

THE PILGRIMAGE FACTOR IN ISLAMIC REVIVALISM: THE WEST AFRICAN EXPERIENCE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE ELEVENTH CENTURY A.D.

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Abstrak

Kertas ini cuba melihat sumbangan ibadat haji terhadap kebangkitan Islam di Afrika, khususnya di Afrika Barat dengan menganalisis kesan ibadat itu terhadap beberapa orang tokoh ulamak. Sampel yang dikaji ialah Tarshna al-Lamtuna, Yahya ibn Ibrahim, Mansa Musa, Askia Muhammad Ture dan Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio. Perbincangan dimulakan dengan menyoroti falsafah haji dan rukun-rukunnya, kemudian melihat sejarah tokoh-tokoh berkenaan terutama sekali sumbangan mereka selepas menunaikan ibadat haji. Kertas ini merumuskan bahawa ibadat haji mempengaruhi bentuk kepimpinan tokoh-tokoh ulamak berkenaan kepada yang lebih dinamik dan inovatif.

As a pretext, the paper presents a mixture - a mixture of description and importance of the pilgrimage or *Hajj* in Islam showing the extent to which the pilgrimage experience has influenced the growth and development of the faith through revivalism in this sub-saharan region of ours since the beginning of the eleventh century. Revivalism as used here denotes the act of restoring orthodoxy and thereby bringing new life into an existing order which is fast losing touch with its origin. It may be, to some extent, equated with growth and development of the faith since the result of all the revivalist movement is a qualitative expansion of the faith. The inclusion of a detailed description of the rituals of *Hajj* is to meet the needs of students who require a ready and handy information about the *Hajj* and its importance without having to go through several works for the same purpose.

It is true, as has been universally acknowledged, that when Islam spread beyond

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the confines of Arabia during the closing years of the mid-seventh century A.D, some foreign beliefs and practices naturally crept into the faith and it is only when contact is made with pristine Islam that such foreign elements are exposed to public curiosity. The Persians, the Syrians, the Egyptians, the Mesopotamians and the Turks all embraced Islam during this early period of Islam and with this warm embrace came various additions and omissions which were in the main un-Islamic. There is a general agreement among Muslim jurists that it is chiefly due to such foreign elements in the faith that revivalism in Islam was born during the years following the expansion.

The most serious problem of this early period was manifested in the reading and re-copying of the Qur'an. We may recall here that the new converts because of their various dialects began reading and copying the Qur'an in a way that suited them best but with such departures from the original came a corresponding corruption in the meaning and interpretation of the Qur'an. It is related in a tradition that a man named Hudhaifa ibn Al-Yamani reported this state of affairs to the then ruling Caliph 'Uthman ibn Affan who found it as frightening as it was disheartening because the very foundation of the faith was in jeopardy. The Caliph therefore quickly took steps to remedy the situation. He appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Zaid ibn Thabit "to rewrite the original manuscript in perfect copies".¹ This was done and a copy was sent to the various provincial cities each with a reader to teach the correct reading and writing of the Qur'an. By this means the Qur'an was standardized. All unauthorized copies were accordingly seized and burnt. Since then it has been the lifelong occupation of many a devout Muslim to study the correct reading and writing of the Qur'an. The practice continues into our own day.

In the sphere of practical Islam too there was no uniformity due to the absence of adequate information about the model life of the Prophet which the Qur'an says is the very embodiment of all that is best in life and the perfect example to be followed by every Muslim. In Chapter 33 verse 21 of the Qur'an we find:

"Ye have indeed in the Apostle of God a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for anyone whose hope is in God and the Final Day and who engages much in the praise of God".

Information about the Prophet's life no doubt existed chiefly in the form of oral tradition but not at one place so that whatever information existed in say Iraq was not

¹Ahmad von Denffer, *Ulum Al-Qur'an*, Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1983, p. 13.

available in Egypt and vice versa. This situation was created by the fact that after the death of the Prophet many of the companions settled in the various provincial cities and towns of the Muslim empire. With the growing demand by Muslims to know more about the model life of the Prophet, the need was felt to gather all the information about the Prophet's life from the companions who were at that time scattered all over the Muslim world. This task was undertaken by men of proven integrity in such a way that by the end of the 3rd century of Islam, that is to say by the end of the 9th century A.D most of what is known today as orthodox Islam had been committed to writing in the works known as the *Hadith* which contains details about the Prophet's life - the way he lived, the way he spoke, the way he smiled, the way he performed the *solat*, what he taught, what he forbade, what he approved and many more. Henceforth prophetic practice or *Sunna* became the norm and any departure or deviation from the *Sunna* became suspect. Since then in a situation of mixed Islam or whenever there is a lull or degeneration in the religious life of the Muslim community, any one who emerges from among the multitude to champion the cause of orthodoxy gets the tag of a revivalist - a *mujaddid* so to speak, sometimes the claim of a Mahdi is made. Now this idea of a reformer or revivalist emerging from time to time to champion the cause of orthodoxy is perfectly in tune with a well known hadith made popular in West Africa through the writings of *Al-Maghili* which says:

"At the beginning of every century God will send a learned man to the people to renew their faith".²

West Africa with which this paper is chiefly concerned has witnessed a number of such revivalist in the past - some successful some not, some honest some not, yet still others clear in their policies others ambiguous to the point of treachery. Now it seems to me, that dealing with nine centuries over a vast area within a limited space entails a lot and calls for brevity but not I should say, at the expense of competent detail. In this paper therefore, express historical information is subordinated to development on the cultural and religious spheres. I have for this purpose selected the following for analysis.

