THE ARTICULATION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES AND THEIR BOUNDARIES IN ETHIOPIA: LABELLING DIFFERENCE AND PROCESSES OF CONTEXTUALIZATION IN ISLAM

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ABSTRACT

Processes of contextualization in Islam are constantly raising questions about self-perception and the 'other', thus challenging the concept of an 'authentic' identity and its boundaries. Innovations and their appropriation or rejection currently play a significant role in Harar, an urban community in Eastern Ethiopia where local saints constitute a key element of everyday religious life. Islamic reform movements have been able to enter Ethiopia since the downfall of the socialist regime in 1991 and have been provoking disputes concerning the 'true' Islam, focusing on saints and related 'un-Islamic' practices. The majority of the Harar community has rejected this essentializing tendency, partly because of the influence of a Harari scholar who presides over the Lebanese organization *Ḥasbashiyya*. However, the contemporary role of religious networks and the quest for authenticity must be embedded in both the historical and contemporary socio-political context.

Introduction

Given that identities play an important role at different levels of ethnicity, class, gender and religion, the idea of boundaries is a central concept in various social sciences. Boundaries emerge as a result of interaction between different groups and the continuous interplay between external and internal definitions. Increasing links between communities, the resulting perception of new alternatives and the (re-)definition of these boundaries are an inherent result of globalization processes. Yet, while pressures to integrate into a global order are intensifying, deterritorialized localities are searching for their own authenticity and are dissociating themselves from global amalgamation. Hence, the conditions of globalization are accelerating repetitive boundary work involving exclusivity or inclusivity.

Because all the monotheistic theologies claim to be based on a 'true' core, a dogma that creates a view of superiority over others, world religions tend to display this tendency on a very obvious level. At the same time, however, these religions are subject to internal differences that may be reflected in variations of faith and practice. Thus, the very sensitive issue of religious identities sometimes culminates—externally and internally—in fierce debates about the 'authentic' faith, despite referring to a common ground of religious unity.

The diversity of Islam can be observed in different practices and perceptions of faith, regardless of the claim by Muslims that Islam is a system detached from time and space. The divergence in views regarding the question as to what ultimately constitutes Islam arises from the problem of knowledge in relation to accurate praxis. The diffusion of ideas itself does not necessarily lead to their unquestioning appropriation, but also to the human realms of doubt, indifference and opposition to understanding. Thus, reason, argument and debates are an internal part of everyday Islam, resulting in different schools of thought and practice and, hence also, different Islamic traditions. Innovations and their (re-)contextualization are, therefore, an elemental part of everyday Muslim life.

At the same time, however, these different traditions are related to each other formally on the basis of the common founding texts (Asad 1996 [1986]). The two tendencies towards unity and diversity in Islam render the search for a perceptible boundary fruitless if it has no social effects. Religious differences in Islam are largely ignored in everyday life and thus became relevant only under certain conditions. 'Islamic sects' (Sedgwick 2004) are an outcome of a certain relationship between an institutionalized denomination and a group whose relationship with the establishment is characterized by tension. This includes the capacity to change positions, for example, a sect which could become a denomination, like the Twelver Shīʿa in Iran. The problem of tolerance and intolerance, inclusivity and exclusivity, is therefore part of a process of negotiation on the social level and situated in a historical and socio-economic context.

In this paper, I attempt to illustrate how religious identities and their boundaries are expressed and perceived. Thus, religion as such will not be treated as a normative system with clearly defined boundaries, that is, as it is perceived mainly by its followers, but instead as a more or less flexible system of reference with blurred conceptions of exclusion. As modern anthropology is less interested in boundaries and more in spaces of transition, I stress the continuous nature of the construction

and reconstruction of religious self-perception and difference in accordance with the historical and cultural context. The modification of boundaries is the result of processes of interaction and negotiation between encountering individuals or groups as social actors. Thus, rather than looking for differences *per se*, it is more important to ask how, through whom and by which means a certain assessment is made and, moreover, for what reason it is accepted or not by the communities and hence becomes socially relevant. The question of authenticity or orthodoxy, which is essential in both Islam and Christianity, is therefore the result of interpretation, power, rhetoric and persuasion, which, again, reflect particular interests adopted by different actors. Motivation and intentions may vary, however, and it must be acknowledged that even these actors are not totally free in their decision-making. They are bound to act within a certain framework of mandatory rules regulating access to the arena of debate. For example, because many Muslim societies have an established system of scholarship, it is quite difficult for a layman without religious education to become an acknowledged authority on Islamic issues. Thus, if such a layman accuses someone of being an unbeliever, it will have fewer social consequences than if a religious scholar makes the same accusation based on his knowledge and experience. However, the rules of access have to be negotiated in the different fields, since in Sufi circles obtaining special blessing (*baraka*) tends to be more important than the completion of formal religious training.

An interesting perspective on the concept of boundaries[1] is provided by Lamont and Molnár (2002) who focus predominantly on the interaction between social and symbolic boundaries. They made this conceptual distinction to emphasize the role of symbolic resources in the production, preservation or modification of an institutionalized social difference. For them, symbolic boundaries represent 'conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space' (ibid.: 168). They are instruments used in the arena of debate as groups compete before attaining hegemony in their interpretation. Thus, symbolic boundaries are not necessarily social as they are 'objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities. They are also revealed in stable behavioural patterns of association, as manifested in connubiality and commensality' (ibid: 168). Symbolic and social boundaries are strongly associated with each other as symbolic boundaries can have an altering and form-giving influence on social boundaries only if they contain

an identifiable pattern of social exclusion and, furthermore, meet with broad acceptance. The aforementioned uneducated Muslim layman is therefore acting on the symbolical level and will not succeed on the social one because of his status as non-scholar.

In this paper[2] I focus on life projects and social biographies, an approach that emerged as an independent field of research in cultural and social studies (Eickelman 1985). It will be demonstrated how individual figures operate in transnational networks and how they aspire to control processes of innovation and appropriation within the framework of Islamic righteousness in the community of Harar in eastern Ethiopia.

The first section provides an introduction to the topic as inter-religious relationships at grassroots level modify the usual imagination of conflict between the followers of different faiths in Ethiopia. The main section is divided into two parts: the first examines the lives of Shaykh Abādir and Shaykh Hāshim, two religious scholars who were later venerated as saints in the framework of networks and an imagined 'golden age of mysticism', thus demonstrating both the permeability and steadiness of boundaries; the second focuses on a contemporary religious debate within the Muslim community of Harar, in which opponents are denounced as *kafirūn*, non-believers, which is a substantial category of symbolical boundary work. It will, furthermore, show how religious and other interests are mixed with the religious quest for the accomplishment of religious coherence through persuasion as the debate is embedded into general tensions between Harari and Oromo.

