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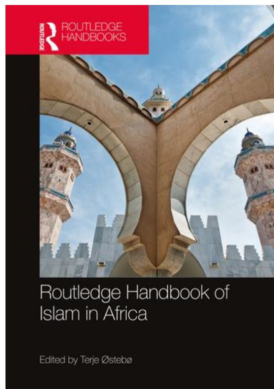


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# Dynamics of reform in Sub-Saharan Africa

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# 13

# DYNAMICS OF REFORM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

*Roman Loimeier*

## Introduction

A contribution on dynamics of reform in Muslim contexts should start out by stressing the fact that the term "reform" has become polysemic (and, consequently, potentially misleading) a long time ago. I would thus like to stress that I see movements of reform foremost as movements of contestation, i.e., contestation of established wisdom, of established authority. Contestation, however, can again take many different forms, as we shall see below, and the term "reform" has consequently been endowed with multiple meanings by different people. Owing to this fact, it does not make sense to confine the term to specific expressions of "reform". This is why I would like to stick to a broad definition of the term "reform", despite the objection raised above. My discussion of the term is based on a number of case studies of movements of reform in Sub-Saharan Africa, most prominently, Senegal, Northern Nigeria, and Tanzania. However, I will not discuss "secular" and/or purely political expressions of reform such as the struggles for a "liberal" society in the Arab world as presented by Albert Hourani (1962).

## On definition and terminology

Before applying the term "reform", at least as a working definition, to our analysis of Muslim contexts, we have to ask a number of questions on the very nature of the processes of reform and their structural features: what are the specific characteristics of a movement of reform in a specific period of time?; are similarities between movements of reform accidental or part of larger social processes that lead to similar results in other contexts and in different times?; why do movements of reform acquire social relevance (*Wirkmächtigkeit*) in some specific historical contexts and not in others? By studying movements of reform in their historical context, by identifying the specific dynamics of movements of reform as well as their social and religious relevance, we will eventually be able to fathom the true nature of movements of reform. When considering "reform", it is also necessary to look not only at the "etic" analysis of movements of reform in Western academe, but also at the "emic" representation of Muslim "reformers" and the way in which they represent themselves to other Muslims and the outside world: specific terms signal a specific cause (*dawa*). It consequently makes a difference whether a group chooses the term *tajdid* or *islah* (or any other term)[1] to describe its cause.

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Despite their different orientations, movements of reform advocate some form of social change and criticize, at the same time, specific aspects of their own societies. Muslim movements of reform do not usually in fact address "the other", Christians, for instance, although Muslim movements of reform may be seen as a response "to the other" – as in the guise of processes of modernization that are perceived to be non-Muslim: they rather address co-believers, i.e., other Muslims. In a specific, radical, and often violent form, movements of reform address those (Muslims) who are perceived to turn into nonbelievers, who may become "deserters" – from the perspective of those who perceive themselves as the guardians of the "true faith":

> La violence fondamentaliste est elle aussi une tentative de faire monter les enjeux, c'est-à-dire de décourager les déserteurs potentiels en démontrant que la defection leur coutera très cher… (Fundamentalist violence is also an attempt to escalate the issues, that is to discourage the potential deserters by showing [to the latter] that desertion will cost them dearly).
>
> *Boyer 2001, 427*

Movements of reform are characterized most importantly, however, by the fact that they have a "program" for the kind of change they propagate. In a first step of analysis, I thus define "reform" for the purpose of my argument as "any transformation that is linked with an implicit or explicit program (*manhaj*) of change", or in short, I see "reform" as "change with a program" (Loimeier 2016, 20ff). This definition understands "reform" to be informed, first, by a normative (reformatory) discourse, an ideology, a program, a will and an intention (*niyya*) and, second, by modes of program-oriented agency which propose to translate a specific program of change into social reality in a specific historical context.[2] This approach is also valid for movements which reject reform: movements of "counterreform" often adopt programmatic elements that features in movements of reform and, in a dialectical turn, come to represent reform as well, even if in a conservative mode.

Initiatives of reform are linked not only with a program, an agenda of reform, but also with societal movements that try to implement programs of change, and this fact necessarily creates tension: other social, political, or religious forces may oppose agendas of reform. Such tensions have to be negotiated by each movement of reform. The process of negotiation contributes to establishing the unique character of each movement of reform and enables us to identify different movements of reform in their respective societal and temporal contexts. Equally, "reform" may fail not only due to the opposition of counterreformist movements, but also due to society's indifference. In such a case, a movement of reform has not managed to translate its program into social realities. When considering movements of reform, we thus have to look at the agents of change and their motivations; the specific program of change they propagate; and both the temporal and social contexts in which these movements of reform are situated, and how they try to translate their program of reform into social realities, how such movements "mediate between words and worlds" (Bayat 2007, 6).

The present contribution argues that while reform movements have to be understood in terms of how they are situated in a matrix of international networks and media-based representations, they must also be interpreted in terms of how they are situated in local contexts where their advocates attempt to translate their interpretation of reform into reality on the ground. Adopting such an analytical posture thus serves to examine the manner and extent to which a particular reform program converses with its own history. The success or failure of particular reform movements is consequently defined by processes of negotiation in the local context and not so much by their degree of trans-local integration. It is only if a reform

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movement manages to "translate" its program in a multitude of local contexts and to properly address the needs, anxieties, frustrations, and aspirations of many different local populations by offering viable solutions to the nagging and often banal problems of everyday life that such a reform movement will gain acceptance in multiple local contexts and become a truly translocal movement. In the process of translation, contestation, negotiation, and reinterpretation of a specific interpretation of the canon in different geographic, social, political, and religious contexts, reform movements develop distinctive positions both with respect to their contexts but also with respect to other contemporary reform movements and/or historical traditions of reform: such reform movements have synchronic and diachronic dimensions which require careful examination. Thus, each movement of reform is marked by distinctive contexts, distinctive markers of reform, and distinctive positions with respect to other movements of reform. Before discussing this theme in more detail, it is necessary to look at the way in which movements of reform have been constructed in dichotomous (and rather misleading) ways in Western academic literature as well as by Muslim scholars.