1. Abdullah Mahammad ibn Tifat otherwise known as Tarshna al-Lamtuna, because he hails from the Lamtuna branch of the Sanhaja clan - a nomadic people who inhabited the Western Sahara in the region now known as the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. This is the man introduced

²Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa*, Longman, 1984, p. 36.

to us by a famous Muslim historian Al-Bakri who wrote in 1068, "as a man of faith, a man of nobility and ability who performed the pilgrimage to Makkah in the year 1025 and who waged a holy war or Jihad but whose efforts as we shall see later ended in a successful failure".

2. Yahya ibn Ibrahim from the Godala branch of the Sanhaja clan - a man of greater wisdom who also made the pilgrimage to Makkah in 1035 and through whose instrumentality the veiled warrior monks popularly known as the Almoravids who built vast empires in North Africa and in Muslim Spain during the 11th and 12th centuries and introduced orthodox Islam into many parts of West Africa came into existence or prominence.
3. Mansa Musa, agreeably the most illustrious of all the Emperors of Mali since the days of Sundiatta Keita and whose pilgrimage to Makkah in 1324 brought fame not only to himself but also to Mali and the African.
4. Askia Muhammad Ture or Askia the great, of the Songhay Empire, a hero by default yet whose contribution to the development of Islam in West African cannot be discounted in any meaningful study of the subject.
5. Sheikh 'Uthman Dan Fodio who is regarded as the most successful of all the 19th century reformers in terms of achievements and finally in our own time, the revivalist movement known as Izala. This movement is well represented in Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra-Leone.

The principal objective of all these illustrious sons of Islam is the revival of orthodox Islam as established in Makkah and Madinah, by combating ignorance, mixed Islam and innovation.

There are other personalities who qualify to be called revivalists but who for want of time and space cannot be discussed here. For the time being the afore mentioned should be taken as a representative selection for this paper.

THE TERMS DEFINED

Any anachronistic behaviour on the part of a Muslim is deemed an act of ignorance i.e. pre-Islamic custom which Islam had forbidden but which is still being practised by some Muslims is an act of ignorance. Also any Islamic act carried out without proper knowledge of its performance is an act of ignorance. Mixed Islam is

simply Islam mixed with traditional or indigenous custom. The situation in the Gonja district of old where the Earth cult priest was also the Muslim Imam provides an example of mixed Islam. Innovation in Islam stands for anything that is thrust upon the faith which is alien to it and the best treatment of the topic I have seen so far is that of Amin Ahsan Islahi. In his book, *How to Attain True Piety*, Islahi writes:

*“For something to belong to the faith it is essential that it is either stated in the Qur’an or occurring in an authentic tradition, failing that guess, and ijihad must have proved that it is in consonance with the Qur’an and traditions in spirit. If none of these relations can be traced in it, it cannot be part of the faith”.*³

If, however, Islahi stresses, a particular action is performed but not introduced as part of the faith it cannot be categorized as innovation and can only be judged in accordance with the Shariah. Here an example may be sufficient to illustrate this point. If a Muslim loves wine, enjoys drinking wine and drinks wine but does not claim any religious authority for this act, his wine drinking cannot be termed an innovation. We can only judge his action in accordance with Islamic legal prescription which says: wine is forbidden. Therefore any Muslim who drinks wine is guilty; any Muslim who buys wine is guilty any Muslim who sells wine is guilty; any Muslim who benefits from the sale of wine is guilty; and by analogy, any Muslim on whose premises wine is served or sold is guilty; any Muslim whose neighbour brews wine under his patronage is equally guilty of breaking Islamic law. If, on the other hand, this wine drinker claims any religious authority for his act by saying that wine drinking is allowed by Islam then we can categorize this act as an innovation and invoke the Islamic ruling on the matter of innovation which says:

*“He who innovates something in this matter of ours that is not of it will have it rejected”.*⁴

THE PILGRIMAGE OR HAJJ

The word *Hajj* literally means “going to a place for the sake of a visit” but in the Islamic sense of the word it implies going to *Bait-Allah* in Makkah to observe the

³Amin Ahsan Islahi, *How to Attain True Piety and Righteousness*, Islamic Book Publishers, Kuwait, 1982, p. 140.

