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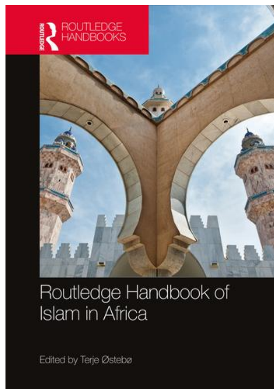

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15

REFORM IN THE DISCOURSE OF ISLAM AND THE MAKING OF MUSLIM SUBJECTS

Abdulkader Tayob

> Indeed, at the beginning of every century God dispatches to this community (*umma*) a person who will renew its *din* (religion).
>
> *Hadith*

Introduction

In the last few decades, Muslim societies in Africa and elsewhere have embraced religious teachings in diverse fields. From politics to personal devotion, they exhibit what scholars have called the failure of the secularization thesis. In almost every part of the globe, Muslims have turned to daily prayer, fasting, and annual pilgrimage. This turn to Islam has included support for Islamic projects in political and social life. Reform has been advocated by religious leaders, movements, and ordinary individuals using traditional and modern media. They have facilitated an Islamization that is visible, vibrant, and sometimes controversial in public spheres.

The discourse of reform in Africa is recognizable as a dialectic of religious practices, norms, and values between the past and present, the local and global. It has been spurred by flows of pilgrimage, migration, political formations, and knowledge exchanges. This chapter focuses on colonial and postcolonial manifestations of reform in African Muslim societies. While it recognizes the value of identifying various movements from Islamic modernism to radicalism, it stresses the fluid boundaries in performances and ever-present debate and deliberation. *Tajdid* is a focusing lens for reflecting on reform in the discourse of Islam. Through recognizing its appropriation in history, the chapter proposes that religious reform may be examined as part of a complex and dynamic discourse constituted by crisis, performance, and deliberation.

The study of Islamic reform

Modern scholarly reflection on Islamic reform reveals the long shadow of Western theoretical frameworks. Standing central is Max Weber's insights on prophets, reformers, and modernization. Weber located the reformer between a charismatic prophet and a priest who does "not claim to be offering a substantively new revelation or to be speaking in the name of a special

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divine injunction" (Weber 1993, 54). This framework has entangled scholarship between the continuity of reform and its creativity. Adding a different dimension to reform, Weber also argued that Protestant Christian reform played a crucial role in the development of modernity (Weber 1958). From this perspective, scholars have been inclined to see a close affinity between reform and modernization. But Weber has not been the only inspiration for studies on reform. Reform as revolt has also attracted a Marxist interpretation. And more recently, scholars have turned to the everyday experiences of reform in a post-structuralist and postmodern turn.

The *Encyclopaedia of Islam* entry on *tadjdid* conveys the idea of reform as a faithful recollection of the teachings of the founder. According to Hans Jansen, reform was a signification of "High Islam" that was never materialized but remained valid as unchanging ideals and aspirations (Jansen 2000). This understanding of reform is also reflected in the study of reformers and reform movements in premodern Africa which recognize a "stable core" of unalterable norms. It was generally argued that African Muslims in history were progressively coming closer to the norms of Islam (Voll 1983; Hiskett 1962; Levtzion 1978, 333; Willis 1967).

Roman Loimeier's extensive study of Islamic reform in Africa in different regions exemplifies Weber's second insight. Loimeier has pointed to the difficulty of identifying a core meaning of reform but suggests "structural" similarities in twentieth-century African Islamic reform movements. These include a passion for education, direct access to the texts of Islam, criticism of established authorities and popular practices, and the pursuit of political projects. Loimeier's analysis is framed against Max Weber's analysis of European Protestant reform in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. An Islamic experience and appropriation of reform is read against a Western, Christian experience (Loimeier 2003, 240–241, 2005).