## The problem of dichotomous representations of movements of reform

Muslim societies and movements of reform, in particular, have often been perceived in dichotomous terms from both etic and emic perspectives. Especially in contexts of conflict, Muslims have used dichotomous constructions as a way of delegitimizing other Muslims for being "less orthodox" or "bad" Muslims, as *munafiqun* (hypocrites), as *munkirun* (deniers), as *khawarij* (dissidents), or even as *kuffar* (unbelievers). These dynamics of othering and the respective construction of binary oppositions can be shown clearly in the development of conflict among Muslims in Sub-Saharan West Africa, as, for instance, in the guise of the competition between the Qadiriyya and the Tijaniyya Sufi orders since the mid-nineteenth century; then, from the 1930s, in the guise of a dispute within the Tijaniyya over the issue of *qabd* and *sadl* (Loimeier 1997, 79ff);[3] and, finally, from the late 1970s, in the context of the conflict between the Sufi orders and the Salafi-oriented[4] Yan Izala in northern Nigeria. In each of these conflicts, the other was depicted in the respective emic view and in the respective "orientalising grammar" (Baumann 2005, 18ff) as being distinctly different (i.e., "unorthodox" etc.). Yet, dichotomous constructions of society may become obsolete when the context of conflict vanishes in the course of time. In Baumann's "segmentary grammar" of conflicts, former enemies, such as 11 and 12 bead Tijanis, the Qadiriyya, and the Tijaniyya in northern Nigeria or both Sufi orders and the Yan Izala, may even become allies when new enemies appear on the horizon and produce a new context of conflict (Loimeier 1997, 309).[5] Dichotomous representations of reform thus constitute an important means of "othering" opponents. It is important to examine such processes of "othering" in so far as they reflect emic perceptions of reality. Dichotomous representations are relational, however, and the result of negotiation processes in a local context. They are often made operational or articulated for specific purposes and change ascription when the context changes.

Dichotomous constructions of Muslim societies and movements of reform, in particular, have gained currency in Western academic representations of Muslim societies. Muslim societies have been presented as being divided into "peaceful" Sufis versus "militant" reformers. This dichotomy was essentially informed by the idea that there was a cosmos of local, allegedly tolerant forms of "Sufi" Islam, often characterized by the cult of saints as well as a plethora of "(pre-Islamic) survivals" in local practices (see Osella and Soares 2010, 59), and, on the other side, one monolithic, "fundamentalist", "puritan", "orthodox", "scripturalist", and usually "outlandish", "reformist" Islam. Such a construction of Muslim societies in Sub-Saharan Africa

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(and beyond) was not only much too simplistic, but also omitted the fact that Muslim societies in Sub-Saharan Africa had a long history of militant reform movements associated with Sufi scholars and Sufi orders: consider, for instance, the nineteenth-century jihads led by Uthman dan Fodio (in what is today Northern Nigeria), Ahmed Lobbo (in what is today Mali), and al-Hajj Umar Taal in what is today Senegal and Mali). Equally problematic is Louis Brenner's concept of the "esoteric" and the "rationalistic" paradigms (Brenner 2001, 17ff): first, even if they are committed to an esoteric paradigm, Sufis are at least as rationalistic, in the logic of their own thinking, as Salafi-oriented reformers. Second, there is never one single expression of either Sufi- or Salafi-oriented reform, but a spectrum of different manifestations of reform.

Another major marker for the construction of an opposition between Salafi-oriented reformers and other Muslims has been the difference between metaphorical (*ta'wil*) and "literalist" (*zahir*) approaches to texts. While Sufis follow the paradigm of metaphorical interpretation, Salafi-oriented reformers are said to be "literalists". Yet, even though Salafi-oriented reformers represent a "literalist" approach to texts, such a clear-cut take on Salafi doctrine turns out to be less clear-cut at a second glance:[6] although Salafi-oriented scholars reject the metaphorical interpretation and understanding of the Qur'an and advance a "literalist" approach to the holy text that is not distorted (*tahrif*) by metaphorical interpretation (*ta'wil*), an approach that does not empty (*ta'til*) the conception of God, an approach that does not associate specific "shaping" (*takyif*) with God's attributes, and an approach that does not compare God with his creation, Salafi-oriented scholars also reject a purely anthropomorphic interpretation that would claim that God's face, hands, and eye are identical with those of humans.[7]

In this sense, Salafi doctrinal positions reject both a metaphorical and a too literal interpretation of those verses of the Qur'an that mention a face, a hand, an eye of God and that refer to him as sitting on a throne. Salafis in fact stress that there are similarities (*mushabahat*) but no complete identity (*mumathala*) between God and humans: *laisa ka-mithlihi shay'un* (Qur'an 42, al-shura, 11; "There is nothing that is equal to him"). God has settled on his throne, yet the revelation is silent about the concrete way in which he has done that (Gharaibeh 2014, 113): "he settled on the throne in his own way" (Ahmed 2015, 128). As a consequence, Salafi-oriented scholars prefer to argue that the true shape of God's attributes exceeds human powers of imagination and should thus not be described; they are "transcendental anthropomorphists", they believe in a God with a human-like shape, though the concrete form of this shape is unknown (Gharaibeh 2014, 123). Salafi-oriented scholars such as Abdallah Salih al-Farsy or Abubakr Gumi have thus rejected a literalistic translation of the Qur'an and stick to the position that only God knows the meaning of the ambiguous verses; they must be accepted without asking questions (*bila kaifa*). Thus, on closer investigation, we see that academic constructions of differences between Sufi- and Salafi-oriented movements of reform are misleading. Virtually all catchwords which have been identified as markers of difference between Sufis and Salafis have turned out to be less than convincing when scrutinized properly, and consequently dissolve into thin air.