Religious neighbourhood in Ethiopia

Religious diversity in Ethiopia is often expressed in the juxtaposition of Christianity, Islam and other religions. Unlike other African countries south of the Sahara, the region has been the focal point of interaction between the different faiths for centuries. Thus, it represents an interesting area for the analysis of religious identities and their boundaries. The crucial and most familiar incident in this regard was the first *hidjra* (Arab. 'migration') of the seventh century when a group of Muslims fled from Mecca to the already Christianized Empire of Axum in Ethiopia where they were welcomed by King Ashama. From that time Ethiopia enjoyed the reputation among Muslims of being a country of religious righteousness where relationships between the faiths were cultivated in a tolerant and peaceful manner. This perception would change later when the relationship between Islam and Christianity was

seen as dominated by religious conflict (Erlich 1994). The Ethiopian Empire favoured Orthodox Christianity as its state religion and marginalized other religious faiths. Ethiopian rulers proclaimed Ethiopia a 'Christian island surrounded by pagans' and an 'island of Christianity in an ocean of Muslims', thus presenting the view of Islam as a foreign threat.[3]

On the formation of the current government in 1991, this prejudiced policy was abandoned and religious freedom was guaranteed as a constitutional right. The accompanying process of democratization led to the liberalization of the political sphere and, consequently, the fragmentation of the religious sphere. As a result, previously suppressed or non-existent contemporary religious movements, such as Pentecostalism and various revivalist Islamic ideologies,[4] entered the country and challenged well-established institutions and initiated a new arena for debate on the 'true' faith, religious boundaries and correlated identities. While Christian-Muslim disputes remain an important discursive element, internal rivalries between adherents of the same faith have increased. Internal religious differences have thus become a dominant discourse and relegated the previous debate to a secondary *topos*.

It is remarkable that Ethiopia is still perceived in the western world as a Christian country despite the fact that Muslims constitute around half of its population and cannot, therefore, be described as a minority.[5] Despite the misconceived belief in a relationship between Christians and Muslims that is dominated by conflicts, peaceful coexistence has prevailed at grassroots level and has even led to religious mobility. Thus, the discourse surrounding the 'Christian island' metaphor is not predominantly a religious one, but one that is mainly based on political interests and therefore reflected the asymmetry in unequal access to power.

The phenomenon of religious mobility goes beyond the presentation of Ethiopia as a model of righteousness, or the idea of the marginalization of Muslims, as it focuses not only on matters of exclusion or inclusion, but also on inter-religious participation in religious rituals. It must be stressed that there has been a general lack of systematic research on this topic hitherto. Kaplan (2004) recently provided an interesting overview of conversion in Ethiopia. Abbink (1998) focused on the occurrence of religious oscillation in the form of joint veneration of saints and the mixed Christian-Muslim participation in certain pilgrimages, but did not go further than mentioning the phenomenon. In addition to this tentative approach by Abbink, Pankhurst (1994) contributed to the subject with some reflections on pilgrimages. In a reference to the

annual festival of Abbo at Mount Zeqwala, which is dedicated to the Christian saint Gebre Menfes Qiddus, he observed that 'many of the litanies have clear Islamic connotations. Some songs referred to the Séh Husén cult in Balé and others to the cult of Arusi Emmäbét. There were frequent mentions of Allāh and Abādir, alongside talk of Egzi'abhér and Waq' (Pankhurst 1991: 8-9). This illustration of inter-religious participation is further developed in his article on pilgrimage, in which he underlined the syncretistic content of the monotheistic religions of Ethiopia (Pankhurst 1994: 950). Levine argues in a similar vein:

> Since both Islam and Christianity in Ethiopia have been highly syncretistic, moreover, their followers have not found it impossible to join in common religious observances. Muslims and Christians have reportedly taken part in one another's holiday ceremonies in Gonder and Shoa. The major pilgrimages in Ethiopia provide a particularly dramatic vehicle for such communion: huge numbers from both faiths attend the annual sacrifice at Lake Bishoftu, a fertility rite of pagan Galla origin, and go on the annual pilgrimage in honor of Saint Gabriel at Kulubi in Harerge province (Levine 1974: 44).

While other scholars also noted this phenomenon and included it in their studies, their illustrations were usually limited to a supplementary sentence.[6]

These references clearly show that religious identities and their boundaries are negotiable, in particular in locations considered as sacred, since these locations provide a certain degree of neutrality. I was able to observe this phenomenon on several occasions during my field trip to Harar: for example, Christian women going to Islamic shrines and praying for pregnancy and receiving the blessing of the guardian of the holy place. Similarly many Christians participate in the celebration of the Islamic shrines and will sometimes stay for an entire week, leaving only to attend Sunday service in their own church. When I asked the guardian of the major shrine of Shaykh Abādir about these events, he answered:

> Abādir is the father of all of us. He does not distinguish between nationalities and religions. Boundaries between followers don't make sense, because there are Christians who are Muslims at heart and there are Muslims who are Christians, the only importance is that you are pure. Allah knows you and on the final day of judgement you will be separated. As human beings, we are not capable of marking difference by ourselves.[7]

A similar notion is expressed in an article by Camilla Gibb (1999), in which she describes the integration of other ethnic communities in Harar through religious and symbolic channels focusing on the veneration of saints. Gibb argues that 'local religious orthodoxy [. . .] is flexible, absorbent and heterogeneous and provides the framework

through which the threat of difference and annihilation of the [foreign] group is transformed and often overturned' (Gibb 1999: 90). Despite the controversial term of local orthodoxy, which again leads us to many *Islams* as indicated by el-Zein,[8] Gibb presents a one-dimensional view, neglecting the debates about saint veneration within the community in relation to ethnic conflicts, in particular those between the Hararis and the Oromo. The following empirical section describes this conflict in part, having provided a general introduction to Harar and the establishment of the saints and their veneration, which would become the point at issue in the current debate.