Loimeier's interpretation may be compared and contrasted with analyses of Islamic reform as protest or revolution. In this framework, Islamic reformist uprisings were interpreted as revolutionary movements against colonialism and other ruling classes. Reform was a resistance invoked by the underclasses against established authorities (Clarke 1995; Hodgkin 1980; Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1990). Karl Marx, and not Max Weber, provided the lens for understanding Islamic reform.

Recently, agency and resistance in everyday life has become a preferred interpretive framework. Reform is seen increasingly from the perspective of individual appropriations and trajectories. At a deeply personal level, it is said, individuals use reform in order to articulate unique meanings, sometimes leading to very divergent goals and values. Reform as a stable recovery of norms is unsettled by looking closely at the experience of Muslims as youth, women, traders, or religious entrepreneurs (Schulz 2011; Reetz 1999; Østebø 2015; Sounaye 2015; Janson 2005).

Since 1986, Talal Asad has objected to this theoretical tendency to match and impose developments in European philosophy and society on the rest of the world (Asad 1986, 12). Following this lead, Saba Mahmood argued that seeing reform through Weberian and Marxist analyses conceals a structure of the self that is unjustifiably applied to Muslim piety movements. It privileges notions of freedom and agency for subjects who commit themselves to the Prophetic model. Arguing for a longer history of pious subject formation in the history of Islam, Mahmood believed that the formation of the self is not determined by an individualized subject exercising freedom. Rather, it is a self that is transformed through repeated practice (Mahmood 2005). The Asadian approach to reform has been extensively debated in the study of Islamic reform and continues to simmer in the literature.

In my view, interpretive strategies that compare reform with Protestantism, Marxist revolutionary theory, or deconstructivist readings provide valuable insights on how Muslims have appropriated reform. They point to the changes introduced through reform, whether intended or not. But they are far more valuable in showing the power and hegemony of prevailing

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interpretive strategies in the social sciences. In this chapter, I take an Asadian view but argue that we need a more complex understanding of discourse. I thus offer a perspective of reform as part of a religious discourse that includes performance and intense debate and argumentation. I accept the appropriation of reform by actors in different times and places (Moosa and Tareen 2012), but not at the expense of suppressing or ignoring the religious motivation and language used by actors.

Tajdid in the discourse of Islam

My approach to reform as part of the discourse of Islam is founded on a critical reading of Ludwig Wittgenstein. According to Wittgenstein, engaging in a language game implies participating through rules that others would recognize and understand. But such rules cannot be formulated in general principles but rather shown in practices that constituted a life-form. Wittgenstein emphasized the differences between language games, particularly in showing that the language game of science was not to be used as a model for everyday and religious language games (Wittgenstein 1958, 81). In everyday and religious language games, rules were shown in complex and unpredictable ways (484). Engaging in reform constituted a life-form that was recognized but not easy to predict. The language game of reform, thus, included change and continuity in Muslim societies.

But in Wittgenstein's model, there was no room for disputes and disagreements among users about how rules ought to be followed and applied within one language game. Over the history of the language game of Islam, for example, disputes arose about how to interpret and show the meaning of the Qur'an. It is not clear if one should then recognize new language games constituted through these disagreements or maintain that one language game is being played in spite of the disagreements. I prefer to take the second option and include some level of disagreement among participants of a language game. This makes it possible to think of a language game like Islam which stretches over time and place.

I present reform in Islamic Africa as part of a cluster of terms in the discourse of Islam. I begin with the following Prophetic statement: "Indeed, at the beginning of every century God dispatches to this community (*umma*) a person who will renew its *din* (religion)". Reform (*tajdid*) is a promise to take Muslims back to the beginning, making Islam new again. In addition to the verbal noun of renewal (*tajdid*), the terms *ihya* (lit. to give life) and *islah* (to rectify) are also employed in reform. Sometimes, reform is also closely associated with a millennialism led by a *mahdi* (rightly guided one) who will come at the end of time to bring order and justice to the world. In modern times, the word *dawa* (mission) has been included in this cluster to reflect a collective and personal commitment to change self and society (Malik 2018). I will lead my presentation of reform through *tajdid* but not ignore the other terms that are connected to it.