Despite such analytical problems, academics have tried to come up with new categories to differentiate movements of reform. Noah Salomon, for instance, has offered a set of categories for differentiating between Sufi and non-Sufi ("postmodern") epistemologies (Salomon 2013, 821). His argument is based on debates on the "theory of Islamic knowledge" in contemporary Sudan, where Hassan al-Turabi's "civilizational project" implies an attempt at "Islamization of knowledge". Such a "scientific" and text-as-authority-oriented approach has been rejected by followers of the Sufi episteme who supported, in Louis Brenner's words, "a hierarchical conceptualization of knowledge… (in which) knowledge is transmitted in an initiatic form and is closely related to devotional practice" (Brenner quoted in Salomon 2013, 824). Such an initiatic

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approach which assumes the spiritual authority of a master over his student relies on a "theory of knowledge" that is based on the idea of the secret and hidden (*batin*) meaning of texts. It stresses the "elusiveness" of knowledge, i.e., its remaining eternally secret to the common adept (824), rather than its "*Erkennbarkeit"* or "*Erlernbarkeit"*, as proclaimed by Hassan al-Turabi's "civilizational project", i.e., that it is possible to grasp the hidden meaning of a text. An initiatic concept of knowledge would violate the idea of the basic openness of texts and the "certainty of knowledge" about the meaning of things in the modern period as represented by Salafi-oriented scholars in Sudan (Salomon 2013, 824). Salafi-oriented scholars would thus come back, in their respective "discourses of certainty" (826), to their basic *aqida* (conviction), namely, that "the Qur'an is clear. Any person can understand it…There is nothing called hidden knowledge".[8] Although Salomon has identified here an important epistemological divide between Sufi- and Salafi-oriented concepts of knowledge, the reality of exegesis of the Qur'an by Salafi-oriented scholars such as Abubakr Gumi or Abdallah Salih al-Farsy, for instance, shows that at least some Salafi-oriented thinkers refrain from a crude literalistic interpretation of texts and accept metaphorical interpretation to a certain extent: a seemingly clear-cut epistemological divide has, thus, been rendered at least partially obsolete by social (and exegetic) reality.

Other scholars have maintained that Sufi- and Salafi-oriented reformers can be distinguished by their different approaches to authority: while Salafi-oriented reformers are said to reject *taqlid* (here: "the blind imitation of both former and established authority") and to favor a direct link with the very sources of Islam without recourse to a chain (*isnad*, pl. *asanid*)[9] of intermediaries, Sufis are said to accept *taqlid* (here: "the respectful emulation of earlier authorities") through such a chain of intermediaries that ultimately link contemporary scholars with the Prophet Muhammad.[10] The importance of an unbroken chain of tradition can be called an "*isnad* paradigm", which can be summarized as

> the overt…predilection in diverse strands of Islamic life for recourse to previous authorities, above all the prophet and companions, but also later figures (whether an Abu Hanifa, Jalal al-Din Rumi, Sheikh Wali Allah ad-Dihlawi or Ibn Abd al-Wahhab) who are perceived as having revived (*jaddada*), reformed (*aslaha*) or preserved (hafiza) the vision and norms of true, pristine Islam, and thus as being in continuity and connection with the original community or ummah.
>
> *Graham 1993, 500*

Such intermediaries are seen as the interpreters of God's revealed word; they reject all *bida* and have a sense of connectedness "across the generations with the time and personages of Islamic origin" (Graham 1993, 501). Truth in fact lies not in documents but in authentic human beings and their personal connections with one another. While not being completely wrong, this concept is also not quite true if we consider that even the most radical "fundamentalists" or "literalists" like to refer to earlier authorities such as Muhammad Rashid Rida, Muhammad Abduh, Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhab or Ibn Taimiya (see Fuchs 2013, 216ff).[11] The concept of *al-wala wa-l-bara*, i.e., the command to follow the sunna of the Prophet as lived and expounded by the Salaf, in fact leads to a "Salafi" *isnad*, consisting, for instance, of those scholars and Muslim reformers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who fought popular customs and who tried to revive the sunna of the Prophet, especially Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) and Rashid Rida (1865–1935), as well as contemporary Muslim reformers such as Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), Abu l-Ala Maududi (1903–1979), Abd al-Aziz b. Abdallah b. Baz (1912–1999), Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (1914–1999), Dr. Rabi b. Hadi Amir al-Madkhali (b. 1931) or Muhammad b. Salih b. al-Uthaimin (1929–2000), who claim – in

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divergent ways – the legacy of the Salaf as interpreted by scholars such as Ibn Taimiyya (1263–1328), Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792), or Ahmed b. Muhammad b. Hanbal (780–855) (Haj 2009, 57). The fact that even scholars with well-known roots in Sufi traditions, such as Ibn Taimiyya or, in Nigeria, Uthman dan Fodio, have become part of Salafi *asanid* points to a process in which Salafis expand the Salafi canon by "retroactively salafizing" historical thinkers of Islam who might not have understood themselves in the way contemporary Salafis do (Thurston 2016, 9) in order to enlarge their historical legitimacy. This process of "retroactive Salafization" has an inclusive thrust and rebels against co-temporal tendencies within Salafi-oriented movements of reform to exclude "dissident" thinkers from the Salafi canon in order to preserve, for instance, doctrinal purity. These processes are mutually exclusive and create tension within Salafi-oriented movements of reform regarding the question of who is regarded to form part of a Salafi *isnad*.

