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By

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ABSTRACT

THE CONSTRUCTION OF MUSLIM IDENTITIES AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN ZINDER, REPUBLIC OF NIGER

By

Robert S. Glew

Social scientists have long debated the appropriate perspective from which to study cultural phenomena. On one side are objectivist perspectives which focus on structure and the constraints society places on the individual. Conversely, subjectivist approaches centralize the actions of the individual and are thus concerned with the influence the individual has on society. In this study of Muslim identity construction in Zinder, Niger is used as a vehicle for mediating objectivist and subjectivist views of culture. Practice theory provides the framework for the analysis of Muslim identity construction in Zinder which in turn furthers an understanding of the relationship between structure and practice.

Based on data collected in Zinder during individual interviews, group interviews and participant observation, several conclusions emerge. First, a consideration of both objectivist and subjectivist perspectives is important for understanding cultural phenomena. Second, this is evident in the dialectical relationship which exists between structure and practice as seen in the dialectical relationship which exists between society and the individual. And finally, although both perspectives need to be considered, it is by focusing on the actions of individuals that one learns the most about culture.

For Margo, Robbie, Tim and Madeleine

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Hausa Words

adda'a: special prayer done by a malam at the request of a client

alhaji, pl. alhazai: title given to a man who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca

allo, pl. alluna: Qur'anic tablet, usually made of wood

allura: needle used to give an injection

almajiri, pl. almajirai: advanced student of the Qur'an and other religious texts

azumi: the annual fast

azna, or hazna: non-Muslim Hausa

biƙin arme: marriage ceremony

biƙin suna: naming ceremony

birni: walled town or city

boka, pl. bokaye: male traditional healer

bokanci: traditional healing

bokanya, pl. bokaye: female traditional healer

bori: spirit possession

buatu: personal needs

ciƙaƙen Musulmi: devoutly Muslim

cutal iska: spirit-caused illnesses

daji: countryside

ɗan bori, pl. yan bori: male participant in bori performances

ɗarme: to tie up

duba: foreseeing performed by bokaye

fada: the sarki's court

fadawa: the sarki's courtiers

Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo: A Hausa-language newspaper in northern Nigeria

gado: inheritance

gida: home

gwadala: kitchen

hula: hat

ƙarya: lie

kemis: person who sells medicines and pharmaceutical drugs on the street

ƙiri: medicine belt prescribed by bokaye

kwancece: condition in which a fetus stops moving

lahiya: state of well-being

latijo: middle-aged man

latija: middle-aged woman

leya: the celebration following Ramadan

listahara: foreseeing performed by malamai

listahara ta barci: foreseeing performed by malamai during sleep

listahara ta zobe: foreseeing performed by malamai using a ring

magajiya: high ranking female official among the yan bori

magani: medicine

maganin galgajiya: traditional medicine

Maguzawa: one of several terms used to refer to non-Muslim Hausa

mai iskoki, mai aiki da iskoki: person who works with spirits

mai sai da maganin galgajiya: seller of traditional plant medicines

malinci: religious scholarship and other services provided by malamai

mala'eka: angels

malam, pl. malamai: male religious scholar

malama, pl. malamai: female religious scholar

malaman sarki: malamai who are attached to the sarki

maulidi: celebration of the Prophet's birthday

mutuwa: death

neman lahiya: search for well-being

passara: translation and interpretation of text from Arabic to Hausa

roƙon Alla: request of God

rubutan sha: erasure

rumfani: entities which appear and assist malamai during certain types of listahara.

ruwan gishiri: rehydration fluids

sarki: sultan

sarkin bori: leader of the yan bori

tabzi: prayer beads

tamowa: weight loss in a child

tohi: spitting of air done by malamai during adda'a

turare: fumes from burning medicine which are inhaled by patient

wa'izi: public teaching session

wuri: cowry shells

wuridi: special prayer done by a malam at the request of a client

y'al bori, pl. y'an bori: female participant in bori performances

y'an ganye mai sai da magunguna: seller of traditional plant medicines

y'an Izala: label used by Zinderois to refer to reformers

yaro: boy

zabura: startling awake

zakka: the Islamic tithe

zaure: entrance hallway, or room, found in most homes in Zinder.

zawiya: center for religious study

zawo: diarrhea

zongo: encampment

French Words

arrondisement: county

département: major administrative region

dispensaire: dispensary

intégrisme: fundamentalism

prefecture: capital of a major administrative region

Zinderois: the people of Zinder

Chapter 1

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Fieldwork is an encounter, a hesitant grappling of epistemological horns. If I were much the stronger, the Other would hold no interest for me; if the Other were much the stronger, I would have no independent perspective from which to report. What we create if we are both successful, and interested is a mutually comprehensible dialogue, a fusion of horizons, the ground for further conversation, not a unified theory. The potential for self-deception is of course very high here.
- Michael Lambek, *Knowledge and Practice in Mayotte*

Research Questions

This dissertation is about Muslim identity and social change in Zinder, a town with a population of approximately 100,000 people, located in the south-central region of the Republic of Niger. Nearly everyone in Zinder considers him or herself to be a Muslim, however, what constitutes this identity depends on who is asked. This variation in Muslim identity construction in Zinder is a useful vehicle for mediating objectivist and subjectivist views of culture, particularly with respect the following questions:

1. Using practice theory (Bourdieu 1977, 1990) to analyze Muslim identity construction in Zinder, what is the relationship between structure and practice; or, more generally, how can we bridge the gap between objectivist and subjectivist views of culture?

2. How does an anthropology of knowledge (Lambek 1993) further our understanding of this opposition? And what does it contribute to an understanding of how Muslim identities are constructed in Zinder?

The Objectivist/Subjectivist Divide

Social scientists have long debated the appropriate perspective from which to study culture. On one side there are objectivist perspectives which place an emphasis on societal rules and constraints. Objectivist viewpoints thus seek to understand the influence of society on the individual. On the other side, subjectivist positions argue that studies of culture should focus on the creative potential of individuals and their actions; that is, the impact of the individual on society. Various terms which have been used for this structure/practice dichotomy are: **langue /parole** (Saussure 1966), structure/event (Ricoeur 1978), objectivist/subjectivist (Bourdieu 1977, 1990), and culturalist/rationalist (Ortner 1988).

Drawing upon practice theory (Bourdieu 1977, 1990) and Lambek's (1993) anthropology of knowledge, I contend that both structure and practice must be considered to gain an adequate understanding of culture (which in this study is Muslim identity construction in Zinder). Such an analysis reveals that, like structure and practice, individuals and society influence one another. Thus, I use the term "objectivist" in the sense of meaning "structuralist" in a Saussurian sense. By "subjectivist" I mean a perspective which focuses on the actions of individuals and the meaning/significance of those actions.

Bridging the Gap: Bourdieu's Notion of Habitus

Pierre Bourdieu, in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) and *The Logic of Practice* (1990), develops a theory of practice in which he explains the relationship between structure and practice. Bourdieu is concerned with "deep seated antinomies" which, according to Wacquant, "rend social science asunder, including the seemingly irresolvable antagonism between subjectivist and objectivist models of knowledge, . . . " (1992: 3). Bourdieu views subjectivist perspectives as those which emphasize the ability of the individual to have an impact on society by creating social change. Conversely, objectivist approaches, in the eyes of Bourdieu, seek to account for individual thought and action by centralizing the structural constraints society imposes upon individuals. Objectivist approaches thus emphasize structure at the expense of meaning and individual creativity which are manifested in practice. For Bourdieu, the gap between subjective and objective aspects of social life is "a gap between embodied, practical knowledge and apparently objective structures which are amenable to theoretical study" (Postone **et al.** 1993: 2).

Bourdieu represents this relationship through his concept of habitus. Habitus is the site at which structure and practice interact and influence one another, or, as Postone **et al.** characterize habitus, "the dynamic intersection of structure and action, society and the individual" (1993: 4). Bourdieu defines habitus as:

> . . . systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to

> attain them, and being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor (1977: 72).

Through habitus, Bourdieu bridges the gap between structure and practice.[1] The concept of habitus is useful because it suggests a way of understanding the role of structure and practice which does not force one to choose between the two. For understanding Muslim identity construction in Zinder, the concept of habitus provides a means of explaining culture in a way that recognizes the role of both societal structures and individuals' actions. As Postone **et al.** write:

> The notion of habitus enables Bourdieu to analyze behavior of agents as objectively coordinated and regular without being the product of rules, on the one hand, or conscious rationality on the other. It is meant to capture the practical mastery that people have of their social situation, while grounding that mastery socially (1993: 4).

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[1] Bourdieu provides the following example of habitus: . . . in the interaction between two agents or groups of agents endowed with the same habitus (say A and B), everything takes place as if the actions of each of them (say, a1 for A) were organized in relation to the reactions they call forth from any agent possessing the same habitus (say, b1, B's reaction to a1) so that they objectively imply anticipation of the reaction which these reactions in turn call forth (say a2, the reaction to b1). But the teleological description according to which each action has the purpose of making possible the reaction to the reaction it arouses (individual A performing action a1, e.g., a gift exchange, in order to make individual B produce action b1, a counter-gift or riposte, so as to be able to perform action a2, a stepped-up gift or challenge) is quite naive as the mechanistic description which presents the action and the riposted as moments in a sequence of programmed actions produced by a mechanical apparatus. The habitus is the source of these series of moves which are objectively organized as strategies without being the product of a genuine strategic intention - which would presuppose at least that they are perceived as one strategy among other possible strategies (1977: 73).

Sherry Ortner (1989) also acknowledges the need to consider both structure and practice, or what she refers to as "culturalist" and "rationalist" positions. Ortner characterizes practice theory as, "a theory of the relationship between the structures of society and culture on the one hand, and the nature of human action on the other" (1989: 11). Practice theory is an appropriate approach for addressing the nature of the relationship between structure and practice because it ". . . is in itself a theory of translation between an objective world and a subjective one, between a world constituted by logics beyond actors' perceptions, and a world constituted by logics spun by thinking and acting agents" (Ortner 1989: 18).

Lambek's Anthropology of Knowledge

Lambek's theoretical formulations regarding knowledge and practice in Mayotte, an island in the Comoros chain off the north coast of Madagascar, complement Bourdieu and Ortner's ideas regarding a theory of practice which recognizes the dialectical relationship which exists between structure and practice. Like Lambek, I adopt a social constructionist view toward knowledge as developed by Berger and Luckmann who argue, ". . . that reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the process in which this occurs" (1967: 1). The term "reality" is used in the sense of relating to phenomena that are outside our control or phenomena that, as Berger and Luckmann write, "cannot be wished away." Adopting Berger and Luckmann's position, Lambek characterizes knowledge as the certainty that phenomena exist and are identifiable by specific characteristics. "Certainty" then takes precedence over "reality." Understanding people's attitudes toward various forms of knowledge in Zinder is a key to understanding

Muslim identity construction and, hence, the dialectical nature of the relationship between structure and practice.

In Zinder there are various forms of knowledge which are important for understanding the construction of Muslim identities. These forms of knowledge are embodied in religious scholars (**malamai**), followers of an Islamic reform movement, traditional healers (**bokaye**), and spirit possession specialists (**y'an bori**). The **malamai** of Zinder represent the religious authority to most Muslims in the town. Spirit possession (**bori**) is present in Zinder and represents, to non-participants, a purely un-Islamic phenomena. Another form of knowledge is traditional healing (**bokanci**). **Bokaye** provide many of the same services as the **malamai,** but use "traditional" rather than "Islamic" prescriptions. They specialize in treating spirit-caused illnesses and are an acceptable source of treatment for many Muslims, if consulted discreetly. The last form of knowledge I will discuss is represented by the emergence of an Islamic reform movement in Zinder. The reformers reject the practices of the **malamai, bokaye,** and **y'an bori** and claim that all of these forms of knowledge are un-Islamic.

Lambek argues that an anthropology of knowledge must consider how knowledge "is produced, or reproduced, distributed and consumed (that is, applied or internalized), and, conversely, how social limitations are placed upon its growth, transformation, circulation and application" (1993: 10). Recognizing knowledge as a source of power, Lambek shows how the acquisition, use, and control of knowledge have implications for self-identity in Mayotte. As he writes, "A broad spectrum of various kinds of knowledge is used to discover and legitimate personhood, . . . " (1993: 11). Knowledge

thus helps constitute and define persons and social relationships in turn forming social identities.

Lambek draws several conclusions which I also found to hold true for the case of Zinder. He concludes that ". . . things in Mayotte do not fully tie together, . . . there is not a hidden order beneath the surface just waiting for the foreign anthropologist . . . to be mined" (1993: 379). Rather, he describes a "plurality of unities" which are "the fragile, contingent, evanescent products of conversation and practice, the moments of insight, of satisfaction, of closure." Lambek's "plurality of unities" is similar to Landau's (1995) concept of individual cosmologies and has also been referred to as personal pluralism. Of particular relevance for this study, is Lambek's conclusion that people make use of the cultural resources available to them in different ways, reflecting the importance of individual thought and action. Although Lambek acknowledges the importance of considering both structure and practice, he sets forth a view of culture which emphasizes "practice more than structure, conversations or arguments more than axioms or rules" (1993: 400). This is the same position developed by Paul Ricoeur (1978) in his writing on the Saussurian distinction of **langue** and **parole**, and one which I conclude to be the most appropriate for considering Muslim identity construction in Zinder as well.

Practice Theory and Social Change

In addition to shedding light on the relationship between structure and practice, I draw upon practice theory to answer what Ortner has characterized as "the simplest-seeming, and yet largest questions that social science seeks to answer: Why does a given society have a particular form at a particular

moment - that form and not some other" (1989: 193)? Also, because societies change, how do individuals, or groups of individuals, initiate, influence, and direct change? Such an approach requires a consideration of history. For Bourdieu, it is the actions/practices of individuals which deviate from the "rules" that lead to social change. In his theory of practice, "Existing patterns of thought are rejected, prevailing rituals discarded, new roles invented; conflicts break out, and projects of resistance are launched-all indicate the incessant play of human practices" (Oberoi 1994: 28). The challenge to the researcher is to find out what the relationship is between these practices and the social, political and economic context of a society (Oberoi 1994).

In Chapter 4 I analyze historical eras in Zinder and explain different conceptions of what it meant to be a Muslim at different points in history. We see how Islam, just as today, was a resource that was contested. Various conceptions of Muslim identity were viewed as advantageous by some people but a threat by others. Drawing upon historical sources we can understand how various Muslim identities were created, maintained, and reproduced. History, however, also teaches us how individuals or groups of individuals working together bring about social change. A diachronic perspective allows us to see the results of individuals' actions in the past, and thus understand how change came about. As an anthropologist doing field work in Zinder, I experienced this process taking place in the contemporary setting. A synchronic perspective therefore enables me to compare lived experience with the results of history.

Identity Politics and its Relevance for this Study

The term "identity" appears frequently in the recent social science literature and is used in a variety of contexts. As Rajchman (1995) notes, the debate over multiculturalism and political correctness has led scholars to problematize the use of the term "identity." Much of this work focuses on aspects of ethnic, national, and racial identity.

In this dissertation I use Muslim identity construction as a means of mediating contrasting objectivist (structure-focused) and subjective (practice-focused) approaches to the study of culture. I am not so much concerned with an analysis of identity politics in general, or why this has become such a prominent topic of study. Rather, I am interested in Muslim identity construction in Zinder to the extent that it is an analytical tool for understanding the relationship between structure and practice, and bridging the gap between objectivist and subjectivist views of culture. I am also concerned with self consciousness and the concept of self, which, as we will see, plays a central role in this study. The failure of anthropology to focus on the influence of the individual on society is a concern here. As Cohen (1994) has recently articulated, taking account of self consciousness (an individual's self-awareness) is a key to understanding the relationship of the individual to society. Such a position does not deny the importance of the influence society has on the individual, but rather highlights the dialectical nature of the relationship which exists between individuals and societies. This point will be developed by considering George Herbert Mead's (1964) characterization of self.

Identity Defined

By "identity" I mean several things. First, I conceptualize identity as an historical process. As such, identity must be considered in terms of the ways differing conceptions of what it means, or has meant, to be a Muslim were created, maintained, and reproduced (Oberoi 1994).

Second, I mean the beliefs and practices of people which create distinctions between themselves and others in society. Thus, "Muslim identities" refers to the existence of a diverse array of beliefs and practices which create distinctions among Muslims in Zinder.

And finally, I view identity as a process of naming. As we will see, identity is a process in which individuals label themselves, label others, and are labeled by others (Brenner 1993). Considering identity in these ways provides a framework for applying practice theory in an attempt to further an understanding of Muslim identity construction in Zinder and, in so doing, mediate the opposition between objectivist and subjectivist views of culture.

The Negotiable Quality of Identity

Lambek (1993) notes that the attitudes people hold toward various forms of knowledge change over time depending upon the needs, interests, and goals of the individual. He makes the important point that a person may have different views of a given form of knowledge at different times. I would also emphasize the ability of people to have different attitudes toward a given form of knowledge at the same point in time, but in different contexts, which also contributes to the negotiable quality of identity.

In Zinder, individuals hold different attitudes toward, and make use of, various forms of knowledge in different ways at different times. As we will see, past experiences, advice from family members and friends, or

desperation are some of the factors which influence individual thought and action.

The concept of individual cosmology (Landau 1995), or personal pluralism, reflects the multitude of ways in which different forms of knowledge are viewed and called upon in Zinder. In negotiating a Muslim identity, people are aware of the various views other individuals in Zinder, with whom they interact, hold regarding the different forms of knowledge. As a result, identities may change, depending on the context of the situation. Berger, for example, writes that, "In so far as he [or she] is able, the individual will try to manipulate his [or her] affiliations . . . in such a way as to fortify the identities that have given him [or her] satisfaction in the past . . . " (1963: 102). More recently Appiah and Gates (1995) have pointed to the negotiable quality of social identities as an area in need of further research. As they note, "each identity, however central it is to our self-conceptions, may in some situations simply not be the one we need" (1995: 6). While accepting Reisman's (1986) emphasis on adopting a phenomenological approach when studying personhood, Jackson and Karp (1990) also comment on the relevance of a "praxaeological" perspective. Such a perspective, they argue, includes "an interest not only in how people construct *meaning* in social life, but in how people use and negotiate those meanings in *action* and *interaction*" (1990: 27). A phenomenological approach is seen as a way of describing and analyzing this focus. The manipulation of identity reflects individuals' ability to conceptualize themselves, and also the ability to conceptualize the way in which others perceive us.

The Concepts of "Self" and "Other"

Mead's concepts of "self" and "other" exemplify our ability to view ourselves through the eyes of others. He notes that as humans we experience ourselves "from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group or from the generalized standpoint of the social group as a whole . . . " (1964: 202). Therefore, according to Mead, we do not experience ourselves directly, but rather indirectly through the generalized other. This is important for understanding Muslim identity construction in Zinder and, as we will see, is useful for understanding the actions of individuals.

Mead divides the self into two components which he labels the "I" and the "me." The "I" represents the uncontrolled and impulsive aspect of the self. The "me" is the generalized other aspect of the self, and allows us to experience ourselves indirectly. In Mead's words, "Social control is the expression of the 'me' against the expression of the 'I'" (1964: 238-239). The combination of the "I" and the "me" thus "constitute a personality as it appears in social space" (Mead 1964: 233).

Mead's "I"/"me" dichotomy parallels the relationship between structure and practice. The "I" represents the self-interest driven individual who has the potential to act on impulse. The "I" is mediated by the "me" which acts, or is aware of, societal rules and thus places constraints on the individual. What an individual actually does, that is the resulting act, is the result of the "I" tempering the "me." These two components of self show how structure and practice lead to social action.

Mead's concept of self reveals that individuals experience how others perceive them. He thus shows how individuals have the ability to view themselves "from the standpoint of the social group as a whole," of which

they are a part (1964: 202). This potential for reflexive thinking is responsible for the ability in humans to manipulate aspects of their social being, which thus allows us to negotiate; that is, create and recreate social identities.

A conceptualization of self in this manner complements Bourdieu's notion of habitus by emphasizing the subconscious nature of human action and, hence, identity negotiation. For Mead, the structure governed "me" guides the impulse, self-interest driven "I" by providing a framework based on societal expectations. Individuals, however, are not necessarily conscious of this process. Thus, just as Bourdieu's habitus emphasizes the subconscious nature of the interaction between structure and practice, Mead's concept of self does the same.

Muslim Identity Construction as a Vehicle for Understanding the Structure/Practice Dichotomy

In order to understand the nature of the relationship between structure and practice in the study of cultural phenomena, I have discussed the need to consider both sides of the dichotomy. Whereas objectivist approaches have emphasized the role of structure at the expense of practice, subjectivist approaches have undervalued the role of structure by focusing on practice. Rather than view the structure/practice dichotomy as an either/or decision, I have suggested, drawing upon the work of Bourdieu, Ortner, and Lambek, the necessity of realizing the role of both structure and practice. I support the notion that structure and practice exist in a dialectical relationship with one another. My analysis of Muslim identity construction in Zinder serves as a testing ground for this view. In this study, I look at how people negotiate Muslim identity, which reveals the structure/practice dialectic.

Outline of the Dissertation

In the following chapter I describe contemporary Zinder, the research site for the study, and provide a brief history of the town. In Chapter 3 I discuss the methods I used to collect data for the dissertation.