⁴Ezzeddin Ibrahim Denys & Johnson-Davies (trans), *An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith*, Holy Qur’an Publishing House, Damascus, 1976, p. 10.

necessary devotions on certain days during the pilgrimage season. The pilgrimage season falls within the well known months which as Yusuf Ali explains in a foot note are, "*Shawwal, Dhul Qa'da and Dhul Hijja*".⁵

The *Hajj* as an institution, is one of the five foundations upon which Islam as a religion is built and in the words of al-Ghazali, the foremost Islamic ethicist is: "the worship of a lifetime, the seal of consumation, the completion of surrender and the perfection of religion".⁶

Yes indeed it was on the occasion of the Farewell pilgrimage of the Prophet in the year 632 A.D that the Qur'anic text confirming the perfection and choice of Islam as a religion was revealed. This text which stands as part of chapter 5, verse 3 reads:

"This day have I perfected your religion for you, Completed my favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion".

The *Hajj* is a duty Muslims owe to God and the Qur'an instructs all able Muslims to perform the *Hajj* once in a lifetime. This obligation however is mandatory only on all Muslims who are sane, mature and have the means both financial and physical to travel to Makkah for the purpose of *Hajj*. On this issue the Qur'an says in Chapter 3 verse 97:

"Pilgrimage thereto, is a duty men owe to God, - those who can afford the journey".

One of the reasons behind the Muslim ardent love for the *Hajj* is that there is a widespread notion among Muslims all over the world that apart from being the ultimate treatment for all spiritual ailments, *Hajj* performed free from all faults, washes away clean all the sins of a person. This notion is further nourished by a well known *Hadith* which has been handed down to us through several distinct chain of narrators and recorded in the top canonical works of *Hadith* namely Bukhari and Muslim which says:

"He who performs the Hajj for the sake of God and does not indulge in any lustful talk or any other transgression becomes free from the filth of

⁵A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an Text Translation and Commentary*, Amana Corporation U.S.A., 1983, p. 79.

⁶Muhtar Holland (tans), *al-Ghazali, Inner Dimensions of Islamic Worship*, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1983, p. 83.

sin as the day his mother gave him birth".⁷

This explains why Muslims invest a lifetime's savings in the performance of *Hajj*. The *Hajj*, as anyone who has performed it can testify is a form of worship which involves the totality of a Muslim's being - his body, mind and soul. It also involves his time, possession and temporary sacrifice of all ordinary comforts, conveniences and tokens of status. Further it calls for the performance of some essential devotional duties. These are *Ihram*, *Tawaf*, *Sa'y*, *Wuquf al-Arafat*, *Ramy al-Jimar*.

Put briefly, *Ihram* is the donning of a special pilgrim's garment in preparation for the rites of *Hajj* or *Umra*. By this act, the pilgrim enters upon a sanctified state in which certain acts which are ordinarily lawful become prohibited. Such prohibitions prescribed by law and as outlined by al-Geyoushie include to wear sewn cloth and to wear shoes which cover the ankles, to cut toe or finger nails, to cover the head touch perfume, to hunt or to eat meat killed in hunting, to marry or arrange the marriage of another, to have an argument over something which is not useful, and to go to his wife.⁸

This special garment is also known as *Ihram* and consists of two seamless sheets preferably white - one for covering the body from the waist to the knee and the other for covering the body from the waist to the shoulder. This later one usually flung loosely over the shoulders. The head is always bare and so are the feet. Sandals may be worn on bare feet. This is for men. As for women they can wear ordinary dress to cover the whole body except the face and hands but the dress should be modest not such as would attract the warm eyes of some men. Before putting on the *Ihram*, the pilgrim must take a ritual bath and thereafter utter the *Talbiya* facing the direction of the Ka'bah.

It is also recommended that two *rakaat* of prayer should be offered. As soon as the state of *Ihram* is entered upon, with the determination to devote as little attention as possible to the cares of body, the spiritual aspect of *Hajj* is brought to mind by all pilgrims chanting the *Talbiya* which signifies that they are in the Divine presence. The *Talbiya* which is chanted only in Arabic which mean:

*"Here I am O God here I am in Thy presence
There is no partner with Thee
Surely the Praise and Grace are Thine*

⁷Muhammad al-Geyoushie, *The Book of Pilgrimage*, Kuwait, 1985, p. 1.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 17.

*And so is the Kingdom
No partner hath Thou”.*

At some places along the various approaches to Makkah pilgrim facilities have been constructed for pilgrims to put on the *ihram*. Such a place is called *Miqat* beyond which a pilgrim should not proceed except in the state of *Ihram*. The various points appointed for *Ihram* are:

1. Dhul Hulaifa - for pilgrims coming from the direction of Madinah.
2. Juhfa - for those coming from Syria and Egypt
3. Qarn al Manzil - for those from Najd.
4. Yalamlam - for those from the Yemen and all those from India, Indonesia, and other countries, in south-east Asia who come through the direction of Yemen.
5. Dhat Irq - for those from Iraq.