However, Salafi *asanid* are still characterized by the fact that they do not constitute "unbroken chains" of transmission (of, for instance, *baraka*) from teacher to teacher and from scholar to scholar back to the times of the Prophet. And there is another difference: for Sufis, an unbroken *isnad* of authorities is not only an unbroken chain of teachers in a tradition of learning going back to the Prophet Muhammad, it is also a chain of *dala'il* (guides) who transmit the blessing (*baraka*) of the Prophet and a specific and highly spiritual message that sanctifies all those who belong to the circle of the chosen few of such a tradition. As a consequence, rebellion among Sufis against established authorities is fairly problematic: such a rebellion is not just a rebellion against one specific authority but a rebellion against a whole tradition based on the blessings of the Prophet. Salafi-oriented reformers, by contrast, reject such chains of authority and blessing and seek to (re)define Islam on the basis of their own *ijtihad* of the key sources, i.e., the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet.

As a consequence, disputes among Salafi-oriented reformers are comparatively "easy": their dissent is directed against human authority and not against a chain of blessing. This fact may help to explain processes of rapid fragmentation among Salafi-oriented movements of reform, as, for instance, in the case of the Yan Izala in northern Nigeria, which not only split into two competing organizations immediately after the death of Abubakr Gumi in 1992, but have also seen the development of numerous "dissident" groups since the 1980s, i.e., even within the very first generation of organizational development. By contrast, conflict among Sufis who essentially accept *taqlid* (i.e., the "respectful emulation of accepted authorities") and the importance of the *isnad* leading to the Prophet through a chain of venerable ancestors is comparatively "difficult": their dissent is directed against a tradition of learning and blessing. Yet, rupture happened, as in the case of Ahmed al-Tijani in the late eighteenth century, who tried to eclipse or to bracket a long chain of authority by claiming to have gained a direct link to the Prophet.[12] In addition to such radical breaks with an *isnad*, there is a series of cases of milder breaks with earlier authorities when young scholars rebel against the authority of the elders by rejecting authority in partial ways only: while still accepting the respective *isnad* and tradition of learning, young rebels reject, for instance, the political or social program of their fathers, though accepting the program (and spiritual legacy) of their grandfathers. Such a partial break has happened in the context of a number of splits within the Tijaniyya in Sub-Saharan Africa in the twentieth century (Loimeier 2001, 120ff; 2010, 144ff).[13]

Following the partial failure of the *taqlid-isnad* argument or the argument of the metaphorical or literalistic interpretation of texts, we could resume the search for ultimate epistemic criteria to differentiate more or less Sufi- and more or less Salafi-oriented reformers. On the contrary, we could also ask ourselves whether analytical categories such as Sufi- and Salafi-oriented reformers are just too general and should thus be abandoned altogether. But how

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would we then grasp religious movements which claim to be "different", to be "true Muslims", for instance? A way out of this dilemma could be to accept, for the time being, "emic" categories of symbolic and ritual distinction such as *qabd* and *sadl* in Sub-Saharan West Africa. However, such an acceptance of "emic" categories of distinction should not lead us to overstretch the analytical power of such categories with respect to:

1. their rootedness in a local context: i.e., even if valid in one local context, such categories must not be taken to be automatically valid for other local contexts,
2. their situatedness in religious and/or political debates: i.e., while "emic" categories such as *qabd* and *sadl* may allow us to distinguish between a clear-cut group of followers of *qabd* and an equally clear-cut group of followers of *sadl*, other religious or political debates may lead us to assume completely different social formations, and
3. their boundedness in time (*Zeitgebundenheit*): i.e., even if valid for a particular period of time, they should not be taken as being valid for all times.

## Doctrinal distinction, symbolic distantiation, social separation, and spatial segregation

Beyond dichotomist constructions of movements of reform, it is possible to read movements of reform through another lens, namely, their respective approach to doctrine, symbols, the social field, and geopolitics. Such a lens again disproves dichotomous representations of reform and will thus be discussed here in some detail. Processes and dynamics of doctrinal distinction, symbolic distantiation, social separation, and, ultimately, spatial segregation, are often linked in fact with a declaration of withdrawal and emigration (*hijra*) from the land of unbelief. Yet, the processes that may eventually lead to the establishment of spatially segregated communities are again not confined to Salafi-oriented movements of reform, but can also be found among Sufis, as, for instance, in the community of Madina Gounass in Senegal, or in all Sufi-led movements of jihad in eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and early twentieth-century Sub-Saharan Africa (see Loimeier 2013).[14] The Salafi concept of spatial segregation or "relocation" (Last 2014, 47) is not based, however, on the Sufi concept of the *khalwa*, "spiritual seclusion", but on the principle of *al-wala wa-l-bara*, i.e., "loyalty" towards God and the sunna of the Prophet as well as "disavowal" and withdrawal from everything which is not in conformity with the sunnah of the Prophet (Wagemakers 2014, 70).[15] When Salafi-oriented movements of reform took such a path towards spatial segregation, especially radical ones such as the Muslim Brothers in Egypt in the 1970s – colloquially known as the jamaat al-takfir wa-l-hijra[16] – they saw segregation not as being limited in time, but as something permanent, a precondition, in fact, for the establishment of the "ideal" Islamic community. But neither Salafi- nor Sufi-oriented movements start out necessarily with the idea of seeking spatial segregation. Rather, they stress distinctness and dissent in less radical ways by doctrinal distinction, by symbolic distantiation and by social separation:[17] both Salafi- and Sufi-oriented movements of reform in fact start out to criticize or condemn established practices verbally; they attack such practices as *bida* and proclaim their own "orthodoxy" (and orthopraxy). In the process of radicalization, other Muslims are condemned as hypocrites (*munafiqun*), ignorant (*jahil*), or even unbelievers (*kuffar*), and this escalation may eventually lead movements of reform to declare a jihad against other Muslims.[18] In this respect, "words", i.e., doctrinal arguments, are of basic importance, because they serve to legitimize radicalization and respective action.

