.2 percent before 1994—jumped on the last decade to represent some 16 percent of the Rwandan population with a gradually increasing growth rate. Long a marginalized tiny minority, Rwanda's Muslims have grown considerably in number and stature in the ten years since the genocide of 1994. From April to June 1994, militias and mobs from the country's ethnic Hutu majority hunted and murdered hundreds of thousands of ethnic Tutsis at the government's urging. Within a few months, three of four Tutsis in the country had been hacked to death, often with machetes or hoes. More than 100,000 suspected killers eventually were jailed. According to the current government, up to a million people were killed then. Muslim communities



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL

www.e-prism.org

played an essential and uncommon role during the genocide: they provided safe havens for both Tutsis and Hutus. For the most part Muslims were not participants or even complicit in the genocide. Everyone regarded Muslims as a group apart and not to be targeted in the violence. For many they were not even considered Rwandans because they were Muslims. On the other hand, there are many examples of mass killings inside consecrated churches and even of collusion between the clergy and the killers.

The UN court in Tanzania, while trying leading genocide-planners and perpetrators, has charged several Christian clergymen. In February 2003, the court convicted an Adventist pastor and his son of genocide and crimes against humanity. In 2001, a court in Belgium, Rwanda's former colonial power, sentenced two nuns to fifteen and twelve years in jail for their roles in the genocide.

Thus, Rwanda is predominantly a Catholic country but Islam is the fastest growing religion. Following the 1994 genocide many converts to Islam say that they chose Islam because of the role that some Catholic and Protestant leaders played in the genocide. Human rights groups have documented several incidents in which Christian clerics allowed Tutsis to seek refuge in churches, then surrendered them to Hutu death squads, as well as instances of Hutu priests and ministers encouraging their congregations to kill Tutsis. Tutsis converted to Islam for practical reasons – seeking protection from renewed killings by Hutus who continued to attack Rwanda from refugee camps in Congo after Tutsi-led rebels ended the genocide and overthrew the Hutu government. For the Hutus, everyone was saying as long as I look like a Muslim everybody would accept that I don't have blood on my hands. Conversions tapered off after 1997 when the government was able to guarantee security and Islam was no longer regarded as a vital safe haven. But the religion still attracts converts.

The Muslim community has played an integral role in the post-genocide reconciliation process. The Interfaith Commission for Re-integration of Rwanda is headed by an Anglican Archbishop and the Muslim leader, Habimana. The goal of the commission is to "seek ways and means of ending ethnic animosity while promoting dialogue and the free expression of all people". Furthermore, mosques represent one of the few places where genuine reconciliation between Hutus and Tutsis is taking place. Muslims have viewed the reconciliation process with a remarkably different lens than non-Muslim Rwandans. Muslims recognized their role in the need to reconcile Hutus and Tutsis. Habimana explains that "we have our own jihad, and that is our war against ignorance between Hutu and Tutsi. It is our struggle to heal... our jihad is to start respecting each other and living as Rwandans and as Muslims". The government's policy of "Rwandan ess" was designed to promote harmony among those who are still divided by ethnic identity, however, it has also allowed the Muslim community who were never divided in such a way, to be considered as equals with Catholic Muslims.

Islam was introduced to Rwanda in around 1900 by Arab traders and translators working with the German military. Besides the marginal influence of merchants, the most serious influx of Muslims into Rwanda was in 1908. The dominance asserted by Christian missionaries in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Sudan resulted in the flight of their local Muslim communities to neighboring areas, including Rwanda where Catholicism had not



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL

www.e-prism.org

yet taken such a strong hold. The merchants, traders, and newly converted Rwandans were primarily restricted to the Biryogo neighborhood of Kigali, where the al-Fatah mosque now stands (built in 1913). The local strand of Islam was restricted to the practices, customs and language of Swahili and Rwandan Muslims had little to no contact with Mecca or other leading centers of Islam. The medium of conversation and religious instruction was and remains Swahili; in Muslim schools the study of the Swahili language is compulsory. However, when a convert to Islam becomes "Swahili" this indicates not just a linguistic switch but a change s/he undergoes from an ethnic to cultural-religious identity. Therefore this is an early indication of the distinctness of Rwandan Muslims from the majority of Christian or animist Rwandans. Not only were they set apart as a religious group but linguistically and culturally their identity was Muslim and not Hutu or Tutsi.