For the inhabitants of Makkah the *Miqat* is Makkah itself. Breaking of the *miqat* regulation calls for *fidya* which is effected by fasting or feeding an indigent.

From this state of *Ihram*, pilgrims proceed to Makkah for the second rite of *Hajj* known as *Tawaf*. The word *Tawaf* means going round a thing but in the language of Islam it means going round the Ka'bah seven times starting from the point of the Black stone (*Hajr al-Aswad*). In the devotional acts of the *Hajj*, *Tawaf* occupies a very important place because it is the first act of the pilgrim upon arrival in Makkah and his last act before leaving Makkah finally for his home. Also, *Tawaf* is one of the essential acts of the pilgrim after the return from Arafat on the 10th of Dhul Hijja. Upon arrival in Makkah the pilgrim enters the sacred Mosque through the Gate of Peace (*Bab al-Salam*) and goes straight to the Ka'bah to begin the *Tawaf* starting from the point of the Black Stone. The Stone may be kissed or some sign made over it. It is desirable to trot the first three rounds and walk the remaining four rounds. This initial *Tawaf* is called *Tawaf al-Qudum*. The process is anti-clockwise - the Ka'bah is always on the left hand side of the pilgrim.

After *Tawaf al-Qudum* the pilgrim proceeds to *Maqam Ibrahim* (the station of Abraham) to offer two *rakaats* of prayer before proceeding to the small hill called *Safa* to begin the third essential rite known as *Sa'y*. Before the pilgrims usually go down to drink of the spring water known as *Zam Zam*. Up the hill of *Safa* the

pilgrim faces the direction of the Ka'ba and chants the verse of the Qur'an which makes the rite lawful:

"Behold Safa and Marwa are among the Symbols of God, So if those who visit the House in the season or at other times should compass them round it is no sin in them". (2:158)

Sa'y is a walk between the two small hills known as *Safa* and *Marwa* starting from *Safa* - and ending at *Marwa*. The trip should count seven with each trip preferably be a combination of a trot and a normal walk. *Ihram*, *Tawaf* and *Sa'y* may be performed at any time during the pilgrimage months and may be performed individually.

On the 8th day of Dhul Hijja pilgrims move to Mina about 4 miles east of Makkah where they combine *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers and also *Maghrib* and *Isha* and stay there until sunrise the following morning when they proceed to the plain of Arafat for the most important part of the Hajj. What is required here is standing on the plain. The time of standing on Arafat spans from noon of the 9th and lasts until sunset and this is known as *Wuquf*. At Arafat, *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers are combined after which the Imam delivers a sermon from the pulpit of Jabal ar-Rahmah (the mount of Mercy). This *Wuquf* is so important that *Hajj* is not complete without it. Most of this time at Arafat is spent in glorifying God.

After sunset on the 9th, there is a flow back to Muzdalifa to offer both *Maghrib* and *Isha* prayers combined and stay the night. Pilgrims leave for Mina after the dawn prayer which means they reach Mina on the morning of the 10th. This day is called *Yawm an-Nahr* or the day of sacrifice. This is the day celebrated all over the Muslim world as *Idul Adha*.

On this day certain duties become necessary for all pilgrims. After the Eid prayer pilgrims proceed to the point called Jamrat al-Aqaba to cast seven stones at the devil. Each throw is accompanied with *Allahu Akbar*. Pilgrims then proceed to the plain to sacrifice an animal after which they go to Makkah for another *Tawaf* known as *Tawaf al-Ifada*. Thereafter pilgrims shave the head or just a small clip of the hair, emerge from the state of *Ihram* and resume normal life. The order is not compulsory. Back in Mina after the *Tawaf* pilgrims stay there for three days to complete the stone throwing ceremony which is done in the afternoon and starts from the smallest *jamrat* near the Mina Mosque, then to the middle (*Wusta*) then *Aqabah*.

This process is repeated during the 3 days at Mina. The pilgrims then return to Makkah in preparation journey home. When pilgrims are ready to leave Makkah they perform another Tawaf called *Tawaf al Wada* to bid farewell to the House. With this the work of the pilgrim is finished. Yet it is recommended that pilgrims should go to Madinah, the city of the Prophet to visit his mosque and his grave and to spend some time there. This visit could take place before or after the *Hajj*.

Several scholarly works dealing with the significance of the *Hajj* exist. However, the ultimate verdict of Muslim jurists on the issue is that it is the fulfilment of a religious duty without which the Islam of a man remains incomplete granted that he has the necessary inputs. Of the many works on the issue may be cited that of Hammuda Abdal Ati who says:

"It is the largest annual convention of faith where Muslims meet to know one another, study their common affairs and promote their general welfare. It is also the greatest regular conference of peace known in the history of mankind"

"It is a wholesome demonstration of the universality of Islam and the brotherhood and equality of the Muslims. From all walks of life, from all trades and classes and from every corner of the globe the Muslims assemble at Makkah in response to the call of God. They dress in the same simple way, observe the same regulations, utter the same supplications, at the same time in the same way for the same end. There is no royalty but loyalty of all to God. There is no aristocracy but humility and devotion".⁹

The standing at Arafat is seen as a reminder of the Grand Assembly on the Day of Judgement when all people will stand equal before God waiting for their final destiny and where no superiority of race or stock can be claimed. This point may be understood better if one stands on Arafat and looks around-one sees nothing but a sea of humanity - everybody for himself and God for us all.