Both symbolic distantiation and social separation as well as eventually spatial segregation have to be based thus on texts and related arguments that establish doctrinal distinctions

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between "true" believers and the "others". Markers of doctrinal distinction are, for instance, specific patterns of interpretation and argumentation (scholastic, "modern", literalistic, allegoric, exclusive, inclusive), especially with respect to the Qur'an: Muslim reformers are characterized by their stress on the paramount importance of the sources of the faith, in particular the Qur'an (on the level of scriptures), the authority of the Salaf, and the corpus of hadith. Muslim movements of reform also tend to stigmatize their opponents and have become notorious for proclaiming *takfir* against dissidents. Consequently, Muslim movements of reform have developed a rich polemical literature that is specifically directed against opponents – both Sufis and Salafis, as well as against other Sufis and other Salafis. Key texts in this respect were Abubakr Gumi's *al-aqida al-sahiha bi-muwafaqat al-sharia* (1976) that defined the doctrinal basis for the fight of the Yan Izala movement against the Sufi orders in Nigeria (see Loimeier 1997) or Ibrahim Niass' *kashif al-ilbas* (1931) that served to proclaim the exclusivity of Ibrahim Niass' community of followers (with respect to other Tijanis, as well as other Muslims) (see Seesemann 2011).

Other markers of doctrinal distinction historical references to earlier and other traditions of reform, to the Prophet, to saints or events, can be used in a doctrinal argumentation as a marker of distinction: each movement of reform cultivates a specific dialogue with the past. The same applies to specific positions on the language of texts and discourses (translations, Arabic, vernacular languages) or on terminology (e.g., stress on *islah* or stress on *tajdid*), as well as a plethora of other issues such as the role of women, the role of modern media, the issue of the secular state, the way in which other states (e.g., Saudi Arabia) are presented as a model (or not), specific concepts of education, specific modes of teacher-student relations, specific school models and syllabi, other reformist groups, social and political opponents, or earlier generations of reform, and social questions in general. All of these issues may become the focus of a doctrinal debate and trigger, for instance, the production of *fatwa* that serve as a basis for doctrinal distinction. This implies that texts may wax and wane in importance depending on their function and role in conflicts and the temporal dynamics of such conflicts.[19]

In the fields of symbolic distantiation and social separation, movements of reform cultivate outwardly visible signs and symbols of distinction, such as hijab or *niqab* (or gloves) for women, or their complete seclusion, or even the question whether a woman's voice is part of her *awrah*, and must be "covered" (hidden), just like her body. Women play a major role in movements of reform and express their support for such movements of reform by dressing in a specific way: dress is not only a marker of membership of women in such a movement, but also a marker of general support for reformist issues. Men also adopt a specific way of dressing, beard and hairstyle, or remain shod when entering a mosque for prayer, a practice which has raised much controversy among Muslims (Meijer 2009, 16; Lacroix 2009, 72).[20] All of these habits contribute to the public visibility of reform-oriented Muslims. The fact that followers of movements of reform create symbols of distantiation on so many different levels (including language) has also created a specific reformist habitus that signals difference. This argument is again not only valid for Salafi-oriented movements of reform: Sufi-oriented movements of reform have equally introduced major symbolic markers such as the practice of praying *qabd* as introduced by Ibrahim Niass as a symbolic distantiation from the majority of Muslims in West Africa which stuck to the practice of sadl or the celebration of the mawlid Abd al-Qadir (al-Jilani) that was introduced by Nasiru Kabara as a symbolic marker for his reform movement of the Qadiriyya in Nigeria (see Loimeier 1997).

Other markers of symbolic distantiation and social separation are specific positions on questions of ritual, the veneration of saints and shrine pilgrimage,[21] different ways of performing prayers, the timing of Islamic festivities, and the ritual complex of death, burial, and mourning.

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The critique of extensive burial rites has been an important part of anti-esoteric discourses in many Muslim societies. In Sudan, for instance, Salafi-oriented Muslims started a campaign against the ritual of "wailing" (*bika'*) in 1989 and condemned not only this practice as such but also the length of the ritual and the respective delay in the execution of the "proper" Islamic ritual (Seesemann 2005). In Senegal, Cheikh Touré focused in a whole chapter of his programmatic text "Le vrai et le faux: L'Islam au Sénégal" (The True and the False: Islam in Senegal) (Loimeier 2001, 198–199) on the issue of burial rites and a critique of local burial practices. Similar condemnations of local burial rites and rites of mourning can be found in the discourse of the Yan Izala in northern Nigeria and of Salafi-oriented reformers such as Abdallah Salih al-Farsy in East Africa.[22]

Prayer has been another field of symbolic dispute, for instance, over the question of when to perform *qunut*[23] (van de Bruinhorst 2007, 325ff) or how to hold the hands during prayers (in the upright, *qiyam*, position), i.e., *qabd* (arms crossed) or *sadl* (arms outstretched) (see above). Supererogatory prayers, such as *tarawih* prayers in Ramadan, have been criticized as a waste of time.[24] Equally, the times for the call to prayer, the *adhan* (call to prayer), have been a matter of dispute, for instance, in northern Nigeria, the agreed time for noon (*zuhr*) prayers was between 1pm and 3pm, although most Muslims prayed around 2pm. In order to express their dissent to such established practices, the Yan Izala movement insisted on the earliest possible time for *zuhr* prayers at 1pm. The Yan Izala also changed the temporal sequence of the *fajr* (morning) prayer: while the phrase *al-salat khayrun min al-nawm* (prayer is better than sleep) usually concludes the second and final call for the morning prayer, the Yan Izala transferred this phrase to the first *adhan* (Mustapha and Bunza 2014, 65–66).