Crisis, performance, and contestation constitute *tajdid* in Islamic discourse. These three features are derived from a close reading of the prophetic statement, its interpretation over time, and its appropriation in different times and places. I begin with the recognition that the hadith text on the *mujaddid* was included in Prophetic hadith collections as signs of the end times. The end times is a particularly urgent and critical time for which the believer must prepare himself or herself. Reformers remind Muslims that there is a crisis that must be averted or a challenge that must be met (Tayob 2014).

The second feature of reform in Islamic discourse is a performance of early Islam – Islam in the beginning. This reflects Wittgenstein's insight on showing the rules of reform in society. Reformers invite Muslims to turn to the original teachings of the Qur'an and the statement of the Prophet. Drawing on Prophetic hadith and the first generations of Islam, reformers emulate

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(show) practices in dress, prayers, or social and political mobilization. Through narrative and ritual, reformers and reform movements transform themselves and their societies in this model of the past. A new sense of self and community (*umma*) come into being on local and/or global levels. Such performances were not a replication of what had happened in the past, but always claimed to do so. They were both repetitive and innovative. Approaching the founding practices of Islam as performance opens the door to understanding reform as coherent emulation, while at the same time exhibiting elements of class resistance, everyday tactics, or modernist piety (Mbembe 2004, 375; Schechner 2013; Turner 1986; Yelee 2006).

But reform does not begin or end with performances, no matter how persuasive they might appear to be. A third feature of reform as part of an Islamic discourse is its disputatious nature. Not all Muslims were convinced by the claims and performances of reformers to make Islam new again. This contentious nature of reform lies ultimately in the fact that reformers could never be prophets. Though sent by God, reformist claims were not prophetic. Such disputes and contestations are as much part of reform in the discourse of Islam as are the claims of crisis and performances of the early models of Islam.

Reform in colonial contexts

Reform in Africa has been a feature for over a thousand years. The earliest movement of reform has been recorded in the eleventh century when the *Murabitun* first emerged in the southern Sahara and extended its power over North Africa and southern Spain (Sanneh 1997, 105). Another major period of reform is recorded in the challenge of the Askiya Muhammad and the jurist Muhammad b. Abd al-Karim al-Maghili (d. 1503/4 or 1505/6) against the Songhay dynasty (Hunwick 1966). The movement of Ahmed Gran on the highlands of Ethiopia is also regarded as a major reform movement in the history of Islam in Africa (Martin 1974). In the eighteenth century, Uthman dan Fodio initiated a series of reform movements in West Africa (Last and al-Hajj 1965; Hiskett 1962). Focusing on the modern manifestation of reform, I begin with reformers and movements that emerged in response to colonial hegemony. After presenting short vignettes, I offer some comments on the appropriation of reform in this period.

Muhammad Ahmed (1844–1885) emerged as a leader against the combined power of Egyptian and British forces (*Turkiya*) that colonized the Sudan. In 1881, he declared himself the *Mahdi* (the guided one) and led a successful campaign against the invaders. Using the Prophetic language and practice of *hijra* (emigration) and jihad, he eventually controlled most of the central and northern Sudan (Robinson 2004, 175). After the *Mahdi* died in 1885, his successors continued his campaign until they were defeated by the British general Kitchener in 1898. The successors of the Mahdi accepted colonial rule and later modern politics (Robinson 2004, 178–179).

In West Africa, Ahmadu Bamba (1853–1927) turned away from the destructive effects of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reform movements, on the one hand, and the mighty power of the French colonial army, on the other hand (Robinson 1991). Bamba promoted Islamic learning and the cultivation of virtue and piety. He founded a new Sufi order, the Muridiyya, and established the authority of his teachings in rural areas of what became Senegal (Robinson 1991). Wary of his popularity, the French kept a close watch on the order. Neither this nor Bamba's determination to keep his focus on education, devotion, and hard work deterred his followers. In the hinterland of Senegal, some of his followers were incorporated into the movement through the cultivation of cash crops for the new economy (Sanneh 1986; Babou 2003, 315; Robinson 2004, 189).