Religious difference in Islam: case studies from Harar

Harar is a town in the eastern region of Ethiopia. It is located near the border of what is now Somaliland and has approximately 100,000 inhabitants who belong to different ethnic groups, mainly Hararis, Oromo, Amhara and Somalis. In this section I concentrate mainly on the Harari people who are the descendents of local groups and Arab immigrants and thus claim to be the founders of the city. Despite being a minority—they represent only seven percent of the town's population—they enjoy an elevated status among their ethnic neighbours based on their economic power as traders and their religious knowledge. Since the reorganization of administrative structures by the state since 1991, Harar has become the smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia. This development guarantees special legal rights for the Hararis and underlines the importance of their current political role. Despite the fact that Harar has relinquished its status as the most influential Islamic centre in the Horn of Africa, it has retained its symbolic capital. This is reflected in local terms such as *madīnat al-awliyā'*, the city of saints, and its label as the fourth holiest city in Islam. While the latter undoubtedly involves the reinvention of a weak local tradition by today's tourism sector, the former term is actually legitimate as the town contains hundreds of saintly places inside its old walls and many Islamic shrines in the countryside beyond. Historically, the town attracted many religious scholars and students and thus became a centre of religious learning. It was also an important trade centre linking the Red Sea with the interior of Ethiopia, and this role lends it its special importance. Harar was established in the thirteenth century and later emerged as the capital of the Sultanate of Adal. In the sixteenth century, Imām Aḥmed Ibrāhīm, a Muslim scholar from the region of Harar, nicknamed 'Grañ', the left-handed, succeeded in uniting different quarrelling

factions of Muslims and conquered extensive parts of Ethiopia during a *djihād* (1529-1543) against the Christians. With the defeat of Imam Aḥmed (1543) and the later migration of the Oromo, Harar became a city-state governed by an emirate. It was captured in 1875 by Egypt and in 1887 the then emperor Menelik II incorporated Harar into the wider empire of Ethiopia, imposing a Christian rule for the first time.

Anthropological studies[9] of Harar tend to reflect the attitude of the Hararis themselves as a closed ethnic community, conscious of their historical achievements, the—at least symbolic—role of their town in the Horn of Africa and their shared experience as an economically strong minority that enjoys a certain cultural superiority over other ethnic groups. Conflicts and debates, especially internal ones, were generally restricted to historical incidents and presented in a functionalistic way instead of being an essential part of cultural dynamics. In addition to the aforementioned work by Gibb (1999), Waldron analysed Harar as an intact pre-industrial city and its society as a system of social integration in which gossip assumes social control over deviant behaviour (Waldron 1975). Both authors, however, neglect conflict and debates that have, indeed, played a central role in the life of the town, both historically and in the present. The ruling class has been constantly involved in quarrels about leadership and succession since the establishment of the emirate in the thirteenth century. Since the incorporation of Harar into the Ethiopian empire in the nineteenth century, Harari families have been torn between centripetal and centrifugal tendencies, that is, one group trying to remain close to the Ethiopian government and another striving for unification with Somalia. The most popular examples of these phenomena are the *Kulub-Hanolatto* incident of the 1940s, which involved the emergence of a separation movement, ended through the intervention of the Ethiopian government, and the political conflict that arose between the two Harari parties, *Harari Democratic Unity Party* (*'Hadiyappa'*) and the *Harari National League* (*'League'*), in the 1990s during the reorganization of the Ethiopian administrative regions under the new government.

These political conflicts were accompanied by analogous debates in the religious sphere; a handwritten nineteenth-century Arabic document that I came across in the course of my fieldwork reveals the internal disruption to the community. In this short text, the Qadi Yūnis bin ʿAbdallāh appealed to the community to treat the elected Friday preacher Shaykh Aḥmed Yūnis fairly, as many Hararis were attacking him for reasons not mentioned in the document.

Whether in regard to their political or their religious leadership, the situation among the Hararis is best described using a metaphorical assessment coined by a local informant who portrayed the Amharas as sheep and the Hararis as goats: the first follow the herdsman blindly while the latter follow nobody. This problem of power and control is often contrasted with an imagined 'golden age of mysticism', in which everybody was a Sufi and equal. This era is exemplified in different oral histories, songs and proverbs[10] that reflect the predominance of religious knowledge among the Hararis as compared with other Muslim communities, thus cementing the position of Harar as an Islamic centre of learning. The following story illustrates this tendency and locates the general notion of the involvement of Hararis in contemporary disputes about religious boundaries in a wider context:

> Once upon a time there was a Yemeni religious scholar who came for daw'a, religious teaching, to the rural areas of Ethiopia. He reached the outer rim of Harar at dusk and decided to rest for the night before entering the town the next morning. Suddenly a woman approached him from Harar, bringing him some food and blankets for the night. Concerning the cooked meal, she said to him, 'eat the allowed and leave the prohibited', then left him and went back home. The Yemeni Shaykh was surprised and took a look at the dishes she had brought, but he couldn't work out what this strange woman was indicating to him. Finally, the Yemeni left the food, remained hungry and waited until the next morning. The woman from Harar approached him again and asked if he had enjoyed the meal. But the scholar answered that he hadn't touched it, since he didn't know which of the food was prohibited and which was allowed. Then the woman answered that this couldn't be an obstacle, since he should have eaten the food but spat out the pieces that stuck in his teeth. Thereupon the Yemeni left the place, remarking that he was not capable of teaching religion in a community in which even the women had such a great knowledge of Islam.

This story could be analysed from a number of different perspectives, but the essential point in this context is the superiority and exclusivity of the Hararis' own status in comparison with other views and ideas. The full relevance of the current *takfīr* debate, which involves accusations of religious infidelity, is unveiled through this perspective. Finally, it must be mentioned that the knowledgeable woman was Ai Abida, the most popular female saint of Harar.

The practice of saint veneration is currently the central *topos* in debates between the adherents of different Islamic groups. A recent minority reform movement, locally referred to as 'Wahhābīs', views such practices as un-Islamic innovations. The opposing stance in this debate represents the dominant thinking in Harar, according to which saint veneration is entirely righteous within the framework of Islam.[11] It should be mentioned, firstly, that innovation has a specific and, as

a general rule, rather negative meaning in Islam; inadmissible innovations, *bidaʿ*, imply a deviation from the given path of God and are therefore unwanted (Robson 1960). This brings us again to the question of the actor. What is particularly interesting in this context is who identifies a given phenomenon as an innovation—and based on what authority—and who does not. I will focus on both of these processes in the next section: the rejection of religious opinions, classified here as *bidaʿ*, on the one hand and the appropriation of different opinions, which correspond to a view of a 'true' Islam but are not interpreted as innovations, on the other.