Symbolic distantiation and social separation may indeed be established prominently by a specific way of organizing time, as manifested, for instance, in the disputes over the timing of the daily prayers, the Friday prayer, the times for feasting and fasting (in particular during Ramadan), the feast at the end of Ramadan *Id al-fitr* on the first day of Shawwal, the pilgrimage (*hajj*), and the id *al-adha* (also *id al-hajj, id al-kabir*) on 10 Dhu l-Hijja. Muslim movements of reform in fact express both their program of reform as well as their distinctness in aspects of the Islamic time regime. Time thus has to be regarded as a central factor in the formulation of doctrinal distinction, the demonstration of symbolic distantiation, and the development of social separation and spatial segregation. Time constitutes the hidden substructure underlying these categories: both doctrinal distinction and symbolic distantiation are expressed in categories of time (and respective texts) and the ways in which Muslims' "live time" reflect both doctrinal distinctions and modes of symbolic distantiation – social separation and spatial segregation may be limited or unlimited in time (see Loimeier 2016, 43ff).

Both Sufi- and Salafi-oriented Muslims thus create social segregation by forms of participation or nonparticipation in communal ritual and communal social life or by organizing their groups in specific ways, often in the form of bureaucratic associations. Salafis as well as Sufis equally often refuse to join other Muslims in prayer; they set up their own mosques and schools, settle in their own communities, keep at an (increasing) social distance from non-Muslims, fellow Muslims, members of their own communities, and, finally, their families (fathers, mothers, husbands, wives) if these refuse to join their path. Their attacks on established practices lead to hostility and to *fitna* (strife) and support dynamics of mutual exclusion among Muslims: "Collective identity is constituted (thus) by dialectic interplay of processes of internal and external definition" (Lamont and Molnár 2002, 170).

Doctrinal distinction, symbolic distantiation, social separation, and spatial segregation exist not only side by side, but may also be part of an historical "escalation" and intensification of distinction, identity building, and segregation, although the move from doctrinal distinction to

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symbolic distantiation and social separation and finally to spatial segregation is neither predestined nor inevitable. Doctrinal, symbolic, social, and spatial distinction serves to preserve and to construct purity in a social context that is seen as being polluting. However, it is important to note here that not all movements of reform that stress doctrinal distinction and symbolic distantiation also stress social separation: some might do, others might not. Movements of reform differ in fact with respect to the intensity and radicality of social separation. Even more interesting is the question why so few movements of reform eventually turn into movements of jihad – although some do so: the movement of reform of the Prophet Muhammad did so, as did the movement of reform of Uthman dan Fodio and Muhammad Ahmed in the Sudan, but the Yan Izala did not become a movement of jihad, and the same is true for the jamaat ibad al-rahman in Senegal. I would again argue here that it is the local context that is decisive. Yet, the local context does not explain everything: when looking at contemporary Somalia, for instance, we find a number of movements of reform such as the jamaat al-islah – which has always stressed a program of peaceful reform and there is also al-ittihad al-islami – which followed the path of jihad from 1988 but abandoned it in 1997. Finally, we have the harakat al-shabab al-mujahidin that also entered the path of jihad in the early 2000s and has remained a jihad-minded movement (see Loimeier 2016, 274f.).

When looking at the question why movements of reform did not turn into movements of jihad, we get a plethora of responses that are again not only linked with the local context: states and/or governments might recognize the need to solve social, economic, and political problems and to respond to movements of reform by taking up (some of) their demands at reform; second, protagonists might continue to talk with each other despite doctrinal differences, because they are not interested in escalation, in particular, when social ties link protagonists and oblige them to recur to established peaceful ways of solving conflicts; circumstances may change as well and opponents might decide to overcome their disputes because a new (and dangerous) enemy is perceived to be standing "at the gates";[25] finally, people may become tired of conflict and reach a stage of "passion fatigue", are perhaps (over)saturated with conflict and argument and have realized that everything has been said, that nothing new is coming up, and that there seems to be a doctrinal solution for every (major) bone of contention.

In order to understand movements of reform, it is thus necessary to look at the way in which doctrinal, symbolic, social, and spatial boundaries and distinctions are formulated and established. In order to be able to identify structural similarities among different movements of reform, I therefore propose to not only check the meaning of specific markers of reform in their respective contexts, but also to document, if possible, the temporal intensification and accumulation of specific markers of reform in a given historical context. We still have to be careful, however, as specific markers of reform may have different interpretative weight and value in different contexts. Also, some markers of reform may be adopted sooner or later by other and competing movements of reform. Finally, programs of reform may acquire relevance for both individual agency and social reality. Yet, not each movement of reform is successful: the failure of programs of reform consequently constitutes an important field for research.

## Temporal and structural disjunctures

The important role of the local context for the success or failure of movements of reform can be shown clearly by taking a closer look at the history and structure of movements such as the Yan Izala in Nigeria, the Union Culturelle Musulmane (UCM) in Senegal, or the ansar al-sunna in East Africa. We can easily identify these religious movements as distinct

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movements of reform by looking at their program, organizational setup, public discourse etc. and by examining the question how these movements translate their programs of reform into societal realities. Often, this is accomplished through the establishment of mosques, schools, youth and women's organizations, and the like. Equally, these movements of reform are led by activist elites and we can again ask how these activists reach out and organize the individual movement in practical terms. Finally, movements of reform and activists are inspired by Muslim intellectual leaders and/or charismatic religious scholars, such as Cheikh Touré for the UCM, Abubakr Gumi for the Yan Izala, and al-Amin b. Ali al-Mazrui and Abdallah Salih al-Farsy for the ansar al-sunna.