In Chapter 4 I conceptualize identity as an historical process and analyze, from a diachronic perspective, what it has meant to be a "Muslim" in Zinder at specific points in history. In so doing, I begin to address the theoretical concerns of the dissertation I outlined earlier in this chapter. The relevance of considering both structure and practice when studying culture, and the dialectical relationship which exists between structure and practice are analyzed, and emerge here in an historical context. I also show how different conceptions of "Muslimness" or Muslim identity were created, maintained, and reproduced over time. This accounts for the individuals, or groups of individuals, who initiated, influenced, and directed change. Thus, in Chapter 4 I am concerned with the results of the struggles which have taken place over Islam, as opposed to the focus of the following chapters, in which I analyze the process itself.

In Chapters 5, 6, and 7 I begin my analysis of the contemporary situation by presenting ethnographic data on the people who embody the various forms of knowledge in Zinder. Muslim identity in these chapters refers to contrasting beliefs and practices which create distinctions among Muslims in Zinder. In Chapter 5 I discuss the **malamai** and the types of services they provide to clients based on the principle of **rokon Alla**. The leaders and followers of the Islamic reform movement, who claim the **malamai**'s practices are un-Islamic, are the subject of Chapter 6. Chapter 7

contains descriptive material on the role of the **bokaye** and **y'an bori** in Zinder society. A background knowledge of the **malamai**, reformers, **bokaye**, and **y'an bori** is necessary for understanding my analysis of the contemporary setting in Chapters 8 and 9.

The core theoretical issues of the dissertation are returned to, and are the focus of, Chapters 8 and 9. In Chapter 8 I consider identity as a process of naming (Brenner 1993), and as Lambek has done for the case of Mayotte, analyze the attitudes people hold toward the various forms of knowledge discussed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. I also consider how people, who represent and embody these forms of knowledge, view one another. Considering identity in this manner shows how various constructions of Muslim identity have underlying social, political, and economic motivations. This analysis reveals the dialectical relationship between individuals and society Finally, following Ricoeur (1978) and Lambek (1993), I suggest that while both objectivist and subjectivist views of culture need to be considered, ultimately a consideration of individuals' actions provide the most interesting information for further an understanding of Muslim identity construction in Zinder.

The focus on these theoretical issues continues in Chapter 9. Through the use of case studies, I show the utility of Bourdieu's habitus and Mead's concept of self and their relevance for considering individuals' actions. This analysis highlights the negotiable quality of Muslim identity in Zinder and the often times subconscious nature of this negotiation. The dialectical relationship between structure and practice continues to emerge, as does the dialectical relationship between individuals and society. Analyzing people's actions further suggests that although a consideration of both structure and

practice is needed, looking at people's actions is most useful for furthering an understanding of Muslim identity construction in Zinder.

Based on my research in Zinder, I conclude in Chapter 10 that an adequate understanding of Muslim identity construction depends on both subjectivist and objectivist viewpoints. Based on the case of Zinder, it is clear that structure and practice influence one another, as seen in the dialectical relationship which exists between individuals and society. Furthermore, my data show that, as Ricoeur (1978) and Lambek (1993) argue, although both structure and practice must be considered, we learn the most about culture by looking at what people do.

Chapter 2

GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY AND OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH SITE

The Global Resurgence of Islam

Muslim societies in Niger, like Muslim societies in other parts of West Africa and the world, continually face the challenge of presenting themselves as a unified global community of believers in the face of regional diversity. This diversity is reflected in the various ways Islam is manifested throughout the world. Esposito (1988), for example, has commented on the "fictional unity" of the Islamic community. More recently, Watts (1996) has described the "fissiparous nature" of the Muslim world. More generally, Anderson (1983) argues that all religious communities are "imagined communities" reflecting the variation which exists in all religions.

Studies of Islam in individual societies, or what Eickelman (1982) calls "the study of Islam in local contexts," have explored this variation. Studying Islam in local contexts shows that, in addition to regional diversity, there are also differing constructions of Muslim identity within individual societies; that is, as Gilsenan (1982) and Lewis (1986) have demonstrated, there may be several forms of Islam operating in a given society.

The broader context in which contemporary studies of Muslim societies are conducted is the global resurgence of Islam. Esposito (1988)

points out the importance of the "Islamic revolution" which took place in Iran in 1979 and inspired an intensification of the practice of Islam in many Muslim societies. This resurgence has been given various labels, none of which, according to Hodgkin (1990), accurately represent what has, and is, taking place. She cites terms such as: the Islamic revival, Islamic reformism, Islamic radicalism, fundamentalism, **intégrisme**, Islamicism and Islamism which are commonly used in Western languages to refer to this resurgence of Islam (1990: 74).

Hodgkin finds it useful to distinguish between two types of movements within this resurgence, which she labels "Islamic resurgence" and "Islamism." Both of these movements are relevant to understanding Muslim identity construction in Zinder. "Islamic resurgence," according to Hodgkin, refers to ". . . an increase in religious observance and fervour among many sectors of the population, especially in the towns, . . ." (1990: 74). In contrast, "Islamism," is "a modern and intellectual movement to bring Islam into every aspect of human life, political, economic and cultural" (1990: 74). The ideological foundation of "Islamism" involves three principles which are: a stricter adherence to the practice of Islam as dictated by the Qur'an, a purification of Islam via the elimination of innovative practices, and a purification of the state by adopting Islamic law, thus creating an Islamic state. Muslims, she concludes, who are part of an "Islamic resurgence," but not supporters of "Islamism," find themselves involved in a struggle "over the possession of Islam and the validity of different Islamic identities" (1990: 74). As we will see, this is precisely what is happening today in Zinder.

In Zinder, with the exception of a very few Christians, everyone labels

him or herself "Muslim." This includes the **malamai,** who are the religious authority of the town for most majority Muslims. The **malamai** and majority Muslims adhere to a form of Islam which is based on the core principle of **roƙon Alla,** the belief that the **malamai,** through intensive study and dedication to their faith, have achieved a "closeness to God" (**kusa da Alla**). As a result, the **malamai** are able to make requests of God, and thus provide people with special services including protective and curative amulets (**layu**), Qur'anic erasure (**rubutan sha**), divination (**listahara**), and special prayers (**wuridi** and **adda'a**). Supporters of the Islamic reform movement in Zinder reject these practices. In addition to the **malamai** and reformers, the community also includes traditional healers (**bokaye**), who have specialized knowledge of, and the ability to treat, spirit-caused illnesses, and the **y'an bori,** people who participate in spirit-possession ceremonies (**bori**). Thus, in Zinder there is a wide range of beliefs and practices which people consider part of a given Muslim identity.

Recently, the debate between the reformers and **malamai**/majority Muslims has led to both sides labeling the other "non-Muslims." Because a Muslim identity is one of the most important aspects of a person's social identity in Zinder, the use of the label "non-Muslim" generates an emotional response from the person, or group of people, being labeled. The question of what constitutes Muslim identity was historically represented by the **malamai**'s critique of the **bokaye** and **y'an bori,** whom the **malamai** viewed, and continue to view, as "non-Muslims." Recently, the **malamai** themselves have been criticized by reformers who claim the services **malamai** provide to majority Muslims are innovations and hence un-Islamic. The **malamai** now find themselves being labeled "non-Muslims" by the reformers, who argue

that the **malamai** have deviated from the "true" practice of Islam. It is in this debate that we see Hodgkin's distinction between "Islamic resurgence" and "Islamism," with the **malamai** being associated with "Islamic resurgence" and the reformers with "Islamism."

The increase in the attention paid to religious observance that began in Zinder in the mid-1970s is characteristic of an "Islamic resurgence." Beginning in the 1970s, and continuing into the 1980s, there was an increase in Zinder in the number of Qur'anic schools and number of students attending those schools. In addition, girls began attending Qur'anic schools in larger numbers. The number of Friday mosques in Zinder also increased from one in the mid-1970s to five today. Also during this period, the **malamai** gained ground in persuading people in Zinder to stop attending **bori** performances. This resurgence was likely intensified by President Kountche's conscientious efforts to forge a national Islamic identity in Niger (see Chapter 4). This increased attention to Islamic practice clearly indicates that Zinder has, since the mid-1970s, experienced an "Islamic resurgence."

In 1991 Niger made a transition from military rule to an elected government.[1] With this transition came new liberties in the areas of freedom of association and speech. It was at this time that the reform movement emerged in Zinder, and subsequently spread to other regions of Niger. This movement, with parallels to other reform movements in West Africa, has been labeled "Wahhabiyya" by non-followers. It is based on a rejection of the principle of **rokon Alla**, and, hence, the rejection of many of the beliefs and practices of the **malamai** and majority Muslims in Zinder.

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[1] In February 1996 a military coup lead by Ibrahim Mainassara Bare overthrew this government.

Leaders of the reform movement in Zinder founded an Islamic association named the Association for the Diffusion of Islam in Niger (ADINI) in Zinder in 1991, and established their own Friday mosque. This reform movement typifies Hodgkin's concept of "Islamism," as it is modern, intellectual, and has as its goal the introduction of Islam (as they view it) into all aspects of society.

Because of the differences between "Islamic resurgence" and "Islamism," Hodgkin argues that it is not possible to consider either as a single, unified movement. The result in Zinder is a lively debate between reformers and majority Muslims over what Islam is, and what Muslims should and should not do. It is in the context of these two movements that I collected data for this study.

Zinder: A Center of Islamic Culture in South-Central Niger

The German traveler Heinrich Barth recorded the following description of Zinder during his brief visit to the town in 1854:

> The situation of Zinder is peculiar and interesting. A large mass of rocks starts forth from the area of the town on the west side, while others are scattered in ridges round about the town, so that a rich supply of water collects at a short depth below the surface, fertilizing a good number of tobacco-fields, and giving the vegetation around a rich character (1965 [1857]: 73).

While the characteristic rock formations described by Barth remain, the lush vegetation and abundant water supply have given way to an arid landscape which now surrounds Zinder. Today, it is common for the fields surrounding Zinder to produce low yields of millet, the staple food of people in the region. Low annual rainfalls have made farming in the area

unpredictable and added to the economic hardships experienced by the people of Zinder in the past decade. The failure of the government to pay civil servant salaries on a regular basis, and the devaluation of the CFA in January 1994, have had a severe negative effect on the local economy.[2] The 50% devaluation of the CFA was especially devastating as it undercut the economic advantage traders in Zinder had in doing business with their Nigerian counterparts to the south. As a result, all goods imported from Nigeria, which account for many of the goods found in Zinder, have increased significantly in price. This, combined with the failure of civil servants to regularly receive their salaries, has caused an especially difficult situation.

As one enters Zinder today, the town appears generally calm, except for Thursdays, the official market day, when the roads are congested with people bringing goods to market on foot, and via taxis, bicycles, camels, donkeys and ox drawn carts. On other days there are relatively few cars on the roads, and even taxis are becoming increasingly difficult to find. This is because owners of the cars are unable to pay for repairs. During the day the town is hot and dry, with temperatures dropping a bit at night, enough to require the use of a blanket during the cold season in the months of December, January and February.

The town is characterized primarily by one story homes and buildings, often made from sun dried mud bricks. The center of town boasts a few banks, modest hotels, a post office and the mayor's office. Just to the south of the center of town are regional governmental offices. Niger is divided into

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[2] On January 11, 1994 members of the **Communaute Financiere Africaine** (CFA) devalued the CFA franc by 50%.

seven administrative districts called **départements**, analogous to U.S. states, which are each divided into sub-regional administrative districts known as **arrondisements**. Each **département** has an administrative center and Zinder is the seat, or **prefecture**, for the **département** of Zinder (see Figure 2.1). The town has a large high school and numerous middle and primary schools.

Zinder has a reputation of being a conservative center of Islamic culture in Niger; conservative in the sense of being stable and resistant to change. This conservative nature of the town stems from the belief that the practice of Islam in Zinder (as represented by the **malamai** and majority Muslims) has developed because of the efforts of preceding generations to instill religious values. As we will see, this is one of the reasons that the recently emerged reform movement in Zinder has met strong resistance from the **malamai** and majority Muslims.

Zinder's people represent a mixture of Hausa, Kanuri, Tuareg and Fulani peoples who, since its founding in 1812, came to settle in the town and surrounding area. This blending of cultures through time gives Zinder a cosmopolitan flavor in which ethnic distinctions become less important than one's place of origin (Dunbar 1970). Thus, while the people of Zinder are Hausa-speaking, they come from various ethnic backgrounds. Rather than refer to Zinder's inhabitants as "Hausa," I prefer to use the French term **Zinderois** or simply "the people of Zinder." These alternatives indicate that although the town is "Hausa" in the sense that its people speak Hausa, its population consists of a mixture of numerous cultures which have come together over the past 180 years.[3]

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[3] See Miles (1993) for a guide to the literature regarding the various meanings of the term "Hausa."

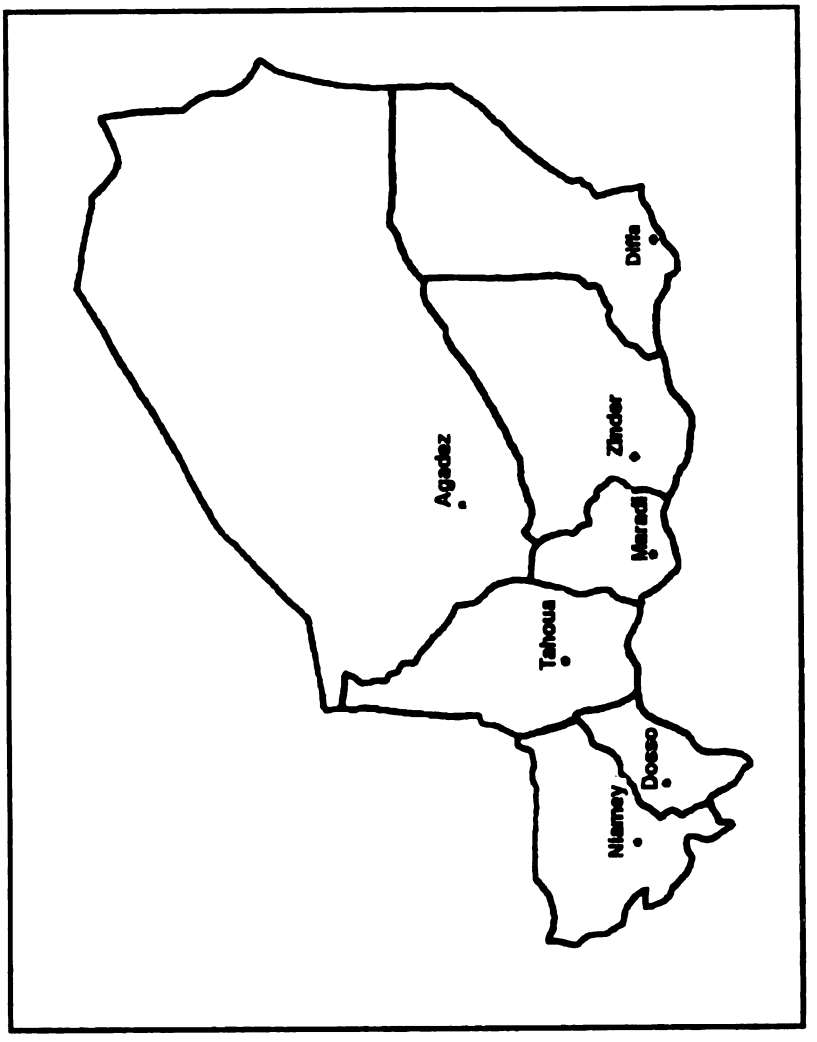

Figure 2.1 - Niger and the Seven Départements

Zinderois regard their town as the **coeur d'Islam**, or heart of Islam, in Niger, and are proud of its reputation as a center of Islamic culture. Archival documents from the colonial period support the view that Islam has played an important role in the lives of the people of Zinder since the turn of the twentieth century. The Islamization of Zinder occurred at a later period in comparison to other nearby regions such as northern Nigeria. Initially founded as a small settlement in the early nineteenth century, Zinder grew steadily in size and power until the arrival of the French, just before the turn of the twentieth century. During this time, Zinder became the capital of the kingdom of Damagaram which extended its influence in the region, claiming territories in all directions (see Figure 2.2).

The settlement was initially made up of Kanuri and Hausa-speaking people at the time it was founded in 1812. It grew into a fortified walled town (**birni**) under the reign of Tanimu (1851- 1884)[4], just after the middle of the nineteenth century. Shortly after its founding, Tuaregs established settlements directly north of Zinder in an area which became known as **zongo** (or **zengou**, as it is referred to in the colonial archival materials), a Hausa word meaning "encampment." The various groups of Kel Owi Tuaregs were encouraged to settle there by the ruler of Zinder. Their presence had importance for Zinder's involvement in trade along the desert-side networks (Baier and Lovejoy 1975). The two communities, one a mixture of Kanuri and Hausa-speaking people, and the other Tuareg, developed close ties over

[4] Dates following the leaders refer to the period of their rule.

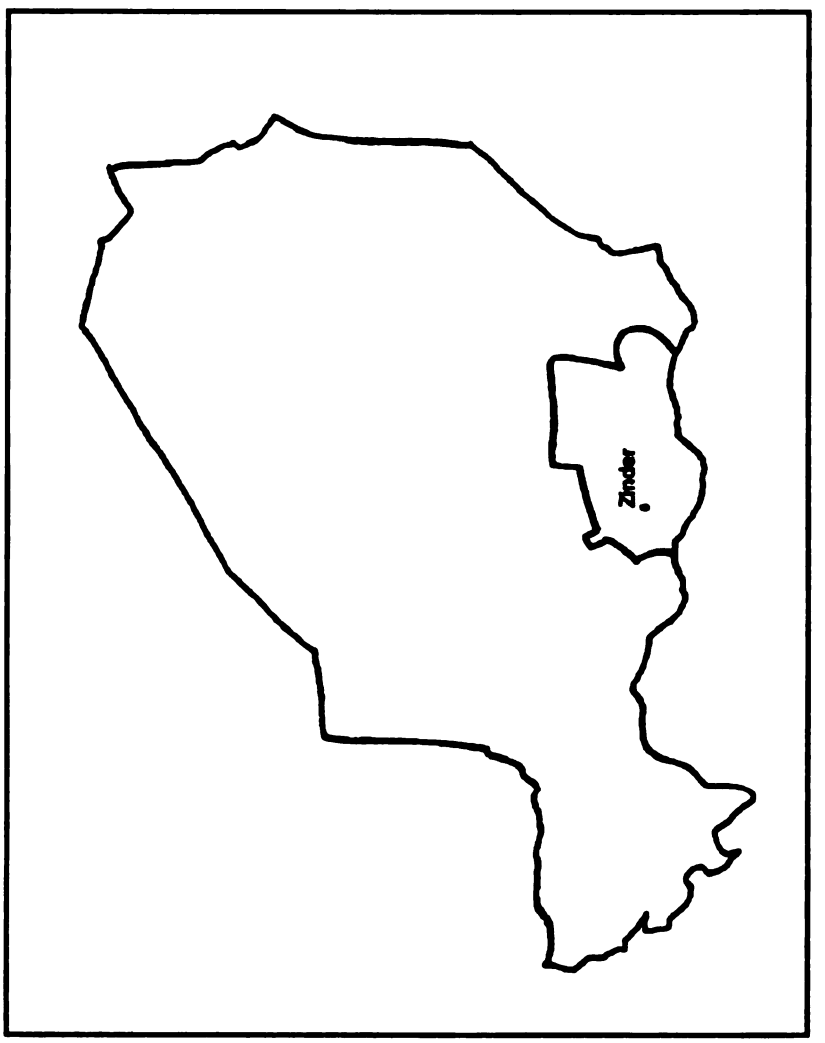

Figure 2.2 - Approximate Boundary of Damagaram in the Nineteenth Century
Source: Salifou (1971)

time through intermarriage, military exploits and trade interests (Dunbar 1970). As the population of these settlements grew through the nineteenthand twentieth centuries, the Birni and Zongo came to form the core of what is the modern day town of Zinder (see Figure 2.3).

In the nineteenth century Zinder benefited from its geographic location with regard to the two large political entities in the region, the Sokoto Caliphate and the Empire of Bornu. Warfare between the Sokoto Caliphate and Bornu made it difficult for the empire of Bornu to control its northwestern territories, which included Zinder. By the mid-nineteenth century Zinder had achieved semi-autonomous status in relation to Bornu (Brenner 1973). Over the second half of the nineteenth century Zinder loosened Bornu's control, and ultimately gained independence in 1893 (Dunbar 1970).

During the rise of the Sokoto Caliphate in the nineteenth century, Zinder remained on the northern fringe of the Caliphate. Zinder benefited economically from Dan Fodio's jihad as trans-Saharan trade routes which had formerly terminated in Katsina shifted east to Kano. Passage along the route to Katsina was unsafe due to fighting in the region between the Caliphate and those who fled north from Katsina to Maradi and Gobir (Dunbar 1970, Baier 1980). Zinder then became a stopping point on the route between Tripoli and Kano (see Figure 2.4). The economic impacts of this were far reaching as Zinder experienced unparalleled economic growth. Barth, for example, remarked that Zinder's commercial importance could earn it the title, "Gate of the Soudán" (1965 [1857]: 73).