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Around the same time as Bamba, Muhammad Abduh in Egypt emerged as a reformer and teacher whose influence spread to different parts of the world. Abduh and his mentor Jamal al-Din al-Afghani campaigned against foreign occupation, but also believed in the necessity of fundamental social and educational reform. Abduh championed the term correction (*islah*) which he compared favorably with Protestant reform (Abduh 1989, 77). Like other reformers, Abduh opposed harmful innovations that had crept into Muslim societies (Abduh 1989, 94, 2000, 48). His teachings focused on reforming faith and practices that had made Muslims vulnerable to colonialism (Merad et al. 2009). He was of the view that Islamic reform was both prophetic and modern.

Sheikh al-Amin b. Ali Mazrui (1891–1947) from a prominent family of Arab descent in colonial Mombasa was influenced by Abduh's writings. Mazrui recognized the effects of British colonial rule and directed his teachings to the improvement of the social and economic position of Muslims. He saw Muslims divided among themselves, ignoring the threat from upcountry Kenyans who were ready to take advantage of colonial schooling and governance structures. He justified modernization for its utilitarian benefit (*maslaha*) (Pouwels 1981). Taking advantage of new modes of communication, Mazrui promoted reform through lectures and newsletters (Elmasri 1987, 234), which had had a long-lasting impact on reformist teachers in the region (Kresse 2006).

There was another reformer in Egypt who is usually associated with post-colonial developments. But Hassan al-Banna, a school-teacher in Ismailiyya in Egypt, founded the Muslim Brothers in 1928. His call for reform turned attention to those exposed to the schools and factories of colonial Egypt. He conceptualized Islam as a mission (*dawa*) that may be compared and contrasted with nationalism and socialism (al-Banna 2010, 19). The movement was not primarily led by scholars but by lay intellectuals who shaped Islam as a badge of honor and identity. Al-Banna and the Muslim Brothers introduced new structures of learning about Islam through study circles, mass gatherings, sport clubs, newspapers, and other literature. The Muslim Brothers became one of the most organized movements in colonial Egypt, and their impact has reverberated in post-colonial states (el-Ghobashy 2005; Mitchell 1993).

The proliferation of reformers in this period reflects the colonial crisis for Muslims. However, reformers and reform movements seem to frame the crisis in a unique ways. Abduh saw the crisis as an opportunity to retrieve the true values of Islam against colonial hegemony, while Ahmadu Bamba sought to restore a model of piety that predated the reform movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For the Mahdi of Sudan, the crisis demanded military resistance.

In this period, multiple reformers claimed to make Islam new again. This was not entirely novel in the history of Islam, but some religious scholars in the nineteenth century began to accept and promote this tendency (Lazarus-Yafeh 1986, 103). With this phenomenon of simultaneous reformers, an important development may be discerned in the discourse of reform in Islam. Reformers henceforth did not only have to respond to detractors, but also competed with each other on the meaning and substance of reform. Within this contestation, divergent ideas and practices about state and society became part of the discourse of reform.

The reformers and their projects introduced new terms or translated older terms into the discourse. Abduh's ideas of Islam as progress and modernization filtered into the discourse of reform. But Abduh was also wary of a Westernization (*taghrib*) that pervaded Muslim societies (Haj 2009). Islamic reform has since adopted and debated the value of authenticity against the West (Lee 1997; Voll 1983). With the Muslim Brothers, the idea of mission (*dawa*) was transformed from its political and military meaning to a commitment to social and political

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projects (Kerr 2000; Malik 2018). The work ethic of Islamic reform was not as prominent among reformers, but found fertile ground among the Mouridi of Senegal, the Ismailis, and some reformist writings in North Africa (O'Brien 1977, 99l; al-Fasi 1978; Gellner 1981).