Saints, their networks and the historical formation of a religious mainstream in Harar

Although the story above emphasizes the authenticity and superiority of knowledge, it is not necessarily a reflection of purity.[12] This section presents the life stories of two saints to show how new ideas and practices were integrated into the life of the Harar community, thus demonstrating the ongoing nature of the formation of a local denomination, i.e. an intellectual establishment with saints[13] and the related practices as its focal point (see Foucher 1994; Zekaria 2003).

An historical-mythical review of the town's origins, mainly based here on oral traditions, reproduces the image of Harari as an inclusive, righteous community. This kind of 'authentic' Islam develops out of an abundance of historical traditions, a changing framework of transmission, inventions and even tendencies to annihilate historical Islam (Hartmann 2004). Therefore, the mechanisms of remembrance and the relationship with the past in relation to saint veneration are of particular interest. They demonstrate processes involving the continuous contextualization and re-contextualization of elements that must be classified as innovations in relation to the local context.

Shaykh Abādir: patron of Harar

Shaykh ʿUmar al-Riḍā, alias Shaykh Abādir, is considered the founder and first saint of Harar. According to the legendary *Fatḥ madīnat Harar*, by the Harari author Yaḥyā Naṣrallāh (Wagner 1978), he came from Mecca and reached the already Islamized region of Bandar Gaturi, later Harar, with 405 shaykhs in the year 1215 (612 a.H.).[14] They arrived on a Friday, went straight into the mosque and the congregation

allowed them to lead the prayers and conduct the Friday sermon, a task assumed by Shaykh Abādir. Two weeks later the scholars ordered the surrounding tribes to gather in town within three months. On that occasion another sermon was given by Shaykh Abādir, in which he demanded the reorganization of Harar by requesting the tribes present to bring their goods into town daily.[15] In the course of the following passages in the text, Shaykh Abādir fought several battles against the unbelievers in the surrounding country and travelled back to Mecca (1234/5), from where he returned in 1279.

According to oral traditions, 44 of the 405 *shaykhs* assumed different duties and responsibilities of benefit to the community: e.g. Āw Ḥakīm was appointed as Qadi and Āw Sofi Yaḥya was assigned to the first Qur'anic school. A tradition later developed within the community which attributed patronage, e.g. rain, honey, shepherds, etc., to a certain saint or linked them with a special blessing or ability, for example, the healing of swollen eyes or the encouragement of idle students.

The remaining scholars were sent out to the countryside to proselytize und teach Islam. They were also active as healers so as to win support for their purpose among the local population. When a shaykh died, his followers would build a grave, usually under a tree where he used to teach, and henceforth venerated him as a saint. The shrines served as a kind of communication network with Harar as its centre. In times of peace they served as missionary and education centres while in times of crisis they acted as centres of information. Something that lends credence to this suggestion is the fact that the locations of the shrines around Harar radiate in the form of a five-pronged star.

Today, Shaykh Abādir is considered as the first reformer who strengthened the religious-institutional framework and the founding father who, like all the saints of Harar, bears the title of *āw* (Har. 'father'). In the town of Harar there are currently two locations at which he is venerated, first his grave and secondly his wedding house.

Shaykh Hāshim: the last nominal saint

The second saint, Shaykh Hāshim, lived in the sixteenth-seventeenth century and represents a different type of scholar from Shaykh Abādir. While they have their mobility in common, Shaykh Hāshim not only strengthened Sufism in Harar, he also wrote important texts, which continue to be of important religious-cultural value. Furthermore, he is the only saint of Harari ancestry, while the others are of Arab, Somali

or Oromo background (Gibb 1996: 83). Above all, he is the last nominal saint of Harar and comes second in the local hierarchy after Shaykh Abādir.

From the perspective of innovations and their appropriation, the story of the emergence of the *Qādiriyya* Sufi brotherhood is significant in terms of the importance of religious networks and, furthermore, provides an example of the invention of tradition dating as far back as the end of the fifteenth century.[16]

According to this mystical narrative, an angel approached an old man called Salmān al-Maghribi[17] in a dream. The angel revealed the picture of a young man, without mentioning his name, and ordered al-Maghribi to search for him and to pass by his *idjāza*, the authorization given by a mentor to transmit knowledge. When the old man woke up, he set off from Morocco via Algeria and Egypt, to Iran, Syria and Mecca and finally reached the town of Zabid in Yemen. There he met with Shaykh Hāshim, who was on his way to Mecca and Medina on pilgrimage. As they caught sight of each other, they greeted each other like father and son. Al-Maghribi said: 'Oh, young man, I searched for you all over the Arab world. I need you, where are you going?', whereupon Shaykh Hāshim replied that he was heading to Mecca and Medina to perform his *hadj*. 'Well', al-Maghribi replied, 'continue your obligation and than travel back to Harar and ask your mother to come back to Zabid. I was assigned to give you my *idjāza*'. Thus al-Maghribi waited in Zabid while Shaykh Hāshim fulfilled his religious duties and then visited his mother to obtain her permission. He studied in Zabid for several years until he returned to Harar with the *idjāza* of the *Qādiriyya*.

In Harar he wrote the *Fatḥ al-raḥman*, Arabic poems of praise for the prophet, and the *Mustafā'*, likewise a work of praise, but in Harari prose. Both texts are still read regularly at different shrines during festivities. The *Fatḥ al-raḥman*, in particular, is an important work as it is claimed that initiation into the *Qādiriyya* is completed merely by regular reading of it.

Despite the fact that Shaykh Hāshim is considered the initiator of Sufism in Harar, he was also responsible for its demise. During his lifetime he criticized the population for being profit-oriented and materialistic, as their worldly orientation would prevent them from reaching a mystical level of spirituality. One particular incident led to the final break between Shaykh Hāshim and Harar. According to the anecdote relating to this event, Shaykh Hāshim liked to spend his time in his house reciting the name of *al-wadūd*, one of the 99 names of Allah. Some inhabitants tried

to emulate the scholar, but recited *wadaad* continuously, which was considered as a kind of possession by spirits.[18] In reaction to this, Shaykh Hāshim declared that all the Sufis and saints coming after him should be hidden and that his *ṭarīqa* (Arab. 'Sufi brotherhood') should not recur until seven generations had passed. He then left Harar for Wollo where he again initiated the *Qādiriyya* (see Ahmed 2001: 69).