The expansionist policy of the dynasty continued through the middle of the nineteenth century. Under the reign of Tanimu, Damagaram's forces

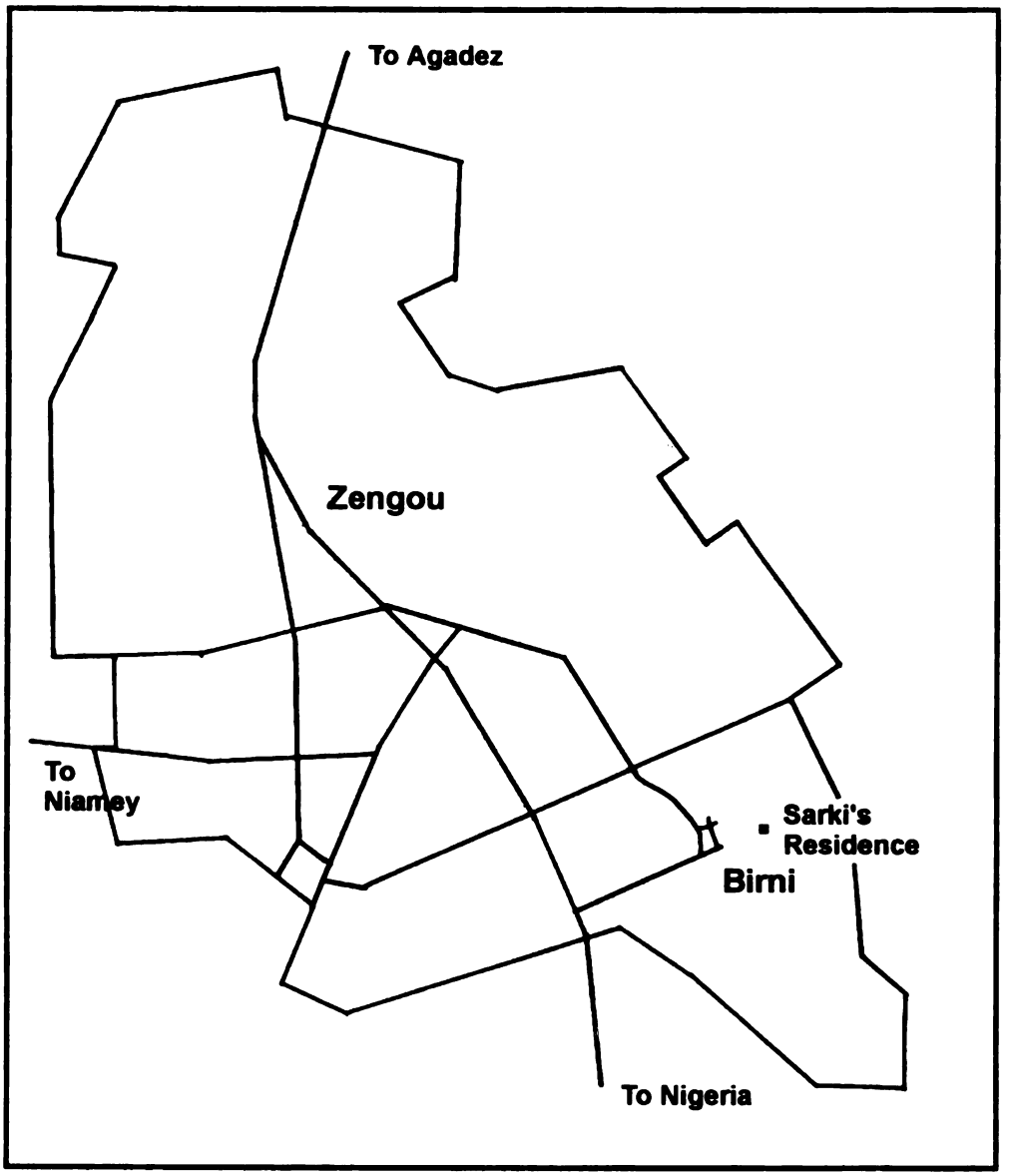

Figure 2.3 - Contemporary Zinder
Source: **Service des Plans**, Zinder

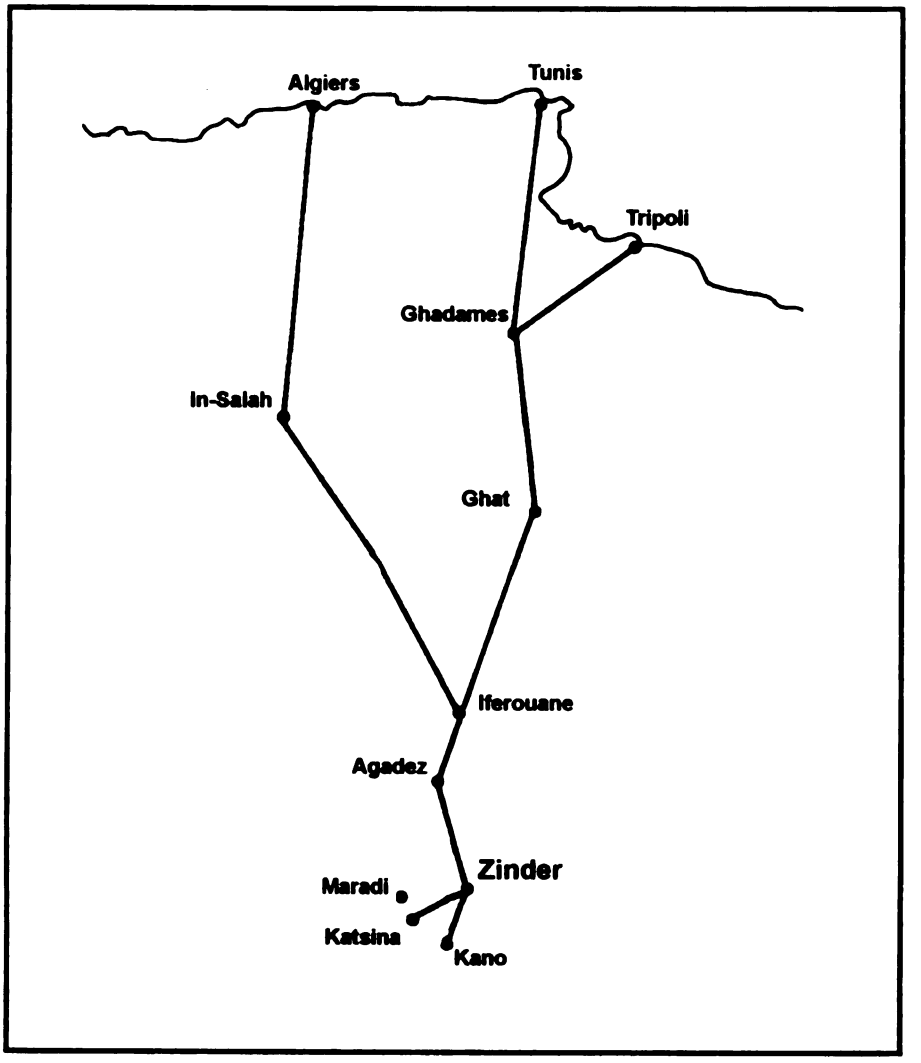

Figure 2.4 - Trans-Saharan Trade Routes
Source: Adapted from Grégoire (1992)

expanded the boundaries of the empire to the east, and also made raids into the territories of Bornu and the Sokoto Caliphate. It was during Tanimu's reign that Fulani, who previously were few in number in Zinder, arrived and began to settle near the town. Thus, the size and diversity of the population of Zinder continued to grow.

It is Tanimu who is credited with formally implementing the practice of Islam in Zinder. Just after the middle of the nineteenth century, Tanimu invited a well-known and highly respected Qur'anic scholar, named Malam Suleiman, to live in Zinder. Suleiman, who was originally from Gobi, butcame to Zinder after having spent over nine years in Katsina and Kano, assisted Tanimu with the implementation of Islamic principles in the lives of **Zinderois** (Dunbar 1970, Salifou 1971).

In 1898 the first French officials arrived in Zinder. The mission, known as the **Mission du Haut-Soudan**, was led by Marius Gabriel Cazemajou. After purchasing supplies to continue his journey east, Cazemajou and another French official were killed in Zinder. In retribution, the French sent a second mission the following year, the **Mission Afrique Centrale**, to capture those responsible for the deaths of the French officers and claim the region as a protectorate of France. The Mission arrived in July of 1899 and executed Ahmadu (1893-1899), the **sarkin** Damagaram.

The arrival of the French marked an end to Damagaram as it had existed in the nineteenth century. The French put a halt to the violent methods used by the **sarki** to collect taxes in the sultanate. This action reduced the income of the **sarki**, and greatly reduced his ability to participate in long distance trade. Also, he no longer had enough capital to fund the administration of Damagaram (Fugelstad 1983). French taxes further reduced

profits, which were already low as a result of the declining trans-Saharan trade. The alleged plot to overthrow the French in 1906 resulted in the exiling of **sarki**, Ahmadu (1899-1906) and end of the sultanate as it had existed during the nineteenth century.

Until the arrival of the French, the political, economic, and religious structures of Zinder were controlled by a diarchy consisting of the **sarki** and his corps of elite **malamai**, known as **malaman sarki**. This was different from other Muslim societies in West Africa (such as those in Senegal, Mauritania and northern Nigeria), where Islamic orders, most notably the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya, provided the political and religious organizational framework.

Zinder was without a **sarki** until 1922, when the French appointed Mustapha (1922-1950) to the position of **sarkin** Zinder. In reinstating a **sarki**, albeit a **sarki** void of his previous authority, the French were careful to select a person who would be willing to fulfill their demands. The ascension of Mustapha marked the beginning of an era in which the French would enjoy amicable relations with the ruler of Zinder. In 1935, for example, Mustapha was given the rank of **Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur** by the French for his loyal service, and visited France as well. Similarly, at the end of Ramadan in 1950, Mustapha made the following statement:

> We are all united here by the same voice, the voice of God. May God give us health, peace and a good winter planting season. May God support France and its flag, may God place it in first place before the world. The Qur'an is powerful, just and generous. Yesterday we were France, today we are France, tomorrow we will remain France and we will always be France. (ANN4E3.5).

During the colonial period the French carefully monitored the **malamai** in Zinder. The French feared religiously inspired uprisings

originating in Zinder, but also from regions outside their control. No such uprisings occurred in the town, and Zinder remained calm throughout the colonial period.

Following the exiling of the **sarki** and some of his prominent **malamai** in 1906, the diarchy consisting of the **sarki** and the **malaman sarki** ceased to have the political, religious, and economic power it previously had. The French took political control, and the religious authority was decentralized. The religious authority became distributed throughout Zinder as **malamai** other than those attached to the **sarki**, rose in prominence.

The authority of the **malamai** in Zinder was based on a belief in the principle of **roƙon Alla**. Recall that **roƙon Alla** is the belief that by interiorizing and intensifying the practice of Islam, a person is able to gain a direct understanding of God (in the sense of forming a special relationship with God). Those who attain such a position earn the title **malamai**, who, because of their specialized knowledge of the Qur'an and other religious texts, have a special relationship with God. This "closeness to God" allows them to make requests of God on behalf of others. This belief, which has been an important characteristic of Islam in Zinder throughout the twentieth century, continues today.

Because of their ability to make requests of God, the **malamai** can offer a variety of services to clients, including: amulets (**layu**), made from verses of the Qur'an and other liturgical material; erasure (**rubutan sha**), made by rinsing writing off a Qur'anic board which is then drunk; foreseeing (**listahara**); and special prayers (**wuridi** and **adda'a**), done at the request of clients to meet their personal needs (**buƙatu**). Majority Muslims in Zinder believe in the **malamai**'s abilities to perform these services. The services are

requested for a variety of reasons, including treatment of illness, to bring good fortune, or, in the case of **listahara**, to learn about the future. The services people request reflect their concerns for the short term, but also, as we will see, concerns for the long term.

Before the emergence of the Islamic reform movement in 1991, it was the **malamai** who accused others of being "non-Muslim;" primarily, the **bokaye** and **y'an bori**. While much of this criticism was based on the argument that **bokanci** and **bori** were un-Islamic, it will also be seen that the **bokaye** and **y'an bori** provide services similar to those provided by the **malamai**. Thus, the **bokaye** and **y'an bori** were, and continue to be, in competition for clients with the **malamai**.

Today, most **Zinderois** do not attend **bori** performances under any circumstances. There is, however, a small community, made up primarily of immigrants, in which people continue to practice **bori**. People in Zinder explained that the frequency of **bori** performances began to decline in the mid-1970s. It appears that around that time the **malamai**, long time critics of **bori**, finally succeeded in convincing people in Zinder that **bori** ceremonies, which typically include drumming, dancing and spirit possession, were outside the sphere of Islam. This coincided with the period of Islamic resurgence discussed earlier.

Most majority Muslims in Zinder, however, continue to believe in spirits who are capable of causing illnesses in humans. The treatment of such illnesses now often falls into the hands of the **bokaye**. Unlike **bori** performances, **bokaye** consult their clients discreetly in private consultations. The **malamai**, however, have so far been unable to persuade people to stop consulting **bokaye**. Recent events, however, have caused the **malamai** to

redirect their attention in the direction of the reformers, who threaten what have been core Islamic principles for themselves and majority Muslims in Zinder.

Summary

Fieldwork for this study was conducted in the south-central Nigerien town of Zinder. The former captial of the nineteenth century sultanate of Damagaram, Zinder has long been recognized as a center of Islamic culture in Niger. Zinder is a particularly appropriate setting for a study of Muslim identity construction because, using Hodgkin's terminology, movements representing "Islamic resurgence" and "Islamism" are occurring simultaneously in the town. The "Islamic resurgence," which is led by the **malamai** and began in the 1970s, involves a struggle over the institution of Islam with reformers who embody "Islamism." The result is a dynamic and multi-faceted debate between members of both movements regarding Muslim identity.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The relationship between informant and anthropologist is somewhat analogous to a pedagogical relationship, in which the master must bring to the state of explicitness, for the purposes of transmission, the unconscious schemes of his practice.
- Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*

Introduction

This dissertation is based on data which I collected during interviews with individuals, interviews with groups of people and through participant observation in Zinder, Niger in 1994-95. Important historical materials were consulted in the **Archives Nationales du Niger** located in Niamey, the **Archives Départementales** in Zinder and the **Archives Nationales, Centre des Archives d'Outre Mer** in Aix-en-Provence, France.

Before beginning my fieldwork in Niger, I received approval from the Michigan State University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) and followed the committee's guidelines regarding data collection from informants. These guidelines are intended to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects of research. I received permission to conduct research in Niger from the proper government officials at the Ministry of the Interior in Niamey as well as the local government official in Zinder. Following the Nigerien government's regulations regarding

conducting research in Niger, a copy of this dissertation will be provided to the **Institut pour la Recherche en Sciences Humaines** (IRSH) in Niamey.

Maintaining Informants' Anonymity

What constitutes being a Muslim in Zinder is a controversial topic and can lead to emotional debates between people holding contrasting views. The debate over this question has, in some instances, led to violent confrontations and in other cases divided families. In one instance, a father drove his son from their home after he learned the son had adopted the reformers' point of view. My discussions with those I interviewed about Muslim identity thus required a sensitivity for this situation. Because I cannot be sure of the possible repercussions of attributing data to informants, I feel it necessary to maintain the anonymity of all my informants. The most crucial requirement of this study was my ability to engage people in frank discussions regarding their views on Islam, as well as traditional beliefs and practices. I did this by assuring anonymity to the people I interviewed.

The Importance of Speaking Hausa

I conducted my interviews in Hausa, which I studied through the advanced level at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and spoke on a daily basis in Zinder from 1988-90, while living in the town as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Speaking to people in Hausa had implications which went beyond having the ability to conduct interviews in the language of the region. Speaking Hausa showed people that I had made a commitment to understanding them, and that I was interested in them enough to learn their language. Speaking Hausa gave us something in common and, in a sense,

made me a little bit like them. It also allowed me to have access to their perspectives through the medium of their own language, thus granting me direct access to their own distinctions and categories and not indirectly through a translator. Also, having visited Zinder in 1987, and lived there from 1988-90, people viewed me as a part-time resident of the town. This gave them the sense that I had more than a passing interest in their lives.

Working With Research Assistants

Upon my arrival in Zinder, I presented myself to the local government official and then proceeded to the **sarki** of Zinder's palace, where I explained the nature of my study to the **sarki**. The **sarki** , Mr. Aboubakar Sanda, assisted me in finding a modest house with a small compound in the Birni. Although I did not have running water, I was grateful to one of my neighbors, who ran a wire from his house to mine, so I could have electricity to read and write at night. My house was in the shadow of the large Friday mosque, adjacent to the **sarki**'s palace. As a result, I did not have to use an alarm clock, as the morning call to prayer woke me daily at sunrise.

During interviews I was assisted by three research assistants. Ousmane Nadali, an aspiring **malam**, attended interviews I conducted with **malamai** and majority Muslims. Zara Mani conducted interviews, on her own, with young women in Zinder. And Gambo Madou, a young part-time trader, attended my interviews with reformers, **bokaye** and **y'an bori**. Except for the interviews which Zara Mani conducted, the research assistants' primary role was to sit in on the interviews and listen. I conducted the interview and the research assistants only intervened when it became obvious that I was not being understood. I found the greatest benefit of having research assistants

was not as translators, but as co-analyzers of the data collected during the interviews. It was useful to have someone from the community with whom I could discuss my interpretations of what I learned. These discussions contributed significantly to my conclusions for this dissertation.

We held interviews with individuals as well as groups. Interviews with individuals had the advantage of privacy, and people were more willing to reveal and share personal experiences that they might not be inclined to share with a group (discussing a recent consultation with a **boka**, for example). Group interviews allowed me to hear people debate broad issues I was trying to understand, such as why the reformers are disliked by majority Muslims in Zinder.

I began interviews with a standard set of questions aimed at understanding people's views of what constitutes being a Muslim in Zinder. However, if a particular question produced a detailed response, I allowed the interview to flow in that direction and then returned to my list of questions. Thus, the interviews were structured, but were allowed to develop relevant tangents when appropriate.

As I have stated, asking people questions regarding their views on Islam places them in a potentially vulnerable position. Because there have been violent acts against people due to their views on Islam, I do not want the people I interviewed to be identified. As a result, before each interview I explained to the person, or people, who I was and why I was doing my study. I also showed them the official documents which I received from the government of Niger giving me permission to do the study. The documents were also signed by the local government official. These documents legitimized my presence by exemplifying I had received permission from the

proper officials of the country and town. I explained to people that I would not use their name or identify them as the source of the information given. To demonstrate this commitment, I therefore did not tape record interviews which could be used to identify the individuals cited, but rather I took notes. At times, I noticed that even writing notes during the interviews appeared to inhibit some people. When this happened, I simply put the notebook down and listened. Following the interview, I returned home and wrote down the information I had learned.

One problem with not using a tape recorder is the lack of an abundance of long quotes or case studies in the exact words of informants. The direct quotes which are cited in this study are from notes I took during the interviews. When a person made a comment I thought would be especially useful, I wrote it down as it was spoken. Admittedly, it was sometimes necessary for me to ask an informant to repeat a statement I wished to write down. Because of the length of the case studies in Chapter 9, however, it was not possible to record the informants' words exactly. Obviously, it was also not possible to do this for the interviews with young women, which were conducted by Zara. As a result, I paraphrase this information. The case studies do, however, accurately reflect the actions taken by, and attitudes of, the people interviewed.

My "Teachers"

In order to get a representative sample of what social scientists generally refer to as "informants," but who I prefer, following the quote at the beginning of this chapter, to view as teachers, we interviewed a wide range of people. These teachers included: as many women as men, people of all age

groups (excluding those under 18 years of age), people with different educational backgrounds (Qur'anic school/government school/no formal education), people of various occupations, and people of different status groups (based on status distinctions as successfully done by Grolle (1996), Watts (1986) and Hill (1972)), as well as specialists, such as **malamai, bokaye** and **yan bori.**

Interviewing Women

Before continuing, I would like to make a few comments regarding the data collected from women. Because women's experiences have, until recently, been largely ignored in studies of Hausa-speaking societies, or as Cooper (1992) writes, "relegated to the footnotes of history," I wanted to be sure that their views were incorporated in this study.[1] There were, however, some considerations I had to take into account to do this. I generally had no difficulty interviewing older women and usually was accompanied by Ousmane Nadali to such interviews. In general, there are no societal restrictions which prohibit men from speaking with women who are in their early forties and older. There are, however, restrictions regarding men speaking with younger women. Young women are those who are approaching the age of marriage (mid to late teens), and those who had recently married or were in their twenties and thirties. In most instances, it is considered inappropriate for a male to enter the living space of such women, even if accompanied by a female. As a result, I asked Zara Mani, a 26 year old

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[1] See Coles and Mack (1991) for a bibliography of recent works which focus on Hausa women's experiences.

woman, to conduct interviews for me.[2] I gave Zara a list of questions (written in Hausa) to ask, and a notebook for her to write down informants' responses. In order to train her to ask follow up questions and allow informants to pursue tangents when appropriate, Zara, like Ousmane and Gambo, watched numerous interviews I conducted. After Zara interviewed a young woman, I met with her in the presence of her male cousin and his wife to record the information she collected. Meeting Zara in the presence of her cousin and his wife was done so that the community could see I was not alone with her at any time.