The stone throwing ceremony, it is said, teaches the lesson that man must learn to hate evil and that the Evil one should be kept at a distance because the nearer you get to temptation the more likely you are to yield. It also serves as a reminder of the

⁹Hammuda Abdal Ati, *Islam in Focus*, Islamic Teaching Centre, Indiana, 1983, p. 100.

spiritual fight man must wage against evil. The whole process of *hajj* is therefore Abdal Ati concludes "is a course of spiritual enrichment and moral rearmament".¹⁰

Another Sheikh, Mahmoud Abdulla states that "the *Hajj* which is the micro-cosm of the fraternity of the world of Islam serves also as a demolisher of the barriers of race, colour or nationality".¹¹

This view is shared by Prof. Hitti who comments:

*"Of all religions, Islam alone seems to have attained the largest measure of success in demolishing the barriers of race, colour or nationality at least within the confines of its own community."*¹²

That the pilgrimage experience affords the opportunity for Negroes, Berbers, Chinese, Persians, Syrians, Turks and Arabs - rich and poor, high and low to fraternize and meet together on the common ground of faith as Prof. Hitti¹³ sees it, can hardly be denied by any honest person who has performed the pilgrimage.

Equally significant about the pilgrimage is that passing through the ceremonies, an informed observer realizes, as Islahi rightly points out:

"The long history from Abraham to Muhammed spread over several thousand years and with all its landmarks presents itself as a panorama before the pilgrim's eyes ... the things we heard from people or read about in books can be seen with our own eyes ... Much more impressive are the places associated with the life of the Prophet (SAW) and his companions. The traces left by them and their miraculous feats are witnessed at every niche of those sacred places - the city where the Prophet was born, in whose streets he had roamed preaching the faith; the beloved city which left for the sake of God....., the plain and hills in which he and his companions fought battles for the sake of Truth. When these things come one by one before the pilgrim's eyes the entire history of Islam is made so evident to him that it seems there is no barrier left between him and the early period of Islam".¹⁴

¹¹Sheikh Mahmoud Abdullah, *The Hajj Message*, Islamic Da'wah and Irshad, Nairobi, 1984, p. 56.

¹²Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, The MacMillan Press Ltd. London, 1974, p. 136.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Amin Ahsan Islahi, *op.cit.*, p. 226.

THE EFFECTS OF *HAJJ*

It is during such moments of truth, it seems that would be revivalist takes inspiration and formulates his intention. This was the situation in which Tarshna al-Lamtuna found himself in the year 1025. His people, the Sanhaja who were known to have worshipped the sun god and eaten unclean meat, had been converted to nominal Islam a century or so earlier. Their kind of Islam was nominal in the sense that even though they professed the faith there was little or nothing that meant justification of faith by works. This is the anomaly to which Tarshna al-Lamtuna wished to address himself upon his return, having acquired the idea of *jihad* for the sake of God during his pilgrimage to Makkah. But as it came to pass, ill equipped, ill prepared and most likely ill fated he lost his life, Peter Clarke informs us, while fighting "against the Sudanese in the region of Adrar in Central Mauritania".¹⁵

Historians do not give him much credit. Peter Clarke however records to his credit that "he was responsible for initiating the process Of Islamic reform among the Sanhaja and restoring some of the unity and cohesion which they had lost".¹⁶ Now, Islam preaches unity and if Tarshna al-Lamtuna was able to achieve this much among his people and lost his life in the process then he has the blessing of the Qur'an which says in chapter 61 verse 4:

"Truly God loves those who fight in His cause in battle array..."

Also in chapter 86 verse 11, there is another consolation for people like Tarshna al-Lamtuna:

"For those who believe and do righteous deeds will be gardens beneath which rivers flow"

After the first conquest of the Muslims in North Africa says Blyden, "their religion advanced southwards into the continent not by armies but by schools and books and mosques; by trade and intermarriages".¹⁷ Bosworth Smith also asserts that "the religion has spread not by the sword but by earnest and simple minded Arab missionaries".¹⁸ Bishop Crowther however, is more critical and says, "the real voca-