The life histories of Harar's two leading saintly figures reveal an interesting pattern in terms of the explanation of the general shift in and contextualization of new thoughts. First, the absolute acceptance of Shaykh Abādir and the 405 scholars by the inhabitants of Harar, based on their religious knowledge, legitimated their rule over Harar and its surroundings. This religious and secular reorganization could be interpreted as the initial revitalization of Islam. The myth of an Arab ancestor is often used as a vehicle for the exclusion of other Muslims and is intended to affirm the fact that the scholarship in the location in question is more 'authentic' and thus strengthen its claim as an Islamic centre. In the case of Harar, this is reflected in the order to the surrounding tribes to bring their goods into the town every day: the land belongs to Harar, but should be worked by others. This religion-based argument is reflected in the contemporary debates between the Hararis and Oromo concerning land rights.

Links with and reference to the Arab world are emphasized in both histories: Shaykh Abādir, who became also known as *shaykh ash-shuyūkh* (Arab. '*shaykh* of the *shaykhs*'), originated from the core region of Islam, the Hijaz, while Shaykh Hāshim had intellectual links with a centre of education in Yemen and Mecca. The continuous development of a cognitive map of the relationship between Harar and important religious centres becomes visible from this historical context. At first the people of Harar only acknowledged Mecca and Medina, but their worldview was later enhanced through contact with Zabid. Yemen later relinquished its role as education centre and Egypt took over. Students currently travel Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Pakistan for further study, thus emphasizing the multicentrism of Islam in Harar.

Shaykh Abādir was the reformer who introduced 'true' Islam to the city and defended it against the unbelievers. Shaykh Hāshim was also a reformer based on his establishment of the *Qādiriyya* and similarly symbolized the perpetual fight against inner tendencies which run contrary to Islam. The two saints are also representative of the rise and fall of mysticism in Harar. An interesting aspect of this is the quasi-canonization of saints in Harar by Shaykh Hāshim which could be related to the term *khātm al-awliyā'* (Arab. 'the seal of the saints'). Both

saints constitute the historical cornerstones of a 'golden age of mysticism', the period between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. This epoch coincides with the religious and economic rise of Harar, which peaked with the *djihād* of Imam Aḥmed 'Grañ'. Although the city was able to maintain its role as trade centre, the flow of religious ideas through the religious networks was rather limited, as most of the foreign religious scholars who were active in the *djihād* fled the country.

Diversity and factions among Muslims in Harar

Despite the fact that religious contextualization, and the obvious but concealed debates, have always existed in the town, the current *takfīr* debate takes the conflict concerning authenticity to a new level, which is again strengthened by the increasing density of ideas circulating in a more globalized world. The notion of diversity within the unity of Islam is explored in more detail in the following section, but it is first necessary to provide a brief introduction to the general notion of *takfīr*.

The association of an individual with unbelief is a clear sign of boundary work and is used, in particular, in the context of revitalization movements and the resulting debates about authenticity and the 'true' Islam. *Kafirūn*, and the singular form *kāfir*, means infidel(s) and *kufr* is the general term for disbelief. In the context of the Qur'an, the term is related to a cluster of negative qualities and conveys the notion of an outsider or someone who is excluded or has excluded himself from the Muslims. *Takfīr* indicates the action of judging or pronouncing someone to be a *kāfir*. However, this kind of excommunication is very controversial as, according to one *hadīth*, a person who calls somebody else a *kāfir* is a *kāfir* himself. Thus, it is highly problematic for a Muslim to denounce another as a *kāfir*. Nevertheless, the committing of *takfīr* by Muslims against their coreligionists was and continues to be a regular feature of Islamic life as, according to another *hadīth*, Muhammad predicted that after his death the Muslim community would be divided into 73 sects. Of these, only one would be destined to enter heaven and all the rest would be punished in hell. Thus, everybody wants to be the righteous bearer of religious tradition, calling themselves *ahl al-sunna wa' l-djamāʿa* (Arab. 'people of the prophet's way and the community'). This example shows the different options for interpretation and emphasizes how the concept of *takfīr* offers a formidable weapon against those who hold opposing views, even if they were/are pious and faithful.

In terms of its modern meaning, the term *kufr* carried a new significance in the context of revivalist movements, such as the *Wahhābiyya*, whose

followers criticized their coreligionists as diverging from the correct path of Islam. The *Wahhābiyya* is a reformist movement founded on the Arabian Peninsula by Muḥammed ʿAbdul-Wahhāb in the eighteenth century. Established as a response to a perceived moral decline and political weakness on the part of the Muslim community, the movement proposed an idealized Islamic past through the reassertion of strict monotheism and a word-for-word interpretation of the Qurʾan and the Sunna of the Prophet. Anything that goes beyond the movement's understanding of *tawḥīd*, the oneness of God, such as the veneration of saints and visitation of their tombs, is considered as *shirk*, that is, association of something with God and an un-Islamic innovation. Muḥammed ʿAbdul-Wahāb formed an alliance with the family of Saud, and Wahhabism became the officially supported state doctrine of the Saudi kingdom. Against the background of the oil boom of the 1970s and with the help of its resulting new financial power, Saudi Arabia became active in spreading its interpretation of Islam, sometimes referred to as petro-Islam, throughout the world and engaged local Muslim communities in a debate about the 'true' Islam. Given that the movement and its ideas have to be contextualized and that it changes according to the cultural background in which it finds itself in order to gain ground, the *Wahhābiyya* clearly does not usually involve a single organized group at local level, but a type of view and attitude with many branches of thought. In the same way, the term 'Wahhābī' is loaded with different meanings that can cover a range of sentiments, as the following example from Harar will show.[19]

Old scholars, old conflicts

In the context of Harar, the ubiquitous quest to define Islam could be explained through the historical perspective of a conflict between two religious scholars who can be described justifiably as transnational actors. Both were born in Harar in the 1910s and are now the agents and symbolic representatives of different schools of thoughts: Hadj Yūsuf ʿAbd al-Raḥman, a businessman who represents the Wahhabitic ideology of Saudi Arabia, and Shaykh ʿAbdallāh, a traditional scholar who presides over a counter movement, the *Ḥabashiyya*, which was initiated in Lebanon.

The initial tension between the two scholars arose in the early 1940s. Hadj Yūsuf, who completed his religious education in Mecca and Medina between 1928 and 1938, met a group of Hararis in Saudi Arabia who had gone there on pilgrimage with the support of the Italians who occupied Ethiopia from 1936 to 1941. As a result of this

meeting, the group came under the influence of the Wahhābī ideology. They travelled back to Harar in 1941 where they became involved in a local educational institution. At the same time Shaykh ʿAbdallāh was teaching in Daway, an Islamic centre in the Wollo region, but, when he heard about the new group in Harar, he rushed back to his birthplace and challenged them on the ground of being 'Wahhābīs'. Shaykh ʿAbdallāh succeeded in bringing about the closure of the new school with the help of the Ethiopian government. One member of the group was arrested and deported. It is remarkable that the veneration of saints was not highlighted as a central theme on this occasion, but the concept of 'Wahhābī' was initially used as a synonym of 'otherness' and, therefore, viewed as a misinterpretation of Islam.