The new terms should be located in the political order that confronted Muslims. Even though reformers did not give up the goal of political emancipation, they eventually accepted this new status quo. In this period, reform seems to have embraced a conditional public sphere introduced by colonial regimes (Soares 2005). It was not a sphere for free rational deliberation, but one forced upon Muslims excluded from power.

Muslim subjectivities may be appreciated as part of the new regimes. The reformer as modernizer tried to show the compatibility between Islam and modernization. This contributed to a heightened sense of Muslim identity in reform projects like the Muslim Brothers. But we should not ignore the success of the Muridi in spreading the development of piety and prophetic norms in public spaces and private lives. Once colonial subjection was accepted, we may be able to appreciate how reform shaped Muslim subjects in alignment or opposition to the new local and global political regimes. We also note the alignment of reform with global exchange through new networks facilitated by colonial regimes.

Reform in post-colonial times

The colonial state in Africa inherited the structures of the colonial state in economics, education, and politics. In this new context, some of the Islamic reformist movements challenged the state and were suppressed or suspected of hostility. But most reformers seem to have embraced the public spheres of the new states, taking advantage of the freedom of religion guaranteed by them. The public spheres provided a space for religious performances, as well as for debate and contestation over values and practices. As in the previous section, I will present some of the reformers and reform movements that made an indelible impact on politics and society in Africa, and then draw some conclusions on the appropriation of reform in this period.

The *Izalat al-bid'a wa iqamat al-sunna* (the removal of innovation and the establishment of the prophetic model, or Yan Izala) was founded in 1978 by Ismaila Idris in Nigeria. For its vehement opposition to innovations (*bida*), it rose to prominence as an assertive, sometimes violent, movement in Nigerian politics and public life. Idris was inspired by Abu Bakr Gumi (d. 1992) who was educated in the new colleges established by the British to train judges for *sharia* courts. Gumi was appointed Chief Qadi by Ahmadu Bello, the first president of the country. Gumi preached against the claims and practices of the Tijani and Qadiri Sufi leaders that dominated northern Nigeria:

> By far the greatest point of contention centers around the claim by Sufis to have a special place above other Muslims, as a result of their access to hidden and extraordinary knowledge, gained through direct experience.
>
> *Gumi and Tsiga 2001, 142*

Gumi preached that all Muslims enjoy equal access to God and the Prophet. He rejected Sufi practices like the celebration of the Prophet's birthday and special forms of communal prayer (*dhikr*) (Amara 2020, 127–130).

Ousmane Kane's study on the Yan Izala has sketched a public piety built around its teachers and new mosques. The movement divided Nigeria into sectors, attempting to cover the whole country in its vision. Its library was dominated by the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792) through its close links with Saudi Arabia. From such new mosques,

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loudspeakers transmitted the call to prayer, sermons, and a distinctive style of reciting the Qur'an (Kane 2003, Ch 3). The political significance of Yan Izala does not lie too far from its religious concerns. Gumi was courted by Bello, the first national president of Nigeria, to create a Muslim power bloc in the country. The Yan Izala attracted Nigerian Muslim politicians for its popularity (Kane 2003). Many of Yan Izala's political decisions point to a similar preoccupation (Abun-Nasr 1988; Loimeier 1997; Hunwick 1992; Umar 2001).

In East Africa, Sheikh Abdallah Salih al-Farsi (1912–1982) pursued reform differently. After studying with the leading scholars of the Island of Zanzibar, Farsi went to Mombasa to study with Sheikh al-Amin Ali Mazrui, the leading East African reformer mentioned above. Farsi's career traversed modern state and society, beginning as a primary school teacher (1933–1947), then an inspector of schools (1949–1952), principal of the Muslim Academy (1952–1954), Chief Qadi of Zanzibar from 1960 to 1967, followed by the same position in Kenya from 1968 to 1980 (Mraja 2010). Farsi promoted reform through lessons he gave in a number of mosques in Zanzibar, through his publications and in his judicial decisions (Elmasri 1987; Mraja 2010).