¹⁵Peter B. Clark, *West Africa and Islam*, Edward Arnold Ltd. London, 1982, p. 13.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Anson Atterbury, *Islam in Africa*, Negro Universities Press, New York, 1969, p. 86.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

tion of these so called quiet apostles of the Qur'an is that of fetish peddlers".¹⁹ The net result of such development was that there existed in the Sahara a group of Muslims identified as Barghawata, Kharijite Shi'a and Ibadis. Those groups from the information available were not orthodox. In fact they were noted for their heresies and laxity. This was the position of Islam among the Sanhaja which Yahya ibn Ibrahim sought to correct. Having done so he sought to unite his people under the banner of orthodoxy. The story goes that in the 1035 Yahya ibn Ibrahim accompanied by a number of Sanhaja chiefs and an expert in Islamic law called Jawhar ibn Sakkum set out on a pilgrimage to Makkah. On their return journey the pilgrims passed through Qairawan which was a centre of orthodox Islamic learning and missionary activity. Yahya asked a prominent scholar and teacher named Abu Imran al-Fasi to send one of his able students to the Sahara to instruct the Sanhaja in orthodox Islamic beliefs and practices. He was however directed to Wajjaj ibn Zalwi of the Dar al-Murabitin in Southern Morocco. He in turn chose one of his students named Abdullah ibn Yasin who had matrilineal connection with the Sanhaja. On their way it is said they passed through areas under the influence of the heretical Islamic sect, the Barghawata. In the Sahara, Abdullah ibn Yasin saw for himself the religious laxity and influence which the Ibadite brand of Islam had over the people. His task was to teach the Sanhaja the true faith.

At the time of his death in 1056, orthodox Islam had replaced the heresies in many areas of the Sahara and beyond. The very fact that Maliki teachings prevail in West Africa today is a tribute to Abdullah ibn Yasin and his disciples. The turning point in this development is the pilgrimage in 1035 of Yahya ibn Ibrahim. The Almoravid, in the account given by Peter Clarke, "helped stamp out a number of unorthodox beliefs and practices in the Western Sahara - beliefs and practices introduced by Ibadite and Sufrite traders and missionaries".²⁰

The main contribution of the Almoravid in the eyes of Peter Clarke, came in the field of learning and missionary activities. We may add that they also stimulated the interest of the Sanhaja in Islamic theology and the Arabic language. The Marabouts found in many parts of West Africa are the descendants of the Almoravid.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Peter B. Clarke, *op.cit.*, p. 241.

Our next subject to scrutinize is Mansa Musa of Mali. Mansa Musa, the Emperor of Mali whose reign lasted from 1307 to 1332 is reported by al-Umari to have done a great deal to promote the development of Islam in Mali and as Peter Clarke rightly remarks "the pilgrimage to Makkah seems to have inspired Mansa Musa to make considerable efforts to promote Islam in Mali."²¹ For his pilgrimage to Makkah in the year 1324 Muhammad Belly el-Fouty in his book *African Landmark in Islam* (p. 12) credits Mansa Musa with the following:

1. Bringing into Mali from Arabia and Egypt a number of Sharifs, that is Muslim missionaries who claim descent from the Prophet through his grandsons Hasan and Husein.
2. The purchase of many books on Islamic law which he brought into Mali to promote Islamic learning.
3. The elimination of some un-Islamic practices prevalent in Mali.
4. The dispatch of cultural missions to North Africa, the first of its kind which included Imams, Judges and teachers who on their return established in many parts of the empire notably Timbuctu, Nyane and Jenne, centres of Islamic learning and consequently made Arabic language important alongside other national languages.
5. The building of mosques and setting in motion of the congregational prayers on Friday. This resulted in a general rise in the level of performance of Islamic devotional duties.

On this last point, Ibn Batuta is quoted as saying: "on Friday if a man does not go early to the mosque he cannot find a place to pray because of the large number of people there".²² The Arabic scholar, al-Umari writing about Islam in Mali during the 1340s is also reported as saying: "The present king of Mali is called Suleiman and he is a brother of Mansa Musa. It was in effect his brother Mansa Musa, who built the mosques and the minaret and set in motion the congregational prayer on Friday... It was Mansa Musa who brought to his country Islamic lawyers of the Maliki School".²³

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 44.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*, p. 43.

All these are signs of positive development in the world of Islam. It should be observed here that the highest point of all this development was Mansa Musa's pilgrimage to Makkah in the year 1324.

The idea of a pilgrim king replacing a magician king as intimated by Prof. Levtzion is no where more aptly applied than to the reign of Askia Muhammad Tare or simply Askia the Great who ruled the Songhay empire from 1493 - 1528. Askia the Great is remembered especially, Hiskett writes, for his initiative in consulting two prominent Muslim scholars of his day namely al-Maghili of Algeria and as-Suyuti of Egypt.²⁴ Askia the Great sought their advice on how best to govern his empire the Islamic way. The result of such consultations was that Islamic education made considerable progress in the Songhay as well as other areas of West and Central Sudan. This progress in the eyes of many "was far reaching and unsurpassed".²⁵ He encouraged Muslim scholars to settle in the Songhay by lavish grants. He himself, it is on record practised the devotional duties with great zeal and thereby set a good example for his subjects. He is also reported to have brought in 4 Muslim scholars of the Quraishi from Makkah to teach and settle in the Songhay. It has been established that it was Askia the Great who restored Islam and made it a state religion after the decline Islam suffered under Sunni Ali. In sum, his reign as Onwubiko puts it, "witnessed a revival of the Islamic religion and the advent of oriental culture".²⁶ Commenting on this revival, Felix Dubois is quoted as saying that the reign of Askia the Great "was like a brilliant light shining after a great darkness".²⁷

What ever Askia the Great was able to achieve for Islam during his reign may safely be attributed in no small way to his contact with al-Maghili and as-Suyuti. This contact too was made possible by his pilgrimage to Makkah in 1497.