Conversion among Rwandans was primarily in communities that existed on the margins or had been uprooted in some manner. This included commoners and landless peasants. Many Muslims believed that converting would bring them riches through increased access to trade. Paradoxically conversion also meant less access to western education and limited employment possibilities. While the Muslim population of pre-genocide Rwanda remained small it became increasingly institutionalized and more active in civil society. Currently, there are several Muslim schools—madrassas—and a Muslim Association of Rwanda that helps Muslim converts in learning about their new faith. The community is mobilized by the leadership of Sheikh Saleh Habimana who has ensured the growth of mosques in nearly all of the counties, cities, and towns.

Becoming Muslim, however, has not been an easy process for many Rwandans, who chafe at the religion's dress and lifestyle restrictions. Despite Islam's new status, Rwandan Muslims traditionally have been second-class citizens, working as taxi drivers and traders in a society that reveres farmers. Nowadays, as the religion's popularity grows, that is changing.

There are few signs of the existence of radical Islam in Rwanda. Some government officials quietly express concern that some of the mosques receive funding from Saudi Arabia, whose dominant Wahhabi sect has been embraced by militant groups in other parts of the world. They also worry that high poverty rate and traumatized populations make Rwanda the perfect breeding ground for radical Islamism. This concern is rooted in reality. In the beginning of 2004, a Rwandan priest and about one hundred of his followers have embraced Islam, thanks to a medical convoy of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), which visited remote areas in central Rwanda and whose members' sermons deeply touched many locals. The convoy delivered sermons in Rwandese at the outskirts of the capital Kigali, which defined Islam and encouraged non-Muslims to accept it.

WAMY was established in Saudi Arabia in 1972 and is an independent international organization and a member of the United Nations NGOs. Its headquarters are located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It has a presence in 55 countries and an associate membership of over 500 youth organizations around the world. Yet, WAMY has been subject to investigations and suspicions of money laundering for extremist Islamist groups.



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL

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Concerns over radical Islam developing in Rwanda has been noted among the international community. The spread of radical Islamists from northern Africa into Sub-Saharan Africa has gathered considerable attention. The international crackdown on Islamist extremism has sent many students from the madrassas in Pakistan to Africa where they are gaining influence among communities and with political leaders. A push for expanding Shari'ah is evident in Tanzania and Kenya and increasingly arrests of radicals have been made in Malawi, Zambia and South Africa.

There have been speculations that some of the madrassas in Rwanda are receiving funding from Saudi Arabia and that there are links between al-Qaeda and President Kagame and his inner circle. Suspensions are based on reports concerning the training of Rwandan troops by al-Qaeda cells in Somalia and Eritrea and Kagame's central role in a "web of international terrorism, arms trafficking, illegal mineral trade, invasion and civil war, dating back to years before the genocide". The persistent levels of poverty, spread of AIDS and the violent history of genocide may be fertile ground for radicalism, however, this concern is notably absent among Rwandans themselves. The Muslim community has convinced Rwandans at large that the divided fabric of their society provides a natural constituency for a jihad that struggles to heal. The Muslim community in Rwanda has also withstood challenges for negative change. A small group of Pakistanis who visited Rwanda frequently had funded a group of local radical Islamists who attempted to take control of a mosque after the genocide. The Muslim Association of Rwanda kicked them out of the community.

Islamic Banking in Kenya: A Victory for the Islamists?

The Kenyan government will allow financial institutions to offer Islamic banking services that charge no interest. It is the first time the government has made credit access possible for those who have been left out of the financial services because of their faith. The first Islamic bank in Kenya will open its doors to the public in September 2006. The bank will give a wide range of Shari'ah-compliant banking services once it is operational. The bank will conduct its activities in a purely Islamic mode, which includes a stipulation that money must be invested ethically and that the giving or receiving of interest is forbidden. A Shari'ah supervisory body of scholars from the Middle East will partner with local counterparts to supervise the bank's activity.

Among the wide range of products expected to be tailor-made for Muslims will be interest-free banking services, mortgages, car financing as well as health financing schemes. However, the bank will not invest in businesses that are deemed "unethical", such as tobacco, gambling, alcohol and pornography.

In the first year of operations the bank will open branches in Nairobi and Mombassa, growing these to 14 in the next four years, targeting Muslim-dominated areas such as Malindi, Lamu, Wajir, Garissa and Mandera. The bank will also provide services to non-Muslims wishing to try the Islamic banking system.