Mohamed Mraja has shed light on the reform promoted by Farsi among the Digo in coastal Kenya. The latter had converted to Islam in the nineteenth century but maintained some practices that Farsi criticized. Among others, Farsi objected to excessive dowries and violence against women. His teachings, popularized through his books and students, seemed to have had an effect. But Mraja also records resistance from local leaders who believed that some of the practices, like divination, might be justified in Islam. In their view, such practices were derived from earlier Islamically justified traditions like astrology for their potentially good effects on the stability of marriage (Mraja 2010).

South African reform in the 1960s was inspired by developments in South Asia. Until then, religious scholars (*ulama*) trained in institutions in India and Pakistan were not clearly differentiated from their Sufi counterparts. With the arrival of the Tablighi Jama'at in South Africa, reform swept through every town and city. *Ulama* trained in institutions affiliated with the Deobandi school attacked practices that were not supported by the Sunnah of the Prophet. Beginning with daily prayer, they encouraged men and women to adopt religious dress in public places, to shun questionable habits in leisure times, and to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. The Tablighi Jama'at introduced readings of hadith in mosques and traveled from one mosque to another to revive the prophetic model. They also encouraged similar practices for women through circles of learning (*talim*). Public lectures, national and global travel, distinctive dress, regular prayer, and pilgrimage radically transformed Muslim public life. The performance of reform of the self, home, and mosque enjoyed wide appeal among Muslim communities (Tayob 1999; Vahed 2003, 2009).

In spite of its popularity, however, the reform movement in South Africa faced tenacious contestation. Goolam Vahed has pointed to opposition from alternative religious scholars called the Brelvis, and from some prominent Sufi families in Durban. The latter accused the reformists of themselves deviating from authentic beliefs and prophetic traditions. The 1980s witnessed a number of notorious clashes in mosques between the two groups (Vahed 2003). Another source of opposition to pietistic reform came from youth in the 1970s inspired by Hassan al-Banna, Abu al-A'la Mawdudi of South Asia, and Ali Shariati of Iran (Tayob 1995). Articulating an Islamic politics against the apartheid state, they rejected the distinctive religious sphere embraced by pietistic reformers (Moosa 2000).

Salafism is another global movement of reform that emerged from students and teachers who graduated from Saudi Arabian universities in the 1970s and 1980s. Salafis devoted themselves to the explicit texts and meanings of the Qur'an and hadith, displayed in distinctive styles of dress, ritual performances, and beliefs. They challenged groups like the Muslim Brothers for

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their lack of attention to authentic beliefs and practices, and other religious scholars (*ulama*) for their blind devotion to Sufis and juridical leaders (Haykel 2009; Lacroix 2009; Wiktorowicz 2006; Salomon 2009; Loimeier 2015).

When the Salafis returned from study abroad, they had to make room for themselves within existing leadership structures. Some were more successful than others, but their engagements always led to debate and conflict among Muslims on how to follow the prophetic model (Østebø 2015; Dumbe and Tayob 2011). In their study of Salafis in Ghana, Yunus Dumbe and Musa Ibrahim have pointed to their use of radio and television to popularize reform (Ibrahim 2013; Dumbe 2011). Among Salafis in Nigeria, a similar leaning towards using electronic media makes up for lack of support in real places (Thurston 2015).

A closer look at one Salafi trajectory sheds light on this movement and its transmutation to a radical turn. Sheikh Jafar Mahmoud Adam was a committed Yan Izala member in the 1980s. He studied in Nigeria and then went on to further his studies in Saudi Arabia and Sudan. On his return in 1993, Sheikh Jafar became a popular preacher. When some of the northern states extended *sharia* laws in the country in 1999, he briefly occupied an official position in Kano. But he returned to his preaching career, supported by Nigerian businessmen and by the transnational Salafi organization *al-Muntada* (Brigaglia 2012, 13). Preachers such as Sheikh Adam ensured that a particular model of following the Prophet became popular among Muslims in Nigeria in particular and the region in general.