Tensions between the two leading figures prevailed in the years that followed. They could also have been secular in nature as was the case in the context of an independent movement in Harar, already mentioned in reference to *Kulub-Hanolatto* (1946-48). In the course of this political conflict, Shaykh ʿAbdallāh was imprisoned and went into exile in 1948. As opposed to this, Hadj Yūsuf became closer to the Ethiopian government and supervised the first official translation of the Qur'an into Amharic, published in 1961. When the socialist regime came to power in 1974, however, he too left the country and returned to Saudi Arabia. Since then he continues to exert a particular influence on Harar, in particular on the political level. He is now referred to by Hararis in a whispering voice as 'Mr X' or the 'invisible control centre'.

Shaykh ʿAbdallāh and the Ḥasbashiyya[20]

When he left Ethiopia, Shaykh ʿAbdallāh al-Harārī pursued further studies in the Hijaz, Syria and in Jerusalem. He settled in Lebanon in the 1950s and he took over the leadership of the Lebanese organization *Association of Islamic Charitable Project* (AICP, Arab. *djamʿiyyat al-mashāri al-khayriyya al-islāmiyya*) in 1983. This organization is also known as *al-Ḥabash* or *Ḥasbashiyya* ('Ethiopians') in reference to the birthplace of its leader. Shaykh ʿAbdallāh managed to attract a large number of followers not only in Lebanon, but particularly in places with Lebanese and Harari diasporas.[21]

The AICP is a Sunnite religious organization with a strong emphasis on Sufism. The ideology of the *al-Ḥabash* is strictly anti-Wahhābī and the organization defends mystical Islamic practices which are interpreted by the reformists as *bidaʿ*, un-Islamic innovations. It became Shaykh 'Abdallāh's main aim to teach the 'real' and 'authentic' *tawḥīd*,

denying the verbatim interpretation that God sits on the throne, a version which is prominent among Wahhābī-followers and can be traced back to the religious scholar Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328). However Shaykh Abadallah also denies the view that God does not have a shape and is, therefore, everywhere, a position that developed with the theological school of *Muʿtazila* (eighth-ninth century) and is supported by many Sufis and the majority of the Harari. He argues instead with the *Ashʿarites* school (tenth-twelfth century) that God does not have a place.

This interpretation was later also approved in Harar, at least among the religiously educated supporters of Shaykh ʿAbdallāh. This understanding of the nature of God was initially made the central focus of different polemics against Shaykh ʿAbdallāh, published in Arabic journals outside Ethiopia. Besides this opposition to his religious theology, he was also exposed as *shaykh ul-fitna* (Arab. *ʿshaykh* of seduction/discord') based on some biographical details concerning his role in the past of Harar. These polemics provoked responses in his journal *Manār al-Hudā*, the Lebanese mouthpiece of the *Ḥabashiyya* in which the historical events of the early twentieth century were reproduced in a 'correct' manner. However, these statements were also greeted with numerous counter-polemics, which can be accessed in different languages on the internet.[22]

The precise origin of the *takfīr* debate between Shaykh ʿAbdallāh al-Harārī and his opponents is unclear. It is said in Harar that Shaykh ʿAbdallāh aimed to publish a book for which Shaykh ʿAbd al-ʿAziz bin Baz, the Mufti of Saudi Arabia, excommunicated him. Before being sent to prison, he fled to Syria. This story may be an invention since it is normally used to blame the 'others', in this case the Wahhābīs, of being responsible for starting the conflict.

Harar as an arena of religious debate

In the 1990s, the tradition of the Islamic shrines in Harar, which were accused of being un-Islamic by the new reformist groups, became the focal point of the aforementioned debate. The Hararis did not react to the accusations initially, but altered their stance with the involvement of Shaykh ʿAbdallāh in the debate and began to defend themselves and accuse the reformist groups of being 'outside Islam'. The incident initiated a fierce debate within Islam about the correct interpretation of the sacred scripts, in particular with respect to the oneness of God, and illustrated, furthermore, the interplay between the local and global levels.

The emergence of reformist ideas is linked to the socialist military regime of the *Dergue* (1974-1991) as, during the 'red terror', many Ethiopians fled to neighbouring countries and abroad to escape the civil war.[23] At the same time, the Oromo, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, was fighting for its own state. In this context, young Oromo refugees started to receive scholarships for religious studies from the Saudi government (Gnamo 2002). During the change of government in 1991, the Ethiopian state modified its religious policy; religious freedom was enshrined in the constitution and the ban on religious literature and travel restrictions was lifted. The resulting guarantee of religious freedom was used by the newly educated young scholars to return to their home country where they preached that some of the long-established religious practices, in particular those involving the shrines, were un-Islamic. They labelled most of the rituals as cultural in order to emphasize their inherent unsuitability. Numerous examples of their accusations can be found. In their view, one of the most controversial practices is the feeding of hyenas at some rural shrines on the day of *'āshūrā'*, the day of commemoration of the martyrdom of Ḥusayn, which has strong connotations of divinational practice. Another is the *shawwāl-ʿīd*, a day celebrated by Hararis to mark the end of six days of additional fasting after *ʿīd al-fiṭr* when *zikris* (Arab. *dhikr*), that is, songs of praise, are performed for two days and nights at two shrines in Harar. This ritual has an additional purpose as it is the feast at which young men are able to choose their future fiancées and this is the focal point of criticism as the sexes are thus allowed to mix at an evening of celebration.

In addition, reformist Oromo linked this debate to local politics and ethnic conflicts: the religious practices they were criticizing were considered as Harari cultural inventions and thus not originally practised by the Oromo, but falsely adapted, thanks to a relationship based on exploitation. The reformists argued that they were dominated politically by the Christian Amhara and economically and religiously by the Hararis. It is obvious that the ensuing religious dispute incorporated an entire set of conflicts between the two ethnic groups that mainly concerned the formal ownership by the Hararis of land where the Oromo worked and the monopolization of religious positions in Islamic institutions.