When comparing the historical development of movements of reform, we discover, however, *temporal* disjunctures between movements, activists, and intellectual leadership: the rise of the UCM in Senegal in the 1950s, for instance, was closely associated with the rise of Cheikh Touré as an outspoken reformist leader and opponent of the Sufi orders of the time. Equally, the rise of the Yan Izala in Northern Nigeria in the 1970s was intrinsically linked with the activities of Abubakr Gumi and his efforts to fight the Sufi orders in Nigeria. When looking at East Africa, however, it is easy to see that the major propagators of Salafi-oriented reform in Kenya and Tanzania in the 1930s and 1940s (al-Amin b. Ali al-Mazrui) as well as the 1950s–the 1970s (Abdallah Salih al-Farsy) acted as individuals, while the ansar al-sunna movement developed only in the 1980s, after the death of both scholars.

At the same time, the societal context was marked by structural disjunctures: while the Yan Izala established a broad array of social and religious institutions to bolster their program of reform, focused on the struggle against the Sufi orders and fought in one single country (Nigeria), often supported by the government, the ansar al-sunna have not (yet) built a grassroot network of schools and mosques; they are split into numerous fractions in Zanzibar, Tanzania, and Kenya, and fight not only against quietist or loyalist "government scholars" but also against the respective political administrations and an array of churches, mostly Pentecostal churches. The UCM in Senegal, and its successor, the jama'at ibad al-rahman (JIR), have so far not managed to establish an independent economic basis that would enable them to compete with the Sufi orders on a par. But Sufi orders in Senegal have successfully adopted issues and themes of reform propagated by the UCM/JIR and enjoy the support of the state. This contributes again to the argument that each single movement of reform has to be studied in its own temporal and societal context.

Thus, the term reform does not connote a specific historical period in the development of Muslim societies. There is no "before and after" reform, as we can speak about a time "before Islam" (i.e., the time of *jahiliyya*) and "since Islam", although some movements of reform and Sayyid Qutb, in particular, have spoken of a relapse into the times of *jahiliyya*. In order to identify the real character of "reform" in a specific period of time and a specific societal context, it is necessary to identify the markers of change and to see what specific movements of reform intend to achieve, what reformers criticize, what they aspire to and how specific movements of reform try to translate these programs of change into the social realities of their time. At the same time, it has to be stressed that movements of reform are not juggernaut-like movements which blaze their way through established traditions. They have to be located in specific contexts; their programs have to be translated into respective idioms; and the respective context has to welcome social support for reformist discourses. Only when these conditions apply may movements of reform have a chance to find support in a specific, or even in several, local contexts. In order to gauge the character of a specific movement of reform, and in order to overcome any arbitrary usage of the term reform, it is necessary to translate the term "reform" into the language of the Muslim society, the time and the locality that we wish to study. What

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are the identifying markers, the characteristic features of a movement of reform that would help us to define the specific character of a movement of reform? If we endeavor to identify the distinctive "markers" of each movement of reform we may eventually develop a systematic approach to the study of movements of reform.

## Conclusion

When summarizing the development of movements of reform as presented here, it may have come as a surprise that I did not confine myself to more or less Salafi-oriented movements of reform, as is usually done in the literature on reform, and that I do not see a fundamental gap between Sufi- and Salafi-oriented movements of reform, despite acknowledging a plethora of differences between Sufi- and Salafi-oriented movements of reform. This approach to reform is linked with the fact that neither Sufi- nor Salafi-oriented movements of reform form Weberian "ideal types": although radical expressions of Salafi-oriented reform may by far be removed from radical expressions of Sufi-oriented reform – at least in some aspects of their manhaj, their program – they might be rather close to each other with respect to other aspects of their program of reform. In addition, it has to be considered that Salafi-oriented movements of reform have often developed from a background in Sufism – as can be seen clearly when looking at the genesis of the Yan Izala in Northern Nigeria (Abubakr Gumi was a student of Nasiru Kabara) in Northern Nigeria and the Union Culturelle Musulmane (Cheikh Touré was a member of a respected family of Tijani scholars) in Senegal. Also, "moderate" expressions of Salafi-oriented reform may be rather close to some expressions of Sufi-oriented reform, in particular, "austere" expressions of Sufi-oriented reform such as the movement of the Sanusiyya in Libya and Chad in the late nineteenth century (see Triaud 1995) that it is hard to identify major differences at all: movements of reform may merge into one another. Finally, I would like to conclude with the Nigerian saying that it is also valid for movements of reform, namely, "no condition is permanent": movements of reform pass through stages of development that are linked with the dynamics of the local context, with generational change, political, economic, and social transformation as well as their varying integration (or nonintegration) into transnational networks of scholarship.

## Notes

1 Other terms in the semantic field of "purification" that are often quoted by Salafi-oriented reformers are *tasfiya* and *tazkiya*, as well as *tashih* (rectification).

2 Østebø (2008, 418) has proposed a similar definition: "As the name implies, the main object for any reform movement is to initiate change. This involves evaluative perceptions of the existent reality, a determined agenda and a strategy for change and reflections on an idealized future".

3 Another issue of dispute within the Tijaniyya from the 1930s was the question whether the prayer *jawharat al-kamal*, which forms a central part of the Tijani *dhikr*, should be recited 11 or 12 times. The respective positions were expressed symbolically in Tijani rosaries which contained either 11 or 12 beads for this section of the *dhikr*; see Hanretta (2009) and Soares (2005).

4 For a debate of the terms "Salafi" and "Salafi-oriented" see Loimeier (2016, 31f.).

5 The question arises, however, whether the duration and the intensity of a conflict and respective dichotomous constructions of society depend on factors such as the degree of mobilization, the number, or weight of those who remain outside a context of conflict. See Baumann (2005, 18ff) and what he calls the "ternary challenge".

6 In addition, it has to be mentioned that movements of reform that insist on a radical literalistic reading of the Qur'an, such as the "Maitatsine" movement in Northern Nigeria in the 1980s – which reduced the number of daily prayers from five to three, arguing that the Qur'an mentions only three daily prayers – are rather rare and often meet with the opposition of most other Muslims.