But Salafi teachings were not free of contestation, least of all among themselves. Salafis were embroiled in debates with each other on their relationship with the Nigerian state. Sheikh Jafar was critical of the state and refused to be part of any other election after 1999. But he also criticized one of his students, Muhammad Yusuf, who totally rejected the Nigerian state. Sheikh Jafar argued that necessity and social expedience (*maslahah*) dictated that Muslims in Nigeria take advantage of modern education. He pointed to the positive gains that Muslims in Nigeria had made from participating in the state, such as the extension of *sharia* in 1999 and the favorable place of Muslims in its political structure. He also reminded his student that, in the absence of the caliphate, an individual Muslim was only responsible for his personal moral obligations (Anonymous 2012).

Yusuf opposed his teacher and rejected any positive benefits of modern education. His criticisms ranged from the mixing of sexes in classrooms to modern scientific theories that contradicted the literal meanings of the Qur'an. He also went on to describe the Nigerian state as *taghut* (evil) that threatened Muslim practices and beliefs (Anonymous, 2012). Sporadic confrontations with the state from 2004 to 2009 eventually led to his arrest and murder by Nigerian security forces. Henceforth, his followers emerged as the Boko Haram against all Nigerians and launched a reign of kidnapping, death, and destruction. The most disastrous effects of Boko Haram campaigns were felt in the northeastern part of the country.

Islamic reform has proliferated in the post-colonial period and shows no sign of abating. Failure of the new independent states to deliver on the promises made after independence inspired Islamic reform. Reformers interrogated the legitimacy of the post-colonial states in various ways. The trajectories of Abu Bakr Gumi and Yan Izala may be compared with similar movements in colonial Africa such as the Jama'at Ibad al-Rahman in Senegal, the short-lived Islamic Party in Kenya, youth movements in South Africa, and the Adl and Ihsan Party of Morocco (Voll 1991; Loimeier 2000; Jeppie 1991). In each case, the movements responded to political crises in their societies with Islamic reform. Later, radical groups like the Boko Haram went further and totally rejected modern politics altogether. These various movements are not identical mirror images of each other but share in the desire to create new subjects in the shadow of post-colonial politics. Their rejection of established scholars was indicative of a new social and

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political sphere that they inhabited. They introduced distinctive forms of belonging and piety that set them apart from their opponents. And they always included a political vision for the new nation, or in extreme cases, a destruction thereof. Islamic reform translated the model of the Prophet into the modern state, showing both continuity and change in the process.

Not all reformers and movements were preoccupied with political subjection and emancipation. On a far wider scale the prophetic model was performed in what may be called a religious public sphere. Reform thrived in modern states that liberalized their economic and political policies after the end of the Cold War. Also framed as crises, reformers turned attention to the corruption of belief and practices among Muslims. Reform was directed against the lax or corrupt self, transforming it in dress, personal relations, and family. Out of this emerged a new Muslim public life, with a heightened sense of competition with other Muslims and sometimes with other religious groups. While reformers do not accept religion as a private affair, they accept the main frame of reference of a public sphere set up by the modern state. And they keep challenging its limits with practices that seem to go against the secular status quo through dress, leisure, and consumption.

Some reform movements established organizations to promote their projects in rational, bureaucratic ways. The new institutions thus formed contributed to distinctives identities of reform movements, sometimes in competition with each other (Brenner 1993). Social organizations gave structure to such practices and emphasized differentiated identities among various reformers. The Yan Izala and the Tablighi, for example, were henceforth displaying both Prophetic practice and the identities of their movements.