Based on my knowledge of male-female relations in Zinder, I knew it would be necessary to work with a female research assistant if I wanted to learn about young women's perspectives on Islam. I was curious, however, to see how the information Zara collected would compare to what I might learn from women in this age group if I had the opportunity to interview them. I arranged an interview with the friend and neighbor of Ousmane Nadali's wife, someone who knew me quite well, as I saw her and greeted her daily when I arrived for my consultations with Ousmane at his home. I conducted the interview in the yard of Ousmane's compound in the presence of Ousmane and his wife. Ousmane was present so I would not be alone with his wife and neighbor, and his wife's presence assured that the neighbor was not alone in the presence of two men. I began asking questions as I normally did during an interview. After several minutes I was surprised by the brevity of the young woman's responses. In low tones, with her eyes looking down toward the ground she replied with "yes" or "no" answers to most questions

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[2] Zara, a young woman herself, was able to conduct interviews for me because I knew her family, who approved of her assisting me.

and was reluctant to expound upon her answers. By the time I had asked half of the questions, I realized I was not getting the detailed replies I often received during interviews I did with men and older women. I set up a similar interview with one of Ousmane's cousins, a 24 year old married woman who was also familiar with me and the study. Again I believed that the young woman's familiarity with me and the study would create an environment conducive for learning her views on Islam. As the interview unfolded, again in the presence of Ousmane and his wife, the young woman did not provide detailed responses. When I compared the responses of these two women to the information Zara received, I realized there was more to be considered here than mere physical access to informants. If these two women, who knew me and what I was doing, were hesitant to respond to questions, then I certainly would not learn much from young women who are unfamiliar with me, even if I was able to interview them personally. This confirmed in my mind that having Zara conduct interviews with young women was the most appropriate and productive manner in which to learn the views of younger women.

I believe that this experience is directly related to the social dynamics of Zinder society, in which young women generally do not interact with men (perhaps other than their husbands or male relatives) socially, and certainly not in the question and answer format of an interview. The argument that the women may have failed to elaborate their responses because they viewed me as highly educated and knowing more than them, is unlikely. The older women and the men I interviewed generally held strong opinions and were quite detailed in their responses to my questions. By having Zara conduct the

interviews and convey the information to me, I was able to collect useful data regarding the views of women in Zinder as they related to my study.

Participant Observation

In addition to interviews, I also spent a good deal of time observing **malamai, bokaye** and **y'an bori**. By observing the **malamai,** I learned firsthand how **layu** and **rubutan sha** are made, the texts used, and various reasons they are prescribed. Also, I witnessed several forms of **listahara** and collected information about **wuridi** and **adda'a**. **Bokaye** in Zinder taught me how they treat spirit-caused illnesses, recounted their experience with spirits, and provided useful information on the relationship between **bokanci** and **bori**. In addition, I observed foreseeing done by **bokaye** and the production of amulets which contain plant materials and/or dried animal parts. Attending **bori** performances in Zinder gave me the opportunity to learn who participates in spirit possession ceremonies and the reasons they are held. I was always welcome at the performances and observed details that I could only have learned by being there. Thus, participant observation provided useful information to compare with what I learned in interviews.

Relating the Data to the Research Questions

The information I collected through individual and group interviews, participant observation, and from archives in Niger and France provided me with a rich collection of data. An historical analysis of Islam in Zinder sheds light on the dialectical nature of the relationship between structure and practice. Archival materials support the contention that both structure and practice need to be considered in formulating an understanding of culture.

Furthermore, history shows that it is when individuals deviate, or attempt to deviate, from the way things are, that social change may occur. Such an analysis allows us to see the residues of societal attempts to guide people's behavior, but also highlights the potential of people to reshape the rules of society.

Similarly, data I collected regarding the contemporary setting contribute to an understanding of these issues. Furthermore, when considered in the framework of an anthropology of knowledge, these data further an understanding of the structure/practice dialectic . The ways in which individuals draw upon different forms of knowledge at different times reflects the negotiable quality of Muslim identity. It is here that practice theory provides a framework for understanding the amalgam which represents the structure/practice dialectic.

A Final Note

A final comment I have regarding a study of this nature, is the importance of taking the time to explain to people the purpose of the research. I spent much time visiting potential informants to explain who I was and what I was doing. I do not recall interviewing anyone the first time I met them. Although this activity was time consuming and tedious, I believe it resulted in the collection of reliable data. I explained to people I wanted to interview, or anyone else who asked, that I was interviewing a variety of people, including **malamai, bokaye** and **y'an bori. Malamai,** for example, often asked why I was attending **bori** performances if I wanted to learn about Islam in Zinder. This evoked a fruitful discussion on why **bori** is counter to Islam in the eyes of the **malamai.** I also told people that they were not

required to answer a question if they did not want to and that they could end the interview at any time. Many people expressed the view that a study of Islam in Zinder was important because it would illustrate the importance of Islam not only in Zinder, but also the world. The people I interviewed and observed for this study were my teachers. While I learned that being a Muslim in Zinder meant different things to different people, I also learned that Islam provides a framework for people in which they situate themselves at the community, nation and world levels. Undoubtedly there are still some people who are wondering what I was doing, but I feel that I did the best I could to explain why I had returned to Zinder.

Chapter 4

ISLAMIC CULTURE AND MUSLIM IDENTITY IN ZINDER: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

This chapter is historical and identifies the process through which aspects of Islamic culture were incorporated into Zinder society and the attempts which were made to influence and change this culture over time. I discuss what it meant to be a Muslim in Zinder during specific eras and identify the people, or groups of people, responsible for attempting to shape, define, influences and reproduce, or change, what constituted Islamic belief and practice during these periods. A diachronic perspective provides an opportunity to illustrate the dialectical relationship which exists between society and individuals and, hence, structure and practice. By considering the results of history, we can see this dialectic and thus understand how social change may occur as the result of individual action. Furthermore, I suggest that although both structure and practice must be considered, it is by focusing on what people do that we learn and understand the most about culture.

Early History (ca. 1731)

Oral tradition provides evidence which suggests that in the early eighteenth century there was a respect for Islam among the inhabitants in the region that, in the early nineteenth century, was to become Zinder.

According to these accounts, sometime around 1731 a man, known only as Malam[1], became the head of a village named Gueza located to the east of present day Zinder. While the origin of Malam is uncertain, it is clear that his political leadership stemmed from his religious piety and scholarship (Tilho 1911: 438, Salifou 1971: 39, Dunbar 1970: 247). Malam had a reputation as a learned scholar and devout Muslim who, oral tradition claims, was capable of miracles.[2]

Although the account of Malam appears to indicate an appreciation and respect on the part of the people he ruled for Islam, it is probable that traditional beliefs and practices were important in the lives of the majority of people at this time.[3] This view is supported by the central role such beliefs and practices played in Zinder society and the region through the middle of the nineteenth century (Richardson 1853, Salifou 1971, Dunbar 1970). While it is not possible to know the exact nature of these beliefs and practices, twentieth century studies in Hausa-speaking areas of Nigeria and Niger permit some speculation.

In his study of non-Muslim Hausa in the Kano region of Nigeria, Greenberg (1941) describes how traditional religion was based on a belief in, and worship of, spirits. Some of the spirits, which were said to be infinite in

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1 "**Malam**" is a Hausa word meaning Qur'anic scholar.

2 Dunbar (1971: 247-48) cites two such examples recorded by the Tilho Mission. In one example, Malam prayed to God for 74 days so that a path would be created through a mountain which separated two villages. The second example involves the return of a young woman who had been taken by Tuaregs following a raid. Upon hearing the story from the young woman's father, Malam prayed. That night the young woman returned to her father from Agadez, a town 445 kilometers away.

3 Dunbar makes the point that is not uncommon for the leaders of dynasties in Muslim societies in West Africa to allege a religious founder (1971: 248).

number, were known by name and had individual personalities and physical characteristics. The spirits were regularly offered sacrifices in order dissuade them from causing the numerous illnesses attributed to them. Spirit possession performances were one part of this religious complex and were held to treat such spirit-caused illnesses when they occurred. Similarly, for the case of the Ader region of Niger, Echard (1991) characterizes traditional religion as centered around animal sacrifice and prayers made to spirits. Like in the Kano region of Nigeria, **bori** ceremonies in Ader are a part of traditional religion and are often held to treat spirit-caused illnesses. The continued existence of **bori** and ceremonies in which animal sacrifices were made to spirits in Zinder at the middle of the nineteenth century suggests that such practices were an important part of social life for many people during the time of Malam as well.

The Founding of Zinder in the Early Nineteenth Century

Malam ruled Gueza until the middle of the eighteenth century, at which time he was succeeded by one of his sons. In the following decades, descendants of Malam received allegiance from a handful of villages in the region which was becoming increasingly insecure as a result of Tuareg attacks (Dunbar 1970: 17). At this time, the region was not organized into a state, but was rather a collection of villages, each with its own ruler (Salifou 1971: 39-40). During the first decade of the nineteenth century, the nearby village of Chianza was fortified and expanded to provide protection from these attacks (Dunbar 1970: 249). These developments marked the beginning of the formation of Damagaram, an economically prosperous dynasty based on its military might and involvement in regional and trans-Saharan trade.

Malam's descendants shared his religious piety and appreciation for Islamic scholarship. Dunbar categorizes these rulers as religious, rather than political, leaders, and cites the small number or lack of courtiers as evidence of this (1971: 249). Based on this information, it appears that Islamic principles were part of the religious life of some people. Unfortunately, there are no sources which provide details on how, or to what extent, these leaders attempted to introduce Islam into the lives of the people at this time. If the characterization of these rulers as religious leaders is true, however, this suggests that there was probably an effort made by these leaders to encourage people to practice Islam. For those people who adopted Islam, however, it was likely an Islam which incorporated many elements of traditional belief and practice as well.

In an attempt to increase security in the region in the early nineteenth century, Chianza was moved (ca. 1812) west, and the settlement became known as Zinder. Zinder, ruled by Suleiman Babba (1812-1822), was chosen based on two important geographical features. First, there was an outcropping of rocks which formed a natural defense for the settlement. And second, a nearby lake and numerous springs provided a reliable water supply. This increased security permitted Zinder to grow in importance as a center of regional and trans-Saharan trade (Dunbar 1970: 17).

As the leader of a developing center of trade, Suleiman began to expand his geographic area of control by capturing territories to the north and southeast. Suleiman's ability to expand and defend his territory marked the

establishment and development of Damagaram, an independent political entity on the western edge of the Bornu Empire.[4]

The Islamization of Zinder in the Nineteenth Century

In the first half of the nineteenth century, demonstrating a Muslim identity was likely necessary for people wishing to participate in the increasingly lucrative regional and trans-Saharan trade networks. In 1822, Suleiman was succeeded by his son Ibrahim as **sarkin** Damagaram. During Ibrahim's reign (1822-1841), Zinder continued to develop as a center of trade and maintained a powerful military force. Also during this period, Zinder became an important stopping point on the trans-Saharan trade route between Tripoli and Kano. At this time North African merchants lived in Zinder and developed what was to become a lucrative trading diaspora (Baier 1980: 38).

Through mid-century, however, traditional beliefs and practices continued to play a prominent role in Zinder society. James Richardson's account of his visit to Zinder in 1851 provides information on the religious milieu of the town at that time. Richardson describes Zinder as a town in which many people, including the **sarki**, continued traditional practices. In the following passage Richardson documents the practice of making offerings to the spirits:

> In the forenoon I received a visit from the Imam of the mosque of Zinder. I asked about the Hazna, or pagans, thinking to get a little

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[4] Although Damagaram was not officially independent until 1893, the ability of Bornu to control the actions of the leaders of Damagaram was minimal even after representatives from Bornu were sent to live in Zinder in the 1840s and 1850s (Dunbar 1970: 124-25, Brenner 1973: 174).

> information; but I only learnt what I knew before, that the Hazna make their offerings, which consist of milk and ghaseb, under trees (1853: 245).[5]

Regarding a conversation he had with the Imam of the mosque in Zinder, Richardson wrote: "He informed me, also that there are a good number of Hazna [non-Muslims] in both Zinder and the other towns and villages of the province" (1853: 259). He also claims that the **sarki** participated in traditional ceremonies in which animal sacrifices occurred under trees, and describes how the **sarki** had more than the allowable four wives who were allowed to move about town freely (1853: 233). Finally, he recounts how the **sarki** asked him for alcohol, which he received and drank (1853: 217). These observations support Dunbar's conclusion that, "the fact that Islam had not made greater strides before Tanimu [Ibrahim's successor] is accepted as true by modern chroniclers in Damagaram" (1971: 144). According to these chroniclers in Zinder, animal sacrifices to spirits were common at the middle of the nineteenth century and few people performed the daily Islamic prayers. Salifou's (1970: 66) assessment of the state of Islam in Zinder at mid-century also portrays a society in which traditional practices were common.

However, there were at this time signs of Islamic scholarship in Zinder. Much like today in Zinder, and other Muslim societies in West Africa, there were many Qur'anic students who circulated through town in search of food to eat or money to pay their instructors (Richardson 1853: 211). This is significant because if there were large numbers of Qur'anic students in

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[5] This is similar to Greenberg's account, for example, in which he writes, "Each of these spirits customarily has its favorite type of tree or other specific locale which it visits on occasion; and where the proper sacrifices, consisting of sheep, goats, or fowl are offered" (1941: 56).

Zinder, then a scholarly class was likely present to teach them. There were also a significant number of **malamai** traveling throughout Damagaram teaching, and Islamic amulets were also being produced and sold at this time (Dunbar 1970: 30, Richardson 1853: 269). Thus, as these sources indicate, even though traditional beliefs and practices persisted, there was evidence indicating an increase in Islamic culture in Zinder at mid-century: a Friday mosque and an Imam to lead the Friday prayer, Qur'anic students, and, presumably, a scholarly class to teach them.

The question these sources raise is: What did it mean to be a Muslim in Zinder during the first half of the nineteenth century? The evidence just cited suggests that many people who continued traditional practices, such as **bori**, considered themselves to be Muslim. For many people, a Muslim identity at this time was likely quite flexible and incorporated many aspects of traditional culture such as **bori**. The historical sources, however, do not discuss how people who practiced bori and made sacrifices to the spirits labeled themselves. As we will see in Chapter 6, this relates to my discussion of identity as a process of naming.

During the reign of Tanimu (1851-1884), who succeeded Ibrahim just after mid-century, what constituted being a Muslim in the eyes of the political and religious authority changed. No longer was it acceptable for the Sarki to make sacrifices to the spirits. Tanimu and his **malaman sarki** condemned traditional practices as "un-Islamic" and took steps to formally implement Islamic principles in the lives of those he ruled. This conscious effort on the part of Tanimu to re-define Muslim identity occurred during the period when regional and trans-Saharan trade was in full swing.

Baier recognizes what he calls the "official establishment of Islam" in Zinder as occurring during the reign of Tanimu (1980: 25). By this he means that for the first time in the history of Zinder, the **sarki** consciously attempted to impose what he perceived to be Islamic practice on those he ruled. Baier argues that rather than occur through jihad, as was the case for the Sokoto Caliphate, Islam was established in Zinder peacefully under Tanimu. The progress of Islam in Damagaram, Maradi, and Gobir appears, according to Baier, to be tied directly to the extent to which these areas were able to conduct trade with the Caliphate. Because of the trade routes which linked Zinder to the Caliphate, Islamization occurred more quickly than in Maradi and Gobir, which were not tied into the economy of the Caliphate (Baier 1980, Grégoire 1992). As Baier concludes:

> Concomitant with increased trade, urbanization, and the relocation of population in the centre of the Caliphate was the progress of Islam. The religion of the prophet also made gains in sedentary states to the north of the Caliphate to the extent that the northern, peripheral states participated in economic and demographic change at the centre of the region (1980: 35).

The importance of trade with the Caliphate for the intensification of Islam in Zinder is also supported by Dunbar, who, for this period, cites an increase in the attention paid to Islamic religious celebration. According to Dunbar, "it can be assumed that the extension of Islam in the Sokoto Empire and the multiple contacts of an economic . . . nature between the leaders in Damagaram and those to the south did influence the character of Islam in Damagaram" (1971: 230). Thus, in Zinder, the increased attention paid to the question of what constituted Muslim identity and Islamic culture was in part

due to trade. More importantly, however, it seems to have been due to the efforts of Tanimu.

In 1859 Tanimu requested that a prominent scholar, named Malam Suleiman, live in Zinder and assist with the implementation of Islamic culture in Damagaram. Malam Suleiman, originally from Gobir, arrived in Zinder after having spent nine years studying in Katsina and then a period of time in Kano (Dunbar 1970: 155). In Dunbar's words, this marked ". . . the beginning of a much more profound Islamisation than had occurred before, . . . " (1970: 44). Thus, in the second half of the nineteenth century, Zinder underwent what Salifou calls a "religious reform." Regarding Tanimu's actions during this period, Salifou writes, "The great ruler decided to consolidate the foundations of the Muslim religion and to apply the Shari'a in all of the territories which fall under his authority" (1971: 67). Concordant with the implementation of Islamic principles were vigorous attempts to eliminate traditional practices, such as making sacrifices to spirits and **bori** (Salifou 1971: 67). People who failed to follow the tenets of Islam as defined by Tanimu and Suleiman were, as Dunbar writes, "treated badly" (1970: 145).

In addition to Malam Suleiman, another prominent scholar named Limam Borkoma arrived in Zinder with his family ca. 1870 and established a residence near the **sarki**'s palace (Zakari 1996). According to Zakari, Limam Borkoma was a member of the Qadiriyya order who founded a **zawiya** in Zinder and trained students who became prominent **malamai** in the region. Limam Borkoma also served as the **kadi** and counselor to the **sarki** regarding matters of religion. In 1877, seven years following his arrival in Zinder, Limam Borkoma died. Following the death of Limam Borkoma, his son Malam Mamadu Shetima Kiari succeeded him as head of his **zawiya**. The

French had good relations with Malam Shetima, who also took over his father's position as **kadi**.

Islamic culture in Zinder thus underwent significant change under the direction and guidance of Tanimu and Suleiman in the second half of the nineteenth century. As **sarki**, Tanimu was in a position of authority to define Islam as he and his advisors viewed it. Tanimu, with the assistance of Suleiman, Limam Borkoma, and Malam Shetima, for the first time in the history of Damagaram, attempted to consciously make Islam the "official religion" of the Sultanate. People were encouraged to pray, attend the mosque on Friday, and fast during Ramadan. Islamic law was also instituted in Damagaram.

Dunbar concludes that Malam Suleiman was probably a member of the Qadiriyya order (1970: 199). She bases this conclusion on the fact that Malam Suleiman's son, Malam Hassan, was the leader of the Qadiriyya order in Zinder at the turn of the century. This is also supported by the amount of time Malam Suleiman spent studying in Katsina and Kano, cities within the Sokoto Caliphate, a region whose leader (Uthman Dan Fodio) was a member of the Qadiriyya. Because of this, and the prominent role Malam Suleiman had in Zinder society, Dunbar believes that the Qadiriyya order was historically the first important order in Damagaram. That Limam Borkoma and his son were also members of the Qadiriyya, supports this assertion. Reports by colonial officials just after the turn of the twentieth century do indicate the presence of people who labeled themselves "Qadiris" (Gaden 1903). However, the broader significance of this for considering what constituted Muslim identity at this time is unclear. Sources do not provide

information regarding the number of people who affiliated with the order, initiation procedures (if there were any), or public activities held by the order.

Islamic Culture at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

It was during the reign of Ahmadu (1893-1899), in 1898, that the French arrived in Zinder. Ahmadu was a highly respected scholar, also known for his religious piety, who had a reputation for being a righteous and kind man (Salifou 1971: 93). During Ahmadu's reign, the practice of Islamic law continued and the number of Qur'anic schools continued to increase (Salifou 1971: 94).

Fugelstad notes that little attention has been paid to the history of religious change during the colonial period in Niger, resulting in a lack of data for the reconstruction of the history of religious change in detail (1983: 116). While this is still the case, I consulted archival materials which provide useful information regarding the Islamic milieu in Zinder during the first half of the twentieth century.

These sources confirm that Zinder, by the turn of the century, had begun to develop into a center of Islamic culture.[6] There was an increase in the number of mosques, Qur'anic schools and **malamai** to teach in those schools as well as significant attention paid to Islamic religious celebration. In addition, some people affiliated themselves with Islamic orders, reflecting a Sufi influence and diversity in the Muslim community. Within this changing environment, however, traditional practices continued to exist alongside the Islamic.

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[6] See, for example, Gaden (1903). Also, Tilho indicates that most villages in the region had a mosque (1911: 536-37).

Sufism Defined

Sufism developed in the Arabian peninsula during the eighth century. However, because of the diverse interpretations of Sufism, scholars have struggled to provide a concise definition of the term. It is generally acknowledged that the term is derived from **suf**, the Arabic word for wool. According to Chittick (1995), this association is believed to stem from the early Sufis who wore heavy woolen garments to symbolize their rejection of the world. There is evidence which indicates that members of the group had, by the ninth century, adopted the gerund form of **suf**, **tasawwuf**, meaning "being a Sufi" or "Sufism" (Chittick 1995: 102).

Sufism is often characterized as the "mystical" tradition of Islam, or the "esotericism" of Islam. Recently, an alternative definition has been proposed which attempts to avoid these characterizations. Because, according to Chittick, such characterizations are vague and imply a negative value judgment, he defines Sufism in broad terms as: "the interiorization and intensification of Islamic faith and practice" (1995: 101). For the case of Zinder, I would also emphasize Glassé's description of Sufism as "the science of the direct knowledge of God" as an important characteristic of Sufism (1985: 375).

The difficulty in providing a precise definition of the term is reflected in the various ways in which Sufism is manifested throughout the world. As Chittick notes, Sufism is not related to the Sunni/Shi'i separation nor the schools of jurisprudence. Similarly, he points out that geography, kinship, gender, age, and social class are also not determining factors in being a Sufi.