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7 As a consequence, both Abubakar Gumi (in his *tafsir* "Tarjomar ma'anonin alkurani maigirma") as well as Abdallah Salih al-Farsy (in his *tafsir* "Kurani takatifu") have rendered Qur'an 7 (al-a'raf): 54 ("*inna rabbakum allahu, alladhi khalaqa al-samawat wa-l-ard fi-sitta ayamin, thumma istawa ala l-arsh*", not as "… and then he sat down on the throne", but as "then he established himself in order to rule", "then he ruled from his chair", or "then he reigned from his throne".

8 A representative of the Sudanese ansar al-sunna al-muhammadiyya quoted in Salomon (2013, 83).

9 Literally, the term *isnad* signifies "support" and in Islamic scholarship and history means a "chain" of individual trustworthy transmitters who span the generations (Graham 1993, 502).

10 *Taqlid* can be understood as a consensual precedent espoused by established religious authority as well as blind acceptance of religious authority (Haj 2009, 37). At the same time, *taqlid* can mean the acceptance of legal procedure and adherence to a legal authority, a *madhhab* of an intelligent application of principles (Haj 2009, 81), i.e., *taqlid* is not always set in opposition to *ijtihad*: *taqlid* can also be the result of *ijtihad* (Knut Vikør, March 7, 2015).

11 Equally, we can observe that even Salafi-oriented reformist scholars strive to multiply their *salasil* and seek to acquire links with prestigious networks of Salafi-oriented scholarship, either by studying at a renowned institution (such as the Islamic University of Medina) or by establishing contact with a respected scholar (such as Abdallah Salih al-Farsy with regard to the East African context).

12 This claim as well as the claim to spiritual superiority linked with it has created numerous disputes between Tijanis and other Muslims, both followers of other Sufi orders as well as Salafi-minded groups, again, an interesting dividing line.

13 In addition, there are the endeavors of scholars to shorten an *isnad* (of *ijazat*) to acquire a more direct link to the Prophet. Nasiru Kabara, the leader of the Qadiriyya in Kano since the late 1950s was particularly successful in such an endeavor when he visited the supreme shaykh of the Qadiriyya in Baghdad in the early 1950s and acquired an *ijaza* from him, thus circumventing a number of intermediary authorities who had until then linked Qadiri scholars in northern Nigeria with Baghdad by way of Tunisian or Libyan shaykhs (Loimeier 1997, 52ff).

14 For an analysis of Sufi-inspired dissidence, withdrawal, and jihad in the context of early nineteenth century Hausaland, see Last (2014).

15 For an extensive discussion of the concept of al-wala wa-l-bara, see Wagemakers (2009, 81f.) and (2014, 70), and Meijer (2009, 10f.).

16 On the ideology of the Muslim Brothers, see Kogelmann (1994, 123f.).

17 For multiple ways of expressing dissent in the Northern Nigerian context, see Last (2014, 39–50). Last specifically mentions mosques as venues of dissent, rituals, and the times of rituals as focal points of dispute, and, finally, dress and body styles as symbolic markers of dissent.

18 Such dynamics were also at work in the context of movements of jihad in eighteenth and nineteenth century Sub-Saharan Africa that were led by religious scholars who belonged to a Sufi order (Loimeier 2013, 108ff).

19 Movements of reform that are not able to create a doctrinal basis have little chance to survive, as the example of the Maitatsine movement in Northern Nigeria in the 1980s again shows: their program remains enigmatic and without a sound agenda for change.

20 The practice of keeping shoes on when entering a mosque for prayer has been defended by Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani in a text titled *sifat salat al-nabi* ("attributes of the Prophet's prayer") (see Lacroix 2009, 63ff).

21 Muslims who visit shrines to pray at the tombs of saints are polemically attacked as *quburiyun* (grave worshippers) by Salafi oriented Muslims (Haykel 2009, 41).

22 The critique of local burial rites was an issue for earlier Muslim reformers as well. Chapter 17 (pp. 130–147) in Uthman dan Fodio's (d. 1817) *ihya al-sunna wa-ikhmad al-bida* is devoted to un-Islamic innovations in the context of burials (*maqabir*) and rites of burial and mourning *(jana'iz)*, including the custom of wailing (here: *buka'*) which is criticized as a *bida muharama* (dan Fodio n.d., 136).

23 *Qunut* is a supplicatory prayer performed (by most adherents of the four Sunni schools of law) after the first (or the second *raka)* of the *salat al-fajr* and after *witr* prayers (in the *qiyam* position), but there have been debates about the question whether *qunut* should be prayed at all: while Ibadis reject *qunut*, Ithnasharis do *qunut* during all of the five daily prayers. Members of Salafi-oriented groups often reject *qunut* prayers; see Ware (2014, 230).

24 In Ramadan 2003, Muslims in Zanzibar discussed the question whether *tarawih* prayers should have 20 *rakat* (according to the Shafi tradition) or only 8 *rakat* (as practiced in the Ibadi tradition). Personal conversation with Masoud Ahmed Shani (August 6, 2003) and Umar Sheha (August 7, 2003) confirmed

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by Muhammad Haron for South Africa (April 15, 2004) and Hassan Mwakimako for Kenya (March 10, 2005).

25 A famous example was the unexpected resolution of Abubakar Gumi to shelve the dispute between the Yan Izala and the Sufi orders in Northern Nigeria under the impression of the rise of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) as a political force: in local government election in 1986, CAN candidates had managed to win a surprising number of seats even in Muslim majority areas due to the fact that the Muslim vote was split among Yan Izala, Tijani, and Qadiri candidates. Gumi's remarkable "volte-face" was commented by a Nigerian journalist, Bature Idris Gana (*The Triumph*, May 27, 1990), with the words: "If God wishes, he may turn a black man into a white man" (quoted in Loimeier 1997, 309).

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