SHEHU UTHMAN DAN FODIO

Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio had played an obviously significant role in the evolution of African Muslim. His life and works had been dealt with at some length by notable historians such as J. Spencer Trimingham, Peter Clarke and Meroyynn Hiskett and I need not repeat all those historical details here. For immediate purpose

²⁴Mervyn Hiskett, *loc.cit.*

²⁵K.B.C. Onwubiko, *History of West Africa (1000-1800)*, Africana (FEP) Publishers Ltd. Nigeria, 1984, p. 58.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 62.

it is sufficient to recall that Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio came of a scholarly Muslim community which migrated to Hausaland from Futa Toro. His 11th ancestor by name Musa Sukullu is said to have come to Hausaland with his tribe and first settled at Birnin Konni where at the place called Marata west of Gobir. Shehu was born in 1754. Shehu studied under such notable clerics as Shaykh Abdrahman Hamada and Shaykh Jibril ibn Umar. He began his career, J Spencer Trimingham remarks, as an itinerant preacher in Kebbi and formed a coterie of disciples.²⁸

There is no evidence that Shehu ever performed the pilgrimage to Makkah even though many of his kingsmen had done so. From the accounts given by Mervyn Hiskett on Shehu one learns that Shehu once tried to go on the pilgrimage to Makkah but was prevented from doing so because of family reasons and had instead taken increasingly to classical Arabic sources and to the accounts of those who had performed the pilgrimage for his impression of what the pilgrimage was like. Mallam Muhammad Belly el-Fouty also writing about Shehu reports that even though Shehu did not perform the pilgrimage some of his tutors notably Mallam Jibril ibn Umar had done so at the time when the Wahabi reform movement held sway in Arabia and had acquired some Wahabi puritanical ideas which were duly imparted to Shehu.²⁹ This is possible even though the Shehu cannot be called a Wahabi. In one of his poems, Shehu sums up his emotional attachment to the pilgrimage and all that it stands for. This poem, translated from the Arabic by Prof. Sani Zahredeen reads:

*"O my friend I pray that my loneliness may be relieved
Within my heart the Prophet springs forth
I am longing to see him, the Best of the Prophets
Muhammad, Ahmad for he excels all
In my heart I sing his praises.*

.....

*Every time that I go out, it is as if I follow
The direction of my eyes, for they desire to be near him
That they may come to see our Master, the Prophet*

²⁸J. Spencer Trimingham, *A History of Islam in West Africa*, Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 195.

²⁹Muhammad Belly el-Fouty, *African Landmarks in Islam*, Islamic Research Bureau, Lagos, 1982, p. 15.

*When I go out, in whatever direction, I turn my gaze
Towards him and it is as if I see him and hear his voice.*

.....
*The hearing of my ears, the seeing of my eyes
And the longing of my heart, let them all increase
For my body has failed me in going there on Pilgrimage
That we might be together
But in my heart it is as if I have visited him
And Makkah and Madinah and the Garden
In which stands his tomb.*

What is certain about Shehu is what has been observed by Mervyn Hiskett that "for the Sheikh Pilgrimage was the symbol of the beauty and nobility of true Islam."³⁰ It was Shehu's desire therefore to establish Islam in a purer form than he found it and to bring it into conformity with the Islam set up in Makkah and Madinah by the Prophet of Islam and his immediate companions.

For the position of Islam at the time of Shehu let us look at the picture painted by Muhammed Bello, Shehu's son as contained in the *Heritage of West Africa*.

"In truth in the country of Hausa as he found it, there was much heathenism and evil and wickedness. As he found them they knew not God. They did not pray, they paid no *zakat*, they did not fast. There are among them also heathens who worshipped trees and stones and spirits. They called each other heathens but they did not pray or fast or pay *zakat* and spoke evil of God. These people were the majority in the Sudan. They are called Maquzawa. There were also, Fulani obstinate in character in the land of Hausa and Tuareg. Some of them used to pray and fast and pay *zakat* but they were not wholehearted in it. They mingled fetish customs which they had inherited from their fathers with Islam. So also most of the chiefs of the country, they used to pray and keep the fast and pay *zakat* and speak the name of God but they were not wholehearted in it. They observed their evil customs. They remained in their ignorance. Such were most of the Fulani".³¹

³⁰Mervyn Hiskett, *op.cit.*, p. 162.

³¹Norah Latham, *The Heritage of West Africa*, Hulton Educational Publications, London, 1964, p. 80.