At the beginning of the emerging conflict, the Hararis were in a kind of religious vacuum and found themselves confronted with something they already experienced on a smaller scale in the 1940s when a small group of Hararis started to spread the ideology of the *Wahhābiyya* in Harar following a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. However, the vehemence

of the criticism and ensuing conflict was new. Moreover most of the Hararis were traumatized by the 'red terror' of the recent past and the separation of families, and were simultaneously involved in the conflict between the new Harari political parties of *Hadiyyappa* and *League* for the new administrative government of Harar, which had become a regional state. In the mid-1990s, two incidents occurred, which changed the situation significantly.

In June 1995, Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian president, survived an assassination attempt in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. As a result, the state began to intervene in the religious sphere again and banned Islamic NGOs and, in particular, organizations that had a relationship with Sudan. Around the same time Egyptian scholars who taught religion in a school in Harar were deported from Ethiopia when they exposed themselves as affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*), a group which was also under suspicion of having 'fundamentalist' tendencies. The term 'fundamentalist' became a synonym for an Arab-inspired, economically strong, foreign Islam that divides Ethiopian Muslims. The similarity with the 'Christian island' metaphor and the notion of a general threat of Islam is immediately identifiable.

The second incident, which ultimately led to the emergence of the *takfir* debate in Harar, involved the visit of the above-mentioned religious scholar, Shaykh ʿAbdallāh. It should be noted that, since he left Ethiopia, his Harari origin had been persistently mentioned in global discourses, but in fact he had no direct contact with the city. In 1996, after an absence of 40 years, Shaykh ʿAbdallāh al-Harārī returned to Harar with the intention of undermining the nascent influence of the Wahhābīyya within the Muslim community and providing religious instruction. Once again, in his open lectures he accused the Wahhābīs of being non-Muslims. The Hararis were unable to accept the reformist ideas of the Wahhābīs and adopted instead Shaykh ʿAbdallāh's ideas in a modified form, as most of them lacked the educational basis for religious argumentation. The Hararis then started to accuse the reformers of distorting the *tawḥīd*, the doctrine of the oneness of God and condemned their attempt to attack the history and culture of Harar, which is strongly associated with the shrines. Furthermore, they argued that the Wahhābīs are not real Muslims, that they were only taking economic advantage of their Saudi connection and dismissed Wahhabism as a kind of fashion. The Hararis nicknamed them the 'good-deed-sayers' (Har. *kayri baiash*) while the opponents of the *shaykh* called him *shaykh ul-fitna wa-l-k'älak'käl* (Arab., Amh. '*shaykh* of seduction/discord and religious mixing').

Shaykh ʿAbdallāh al-Harārī spent some days in Harar in 2003 for the second time and, again, preached against the Wahhābīs and made accusations against individuals in the course of several open lectures. His lectures were referred to in daily conversation for many days, people accused others of being Wahhābī, openly made jokes about ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and advised people not to go here or there and risk coming under their influence etc. Overall, Shaykh ʿAbdallāh al-Harārī's lectures prompted a wave of stigmatization of potential Wahhābīs in Harar.

On his departure, the Shaykh left an Amharic translation of one of his most popular books in Harar which was distributed by some of his disciplines. The book, the *Mukhtaṣar*, provided scholarly legitimation of his accusations. In tune with his customary polemical approach, the book adopts a scholarly line of reasoning in which the Shaykh criticizes religious scholars like Ibn Taymiyya and Sayyid Quṭb. It reinforces incipient stigmatization and the use of rumour as a weapon for the denunciation of the 'others'.

Just a few Hararis, in particular from the political elite, sympathized with the Wahhābīs, who in turn were systematically linked to Hadj Yūsuf, the old Harari opponent of Shaykh ʿAbdallāh who resides in Saudi Arabia. The Wahhābī-friendly Hararis are now taking a back seat and even disowning the Wahhabitic belief, because of social pressure. Hadj Yūsuf himself has adopted a puzzling strategy: he has made financial contributions to several community projects, distributed dates during Ramadhan and, it is said, has even donated money to the shrine of Shaykh Abādir. While many Hararis are interpreting this as a proof that Hadj Yūsuf is not a Wahhābī, others see it as a tactical manoeuvre of deception. The actual significance of the term Wahhābī here remains extremely vague.

Conclusion

In an attempt to unravel the entangled paths of locality and globality, appropriation and rejection, exclusivity and inclusivity I would now like to summarize certain points. I have attempted to demonstrate how religious identities and their boundaries are historically rooted and constructed in a specific context and certain conditions. The general focus was on actors as carriers of new ideas who played important roles in collective processes of identity-building through debates with and in dissociation with the 'other', in this case the Wahhābīs. Admittedly, the religious ideas of Shaykh ʿAbdallāh also emanated from a different

context and represent an innovation that was acquired by the Hararis. The motivations for their appropriation and the rejection of Wahhabitic beliefs are not substantially based on religious grounds, but are diverse and manifold. First, there is the Hararis' solidarity with their own history and culture. The fact that the first Harari is the main saint of Harar means that a certain degree of veneration is required, at least in the cultural consciousness. Secondly, the contemporary ethnic conflict between the Hararis and Oromo is of utmost importance as it is apparent not only on a religious level, but also on a political and economic one. These conflicts affect current processes of innovation and appropriation and determine the repertoire of adopted elements. Moreover, the assertiveness of Shaykh ʿAbdallāh's ideas has led to a valorization of religious and cultural self-conception.

In this context, the articulation of difference is usually part of the legitimation of the exclusion of the 'others'. Again, some definitions are legitimated by religious texts and others are not; they are all, however, in some way modifications or inventions of traditions. Concepts like 'Wahhābī' are symbolizing images of the other, which could be endowed with different contents. They are also used as blurred rhetorical concepts of combat to protect interests and delegitimize contrary opinions. Already a familiar term, in the historical progress of the debates, Wahhābī was associated with certain contents that were not commonly known.

Moreover, processes of change and persistence are two sides of one coin. Through the increasing interconnection between different communities, the quest for self-location in the wider world and the search for authenticity became increasingly intensified. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that, in terms of their relations with the religious sphere, communities are increasingly integrating themselves into the world system. However, by perceiving the alternatives, they are also searching for and constructing their own authenticity and thus dissociating themselves from the same context. It is significant that Shaykh ʿAbdallāh al-Harārī and his followers do not perceive the debate as setting up boundaries, but as a religious duty. Moreover, in the case of Harar, the symbolic boundaries have to be embedded and accepted by the majority before being socially relevant.