Even membership in one of the Sufi orders, which gained prominence in the twelfth century, is not a precondition for being a Sufi.

For West Africa, there are several noticeable characteristics of Sufism. First, Sufis are Muslims who are in search of an intimate knowledge of God which is achieved through a commitment to Islam and intensive study. Second, following a period of intensive study, Sufis may be initiated into an order such as the Tijaniyya or Qadiriyya. Third, the orders usually have a **zawiya**, or center, and members hold public activities. And fourth, as in the case of the Senegal/Mauritanian variants, orders may be functioning economic organizations.

Sufi Principles in Zinder at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

Sufism is evident in Zinder at the turn of the twentieth century in the belief, by most Muslims, that a person can gain a direct understanding of God by interiorizing and intensifying the practice of his or her faith (in a sense forming a special relationship with God). Those who attained such a position earned the title "**malam**." These scholars, because of their specialized knowledge of the **Qur'an** and other religious texts, were acknowledged as having achieved a special relationship with God. Because they had this relationship with God, **malamai** could make requests of God on behalf of others. However, as we will see, the organizations, or Sufi orders, which have played an important role in Muslim societies elsewhere in West Africa, were generally of less importance to majority Muslims in Zinder.

In addition to people who labeled themselves as members of the Qadiriyya order, there were also people who identified themselves as members of the Tijaniyya and Sanussiyya orders (Gaden 1903).

Unfortunately, there is no information on the processes of initiation, on the public activities of the orders, who their members were, or how they viewed one another, although Dunbar does suggest that there was probably tension between their leaders (1970: 195).

The following characteristics of the Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya and Sanussiyya orders are based on Gaden's 1903 report. According to Gaden, the Qadiriyya was the most organized order and drew its members from the Hausa, Tuareg and Fulani populations. The Qadiriyya, which was under the leadership of Malam Hassan, the son of Malam Suleiman, enjoyed amicable relations with the French.[7]

The Tijaniyya, Gaden reported, was less organized than the Qadiriyya and drew its members from the Kanuri. The leader of the Tijaniyya was a respected **malam**, but the order had few members and few students at its Qur'anic schools. Although Gaden does not mention him by name, the leader of the Tijaniyya he is referring to is Malam Abba Tchillum, the nephew of Malam Mamadu Shetima Kiari (Zakari 1996). Like Malam Hassan, Malam Abba Tchillum was well liked by the French. Regarding Malam Abba Tchillum, Gaden writes: "He is a courageous man who appears to be devout" (1903).[8] The **Mission Foureau-Lamy** also states that there were a number of Muslims who labeled themselves "Tijanis" in Zinder (1905: 942).

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[7] The French commandant in Zinder, for example, wrote: "Mallam Hassan has always demonstrated to us much deference and faith . . . . His reputation of integrity seems justified and his judgments indicate much honesty and common sense" (Gaden 1903: 94).

[8] The French were impressed with the tranquillity of Zinder and what they thought to be the pro-French sentiment of the **malamai** during the period immediately following their arrival (ADZ, monthly Political Reports from 1903 and 1904).

In 1912, however, Malam Abba Tchillum decided to relocate and consolidate his followers in a **zawiya** he had previously established in Kolori, à village about 125 kilometers east of Zinder. According to Zakari, the desire of the residents of Kolori to have such a prominent **malam** in their village played a role in his decision. Zakari also points out that the lack of water in Zinder was likely a hardship for Malam Abba Tchillum's large family.

Membership in the Sanussiyya order was made up primarily of Tripolitains and some Tuaregs (Gaden 1903). The presence of North Africans in Zinder was related to the establishment of the previously mentioned trading diaspora. In the early 1890s an agent of Sheikh Senussi, Mohammed Esseni, frequented Zinder and wished to establish a Sanussiyya center in town. However, he was not well received by the **sarki** and, as a result, left Zinder and established a **zawiya** several days journey north of the town in 1896. Whereas the French enjoyed good relations with members of the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya orders, the same cannot be said of the Sanussiyya. As Dunbar notes, "the secret goal of the Sanussiyya order was thought to be the victory of Islam over the Europeans (1970: 199).[9]

Relying on Gaden for information on Islamic orders, however, is problematic. French colonial officials are well-known for their labeling and categorizing various phenomenon for record keeping purposes. Regarding the French propensity for such statistics, Maurice Delafosse, a long-time colonial officer wrote:

> Today it's poultry statistics, tomorrow it will be statistics regarding Qur'anic schools claimed by public school instruction indicating the number of students, hours of classes, progress achieved, books and

[9] See Triaud (1996) for a comprehensive account of French views toward the Sanussiyya in Niger and West Africa.

> manuscripts utilized by teachers, statistics of the genealogy of the latter, etc., etc. (1924: 214).

Thus, although Gaden provides general information on these orders, important details regarding initiation procedures and public activities held by the orders is lacking.

In March 1906, an attempted plot to overthrow the French in Zinder was uncovered. The alleged plot resulted in the French exiling the **sarki** and some **malaman sarki**. This marked the end of the Sultanate as it had existed during the nineteenth century. The French accused members of the Sanussiyya order of being involved in the plot and immediately limited the activities of all orders (Dunbar 1970: 201).

The presence of Muslims in Zinder who identified themselves as members of these orders suggests a diversity within the Muslim community as well as the presence of Sufi principles. As Dunbar and Zakari indicate, there were prominent **malamai** who were members of the Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya and Sanussiyya orders in Zinder at the turn of the century. Also, these sources state that Malam Suleiman, Limam Borkoma, and Malam Mamadu Shetima Kiari served as advisors to the **sarki** regarding religious matters. Similarly, Mallam Abba Tchillum, a prominent Tijani, had a **zawiya** in Zinder until he relocated to Kolori. However, sources do not provide detailed information on how these orders functioned, or what their exact role was in relation to the **sarki** or members of the general population. Furthermore, we do not know the nature of the relationship among those claiming various order affiliations, although Dunbar suggests that there was tension between their leaders.

It is clear, however, that many **malamai** and members of the general population in Zinder in the early twentieth century did not affiliate with an order. Gaden, for example, states that the distinction between orders was irrelevant for the general population and even for people who claimed affiliation with one of the orders:

> In fact, if the most educated marabouts claim to draw their inspiration from a founder, Abd-el-Kadr or Tijani, it is not likely that they are in touch with the true leaders of their sect. As to the mass of faithful, their religion is limited to the fulfillment of rites unrelated to the orders (1903: 94).

Similarly, Adabie observed: "most of those who claim an order affiliation do not know the significance of the order's rites" (1927: 223).

These sources suggest that affiliation with an order, which was a relatively new phenomena in Zinder, appears to have been insignificant for most Muslims. Those that did label themselves "Qadiris" and "Tijanis" may have done so because of their association with Malam Hassan, Limam Borkoma, Malam Mamadu Shetima Kiari or Malam Abba Tchillum rather than because they were initiated into an order. The use of the label "Qadiri" by some may have stemmed from the prominent role Malam Suleiman, Malam Hassan, Limam Borkoma, and Malam Mamadu Shetima Kiari (all Qadiris) had in guiding Islamic practice in Zinder. Similarly, those who labeled themselves "Tijanis" may have done so because of their relationship with Malam Abba Tchillum.

The failure of the Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya and Sanussiyya orders to develop and formally organize in Zinder, to the extent that they did in other parts of West Africa, may have been the result of the **sarkis**' unwillingness to

embrace such organizations, organizations which could pose a threat to the political and religious establishment as guided by the **sarki** and his **malamai**. In addition to the lack of well organized Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya and Sanussiyya centers in Zinder, a Shadhiliyya center existed in the village of Incharoua near Zinder, although there was no organized center in Zinder (Marty 1931). Thus, in Zinder it is possible that the diarchy consisting of the **sarki** and his **malaman sarki** were responsible for shaping, guiding and ultimately controlling the religious, political, and economic structures of society until the arrival of the French. In making this statement, I do not intend to imply that prominent members of these various orders did not influence the **sarki**. Obviously, based on my discussion of Malam Suleiman, Malam Hassan, Limam Borkoma, Malam Mamadu Shetima Kiari, prominent Qadiris were advisors to the **sarki**. However, when it came to matters of exercising political and economic power, it was the **sarki** who made the ultimate decisions and not the leaders of the orders. This establishment, in conjunction with subsequent French restrictions on religious organizations, may account for the lack of large, well organized Islamic orders in Zinder during this period.

It is thus difficult to know details regarding the significance of the categories "Tijaniyya" and "Qadiriyya" in Zinder at this time. I have generalized, based on the available sources, that attempts were made to formalize Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya, and Sanussiyya orders in Zinder around the turn of the century. These attempts, however, were unsuccessful due initially to the efforts of the indigenous aristocracy and, subsequently, French colonial authority. I suggest that these categories appear to have held much less significance for Muslims in Zinder than they did for Muslims in other parts

of West Africa, such as Senegal, Mauritania, and Nigeria. By suggesting they are to an extent French constructions I imply that these categories were perhaps more important for French statisticians than Zinder's Muslim population. The presence of prominent **malamai** who represented various Islamic orders, and their attempts to influence the **sarki**, shows that, like today, Islam was an institution which was contested. This is one aspect of the history of Islam in Zinder that requires further research. As we will see in the following chapter, the significance of these categories in the contemporary setting remains unclear in the minds of many majority Muslims in Zinder.

Contextualizing French Policy Toward Islamic Orders in Zinder

Following the thwarted revolt of 1906, the French maintained a constant surveillance of the **malamai** which lasted throughout the colonial period.[10] The French, in Zinder and throughout the territory of Niger, monitored the **malamai** because they were viewed as the most dangerous potential source of anti-French activity.[11] Regarding this point, Harrison notes:

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[10] The following political reports contain French views toward the malamai and their responses to expressions of anti-French sentiment: ADZ, Political Report, April, 1909; CAOM, Political Affairs 591, dos. 18., Political Report, 1st trimester, 1916; CAOM, Political Affairs 591, dos. 18, Political Report, 3rd trimester, 1918; CAOM, Political Affairs 591, dos. 18, Political Report, 1st trimester, 1922; ANS, 2G27-12; CAOM, Political Affairs 591, dos. 11, Annual Political Report 1927; ANS 2G32-18; ANS 2G40-5; ANS 2G49-29.

[11] In October, 1923, for example, when the French heard that a possible Mahdist movement was developing in northern Nigeria, they spoke at length with the newly French appointed **sarki** of Zinder, Mustapha, to ascertain if such a movement was also beginning in the region surrounding Zinder. **Sarki** Mustapha reported to the French that there was no Mahdist movement in the region and that the majority of Muslims in Zinder did not associate with an Islamic order (CAOM, Aff. Pol. 591, dos. 15). Although Paden states, "that during World War I Zinder had been a major center of

> Islamic conspiracy was widely thought to be particularly dangerous because its cutting edge was based on religious fanaticism which rendered its followers senseless to rational persuasion. Above all it was the figure of the *mahdi* which haunted the European powers (1988: 42).

The French suspected that the alleged revolt in Zinder was such a conspiracy.

The alleged uprising in Zinder came at a time when the French were attempting to put down a Mahdist revolt in the eastern part of the colony. Beginning late in 1905 an insurrection led by "revolutionary Mahdists" began at Kobkitanda (in what was then French Niger) and subsequently spread east to Satiru, a town just south of Sokoto (Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1990). The uprising, which was aimed at the colonial powers (as well as indigenous Muslim aristocracies), was put down in violent fashion by the French and British. The French and British then agreed to work together to prevent such revolts from spreading across colonial borders again in the future. Because prominent "radical" clerics were the cause of the Mahdist uprising, the French and British agreed to pay special attention to the movement and activities of prominent **malamai** in the future. In Niger, the monitoring of **malamai** continued throughout the colonial period.

The arrival of the French and exiling of the **sarki** with some of his prominent **malamai** had obvious implications for the political structure of Zinder. Following the removal of the **sarki** by the French, the diarchy of the **sarki** and his **malamai** was effectively dissolved. The real political power now laid in the hands of the French authorities. This resulted in the

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Mahdiyya, . . ." (1973: 175), I did not find any evidence in the archives which indicated this.

decentralizing of religious authority which was previously under the direction of the **sarki** and **malaman sarki**. When Mustapha was installed as leader of Zinder in 1922, the French permitted him to use the title **sarki**, form a court (**fada**), and have **malaman sarki**. **Zinderois**, however, were aware of the diminished power of the office of the **sarki**. As a result, religious authority became more evenly distributed throughout Zinder as scholars unattached to the **sarki** began to rise in prominence. While the **malaman sarki** continued to have influence, personal reputation became more important than attachment to the royal court. The core principle of **rokon Alla** continued to be at the heart of Islam in Zinder. **Malamai** developed repuations and rose in prominence by becoming "close to God" via intensive study.

The Niassene Tijaniyya

Toward the middle the twentieth century, another attempt was made by an Islamic order to establish a center in Zinder. Evidence suggests that a Tijaniyya movement based in Kano, Nigeria and led by the Senegalese scholar Ibrahim Niasse attempted to establish a **zawiya** in Zinder.

Paden (1973) and Gray (1988) provide details of the rise of the Niasse branch of the Tijaniyya which Paden refers to as "Reformed Tijaniyya" and Gray as the "Niassene Tijaniyya." After the **sarkin** Kano, already a Tijani, transferred his allegiance to the Niassene Tijaniyya in 1937, many other Tijanis in the town became followers of Ibrahim Niasse as well (Paden 1973: 69). By the mid-1960s approximately two thirds of the **malamai** in Kano affiliated themselves with the Niassene Tijaniyya (Paden 1973). According to

Paden, the most intense period of the shift in allegiance to Niasse was between 1953 and 1963 (1973: 63).

The possible influence of this movement in Zinder is seen in 1951 in the increase in the number of **malamai** who labeled themselves "Tijanis." This evidence suggests that the Niassene Tijaniyya may have had some influence in Zinder and attempted to establish a **zawiya** in the town. In the annual report for the Zinder region in 1959, the Commandant of the region wrote:

> As in previous years, a few Qur'anic scholars from all the regions and notably from Senegal come to Zinder on a tour . . . .
>
> The Sheik Ibrahim Niasse of Kaolack did not appear in the commune for three years, however two Qur'anic scholars from the town of Malam Mamadou in Birni and Malam Youssouf in Zengou continue to organize collections for his benefit.

There are two reasons for thinking Niasse attempted to establish a **zawiya** in Zinder; first, sources indicate that during the first half of the twentieth century there was significant contact between **malamai** in Zinder and **malamai** in northern Nigeria, particularly Kano. Immigration statistics for 1937, for example, indicate that 750 people arrived in Zinder from Nigeria (CAOM, 2G37). This comes at a time when Zinder had a population of less than 10,000 people.[12] It is also known that the **malamai** in northern Nigeria were highly respected by **malamai** in Zinder, thus indicating they would have an ability to influence their thinking regarding religious matters. Second, as

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[12] During the first half of the twentieth century, the population of Zinder generally remained between ten and fifteen thousand. Rivières (1959) provides a figure of 16,000 people for 1959.

the quote above indicates, Niasse visited Zinder, probably in 1956, but also had representatives living in Zinder in 1959 garnering support for him. Also, Senegalese Qur'anic scholars, possibly stationed in Kano but also coming from Senegal, visited Zinder on numerous occasions before this. The Annual Report for Zinder in 1959 (CAOM Aff. Pol. 2181, dos. 1, bis), for example, states that visits from Senegalese religious scholars had been occurring annually. Another factor which may account for the increase in the number of people who labeled themselves "Tijanis" and decrease in the number of "Qadiris" was the death of Malam Hassan in April of 1937. The well-liked and highly respected **malam** was an influential source of religious guidance. Following his death, those he influenced may have been attracted to Niasse. Hassan's son, Malam Falalou, while scholarly, did not have the personal skills of his father and was not well-liked.[13] It is possible that people were attracted to Niasse and thus, re-labeled themselves "Tijanis," following the death of Hassan.

Evidence which suggests followers of Niasse attempted to influence Islamic culture in Zinder is seen in a 1947 report in which 12 of the 14 **malamai** interviewed identified themselves as "Tijanis" (ANN 23.3.69). Similarly, in 1951 out of a total of 31 **malamai** who were interviewed, 24 identify themselves as "Tijanis" (ANN 23.3.90). Recall that early in the century there were more **malamai** who labeled themselves "Qadiris." Initially, it seems likely that an increase in the number of people identifying themselves "Tijanis" in Zinder by mid-century was the result of Niasse's reform movement. **Malamai** who labeled themselves "Qadiris" were still

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[13] See a report by the Commandant of the Region of Zinder dated December 6, 1947 (ANN 4E-3.5) and another report by the Commissaire de Police in Zinder dated August 2, 1950 (ANN 4E-3.5)

present in Zinder at mid-century, but in smaller numbers. However, based on archival sources it is not possible to be sure of this conclusion. First, although the reports indicate an increase in the number of **malamai** who labeled themselves "Tijanis," we cannot be certain of which branch, because the reports do not indicate this. And second, the quote regarding the two **malamai** who represented Niasse in Zinder can be interpreted to mean that he had little success in attracting followers in Zinder, as there were only two **malamai** representing him. Thus, although sources do not permit a detailed discussion of how the Niassene Tijaniyya influenced Islamic practice among the general population in Zinder at this time, it is clear that the **sarki** did not receive Niasse's representatives well.

Muslims in Zinder have, throughout the twentieth century, received religious guidance from the **malamai** whose brand of Islam was based on the principle of **roƙon Alla**. Some **malamai** labeled themselves "Tijanis," some "Qadiris," and many had no order affiliation. Belief in **roƙon Alla** is one aspect of Sufism in West Africa which was, and is, present in Zinder. However, other levels of Sufism were not present. There is no evidence indicating a widespread process of initiation into orders, no official organizations with centers, and no evidence that they conducted public activities. Thus, there were no orders like the Senegal/Mauritanian variants which also functioned as economic organizations.

Traditional Beliefs and Practice in the Twentieth Century

Throughout the twentieth century, Islam in Zinder incorporated traditional beliefs and practices. Dunbar, in the following passage, discusses

the relationship between the **malamai** and those who continued traditional practices at the turn of the century:

> By the beginning of the twentieth century there was still intense rivalry between the hundreds of religious teachers, the marabouts who were everywhere in Damagaram, and those practitioners of earlier religious rites. The rivalry was particularly keen when it concerned the power to cure people from their illnesses. The 'yam bori and the 'yam boka worked their charms in competition against the religious scripture water preferred by the marabouts (1970: 145).

Members of the general population still continued to incorporate traditional beliefs and practices into their construction of Muslim identities. However, a Muslim identity void of traditional practices, at least in public, had become characteristic of the upper class throughout Damagaram. Regarding Islamic culture in Zinder at this time, Dunbar concludes:

> But in the concerns of the regular holding of Friday prayer, of the distribution of alms, led by the Sarki but reflected in the offerings of the masses; and in certain features of the law, Islam was at least an institution for the upper classes throughout the kingdom (1970: 145).

I have argued that following the arrival of the French and dissolution of the diarchy, it was the **malamai**, and their belief in **roƙon Alla**, who provided religious instruction and guidance to the people of Zinder. During this period, the **malamai** criticized traditional practices such as **bori** and **bokanci** claiming both to be un-Islamic. Nevertheless, **Zinderois** found the services of the **yan bori** and **bokaye** useful, particularly in the case of treating spirit-caused illnesses. **Bokanci** continues to exist in Zinder today, and **bori**

played an important role in the lives of some **Zinderois** until about 20 years ago.

Until the early 1970s it was not uncommon for **bori** performances to be held in people's homes. These people considered themselves Muslims and viewed **bori** as a means of treating spirit-caused illnesses. The "Islamic resurgence," which began in the mid-1970s, marked the beginning of a gradual decrease in the frequency of **bori** performances. A retired **bori** specialist explained that it was during that time the **malamai** began to achieve their goal of convincing people in Zinder to stop attending **bori** performances.[14] He said it was at about this time that he began to feel mounting pressure from people in the community, especially the **malamai**, to end his participation in **bori** performances. Similarly, other retired **bori** specialists told me that they had fewer clients requesting possession ceremonies during this period.

It is interesting to note the changing nature of **bori** performances in Zinder. This change is related to what Echard calls the general rule regarding cults of possession, which states: "a possession cult is never the unique form of religious expression within a given society, but is always contiguous to, associated with, other practices based on a different model considered the dominant religious form" (1991: 67). Thus, from the eighteenth century into the twentieth century, **bori** in Zinder gradually lost its place as part of traditional religion and became incorporated, in the eyes of those who attended **bori** performances, into Islam. This supports Echard's claim that **bori** always exists as a part of a greater whole. **Bori**, in this sense, became

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[14] This is very different from the relationship between **malamai** and **bokaye** in northern Nigeria described by Abdalla (1991).

Islamisized. The current head of the **y'an bori** in Zinder, for example, has made the pilgrimage to Mecca and late afternoon performances I attended did not start until after the musicians completed their afternoon prayer. Thus, during the twentieth century, **bori** was not part of traditional religion for most people, but rather a source of therapy for people who considered themselves Muslims.