A precursor to the Islamic bank was launched on December 21, 2005, when Barclays became the first bank to launch Islamic banking products to meet the discerning needs of its thousands of customers in Kenya. The bank launched La Riba Current Account, an



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL

www.e-prism.org

interest-free bank account, designed to address the sensitivities of customers who adhere to the Muslim faith, which forbids the earning or payment of interest.

The animosities between Christians and Muslims in Kenya over the controversial draft constitution and the Suppression of Terrorism Bill and the attempts of the Kenyan government to reconcile its Muslim minority population might well be on the background for this step. According to the US Department of State's International Religious Freedom Report 2005, Kenya's population is estimated to be 32 million. According to official government figures, seven percent of the population practices Islam. Muslim groups, however, often claim to represent 15 to 20 percent of the population, sometimes even more. Other sources also consider the seven-percent figure too low, estimating the Muslim population to fall within the 10 to 15 percent range. Muslims predominate in the North Eastern Province, where the population is chiefly Somali. Muslims also predominate in Coast Province, except for its western areas, which are mostly Christian. Eastern Province is approximately 50 percent Muslim (primarily in the north) and 50 percent Christian (primarily in the south).

The current constitution and the Qadhis' Courts Act of 1967 established a venue to have certain types of civil cases adjudicated based on Islamic law. The constitution provides for the establishment of Qadhis' courts where "all the parties profess the Muslim religion" in cases concerning "personal status, marriage, divorce or inheritance." Articles 65 and 67 make it clear that Qadhis' courts are "subordinate" courts, meaning that the secular High Court has jurisdiction to supervise any civil or criminal proceedings before a subordinate court.

The draft constitution, which was completed by the National Constitution Conference in March 2004, retains Qadhis' courts as subordinate courts with essentially the same jurisdictions as are included in the current constitution. Thus, clause three of article 179 of the proposed constitution provides for traditional and Shari'ah courts, while at the same time the first clause of article 10 stipulates separation between the state and religion. However, in June 2005, a coalition of Christian churches unveiled a proposed constitution of its own, which did not include the Qadhis' courts. Later in the same month, the Anglican Church of Kenya specifically announced its opposition to the Qadhis' courts, arguing that including them in the constitution would give preferential treatment to Muslims. An Anglican bishop further fueled the fire by saying that in countries such as Nigeria, where Shari'ah law is official, there is no peace between Christians and Muslims. Muslim groups argue that other religious group could establish their own courts if necessary. They further contend that the recognition of Qadhis' courts was a condition for the integration of the coastal strip at the time of independence.

Furthermore, in 2003, the Kenyan government published the Suppression of Terrorism Bill. Many observers, including the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), found the bill objectionable on human rights grounds, arguing that it contains provisions that violate the constitution. Muslim leaders argue that the bill specifically targets their community. In June 2004, the Muslim Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya—referring to the arrest of 30 Muslims in terrorism charges—accused the government of targeting Muslims and applying the bill as if it were law. A new bill was being drafted, but Muslims and human



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL

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rights activists continue to argue that the bill was not necessary and would inevitably discriminate against Muslims.

Moreover, some Muslim leaders charge that the Kenyan government is hostile toward Muslims. These leaders claim that, since the 1998 bombing of the US Embassy in Nairobi, the 2002 terrorist attacks in Mombassa, and terrorist attacks elsewhere, government discrimination against the Muslims has worsened, especially demands for identity documents. According to these leaders, authorities more rigorously scrutinize the identification cards of persons with Muslim surnames, especially ethnic Somalis, and sometimes require additional documentation of citizenship, such as birth certificates of parents and even grandparents. The government, on its part, says that this heightened scrutiny is an attempt to deter illegal immigration rather than to discriminate against ethnic Somalis or their religious affiliation.

With the establishment of the Islamic financial institution, Kenya will join other African countries such as South Africa, Sudan, Egypt, Senegal and Nigeria, where the concept is already being implemented.

The Jihad of Haj `Umar Tal and the Revival of Its Heritage

On June 8, 2006, a newly constructed mosque named after al-Haj 'Umar ibn Sa'id Tal was commissioned in Cape Point, Bakau, Gambia. Seven imams presided over the inauguration. The mosque is the first to be built on the Atlantic coast of Gambia. It was built at the site where Haj 'Umar practiced Islam in the nineteenth century during his travels around West Africa.