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NOTES

1. Boundaries and processes of inclusivity/exclusivity constitute an important field of anthropological research which has produced a wide range of literature on the topic. Some recent collections include: Meyer, B., and P. Geschiere (eds.), 1999. *Globalization and Identity: Dialectics of Flow and Closure*. Oxford: Blackwell; Rösler, M., & T. Wendl (eds.), 1999. *Frontiers and Borderlands: Anthropological Perspectives*. Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang.

2. The article is based on a lecture given in the section *African Religious Development in Context* of the VAD 2004 conference in Hannover, Germany (02-06-2004). The empirical data was collected during fieldwork in Harar, conducted between 2003 and 2004 and lasting 11 months. The work is part of the project *Saintly Places and Saint Veneration: Egypt and Ethiopia by Comparison*, which is being carried out by the Collaborative Research Centre 295 *Cultural and Linguistic Contacts*, Mainz (Germany).

3. This metaphor was reflected in studies on Ethiopian Islamic culture, a field of research that was neglected or ignored in the past. A number of studies on the historical and contemporary development of Islam in Ethiopia have, however, been published in the recent past. Overviews are provided by Abbink (1998), Ahmed (1998), Braukämper (2004) and Trimingham (1965) [1952].

4. Those reformist ideas usually remain indistinct and, apart from some exceptional cases, cannot be connected with specific groups developed in Arab countries. This is partly the result of measures adopted by the Ethiopian state which is trying to keep an eye on Islamic 'fundamentalism'. Rumours and news are strongly interlinked here, thus the use of the term itself remains extremely vague. For a more general view of Islamic revivalism in Ethiopia, see Ahmed (1998).

5. Obtaining correct data on religious distribution remains problematic as such data can be instrumental in the support or rejection of certain arguments and therefore represent important political interests. Various authors give figures ranging from 30% (Abbink 1998) to 60% (Hussien 1997). I would estimate that Muslims represent about 45% of the Ethiopian population.

6. Cf., for example, Braukämper (2004), Kifleyesus (1995), Getahun (1997).

7. Interview with Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ṣamed in December 2003.

8. On this point, see el-Zein, Abdul Hamid. 1997. 'Beyond Ideology and Theology. The Search for the Anthropology of Islam', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6. His approach was vehemently criticized in the influential article by Asad (1986).

9. For a comprehensive and excellent bibliography of Harar and Islam in the southeast of Ethiopia, see Wagner (2003).

10. I have Kabīr ʿAbd al-Muḥaimin ʿAbd al-Naṣīr to thank for this information about oral histories, the background of the mystical society of Harar and its holy shrines.

11. The literature on inner-Islamic conflicts in Africa is vast (see Rosander, E.E., and D. Westerlund (eds.). 1997. *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounters between Sufis and*

Islamists, London: Hurst; Piga, A. (ed.). 1999. *Islam et Villes en Afrique au Sud du Sahara: Entre Soufisme et Fondamentalisme*. Paris: Karthala): however a marginal, 'traditional', folkloric character is often attributed, at least implicitly, to saint veneration and its associated shrines. In principle, the academic debate reflects the thematic priorities of the reformers, in particular when the ethical dichotomy of 'traditionalists' and 'modernists' is used. The dynamic dimensions relating to shrines and the practices involving them are mostly neglected. On the other hand, an increasing corpus of literature has been developing recently which does not restrict the view of the reformist spectrum to Islamist groups, but homes in instead on the revitalization of Sufism as a central issue (Popovic, A., and G. Veinstein (eds.). 1996. *Les Voies d'Allah: Les Ordres Mystiques dans le Monde Musulman des Origines à Aujourd'hui*. Paris: Fayard; Werbner, P., & H. Basu (eds). 1998. *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, Locality and the Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults*. London: Routledge; De Jong, F. and B. Radtke (eds.). 1999. *Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, Leiden: Brill; Sirriyeh, E. 1999. *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defence, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World*. Richmond: Curzon).

12. The Harari may claim an Arab ancestry, but the Harari identity actually incorporates different ethnic identities. People who have adapted to and assimilated the way of life of the inhabitants of Harar are called *gē lämäd* (Har. 'learning the town').

13. It should be mentioned that the term 'saint' here is removed from a Christian context and must be re-contextualized for the Islamic framework where there is no canonization or central authority.

14. The reason why Shaykh Abādir favoured Harar as his destination is reflected in the Harari sentence *'Badd zaleyu Abādir. Bäri zaleyu 'Abd al-Qādir'* (Har. 'The country belongs to Abādir. The gate belongs to 'Abd al-Qādir'). This saying is linked to another tradition, which states that Muhammed saw a luminous spot on the ground during his *miradj*, i.e. nocturnal journey. The angel Gabriel explained the place to him as *madīnat al-awliyā'*, the city of saints (see Foucher 1994). When Muhammed returned, the future Khalif Abu Bakr was already waiting for him and asked about the spot Muhammed had seen. But the prophet replied that it was not for him, but for his great-grandson who is considered to be Shaykh Abādir.

15. The text mentioned the [Oromo-] Nole, Argobba, Somali and [Oromo-] Ala (Wagner 1978: 54).

16. Trimingham identified a Yemeni Sufi, Sharīf Abu Bakr ibn 'Abdallāh al-Idarus, nicknamed *al-quṭb ar-rābbanī* (Arab. 'the divine axis'), as the initiator of the *Qādiriyya* in Harar. He died in Aden, Yemen, in 1503 (Trimingham1965 [1952]: 240).

17. It should be mentioned that in the context of Egypt certain saints are known and associated with people from the Maghreb. Since Harar was occupied by Egyptian troops in the nineteenth century the imaginings of great Sufis *shaykhs* from the eastern parts of North Africa may have prevailed.

18. Actually the term *wadaad* is a Somali term for a religious man who is an equivalent of the West African marabout (Lewis 1955: 594).

19. On 'Wahhābīsm' as a tool of rhetoric, see Knysh (2004).

20. I would like to thank Thomas Zitelmann and Haggai Erlich who provided me with important information about the *Ḥasbashiyya* developed in preliminary drafts of their forthcoming publications.

21. An overview of the *Ḥabashiyya*, with a focus on Lebanon can be found in the article by Hamzeh, A.N., and R.H. Dekmejian (1996).

22. The organisation presents itself on the website www.aicp.org. The website www.anti-habashis presents an opposing view against the interpretation of Islam by the *al-Ḥabash*; the name is programmatic. For recent research on this subject, see Pierret (2005).

23. During this time, approximately two-thirds of the Harari people left the country and settled in Saudi Arabia, Canada, Australia and the USA, where they developed as strong diaspora communities.