Based on interviews I conducted with retired **bori** specialists in Zinder, it appears that the public perception of **bori** performances began to change in the mid-1970s. This change coincides with President Kountche's attempt to foster a national Islamic identity in Niger (Triaud 1981, 1982). In attempting to create this identity, Kountche made the pilgrimage to Mecca, oversaw the construction of a large Friday mosque in Niamey, initiated construction of an Islamic university, established the Islamic Association of Niger, and sought to develop ties with other Muslim nations. The "Islamic resurgence" which Kountche contributed to may have been a factor in the decrease in the number of people requesting **bori** performances in Zinder. The mid-1970s represents a time when Nigeriens were redefining, or at least rethinking, what it meant to be a Muslim. **Bori** performances with the musical accompaniment, animal sacrifice, and spirit possession eventually became viewed by most Muslims as "un-Islamic." **Bori** performances had become a liability to one's claim to a Muslim identity.

Bori specialists knew, however, that there was a continued need for their services. The problem, they realized, was related to the public forum in which **bori** performances were held. Such performances alerted everyone in the neighborhood that a person was seeking such therapy from **bori** experts. The afflicted person thus became known to everyone and labeled as a **d'an**

bori , a label which undermined a claim to Muslim identity. As a result, **bori** specialists went underground in a sense; they began to provide treatments and other services in private consultations with clients. By doing this, the **bori** specialist repackaged him or herself as a **boka** or, in some instances, as a medicine seller (**mai sai da magunguna**).[15] Treating spirit-caused illnesses no longer required public announcement, in the form of a **bori** performance, that treatment was being sought. Rather, clients benefited from the **bori** specialist's knowledge of various spirits behind closed doors. An afflicted person could now be brought to a **boka** who would diagnose and treat the illness discreetly.[16] Thus, the rivalry between the **malamai** and **bokaye** commented on by Dunbar at the turn of the twentieth century, continues in Zinder today. The rivalry is intense because the **malamai** and **bokaye** offer the same types of services and are hence in competition for clients.

Summary

In this chapter I analyzed historical periods in Zinder and explained various conceptions of what it meant to be a Muslim at different points in history. This analysis shows how Islam, just as it is today, was a resource that was contested. It was contested by the **sarki** and his **malaman sarki**, by **malamai** who were members of the Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya and Sanussiyya orders and who sought to establish **zawiyas** in Zinder, and even by the French. Today reformers have begun to challenge the institution of Islam in Zinder. Throughout history, various conceptions of Muslim identity were viewed as a potential by some people, but a threat by others. Tanimu's

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15 The significance of this distinction is explained in Chapter 7.

16 The types of services and treatments provided by **bokaye** are discussed in Chapter 4.

implementation of Islamic principles into the lives of **Zinderois**, but refusal to allow a Sanussiyya zawiya in Zinder in 1893, is one example of a person attempting to guide Islamic practice on his terms. Similarly, the debate between the **malamai** and **bokaye** regarding what is "Islamic" highlights the struggle over the institution of Islam. Today, the **malamai** are engaged in a struggle over Islam with the reformers.

Drawing upon historical sources we can understand how various identities were created, maintained, and reproduced. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, a Muslim identity generally included the practice of **bori** and offering of sacrifices to spirits. Even the **sarki** participated in such ceremonies. History, however, also teaches us how individuals or groups of individuals make change happen. A diachronic perspective thus shows us how individuals' actions can bring about change. The actions of Tanimu represent an example of an individual forging change on his terms. During Tanimu's reign, traditional practices were no longer compatible with a Muslim identity, at least among the upper classes. I also discussed the manner in which the diarchy of the **sarki** and **malaman sarki** controlled the political, economic, and religious structure of society until the arrival of the French. Reformers are now attempting to redefine Islam, as they challenge the **malamai** and majority Muslims' conceptions of what it means to be a Muslim.

A diachronic perspective of Muslim identity construction in Zinder suggests that on one hand, peoples' actions are guided by societal constraints and guidelines. For example, it was acceptable for the **sarki** and people of Zinder to attend traditional ceremonies in the middle of the nineteenth century, but it was not acceptable for the **sarki** to do so thereafter. Similarly,

bori performances which were common throughout the first half of the twentieth century, become a progressively more unacceptable forum for a Muslim to seek therapy beginning in the 1970s. The point I wish to emphasize, is that societal rules regarding Islam (rules which generally have been established by the **malamai**) have guided peoples' lives and hence actions throughout the twentieth century. On the other hand, however, we see that when people deviate from these rules, there is a potential for change; that is, individuals can reshape society. As we will see, the reformers' rejection of Islam as defined by the **malamai** is a contemporary example of this.

Chapter 5

MALINCI: THE ROLE OF THE MALAM IN ZINDER SOCIETY

Introduction

The **malamai** continue to play a significant role in guiding Islamic practice in Zinder. In this chapter I describe the various services, based on the principle of **roƙon Alla,** that **malamai** provide majority Muslims in Zinder. Recall that **roƙon Alla** is the belief that the **malamai,** because they have interiorized and intensified their practice of Islam, are able to gain a direct understanding of God and thus have the ability to make requests of God on behalf of clients. **Malamai** embody one form of knowledge that majority Muslims in Zinder turn to in order to assure short and long-term success in life. As we will see, people often consult **malamai** in an attempt to restore, or ensure, a state of well-being. This process is known as **neman lahiya.**

Who are the Malamai ?

Malamai are important members of Zinder society who are first and foremost respected for their knowledge of the Qur'an and other religious texts, particularly the hadiths. **Malamai** operate Qur'anic schools (**makarantar** Hausa), and while generally recognized as being men, women may also attain the title of **malama.** Boyd and Last (1985) have called upon scholars to recognize that there are prominent female religious scholars in Muslim societies in Africa. Answering this call, Sule and Starratt (1991) provide

examples of such women in Kano, Nigeria. I also encountered such women during my research in Zinder.

Most **malamai** began attending Qur'anic school at an early age, some as early as age two. The process of becoming a **malam** is continuous, and, generally, the title of "**malam**" is not bestowed upon a person under 40 years of age. A prominent **malam** who is now 55 years old and has lived his entire life in the Birni, described his training and qualifications as follows:

> I began attending Qur'anic school when I was two years old. I have studied for as long as I can remember. I have studied the Qur'an and many other books. I have also taught many students.
>
> People come to me seeking advice and my services because they know I have the ability to make requests of God. They know I am experienced and have studied for a long time, that is why they come to me.

A **malama** in her early 60's also emphasized the importance of studying the Qur'an and other religious texts in gaining the respect of the community. People in the community, both men and women, consult her for her services and advice on various matters, sometimes telephoning from other regions of Niger. With regard to her training she told me:

> When I was young I lived in a village near Gouré.[1] My parents were Tubu, but because I grew up near Gouré I learned to speak Kanuri and Hausa. But I have spent most of my adult life in Zinder. I began studying when I was seven years old with a **malama**. She taught me to read and write, she taught me the Qur'an and other books. I have studied almost my whole life.

Another **malama** who lives in the Birni has dedicated her life to the

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[1] Gouré is a town located about 170 kilometers east of Zinder.

study of the Qur'an and religious texts as well. This 60 year old woman is well known in Zinder for her scholarly knowledge of the Qur'an and religious texts and is often consulted for her services. Her mother was the daughter of a former **sarki** of Zinder. Regarding her training, she told me:

> My father taught me about religion. He started teaching me when I was young. I have three younger sisters who didn't study. Because I studied, my father made them do all of the household chores. I didn't have to do any housework because I was always studying. I didn't go to Qur'anic school because my father taught me at home. He taught me everything I know. Now people come to see me from many places like Niamey and Maradi.

In Zinder **malamai** are found throughout the town operating Qur'anic schools. Usually the classes of younger children are taught by older students of a **malam** who possess the title **almajiri** (pl. **almajirai**). Still students themselves, **almajirai** have made the progress in their own studies which is necessary to qualify them to be teachers. **Malamai** generally spend their time teaching the more advanced students. After hearing a 30 year old **almajiri** called **malam** by his students I asked him how long he had been a **malam**. He laughed and told me:

> I am not a **malam**. Only someone who has studied for a long time can be a **malam**. Some people call me **malam** but I am not a **malam**. I must continue to study and teach and then one day I will be a **malam**. Today I am only a boy (**yaro**).[2]

The examples above reflect the intensification and interiorization of

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[2] The term "**yaro**" has a much wider context in Hausa than in English. **Yaro** may be used to refer to someone who has not yet reached middle age (in the early 40s at the earliest) at which time a man is referred to as **latijo**, a woman, **latija**.

faith, which are prerequisites for becoming a **malam**, and gaining the ability to make requests of God. Religious texts are studied for a long period of time under the guidance of a **malam**, a period of study often lasting several decades. Interiorization occurs throughout this period of training as the student spends much of his or her free time outside of the Qur'anic classes studying independently. The goal of this process is to gain a direct understanding and thus an intimate relationship with God. This relationship enables a person to gain a "closeness to God" which is unique to **malamai**. As a result of this relationship, the **malam** is in a position to provide members of the community with special services.

The services provided by **malamai** take place in two settings. The first is the public sphere and includes the performance of prayers at religious and social events. The second setting, the private sphere, includes services **malamai** provide to their clients on a personal and individual level. These services, which I discuss shortly, are requests made by clients based on their personal needs.[3]

The Public Setting

The public settings in which **malamai** work include major Islamic celebrations and other social events. In Zinder, major Islamic festivals which are celebrated include: the annual fast (**azumi**), the feast of sacrifice (**leya**), the Prophet's birthday (**maulidi**) and the giving of the **zakka**. During these events, **malamai** play prominent roles in the celebrations and carrying out of events. During the month of Ramadan, for example, **malamai** can be heard

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[3] For examples of similar services provided by malamai in other Hausa-speaking areas see Nicolas (1975) 198-201, Wall (1988) 232-239 and especially, Hassan (1992).

throughout the town reciting the Qur'an and providing commentary on the passages being read. From my home next to the large Friday mosque in the Birni, I could hear a prominent **malam** reading and explaining (**passara**)[4] various passages of the Qur'an each night over a loudspeaker beginning in the early evening and continuing until after midnight

Malamai also preside over rites of passage in Zinder; most notably, at naming ceremonies (**bikin suna**), funerals (**mutuwa**), and marriages (**bikin arme**). **Malamai** are called upon during these events because they are the religious specialists who can assure that such ceremonies are conducted properly and with the blessing of God.

The Private Setting

In addition to these public roles, **malamai** also provide services to members of the community who are engaged in **neman lahiya**. These services center around personal needs of individuals and are based on the principle of **roƙon Alla**. It is important to note that the **malamai** say that it is not them who meet the needs of individuals, but rather God. The **malamai** act only as intermediaries, in a sense, conduits for meeting the requests of clients.

Amulets (Layu)

One of the most common services provided by **malamai** is the production of amulets. **Malamai** provide amulets (s. **laya**, pl. **layu**) consisting of hand written verses from the Qur'an or other religious texts which are

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[4] The term "**passara**" refers to the translation of a text from Arabic into Hausa. Such translation need not be word for word, but rather, is intended to provide an explanation of the Arabic in Hausa.

then enclosed in leather, or sometimes metal cases. **Layu** may be used in many different ways, although they are most commonly worn around the neck, carried in a pocket, hung over a doorway, or placed in a strategic location. People request **layu** for many reasons, the most common being to protect the wearer from misfortune or to bring good fortune (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 - Examples of Reasons Given for Requesting Layu

To bring good fortune
To prevent misfortune
To get married
To get the funds to buy a house
To have a landlord sell the house one is living in
To have children
To improve sale of goods at market
To stop fighting with spouse
To get a desired object owned by someone else
To prevent illness
To marry a woman already engaged
To prevent husband from taking another wife
To find employment
To prevent others from asking for repayment of a loan
To prevent a husband from being unfaithful
To prevent a wife from leaving

The efficacy of the **layu** lie in the **malam**'s ability to select the appropriate writing for the need of the person. The **laya** is effective because the writing, chosen by the **malam**, is directly related to God. Most majority Muslims in Zinder believe strongly in the efficacy of **layu**. The following examples represent various reasons majority Muslims request **layu** from

malamai.

A 40 year old man, who requested a **laya** to prevent thieves from stealing from his house, explained why he consulted a **malam**:

> Thieves came to my house several times and stole some things. They stole a radio and some money. Then, several months later, a thief stole one of my goats. I went to a **malam** and was given a **laya** to prevent the theft of my belongings. I buried the **laya** in my compound. Since that time I have not had anything stolen.

A 42 year old trader in the market, who enjoyed a successful business selling cloth, consulted a **malam** after his profits dropped. The decrease in business was significant enough to result in his being unable to support his two wives and children. He consulted a **malam** who provided him with a **laya** and recounted the event as follows:

> Until recently, I had enough money to buy millet to feed my family. I had a horse and other things. Then everything went bad, I had to sell my things to provide for my family. One of my wives left. I went to a **malam** and told him about my problems. He gave me a **laya** which I carry with me. Since I have gotten the amulet things have improved a little, my wife came back. The situation has improved a little but is not like it was before.

In another instance, a woman heard that her husband was planning to take a second wife. She was unhappy about the situation and consulted a **malam** who provided a **laya** which was intended to prevent this from occurring. The story was recounted to my research assistant, Zara Mani, as follows:

> When I got married, my husband said he would never take another wife. I was happy when he told me this and I believed him. It was

> this way for six years. We had three children. Then I heard the news that he was planning to bring home another wife. I was upset because he said he would not do this. A **malam** gave me a **laya** which he said would prevent the marriage. Even though the marriage had been agreed to, after several weeks the woman refused to marry him.

In the preceding examples, majority Muslims requested **layu** from **malamai** for a variety of reasons related to personal needs. In these cases, the people engaged in **neman lahiya** are concerned with their short as well as long-term well-being. As the second example shows, **layu** do not always bring about the desired result. For the cloth seller, he did not regain his past success in the market. The examples, however, provide evidence which shows that majority Muslims in Zinder find requesting a **laya** from a **malam** an effective means of attempting to restore or ensure a continued state of **lahiya** in their lives.

When **layu** fail to achieve the desired result, various explanations are offered, such as, the writing inside the amulet was done incorrectly, or the person who provided the **laya** was not qualified to do so. Nevertheless, most majority Muslims believe that a qualified **malam** is capable of providing **layu** that will meet the need of his or her clients.

Qur'anic Erasure (Rubutan Sha)

Malamai also meet the personal needs of their clients through the prescription of Qur'anic erasure (**rubutan sha**). In preparing **rubutan sha**, the **malam** writes a verse from the Qur'an, or other religious text, on a wooden tablet (s.**allo**, pl.**alluna**) which is then washed into a bowl and drunk by the client. Similar to the production of **layu**, the efficacy of **rubutan sha** stems

Table 5.2 - Examples of Reasons Given for Drinking Rubutan Sha

Hausa	English
buƙatu	personal needs (general)
aihuwa	to have a child
zazzaɓi	fever
kumburi	swelling
ciwon ƙafa	foot pain
haɓo	bleeding from the nose
ciwon ido	eye pain
hajijiya	dizziness
farin masasara	yellow fever
tindimi	elephanitiasis
hauka	madness
ciwon zuciya	heart pain
fuka	asthma
hana shan taba	stop smoking
ame	vomitting
naƙuda	during labor
ciwon ciki	stomach pain
maganin masifa	prevent misfortune
roƙon Alla	request from God
ciwon kai	head pain
kwancece	lack of fetal movement

Table 5.3 - Uses of Writing by Malamai

Type	Use
Amulet **(Rubutu na laya)**	numerous uses, see Table 5.1
Erasure **(Rubutu na sha)**	numerous uses, see Table 5.2
Writing on metal tablet **(Rubutu na allon ƙarhi)**	Used to make someone return home. Writing with name of person is placed over hot coals.
Writing on grinding stone **(Rubutu a kan «an magurgi)**	1. Used in case of illness when **rubutan sha** on **allo** does not work. 2. Used when a wife is being abused by her husband. 3. Used for a woman giving birth when the baby is being born feet or arms first. Writing is done on stone and erasure is drank.
Writing on ax **(Rubutu na gatari)**	Used to assist a woman during labor. Writing is done on head of an ax and erasure is drank.
Writing on knife **(Rubutu na yuƙuwa)**	Used to attract a person one loves. Writing is licked off knife and desired person will like the person.
Writing on calabash **(Rubutu na ƙwaria)**	Used for a man who wants to marry, but does not have financial means. Writing is done on the inside of the calabash and erasure is drank.
Writing on black paper **(Rubutu a kan baƙa takarda)**	Used to make one invisible. Writing is done on black paper. The paper and **tuwo** made by a blind woman is sealed in the skin of a baby black kitten which has not yet opened its eyes. It can only be made the last Sunday of the month in a dark room after the sun has gone down. It is sealed with seven thorns from a **bagaruwa** tree.
Writing on a lantern **(Rubutu a kan fitila)**	Used to attract unwilling love interest. The name of the person desired is written on glass part of a lantern and left to burn for 40 days.

Table 5.3 (cont'd)

Writing on a stone **(Rubutu a kan dutse)**	Used to prevent theft of crops in fields or personal belongings at home. Writing is done on a stone which is buried in the field or compound.
Writing on leaves of a **dirimi** **(Rubutu a kan ganyen dirimi)**	Used by a man to attract a woman. Writing is done on the leaf and then burned. The desired woman will be unable to drink until she sees person.
Writing on leaves of a **tumpafiya** **(Rubutu a kan ganyen tumpafiya)**	Used to determine if an ill person will live or die. Leaf with writing and name of person is lowered into a well where there is a rainbow. If leaf is pulled from well unharmed person will recover. If leaf is burned, the person will die.
Bathing writing **(Rubutu na wanka)**	Erasure from wooden **allo** is used to bathe. Many uses.
Eye wash writing **(Rubutu na wankan ido)**	Used for illness of the eye. Erasure from wooden **allo** is used to wash eyes.
Writing on cow liver **(Rubutu a kan hantal saniya)**	Used as a treatment for **shukuwa**. Writing is done on cow's liver. Liver is then cooked and eaten by ill person.
Writing on mirror **(Rubutu a kan madubi)**	Used to make a person popular. Erasure from mirror is drank.
Writing to "tie the bush" **(Rubutu ta «arman dawa)**	Used to find lost animals. Writing is done in circle in the sand. This sand is then collected and thrown in all directions. The lost animals will stay where they are until found.

from the belief that it is the words of, or writing related to, God being used in the appropriate way by a qualified specialist. Rather than being worn or carried by a person, as is the case with **layu, rubutan sha** is internalized by the person. **Rubutan sha** is provided for many of the same reasons as **layu,** although it is more frequently used to treat illness than **layu** (see Table 5.2). In addition to these common types of **layu** and **rubutan sha,** there are other less common uses of writing (see Table 5.3).

Foreseeing (Listahara)

Often people will consult **malamai** when they have questions or have to make important decisions regarding the future (see Table 5.4). Again, based

Table 5.4 - Examples of Reasons People Request Listahara

To determine days on which to travel
To learn in one will become wealthy
To learn if a spouse is being unfaithful
To learn if a potential spouse will be receptive
To determine who has stolen an object
To determine the cause of misfortune

on the principle of **rokon Alla, malamai** are able to answer clients' questions regarding the future. **Listahara** may be done in a variety of different ways.

In **listahara ta barci** (foreseeing during sleep), the **malam** listens to the question posed by the client and the answer is revealed to him in a dream. A **malam** in the Birni in his early 50's described this form of **listahara** to me as follows:

> Sometimes people ask me questions and the answer comes to me at night, while I am sleeping. It is God who sends the answer. Then I tell the person who asked me the question what I saw.
>
> One time a man asked me if he would be rich one day. When I was sleeping I saw the man driving a new car. I also saw that he had lots of money and a large house. I told him this and he was very happy. I don't know when it will happen though.

Regarding their answering such questions, **malamai** explained to me that they do not know what will happen in the future. But because of their "closeness to God," the **malamai** argue that they are in a position to receive God's answers to questions, in this case in a dream. One **malam**, for example, told me:

> Someone might ask me if Thursday is a good day to travel to Niamey for business. If I see in my dream that the person would make lots of money I tell him to go. But if he has a car accident on the way and doesn't reach Niamey it is not my fault. It is because God determined that.

A ring similar to a wedding band is used for **listahara ta zobe** (foreseeing done with a ring). In this type of **listahara,** a young boy assists a **malam** in answering a question. The ring is placed on a flat surface and the young boy sees entities in human form (**rumfani**)[5] appear in the ring. Using the boy as an intermediary, the **malam** instructs the boy to ask the question and the **rumfani** provide the answer. **Malamai** told me that there are very few boys who are capable of this.[6]

One example of **listahara ta zobe** that I witnessed took place at the

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[5] **Rumfani** are angels who act as intermediaries between God and the young boy.

[6] **Malamai** estimated that only 1 in 100 boys can assist in **listahara** of this type.

home of a **malam** in the Birni. A young man who was involved in a car accident several years ago continued to have pain in his shoulder. Some days the pain was quite severe and prevented him from using his arm. He decided to consult a **malam** to find out what should be done. The **malam** decided to do **listahara ta zobe**. He called for the twelve year old boy who regularly assists him with this type of **listahara**. The **malam** removed a silver wedding band-type ring from his finger and placed it on a mat on the floor. Present in the room were the **malam**, the young man with the pain in his shoulder, the young boy and myself. The following is an account of what was said at the event:

> **Malam**: Look, do you see them yet?
> Boy: No, not yet.
> **Malam**: [several minutes later] Do you see them now?
> Boy: Yes.
> **Malam**: How many do you see?
> Boy: Three.
> **Malam**: Men or women?
> Boy: Two women and one man.
> **Malam**: [to young man] What is wrong with you?
> Young man: I had a car accident several years ago and I still have pain in my shoulder. I want to know what to do about it.
> **Malam**: [to young boy] Tell them what has happened and ask them what to do.
> Boy: [to **rumfani**] This man had a car accident several years ago and he still has pain in his shoulder. He wants to know what to do.
> **Rumfani**: [to boy] He needs to get medicine.[7]
> Boy: [to **malam**] They said he needs to get medicine.
> **Malam**: [to boy] Ask them what kind of medicine. Medicine from **malamai**, traditional medicine, . . . what kind?
> Boy: [to **rumfani**] What kind of medicine? Medicine from **malamai**, traditional medicine?
> **Rumfani** [to boy]: Traditional medicine.[8]

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[7] Only the boy can hear the **rumfani**.