While organizations promoted identity and uniformity, some reforms made possible highly individualized performances of the model of the Prophet. By making accessible texts and practices from the example of the Prophet, reformers made possible individual subject formation. Abdoulaye Sounaye has followed the trajectory of Yan Izala in Niger who were influenced by new Salafi teachers. Tracing the life trajectory of individuals who had joined the latter, Sounaye showed how they created a personal style of piety (Sounaye 2015). Ousseina Alidou analyzed the trajectories of Kenyan women trained in Saudi Arabia who did not establish new mosques like their male counterparts. She showed how they supported marginalized Muslims in Kenya in education, society, and politics (Alidou 2013). Other scholars have studied similar personal appropriations in Ghana, the Gambia, and Kenya (Ibrahim 2018; Janson 2005; Wario 2012). In a study of the life trajectories of Islamist activists in South Africa over several decades and different movements, I showed that reformist paths were unique and idiosyncratic (Tayob 2017).

The use of new media exploited by reformers has continued unabated. While some resistance was noticeable among Muslims towards new media and technology, reformers have been at the forefront of using all forms of modern media to promote their practices and objectives. These range from the earlier use of pamphlets to social and electronic media in recent times. As the media shapes the message, we may also consider how it shapes Islamic reform. Reform that emphasizes the following of a literal texts is favored by new media. Stripped of a teacher or social context, such a conception and performance of reform only needs a text to emulate the prophetic model. There is no need to account for a long intellectual tradition of interpretation or the presence of a guide. With new media, the vision of every Muslim as a reformer becomes a reality. But still, this has not led to a decline of charismatic reformers on YouTube and other social media platforms.

In comparison with the colonial period, the global dimension of reform has increased significantly. Individual reformers have been inspired by reform projects promoted by Muslim countries. In spite of efforts by Egypt, Libya, Iran, and others, Saudi Arabia has had the most

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far-reaching effect on the nature of Islamic reform in Africa. Ironically, Saudi Salafi reform has also produced the most idiosyncratic reformers. Apart from these political projects led by governments, social media has also made reform available to Muslims on a wide scale. Such proliferation has made norms accessible and their appropriation as diverse as never before.

Conclusion

The study of Islamic reform in Africa and beyond may benefit from theories and insights gained from the intellectual and social history of reform in the West. But such analytical frameworks leave out important dimensions of reform that may be drawn from a close reading of a discourse inherited and appropriated in Muslim societies facing colonialism and post-colonial state formation. Through a reading of reform as *tajdid* since the nineteenth century, I have argued that crisis, performance, and contestation remain deeply inflected in reform.

The crisis of colonialism was easily identified by Muslim reformers. The launch of reform henceforth had to address Islam under colonial subjugation. Some saw the crisis as a loss of political power which had to be reclaimed. But most reformers seemed to accept the crisis as a loss of values or piety that made colonization possible. In postcolonial contexts, these two themes of political or socioreligious crisis continued. Some reformers turned to the political crises of colonial states, while others attempted to address the crises of public life in morality and belief. The division between the political and public dimensions of reform is not water-tight but indicates a major divergence in the appropriation of reform.

Once a crisis had been named, the model norms of the Prophet had to be recovered and performed. In the two periods under question, such performances have been mediated by new technologies, social movements, personal attire, and political practices (elections, violence). Reformers transformed public life in distinctive and dramatic ways. By paying attention only to the performances that anchor Islam at the beginning, one could easily miss the innovations and changes that have been introduced by Muslim reformers and reform movements. The performances of reform have served state-building, modernization, and piety, but also anarchic destruction. Close attention to the performances suggests that devotion to original norms do not preclude implicit and explicit innovations. But they also show that those original norms are never forgotten in the acts of appropriations.

Contestation has been part of the invocation of reform and its performatives. Performances have provoked deliberation and contestation over Islam at the beginning. The colonial and post-colonial periods have been characterized by a multiplicity of reformers that goes against the evident promise of one reformer for every century. Since then, debate and contestation among reformers has intensified and includes political assassinations. Reformers present their projects and teachings as the most trusted performances of Islam in the beginning, but opponents contest such claims. They challenge the claim to purity and authenticity, or its relevance for modern times. Although reform may be Prophet-like, it has not escaped reproach and contestation.

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