This is the type of condition which many writers think, gave Shehu a doctrinal justification for launching his reform programme in 1804, which resulted in the establishment of the Fulani Muslim empire stretching from Niger to Lake Chad (Bornu excepted) in which nominal Muslim chiefs were replaced by true believers. From the account given by Belly el-Fouti, Shehu left behind a large body of Islamic Literature which is a source of inspiration to later generation of Islamic preachers. In recognition of his achievement the Sokoto State Government has renamed the University of Sokot after Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio.

The term *Izala* means abolition and it implies abolition of all innovations and upholding of Prophetic practice (*Sunnat*). The followers of *Izala* call themselves *Ahli Sunnat*. The movement emerged in the early seventies as a direct response to the declaration by Shehu Ibrahim Nyass of Senegal in 1937 of the Reformed Tijaniyya Sufi Order. This declaration brought into the Order items which were hitherto unknown to it and also opened the doors of the Order to people who would otherwise not be fit to be members. The result was disastrous for Islam in West Africa as Islam became doled out by uninspiring Sheikhs in drab surroundings each claiming to be divine and worshipped by novices. Islam on the whole was half dead and in need of stimulation. The group to offer this stimulant was the *Izala* group which is well represented along the West Coast. In Nigeria the movement is under Sheikh Abu Bakr Gumi with branches in many parts of Nigeria. In Ghana it is represented by the group known as the *Wahhabis* - a name they reject in favour of *Ahli Sunna*. In Sierra Leone *Izala* views are shared by the *Ikhwan*, that is Muslim Brotherhood under Sheikh Jibril Sissay.

In all cases, the leaders are those who had been to Makkah for the pilgrimage and also stayed on for studies which gave them the opportunity to see Islam at its best. This group regarded the diversion of the Tijaniyya group as due to ignorance and countered this by preaching the true Islam and opening more schools to make Islamic learning available to many. There were clashes here and there sometimes violent ones between the two opposing groups each claiming to be on the right path and therefore regarding the other as infidel. The increase in the number of schools and mosques is largely the work of this *Ahli Sunna* group. In Nigeria the Universal Primary Education declared in the 70s was chiefly due to the agitation of the *Izala* in their bid to rid the north of ignorance. In Sierra Leone the *Ikhwan* established many schools which are open to both Muslims and non-Muslims. In Ghana the Islamic Education Unit is a sign of progress in favour of the *Ahli Sunna*. In Ghana special

mention should be made of al-Haji Umar Imam, of the Islamic Research and Reformation Centre, Nima, Accra, who initiated a series of reforms that led to:

- a. a general rise in the level of proficiency in Arabic,
- b. more people now take interest in the study of Arabic in order to become competent Muslim missionaries,
- c. the avoidance of many un-Islamic practices, and
- d. the establishment of a modern Islamic School in line with the prescriptions of the Ministry of Education.

To al-Haji Umar and his team therefore we say well done. There is much to be said for both groups. According to Iman Malik any one who abandons the Shariah in favour of Sufism becomes an apostate and any one who avoids Sufism altogether for the Shariah becomes a reprobate. What this means is that apart from the normal prescription of the Shariah if a person goes the Sufi way it is legitimate but to abandon the Shariah prescription in favour of Sufism leads to *Kufr* (apostacy). In all sincerity we may say from observation that the activities of the Tijaniyya if allowed to go unchecked would lead to disaster for the *Muslim Umma*. On the other hand the ultra puritanism of some of the *Izala* group, if carried out to the letter would surely lead to an Islam wherein all Islamic principles have been evacuated. The truth about Imam Malik's ruling stands but it seems to have fallen on deaf ears or else become what T.S. Eliot calls "the word unheard, the word within a word unable to speak a word"

I would like to recall here that the coming of Islam like the coming of the Trojans, was a blessing and the greatest achievement of Islam in the eyes of the West and in the words of Prof. Ballantine Irving was "the transformation of a motley group of warring factions deeply drunk in ignorance devoid of any sense of direction into a civilized international community with a historical personality".³²

The Pilgrimage to Makkah has been a prominent feature of West African Islam for a very long time and as Trimmingham notes: "Pilgrimages have been made by pilgrims from West Africa since 11th century".³³ The changed attitude of Muslims upon their return from Makkah is well known. This paper has noted the remarkable

³²T. Ballantine Irving, Khurshid Ahmed et al, *The Qur'an: Basic Teachings*, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1979, p. 13.

³³J. Spencer Trimmingham, *op.cit.*, p. 85.

achievements of some rulers upon their return from the *Hajj*. This is not to say that the pilgrimage is the only factor that prompts people into action. This paper has also noted the case of Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio. Sight should not be lost however of Shehu's emotional attachment to the Pilgrimage. In the case of rulers like Yahya ibn Ibrahim, Mansa Musa and Askia Muhammad, the pilgrimage factor in their achievements is paramount. Remove the pilgrimage factor from their history and what remains, it seems to me, would be next to nothing.