Haj Umar Tal, also known as "Umar Futi" or al-Haj `Umar ibn Sa'id Tal, was born ca. 1797 in Halwar, Futa Toro, Senegal. He died on February 12, 1864 near Hamdalahi, Mali. He was a Senegalese politician, Islamic scholar, Muslim preacher, warrior and mystic. Early in his career he preached and wrote against social injustices such as the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, and founded the Tukulor Empire. At the age of 23, Tal took on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Later on he was declared a "Caliph for Black Africa" on behalf of the Tijani brotherhood. In 1854, he initiated a jihad against non-Muslims in an area covering parts of Guinea, Senegal, and Mali. There, he created the Tukulor Empire. His army was defeated in 1863 by combined forces of the Tuaregs, Moors, and Fulani tribes, and 'Umar himself was killed during the war in an explosion. Tal's empire continued under his son Ahmadu Seku until 1897, when the French conquered it.

'Umar Tal was born in the upper valley of the Senegal River, in the land of the Tukulor people. His father was an educated Muslim who instructed students in the Qur'an, and 'Umar, a mystic, perfected his studies in Arabic and the Qur'an with Moorish scholars who initiated him into the Tijani brotherhood. At the age of 23, while he set out on the pilgrimage to Mecca, he was already well known for his piety and erudition and was received with honor in the countries through which he traveled. Muhammad Bello, emir of Sokoto in Nigeria, offered him his daughter Maryam in marriage. Thus, 'Umar had become an important personage when he reached Mecca about 1827. He visited the tomb of the Prophet in Al-Madinah, returned to Mecca, and then settled for a while in Cairo. On a visit to Jerusalem he succeeded in curing a son of Ibrahim Pasha, the viceroy of Egypt. In



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL

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Mecca, finally, he was designated as “Caliph for black Africa” by the head of the Tijani brotherhood.

'Umar returned to the interior of Africa in 1833. Trained for political leadership by his father-in-law, Muhammad Bello, the emir of Sokoto, with whom he again spent several years, and his position strengthened by the title of Caliph, 'Umar now decided to convert the pagan Africans to Islam. By now he not only was looked upon as a miracle worker but also had acquired a bodyguard of followers and of devoted Hausa slaves. Upon the death of Bello, he departed for his native country, hoping to conquer the Futa region with the assistance of the French, in exchange for a trade treaty, an agreement the French declined because of 'Umar's growing strength. 'Umar realized that faith without force would be ineffective and made careful preparations for his task. In northeastern Guinea, where he first established himself, he wrote down his teachings in a book called *Kitab Rimah Hizb ar-Rahim ala Nuhur Hizb al-Rajim* (Book of the Spears of the Party of God on the Necks of the Party of the Devil).¹ Deriving his inspiration from Sufism, he defined the Tijani "way" as the best one for saving one's soul and for approaching god. He recommended meditation, self-denial, and blind obedience to the Sheikh. He gained many followers in Guinea, but, when in 1845 he went to preach in his own country, he met with little success. In 1848 he moved away with his followers to Dinguiraye, on the borders of the Futa Jallon. There he established a community of his own, attracting and training military and commercial adventurers as well as religious reformers. His community traded with the Upper Guinea coast for firearms and was consciously conceived as the nucleus for a new state.

In 1852 the Dinguiraye community came into conflict with the adjacent Bambara chiefs. A jihad was launched northward across the upper Senegal, where in 1854 the Bambara kingdom of Kaarta fell. 'Umar then turned west down the Senegal toward his own homeland and the French trading posts. But the French repulsed him, and after 1859 he sought to join with the Fulani of Masina in the conquest of the more powerful Bambara kingdom of Segou. The Masina Fulani were opposed to the idea of a Tijani power advancing into their own Qadiri zone in the Niger valley and even gave some aid to Segou. After 'Umar's forces had conquered Segou in 1861, they continued eastward, and, finding that Ahmadu's somewhat autocratic and intolerant regime had estranged the longer established Muslim communities, they established 'Umar's hegemony as far as Timbuktu. In 1863 'Umar took possession of the city of Timbuktu, but, defeated by the nomadic Tuaregs, he had to retreat. In a subsequent battle, attacked by the Tuaregs, the Moors, and the Fulani, his army was destroyed. He withdrew to the city of Hamdalahi, where he was besieged. He escaped and took refuge in a cave but was killed when the cave was blown up with gunpowder.