[8] In this case, traditional medicine (**maganin galgajiya**) refers to herbal medicine provided by a medicine seller (**mai sai da magani**) and not a **boka**.

Boy: [to **malam**] Traditional medicine.
Malam: [to boy] Where should he go to get it? The Birni, the Zongo?
Boy: [to **rumfani**] Where should he go to get it? The Birni, the Zongo?
Rumfani: [to boy] The Zongo.
Boy: [to **malam**] The Zongo.
Malam: [to boy] Where in the Zongo?
Boy: [to **rumfani**] Where in the Zongo?
Rumfani: [to boy] Sabon Gari.[9]
Boy: [to **malam**]: Sabon Gari.

In this example, the **rumfani** are messengers from God who convey the information requested by the **malam**. Only the young boy is able to see or hear the **rumfani**. Following the advice of the **rumfani**, the young man purchased the medicine as instructed. While the young man claimed to have felt relief for several days, the severe pain returned within a week.

A form of **listahara** similar to the one described above is done with a bowl of water in place of a ring. The procedure is the same, as a young boy who is capable of assisting with this type of **listahara** is needed. Instead of seeing the **rumfani** in a ring, they are seen by the boy in a bowl of water.

In these two types of **listahara**, the **malam** requires the assistance of a young boy. Without the **malam**'s presence, the boy is unable to see the **rumfani**, yet without the **malam**, the **rumfani** will not appear. Thus, the boy and **malam** are both required for this type of **listahara** to be successful. For his assistance, the boy is given a small sum of money. Interestingly, only young boys are capable of this and, eventually, as the boy ages, he will lose his ability to see the **rumfani**.

The significance of this will be seen in Chapter 7.
[9] Sabon Gari is a neighborhood in Zinder.

Another type of **listahara** may be used to answer "yes" or "no" questions. In this type, the **malam** places folded pieces of paper with the words "yes" and "no" written on them. After the question is posed, the client chooses one of the folded pieces of paper from the bowl. The answer to the question is written on the piece of paper.

Although there are different types of **listahara, malamai** tend to specialize in one type. Also, not all **malamai** are capable of **listahara.** It was not uncommon for me to be told by a **malam** that while he believed in **listahara,** he did not do it. As with **layu** and **rubutan sha, malamai** are paid for performing **listahara** based on the clients' ability to pay. There are no set prices and the sum is determined by the means of the person requesting the services.

The **malamai** I interviewed and observed were clear in pointing out that it was God providing the responses and not them. The **malamai** are merely the means by which the answer to the question is conveyed. Because God provides the answer, the **malamai** do not view themselves as foreseers or fortune tellers. **Listahara** is in opposition to **duba** which is the term used to refer to the type of foreseeing done by **bokaye.**[10] The **malamai** reject **duba** because, according to the **malamai, bokaye** do not rely on Allah to answer questions, and only God knows what will happen in the future.

Prayers Done at Request of a Client (Wuridi and Adda'a)

In addition to producing **layu,** prescribing **rubutan sha,** and doing **listahara, malamai** also perform **wuridi** and **adda'a** for clients. **Wuridi** is the repetition of a prayer multiple times at the request of a client outside his

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[10] The role of **bokaye** in Zinder society will be discussed in Chapter 7.

presence. **Adda'a** is the saying of a prayer in the presence of a client generally accompanied by the spitting of air (**tohi**) over the person or object being blessed. Table 5.5 provides examples of reasons **malamai** do **wuridi** and **adda'a** as well the sura and verse used.

Wuridi is requested by clients engaged in **neman lahiya** and, like the others services I have discussed, is sought by people concerned with short as well as long-term notions of well-being. As with the other services provided by the **malamai**, the principle behind **wuridi** is **rokon Alla**. A person requesting **wuridi** be done on his or her behalf explains the reason for the request to the **malam**. The **malam**, in turn, selects and repeats an appropriate prayer multiple times, possibly as many as 100, 200, 500 or 1,000 times, outside the presence of the person making the request. **Wuridi** is done by the **malam** in private and often involves the use of incense. While reciting the prayer with prayer beads (**tabzi**) in hand, the **malam** burns incense which is believed to attract messengers (**mala'eka**) who in turn carry the request to God where it can be heard and answered.

One of the more common reasons people request a **malam** do **wuridi** on their behalf,is to ensure a safe journey. One man told me:

> If I will take a long journey, I want to be sure it will be safe. Many people have car accidents. I ask my **malam** to ensure my safety during the journey, and he does **wuridi**. I have never had an accident,but I know people who have died in accidents.

In discussing **wuridi** with a **malam** in the Birni, he told me that his clients commonly ask him to do **wuridi** for them. He cited sura 36 (Ya Sin) as the most powerful source of prayers for **wuridi**, as it is the heart of the

Table 5.5 - Examples of Wuridi and Adda'a

Sura: Verse	Reasons Prescribed
111: 1-2	To increase market business
111: 1-5	To get a thief to return stolen goods
56	Makes a person popular and well liked
113: 1-5	Prevents a person for being blamed for faults
112	1. For an illness of unknown cause 2. For stomach ache 3. To get a person to sell you a possession 4. To have people stay at home so he or she can be contacted. 5. Sends a person from hell to heaven 6. To guarantee a good harvest 7. To get pregnant 8. To get married 9. To bring rain 10. To have a high profit margin in business
94: 1-8	1. For success in work 2. Done at marriages for well-being
36: 1-83	1. Can be used to kill a person 2. Can cause a person to become a fool 3. To cause a divorce 4. To cause a person's house to fall down 5. To cause a person's belongings to turn to ash 6. To cause an enemy to move away 7. To bring wealth 8. To bring happiness to a marriage 9. To bring well-being into a house 10. To make friends with people who can be of assistance 11. To find work 12. To find a spouse
106: 1-4	1. Makes a person invisible 2. To avoid seeing a person 3. Prevents a thief from choosing one's house to steal from 4. To have the protection of God

Qur'an.[11] Regarding the use of sura 36 in **wuridi** he explained:

> Ya Sin is the heart of the Qur'an, it has many uses. I use it for people who are in need of money or for people who want to have a good marriage. It can also be very dangerous, some people use it for evil purposes, but I don't. It can be used to kill someone, but I have never done that.

Adda'a is similar to **wuridi** in that it is based on the principle of **rokon Alla**. Unlike **wurid**, in which the client is not present, **adda'a** is performed in the presence of the person making the request. Like **wuridi**, **adda'a** is requested by people engaged in **neman lahiya**. During **adda'a**, the **malam** recites the prayer while doing **tohi** over the person or object being blessed.

A 52 year old **malam**, who also farms, explained why he does **adda'a** before planting his seed: "When it is time to plant, I take all of my seed and do **adda'a**. I do **adda'a** to ask Allah to turn the seed into a successful harvest. If I did not do **adda'a** before I planted the seed, it might not be successful." In this example, the **malam** does **adda'a** over all of the seed. He repeats sura 110 twenty times while doing **tohi** over the seed. He said that some people also do a short prayer over each seed before it is planted in the ground.

A young man who played soccer for a local team asked a **malam** to do **adda'a** over his kicking foot before each match. He explained the reason he does this as follows:

> I go to a **malam** before I play because I want to score many goals. The **malam** does **adda'a** on my foot and tells me that I will score goals in the next match. The last time I went to the **malam** he did **adda'a** and I scored the only goal of the match.

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[11] Bowen (1993) 96-98, describes a similar view of sura 36 in his study of Gayo society.

In this case, the **malam** recited sura 36 ten times over the young man's foot while doing **tohi**.

Similarly, a trader in the main Zinder market told me that he asks a **malam** to do **adda'a** over goods he hopes to sell. The **malam** repeats sura 111 a total of 10 times to request the blessings of God. The trader explained why he asks a **malam** to do this:

> I ask a **malam** to do **adda'a** on my things. If I did not do this I would not sell as many of my things. When the **malam** does this for me, I know people will come and buy my things and I will have money. I always have a **malam** do **adda'a** on my things.

Regarding the treatment of an illness, a young man explained how a **malam** used **adda'a** to treat a stomach ailment:

> I had pain in my stomach for three days. It was very painful and I went to a **malam**. The **malam** did **adda'a** to a glass of water. He gave me the water to drink and said that I would feel better. He told me that if I did not feel better the next morning, that I should go to the hospital. The next morning I did not have any stomach pain.

Thus, the principle linking **layu, rubutan sha, listahara, wuridi** and **adda'a** is **roƙon Alla**. This ability to make requests of God is unique to **malamai** who are able to do so based on their specialized knowledge of the Qur'an and other religious texts through which they have achieved an intimate relationship with God. This knowledge gives the **malamai** a "closeness to God" not found among the general population.

Summary

In Zinder, the **malamai** are the religious authority whom people respect and look to for spiritual guidance. They are the religious teachers of society and are responsible for educating majority Muslims in Zinder regarding Islamic practice. For generations this education has included a strong belief in **roƙon Alla** and resulted in the **malamai** being a source of assistance for people engaged in **neman lahiya**. The **malamai**'s guidance regarding Islamic practice, however, is now being challenged. In the following chapter, I discuss the emergence of the Islamic reform movement in Zinder.

Chapter 6

THE EMERGENCE OF AN ISLAMIC REFORM MOVEMENT IN ZINDER

Introduction

Following Niger's transition to an elected government in 1991, an Islamic reform movement, which using Hodgkin's terminology represents "Islamism," began to emerge in Zinder. The reform movement typifies "Islamism" as its leaders are critical of majority Muslims who, in the eyes of the reformers, have deviated from the "true" practice of Islam. The movement thus aims to "purify" Islamic practice in Zinder, and more generally Niger. Although the reformers have not stated their goals as the transformation of Niger into an Islamic state based on Islamic law, majority Muslims in Zinder believe this to be the case. The ideology of the reformers, often labeled "Wahhabism" by non-followers, is similar to other Islamic reform movements which have occurred in northern Nigeria (Umar 1993, Kane 1990), Mali (Brenner 1993) and Maradi, Niger (Grégoire 1993).

Who are the Reformers?

The reformers in Zinder make up only a small percentage of the population. While it is difficult to provide exact figures regarding the number of reformers in the town, they assuredly make up less than 5% of the

population.[1] Like other people in Zinder, reformers are traders, farmers and civil servants. Although they are relatively few in numbers, the reformers have emerged publicly and began an effective campaign in which they have criticized Islamic practice in Zinder.

Members of the reform movement did not appear in Zinder overnight. Leaders and followers of the movement have lived and worked with their families in Zinder for the past twenty years. During this time they prayed together, studied together and operated Qur'anic schools for their children. However, until recently they maintained a low profile in the community and, for the most part, kept to themselves. As was the case throughout the military regimes of Presidents Kountche and Saibou, the reformers feared being identified by the government as an organization with political motivations. However, as it became clear that Niger would adopt an elected form of government, and with it would come increased freedom of speech and association, the reformers in Zinder emerged publicly. This included holding public preaching sessions, forming an Islamic association, and establishing a Friday mosque in the town.

The religious ideology of reformers in Zinder is similar to other such reform movements in West Africa which have been characterized as "Wahhabism" (Kane 1990, Grégoire 1993, Umar 1993, Brenner 1993). The movement in Zinder shares many similarities with these other movements. First, the leaders of the reform movement in Zinder are generally young, wealthy and, in some cases, have been educated abroad in Saudi Arabia and

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[1] This is based on estimates made by majority Muslims and reformers. While the reformers acknowledged that they are a minority, they told me their numbers will grow as their message is heard and understood.

Egypt. Thus, there is a generational difference between the reformers and the prominent **malamai** in Zinder. However, although the leaders of the reform movement tend to be wealthy and relatively young, followers represent all ages groups and often are relatively poor.

The reformers in Zinder, like other "Wahhabi" movements in West Africa, reject the principle of **roƙon Alla** and view the production of **layu, rubutan sha** and performance of **listahara** as innovative and fraudulent. Another similarity is the view of reformers in Zinder that anyone who claims affiliation with an Islamic order, such as the Qadiriyya or the Tijaniyya, is not a true Muslim because such orders are separate religions which stand outside the realm of Islam. The reformers in Zinder also pray with their arms in a different position and pray at different times. They do not show the outward signs of respect to their elders characteristic of Hausa-speaking societies and are thus viewed by majority Muslims as disrespectful to the previous generation. A common metaphor which is used to exemplify this in Zinder is that the reformers view their mothers as envelopes; that is, once they are born (the letter is removed) they have no use for their mothers (the envelope can be thrown away).

Another important difference between the reformers and majority Muslims in Zinder is the manner in which each views the Prophet Mohammed. Reformers reject the elevated status given to the Prophet by majority Muslims in Zinder. As a result, majority Muslims claim that reformers disrespect and insult the Prophet. Finally, reformers in Zinder do not hold the elaborate celebrations which accompany majority Muslims' naming ceremonies, marriages and funerals. In the eyes of majority

Muslims, the reformers are cheapskates who refuse to part with their money. Thus, these differences which characterize the reformers in Zinder are also found in similar reform movements in West Africa which have been labeled "Wahhabism."

The "Wahhabiyya" in West Africa

The challenge to Islam posed by the reformers in Zinder is similar to other attempts to reform Islamic practice in West Africa which have been labeled "Wahhabism." Wahhabism developed during the eighteenth century in Saudi Arabia under the leadership of its founder, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab.[2] Ibn Abd al-Wahhab compared the religious practice of his society to the polytheistic religious practices of pre-Islamic Arabia. He specifically was offended by what he viewed to be the polytheistic and thus "un-Islamic" Sufi practice of the veneration of saints and their tombs.[3] In order to improve the condition of his society, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab advocated a return to the "pure" practice of Islam based on the Qur'an and as represented by Mohammed's life in Medina. Subsequently, a military-based reform movement, or jihad, was set in motion, resulting in the conquering of much of the Arabian Peninsula.

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[2] The following information is based on Esposito (1988). Wahhabiyya is a term which has been applied to the movement and is viewed as pejorative by it followers. Esposito indicates that the group's self-designation was the Muwahiddun which he translates as "unitarians," (those who uphold and practice monotheism)(1988: 120). According to Brenner, members of the group referred to as the Wahhabiyya in Mali label themselves **Ahl al-Sunna**, or Sunnis (1993: 60).

[3] This practice, common among Sufis in other parts of West Africa, is not present in Zinder.

The Wahhabi jihad was driven by a rejection of Sufism. As a result, Sufi shrines and tombs were destroyed, including the tomb of the Prophet. The purpose of the jihad was, as Esposito states, "a return to a purified Islam by weeding out those un-Islamic beliefs and practices that had infiltrated the law and life of Muslims" (1988: 120). The legacy of the Wahhabi movement continues to be seen today in the state and society of contemporary Saudi Arabia (Esposito 1988: 121).

Beginning in the 1930s, West African Muslims began traveling to Saudi Arabia in greater numbers to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. As Kaba (1974: 48) points out, the pilgrimage often included a return via Cairo, and, as a result, he argues, Egypt and Saudi Arabia were the sources of Wahhabi reform movements in West Africa. In addition to the pilgrimage, improved transportation and trade also brought West African Muslims into contact with Muslims in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Thus, the pilgrimage, in conjunction with improved transportation and trade, brought West Africans into contact with Wahhabiyya ideology.[4]

The current reform movement in Zinder is based on "Wahhabiyya" ideology. Majority Muslims associate the reform movement in Zinder with a similar movement known as **Izala** which gained prominence in Nigeria in the 1960s.[5] Reformers in Zinder claim to be independent of **Izala** and deny that they follow "Wahhabiyya" doctrine. Rather, reformers in Zinder claim, their goal (independent of a particular ideology) is the return to the practice of

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[4] See Kaba (1974: 47-72) for details regarding the diffusion of the Wahhabiyya in West Africa.

[5] The full name of the organization is **Jama'atu izalat al-bid'a wa iqamat al sunna** (Movement for the Suppression of Innovations and the Restoration of the Sunna) (Umar 1993).

the "correct" Islam, a "pure" Islam. However, it must be pointed out that the reform ideology in Zinder is almost identical to "Wahhabism" and is almost indistinguishable from **Izala** doctrine. This is supported by Triaud (1986) who identifies the rejection of innovative practices, such as those associated with **roƙon** Allah, and claims that Islamic orders are un-Islamic, as characteristics of the Wahhabiyya in West Africa.

Reformers in Zinder argue that many of the social problems of the town are the result of a decline in moral standards due in large part to society's failure to practice Islam correctly. One reformer explained his view to me as follows: "The situation is not good now. Do you see all of the people who have no work? Do you see all of the crime? Do you see that people have no money to buy food?" The solution, he argued, could be found in the reform movement: "There are many problems here that we can correct. People need to listen and learn what the Qur'an says." He continued, "In order for society to become healthy again, people must recognize that the services offered by the **malamai** are innovations."

According to the reformers, it is not possible for anyone to have an intimate relationship with God in the sense that the **malamai** claim. Thus, the principle of **roƙon Alla**, which is central to the **malamai**'s ability to serve clients, is considered fraudulent by the reformers. In their public speaking sessions the reformers tell people they are being deceived by the **malamai** who claim to be able to meet clients needs through the prescription of **rubutan sha** or **layu**. Similarly, according to the reformers, the **malamai**'s claim to be able to answer questions regarding the future is untrue. They tell people that everyone has equal access to God in the form of prayer, but that to

be able to activate the assistance of God in a direct fashion, as claimed by the **malamai** via **wuridi** and **adda'a,** is impossible.

The reformers' critique of Islam in Zinder echoes the same views espoused by the **y'an Izala** in Nigeria.[6] Because of this similarity, most people in Zinder refer to the reformers as **y'an Izala**. A leader of the reform movement explained that people viewed reformers in Zinder as an extension of **Izala**. This leader denied, however, any formal association with **Izala** of Nigeria and also denied that their views stemmed from "Wahhabi" doctrine. When I asked him how he labels himself he replied, "I am a Muslim, a Muslim who is a member of ADINI." This point serves to reinforce the reformers' position that there are no variants of Islam.

The Association for the Diffusion of Islam in Niger (ADINI)

Since 1991, the reforms in Zinder have emerged publicly and begun efforts to educate Muslims in the town about their religious ideology. Reformers until that time had maintained a low profile and did not have a formal organization through which to disseminate their views. In September 1991 the Association for the Diffusion of Islam in Niger was founded in Zinder, an event which marked the formal organization of the reform movement in Zinder.[7] With the establishment of ADINI, the reformers began actively disseminating their views on Islam in Zinder and villages in the surrounding area.

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[6] In English this translates as "children of Izala" or more generally, followers of Izala.

[7] There are other Islamic associations which represent the views of majority Muslims in Zinder (see Glew 1996).

The association is based on the belief that Islam makes no distinction between people based on race, class or gender. According to the association's statutes, racism, xenophobia, discrimination based on social differences, sexism, and intolerance in general are in direct opposition to the doctrine and jurisprudence of Islam. The association statutes list the fundamental principles upon which ADINI is based as follows:

1. Defense of the sacred character of national unity.
2. Respect for the sovereignty of the people.
3. Defense for the rights of man and liberties.
4. Respect for democratic principles.
5. To struggle against all forms of intolerance, discrimination, oppression and domination.
6. To search, through the voice of the media, for the unity of Muslims as the Qur'an commands and the traditions (hadiths) of the prophet Mohamed.

Members of ADINI view ignorance and a lack of access to information regarding Islam as the greatest threat to the future generations of Muslims in Niger. Members of the association believe that Nigerien youth fail to gain a sufficient understanding of Islam. This, reformers argue, has in turn led to a decline in the moral standards of the society as well as an increase in what they perceive to be the improper practice of Islam. To improve these conditions, the association has outlined the following goals:

1. Training, through simple methods, in the knowledge of Islam.
2. To strengthen national unity, fraternity, and solidarity among people.
3. To promote the integration of women in the process of economic and social development through Islam.
4. Reinstatement and utilization of high ranking Franco-Arabs in theological education.

5. Creation of schools and centers of instruction in Islamic subject matters.
6. To intensify the *Wa'azous* (calls to Islam) in the interior as well as the exterior of the country.

Although initially founded in Zinder in 1991, and officially recognized by the government in 1993, the association has subsequently spread throughout Niger. Members of the association in Zinder told me that ADINI was founded because Muslims had strayed from the teachings of the Qur'an and there was thus a need to return to the "correct" practice of their faith. As previously noted, reformers do not believe there are orders within Islam and simply refer to themselves as "Muslims" whose common goal is a return to the "true" practice of Islam. This view is stated clearly in the association statutes which states its members' absolute opposition to the division of Islam into orders.