Haj 'Umar Tal's empire lasted 50 years, from 1848 to 1897, when it was annexed by the French. In order to enhance his own position, General Faidherde, the then governor of Senegal, described 'Umar in his reports as the “symbol of resistance to French penetration,” and at the same time recognizing his virtues and his courage. In fact, 'Umar was not anxious to oppose the French. He had sought their neutrality and had hoped to buy arms

¹ The book was first published in Cairo in 1892. .



The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Herzliya, ISRAEL

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from them, but they had other sources and feared his power. The mosque of Dinguiraye in Guinea is all that remains of 'Umar's empire.

Thus, the basic structure of the 'Umarijihad consisted of recruitment of men and weapons in the west, in the regions of Senegal and Futa Jalon, to wage war in the east, against the Mandinka and the Bambara. 'Umar relied mainly on the Muslims of west Africa who, like himself, were dissatisfied citizens of the Fulbe states of Futa Jalon, Bundu, and Futa Toro. He fought against people who could be generally classified as non-Muslims and who tried to block the emergence of Islam in West Africa. The Segu Bambara were regarded as particularly notorious "pagans". The campaign against Hamdalahi was not part of the original design of the jihad. When 'Umar decided to undertake it he wrote a long apologia to justify his actions, since it was a Muslim and a Fulbe kingdom, which helped produce the revolt of 1863–64.

The basic structure of the 'Umarijihad contrasts with the experience of earlier Fulbe-led jihads and the states (Sokoto, Hamdalahi, Futa Toro and Futa Jallon) that resulted from them. The earlier pattern consisted of internal revolutions against "pagan" or nominal Muslim ruling classes, followed by expansion to the exterior. This pattern was codified in the writings of the Sokoto leaders and adopted by 'Umar himself in his writings. 'Umar could not, however, lead a second internal revolution in his native land, and he decided to recruit support in the west and fight to the east. He was highly successful militarily, but he laid little basis for an Islamic administration or for the incorporation or conversion of his new subjects. His twelve years of war have left different impressions in today's Senegal and Mali: in Senegal he is the crusading Islamic hero, while in Mali, he is perceived as the invader who used Islam as a pretext.

"Umar left one lasting precedent to Muslims in West Africa: the example of emigration, or *Hijrah*, away from European expansion. In his desperate recruiting drive of 1858-59, he called on Senegalese Muslims to leave a land that had become "polluted" by French expansion. His son, Ahmadu, followed his example in the 1890s at the time of French conquest of the interior, and other Muslim leaders, such as the caliph of Sokoto in 1903, did the same thing. They journeyed to the east, along the old pilgrimage routes, in search of places where they could preserve Islamic State and society.

The most important result of 'Umar's conquests was that they established the Tijaniyyah as the most powerful *tariqah* in western African Islam. This, in addition to the earlier consolidation of Muslim power in the east under Sokoto, ultimately ensured that Islam became the dominant religion throughout western Sudan, and one capable of peaceful expansion deep into Guinea. This makes 'Umar the most prominent religious and political figures in West African history after Othman Dan Fodio, or, even, to his side.

The heritage of Haj `Umar is still influential among the Tijaniyyah Sufi order in Sudan, where his grand-grandson Ahmad al-Madani lives and regards himself "the *Khalifah* of Sheikh `Umar al-Futi in the Sudan." Al-Madani is also member of the Supreme Council of Coordination of the Tijani [Sufi] order.²

² See on-line in: <http://www.alsahafa.info/index.php?type=3&id=2147494837>



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The construction of a mosque named after Haj `Umar Tal is part of a revival of the African Jihadi heritage, and might be just the first link in a chain of such a revival, which uses past local Jihadi heroes to develop a Jihadi culture. The unique phenomenon here, typical so far only to African Islam, is the collaboration of Jihadi heritage with Sufi Islam, especially the Tijaniyyah. This order was established in the early 19th century in Morocco, spread into Senegal, Nigeria, and west Sudan, and maintains strong links between these regions till today. The order is one of the most influential Islamic elements that link North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and part of east Africa. Its founder Ahmad al-Tijani (died in 1815) regarded himself the “last of Saints” (*Khatem al-Awliyya` wa-Qutb al-Aqtab*), as a reference to his meeting with the Prophet. Hence, unlike all other Sufi orders, they believe that it is possible to meet the Prophet in person even in this world, as did their founder.