As stated in the association statutes, ADINI is open to any Muslim willing to abide by the regulations of the association which are:

1. To participate assiduously and actively in the activities of the association.
2. To respect the decisions made by the leaders of the association.
3. To eliminate decisions based on all regionalism, racism and intolerance.
4. To defend in all places and time the actions of the association.
5. To work with abnegation, selflessly following the path of Allah and for the interest of the Islamic community.
6. To continually act according to one's word.
7. To develop cohesion and mutual aid in the bosom of the association.

In order to reach the general population of Zinder and other people in the region, members of ADINI perform a variety of services and activities,

including: public teaching sessions, conferences, video and audio cassettes, and the maintenance of a library containing written materials on Islam. Public teaching sessions are held as a means of reaching the general population of Zinder and are characterized by a critique of the services provided by the **malamai**. In addition to holding such sessions in Zinder, members make visits to villages and smaller towns in the region.

The Rise of Izala in Nigeria

Umar (1993) attributes the rise of **Izala** in Nigeria to Abubakar Gumi and his criticism of Islamic orders which began in the 1940s.[8] Until 1960, however, Gumi's criticism had little impact on the socio-religious landscape, due to the popularization of the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya brotherhoods which occurred in the 1940s and 1950s. In the early 1940s Gumi's ideas were heard by his own students, who,in comparison those of the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya orders, were a great minority. This changed, however, in 1962 when Gumi became the Grand Kadi of Northern Nigeria. Gumi was now in a position in which his reform views could influence the formation of governmental policies on Islamic culture.

Gumi began speaking in public, on television and radio, and publishing articles in **Gaskiya ta fi Kwabo**, a Hausa language newspaper. By the early 1970s, Gumi had also published numerous writings critical of the orders. Gumi's criticism of the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya orders was based on the notion that such orders are innovations, which he claimed was supported

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[8] The information presented in this section is from Umar (1993).

by a lack of their presence during the lifetime of the Prophet and period immediately following his death.

At this time Gumi could no longer be ignored by the members of the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya orders, as he had become an outspoken critic who was gaining a sizable following. As a result, the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya, which had at times in the previous decades had violent clashes, closed ranks in an attempt to defend Sufism from Gumi's attacks. **Malamai** from the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya came together and wrote articles and books responding to Gumi's criticism.

The attacks on Gumi led his disciples to form a counter organization in Jos in March of 1978. The organization, **Jama'atu izalat al-bid'a wa iqamat al sunna** (Movement for the Suppression of Innovations and the Restoration of the Sunna), represented an organized response to defend their reform movement. Following the formation of the organization, **Izala** ideology spread throughout northern Nigeria primarily through the distribution of audio cassettes and public teaching sessions. Like Gumi, members of **Izala** continued criticizing Sufism, but did so in a more aggressive manner. As a result, numerous violent confrontations were reported between members of **Izala** and members of the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya orders. Through the 1980s the tension between the **yan Izala** and Sufis continued, and although several attempts at reconciliation were made, the two groups did not settle their differences.

The rise of the **yan Izala** in Nigeria, like the current reform movement in Zinder, is at the most general level a protest against the beliefs and practices of majority Muslims. In Nigeria, the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya orders

are the focus of criticism; in Zinder, it is majority Muslims led by the **malamai** and their belief in the principle of **roƙon Alla**. However, reform in Nigeria is also, according to Umar, a protest against traditional non-capitalist values. He argues that the rise of **Izala** is part of a greater transformation of Nigerian society in the twentieth century. As the social, political, and economic foundation of Nigerian society changed through the twentieth century, so did Islam. Umar argues that the rise of **Izala** represents a transition from a communal to an individualistic way of practicing Islam which is better equipped to deal with the individualism of capitalist social relations. Umar theorizes that because of the difficulties experienced by most Nigerians during this process of change and the marginalization of most Nigerians in the political process, people sought a catharsis through religion and articulated political issues in religious terms. This, Umar points out, is more likely to occur under military regimes where a lack of political outlets results in the creation of religious organizations which become arenas for achieving political objectives. For the case of Nigeria, Umar concludes that **Izala** is an example of such a catharsis for some Muslims.

Reform in Maradi, Niger

Paralleling the case of northern Nigeria, Qadiris and Tijanis in Maradi, Niger have come together to confront the **Izala** movement (Grégoire 1993).[9]

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[9] There is an important distinction here between Maradi and Zinder. Maradi, a city located 229 kilometers west of Zinder, has about the same population of Zinder. According to Grégoire, the wealthy merchants in Maradi identify themselves as followers of Izala. As I have indicated, reformers in Zinder do not label themselves as **yan** Izala, nor do they acknowledge an association with Izala. The ideologies of the two, however, are similar.

In his recent study of Islamic reform in Maradi, Grégoire (1993) argues that young, wealthy merchants are becoming followers of reform doctrine as a means of identifying themselves as members of an elite group in Maradi society. He argues that as the Maradi economy came to rely more and more upon money in the twentieth century, Islam gained importance, and a Muslim identity elevated a person from the general population. This elevation facilitated one's participation in trade with Muslims in northern Nigeria. As a Muslim identity became more common among the general population of Maradi, wealthy merchants then began to make the pilgrimage to Mecca in larger numbers thus attaining the title **alhaji**, a title which Grégoire points out signifies success in business as well. It was through the pilgrimage and attainment of the title of **alhaji** that these wealthy merchants maintained their identity as elite members of the community. According to Grégoire, some wealthy merchants in Maradi have recently become members of the **Izala** reform movement as a means of reasserting this elite identity.

For these merchants, **Izala** represents the emergence of a new religious ideology in Maradi, "which is supported by a new generation of **alhazai**, whose conceptions of society and social relations differ from those of their elders" (Grégoire 1993: 112). The differences between the new generation and their elders are seen, according to Grégoire, in the way the accumulation of wealth is viewed. Grégoire argues that similar to other Sudanic and Sahelian cultures of West Africa, the accumulation of wealth by individuals for personal use, as opposed to the partial redistribution of such wealth which characterizes traditional values, is the significant difference between members of **Izala** and the older generation of **alhazai**. Thus, the wealthy young

merchants who identify themselves as members of **Izala**, deviate from tradition by preaching individualism and the "rational utilization of wealth." As Grégoire points out, until recently, the alhazai in Maradi often practiced the redistribution of wealth which the young **alhazai** now do not. Thus, similar to Umar's analysis of **Izala** in Nigeria, Grégoire concludes that reform in Maradi "provides a framework for the increasing individualism which is appearing in response to the need to adjust to changing cultural, social, economic and political contexts" (1993: 115).

Accounting for Reform in Zinder

The Islamic reform movements discussed by Umar and Grégoire are identical, in terms of ideology, to the reform movement currently taking place in Zinder. As I will discuss shortly, the theories which Umar and Grégoire use to account for these movements, however, do not account for the reform movement in Zinder. The studies do show how various groups such as Tijanis, Qadiris and, in the case of Zinder majority Muslims, joined forces to confront the reformers.

First, Umar and Grégoire argue that **Izala** ideology in Nigeria and Maradi is a protest against traditional, non-capitalist, values. People in Zinder, however, had been participating in a capitalist-based, in the form of a market-based, economy since the settlement was founded early in the nineteenth century. If **Izala** was a protest against traditional non-capitalist values, one would expect it to have developed earlier. Because similar economies existed in northern Nigeria and Maradi long before the

appearance of Izala as well, I do not think the protest theory is convincing for those cases either.

Second, given the hardships and frustrations of people in Zinder who have been marginalized in the political process, does the current reform movement represent people seeking a catharsis through religion, or people attempting to articulate political issues in religious terms, as Umar argues was the case for Nigeria? I believe it does not. It also does not support his claim that people are more likely to seek a catharsis through religion under a military regime. In Zinder the opposite is the case. Rather than emerge and form a coherent organization during the military governments of Kountche or Saibou, the reformers in Zinder appeared publicly during the first term of the first elected president of Niger. Based on Umar's theory, one would expect that reform in Zinder would have risen much earlier (even in light of the possible consequences) given that military regimes ruled Niger until 1991, a time during which there was a lack of political outlets for people. However, as we have seen, the exact opposite was true. Thus, similar to the case of Nigeria, there was tension and discontent within Nigerien society among Nigeriens who were marginalized in the political process, yet this failed to mobilize the reformers in Zinder, or any other religious movement, to provide an alternative forum for articulating such views.

And finally, Grégoire's conclusion that reform has provided a new identity for Maradi's elite merchants fails to account for the presence of reformers in Zinder. In Zinder, many of the reform leaders were schooled in reform ideology before they became wealthy merchants. Becoming a reformer was not something that was done in an effort to maintain or create

an elite status in Zinder society. Unlike the leaders, most followers are not wealthy.

If the theories of Umar and Grégoire do not account for the current reform movement in Zinder, then what is the reason for it emerging publicly in the early 1990s? In addressing the issue of where the inspiration for reform in Zinder originated, we must consider two perspectives; that of the reformers, and that of majority Muslims in Zinder.

According to the reformers, they are not a formal extension of **Izala**. The distinction, as one reformer explained, is clear: "**Izala** is an Islamic association in Nigeria and ADINI is an Islamic association in Zinder." While he acknowledged the similarities in ideology, he was clear in pointing out that his association was independent from **Izala**. In his words, "People say we are **Izala** from Nigeria, but that is not true. We are ADINI of Niger."

Majority Muslims in Zinder, however, have no question in their minds that reform in Zinder is an extension of **Izala**. During interviews almost everyone associated the emergence of the reformers in Zinder with **Izala**. Many people knew that Abubakar Gumi was the founder of the ideology and were aware of its critique of Islam in northern Nigeria. Thus, although the reformers deny they are related to **Izala**, the majority Muslims believe otherwise.

Given the views of the two sides regarding reform, what is the probable origin of this ideology in Zinder? First, it is likely that reform was influenced, at least to some extent, by **Izala**. I am not contradicting reformers who deny an association with **Izala**; rather, I suggest that, because the rise of **Izala** in Nigeria in the 1970s parallels the time reformers began appearing in Zinder, it

is likely there was some influence from northern Nigeria. It would be hard to believe that reformers in Zinder at that time were unaffected by reformers in Nigeria given the available audio cassettes and pamphlets that were produced and disseminated. Thus, it must be assumed that Gumi's activities in Nigeria lent at least some inspiration or guidance to reformers in Zinder. Second, some of the eventual reformers in Zinder have traveled to Saudi Arabia and Egypt to study. Therefore, this evidence suggests that not all of the motivation for a reform movement came directly from Nigeria. As Kaba (1974) argues, such contacts were the primary means of the diffusion of Wahhabism in West Africa.

Several conclusions can be drawn based on the various insights I gained during interviews with reformers and majority Muslims in Zinder. First, I believe that the emergence of the reformers in Zinder cannot be solely attributed to Gumi and **Izala** nor the overseas experiences reformers in Zinder had in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Rather, the presence and development of reform must be viewed as a combination of these factors. Thus, initially, there may have been a small community of reformers in Zinder which slowly grew in size through the 1970s and 1980s. This community, while gaining inspiration from northern Nigeria, lacked the organizational structure which **Izala** provided reformers in Nigeria; that is, the forum to formally present their ideological perspectives on Islam and critique of Islam as it was practiced by majority Muslims. With Niger's transition to an elected government in 1991, the opportunity to form such an association, with an ideology similar to **Izala**, became a possibility. Under the leadership of home-grown but foreign-educated scholars, reformers founded

ADINI, an association in which their position could be formulated and disseminated.

Summary

While reformers have lived in Zinder for the past 20 years, they have emerged publicly only recently. Their emergence and subsequent formation of an Islamic association coincides with Niger's transition to an elected government. This right to freedom of speech and association provided the reformers with the opportunity to formally organize themselves and present a challenge to the practices of majority Muslims in Zinder.

In comparing the case of Zinder to the cases of Nigeria and Maradi, the rise of a reform movement in Zinder cannot be accounted for using the models of Umar and Grégoire. However, like Zinder, the cases of Nigeria and Maradi illustrate that this type of reform movement has caused other Muslims, such as those affiliated with the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya to close ranks and defend their common interests or, in Grégoire's words, defend "the holiness of their religious practices" (1993: 111). This is currently happening in Zinder,as people with various ideas of what it means to be a Muslim, yet sharing a belief in the principle of **rokon Alla**, come together to confront the reformers.

Chapter 7

BOKANCI AND BORI: TRADITIONAL HEALING AND SPIRIT POSSESSION IN ZINDER

Bokanci and Bori: Exclusive Categories or Variations of a Theme?

Like the **malamai** and reformers, traditional healers (m. **boka**, f. **bokanya**, pl. **bokaye**) and practitioners of spirit possession (m. **ɗan bori**, f. **yaal bori**, pl. **yan bori**) also represent, using Lambek's terminology, different forms of knowledge in Zinder. Before beginning a discussion of **bokanci** and **bori**, however, it is necessary to comment on the way in which these forms of knowledge are defined by people in Zinder.

Bokanci and **bori** are generally treated by scholars of Hausa culture as distinct from one another; that is, they are viewed as separate phenomena.[1] While such studies recognize the significant role spirits (s. **iska**, pl. **iskoki**) play in both **bokanci** and **bori**, they have generally glossed over the different meanings these categories have for individuals in Hausa-speaking societies. During my research I discovered that there are different views in Zinder regarding what constitutes **bokanci** and **bori** .

Everyone I spoke with in Zinder acknowledged that **bori** is characterized by spirit possession performances which involve musical accompaniment, dancing, possession and sometimes animal sacrifice. Such performances, now primarily attended by an immigrant community in Zinder, are considered

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[1] See for example, Nicolas (1975), Wall (1988) and Echard (1991).

strictly off limits to **Zinderois**. As we have seen, the generally held view that such performances are "un-Islamic" is the reason for this. Some people extend their definition of a **ɗan bori** to include anyone who claims to have specialized knowledge of spirits and the ability to treat spirit-caused illnesses (**cutal iska**). In this framework, a **boka** is considered to be someone who does **bori**, even though his or her treatments do not involve possession.

These different views became apparent during group interviews in which those in attendance debated among themselves what constituted **bori** and **bokanci**. People often pointed out that both **bokaye** and **yʷan bori** are involved in curing illnesses and that both rely on their specialized knowledge of spirits to do so. Those who made a distinction between the two cited the lack of possession in **bokanci** as a significant difference. The **bokaye**, they argued, are merely making use of their knowledge of the various illnesses different spirits cause and the types of medicine needed to treat them. For others, however, the presence or lack of possession was less important. These people indicated that a claim to being able to work with spirits was, in any form, **bori**.

In attempting to understand the relationship between **bokanci** and **bori** I soon realized that a pattern emerged regarding whether or not a person equated **bokanci** with **bori**. People who said they did not consult **bokaye** (mostly **malamai**) placed **bokaye** and **yʷan bori** in the same group. People who said they consult **bokaye**, or who had family members who consult **bokaye**, made a distinction between **bokanci** and **bori**. These people explained that the **yʷan bori** were not Muslims but that the **bokaye** were Muslims, or at least marginal Muslims. The way a person defines **bokanci** and **bori** thus appears related to whether or not **bokaye** are consulted by an individual or members of his or her family.

The distinctions are further complicated by people who sell herbal medicines and plant materials which are used to make medicines but who make no claim to having knowledge of spirits or the illnesses they cause. These peddlers of traditional medicine, known as **mai sai da maganin galgajiya** or **ɗan ganye mai sai da magunguna**, complicate the use of the categories of **bokanci** and **bori**. As noted, for some people, the significant distinction is between those providers of medicine claiming to have specialized knowledge of spirits (**bokaye** and **yan bori**) and those who do not. One **malam**, for example, told me that it was acceptable for people to seek medicine from a **boka**. Rather surprised, I asked him if he believed the **bokaye**'s claims to be able to treat spirit-caused illnesses. I could tell by the look on his face that there was a misunderstanding between us. After further discussion I realized that in his mind a **boka** was someone who sold medicine made from plants (or a **ɗan ganye**) and not a person who claimed specialized knowledge of spirits, a person he would label a **ɗan bori**.

Thus, while it is often assumed that the categories of **bokanci** and **bori** are distinct, people I spoke with in Zinder had different opinions regarding these forms of knowledge. However, based on my discussions with specialists who refer to themselves as **bokaye** and **yan bori** I identified certain characteristics of **bokanci** and **bori**. In providing these characteristics I rely primarily upon the information provided by people who identified themselves as **bokaye** and **yan bori** in Zinder. The differences between the two is reflected in the conscious way the two groups sought to describe the differences between their respective specialties to me (see Table 7.1).

After many discussions regarding what constitutes **bokanci** and **bori**, I concluded that the most important distinction, for the purpose of analyzing the construction of Muslim identities, was between the private forum of **bokanci**

versus the public forum in which **bori** performances are held. I have argued in

Table 7.1: Characteristics of Bokanci and Bori in Zinder

Bokanci	**Bori**
Specialists in treating spirit-caused illness	Specialists in treating spirit-caused illness
No possession	Possession
Consultations in private	**Bori** performances held in public
Bokaye granted status as Muslims or "marginal" Muslims by majority Muslims	**Yan bori** viewed as non-Muslims by general population
Viewed negatively by **malamai**	Viewed negatively by **malamai**
Animal sacrifice sometimes required	Animal sacrifice sometimes required
Label themselves Muslim	Label themselves Muslim
Socially acceptable in eyes of majority Muslims if need arises	Unacceptable in eyes of majority Muslims in any context

this dissertation that as public **bori** performances became more heavily criticized by the **malamai** in Zinder in recent decades, they gradually became a less acceptable forum in which to seek treatment. As a result, **bokaye**, working in private, became the semi-acceptable specialists to diagnose illnesses attributed to spirits. In using these categories for the purpose of analyzing how Muslim identities are constructed, I take this to be the most important difference between **bokanci** and **bori**. Thus, when I speak of **bokanci** I am referring to people who have specialized knowledge of spirits, the illnesses they cause and appropriate treatments. The treatments, however, are sought discreetly and do not involve possession. When I refer to **bori** I am speaking of those people who regularly attend public **bori** performances at which members become possessed and musical accompaniment is a necessary component for possession to take place.

Bokaye: The Role of Traditional Healers in Zinder

The various definitions of **bokanci** found in Hausa dictionaries reflect the two basic qualities of **bokanci** in Zinder.[1] First, they are healers and medicine sellers with specialized knowledge of plants used to make various medicines. And second, **bokaye** are foreseers of the future and, most important for considering the construction of Muslim identities in Zinder, possessors of specialized knowledge and abilities which allow them to identify and treat spirit-caused illnesses, phenomena the average person cannot deal with.[2]

In Zinder the term "**bokanci**" connotes these characteristics in the minds of majority Muslims. Many people characterized **bokaye** as medicine sellers who are capable of foreseeing and specialists who "have" or work with spirits (**mai iska, mai aiki da iskoki**). There is a tension between the **bokaye** and **malamai** which is, on the surface, based on the question of what is Islamic and what is not. However, as will be seen in Chapter 8, the tension is also based on the competition for clients and is thus economic as much as it is religious.

Bokaye, because of their association with spirits (something the **malamai** argue is polytheistic and hence un-Islamic), occupy a liminal position in Zinder society. Majority Muslims believe that the **malamai** can meet their needs through the principle of **rok'on Alla**. However, in some instances, people engaged in **neman lahiya** recognize and rely on the expertise of the **bokaye** as

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1 In his *Dictionary of the Hausa Language*, Abraham defines a **boka** as a "native doctor" and a "wizard" (1962: 109). Similarly Bargery's dictionary characterizes a **boka** as a "soothsayer," "wizard" and, reflecting his ethnocentric position, "quack doctor" (1934: 117). And in Ma Newman's English-Hausa dictionary she includes **boka**, in the sense of native herbalist, as a Hausa translation of the English "doctor" (1990: 73).

2 Most majority Muslims in Zinder believe in these spirits and their detrimental capabilities. Even malamai acknowledge their existence although they do not identify them by name and affliction as do **bokaye** and **y'an bori**.

well. Although **malamai** claim to be able to treat spirit-caused illnesses, many people turn to **bokaye** who are recognized by many as specialists for treating such afflictions.

Because **bokaye** are labeled "non-Muslims" by the **malamai, Zinderois** are aware of the need to consult such specialists discreetly. Notice, however, because **bokaye** provide necessary and effective treatment for spirit-caused illnesses as well as other services, majority Muslims in Zinder benefit from them and are privately unwilling to categorically accept the **malamai**'s call to reject such treatments. Thus, **bokaye** are generally accorded at least a marginal Muslim identity by majority Muslims who consult them. Granting such an identity to the **bokaye** permits them to, in a sense, deny an association with what the **malamai** label as "un-Islamic."[3]

Bokaye work in a private setting, generally the **boka**'s home or work place, where illnesses are diagnosed and treated discreetly. Although **bokaye** are capable of treating a wide range of illnesses (both spirit and non-spirit-caused), they are viewed by many **Zinderois** as the specialist par excellence for the treatment of spirit-caused illnesses (see Table 7.2). Such illnesses are generally characterized by seizures, night sweats, falling down, swelling, unexplained behavior, persistent fever or an inability to walk.

One 19 year old woman explained why she took her younger brother to see a **boka** as follows:

> My younger brother had a spirit-caused illness. He fell down whenever he tried to walk. We went to a malam and were given **rubutan sha, a laya** and the **malam** did **adda'a**. When my brother didn't get better we took him to a **boka**. He [the **boka**] told us my

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[3] All of the **bokaye** I worked with in Zinder labeled themselves "Muslims."

Table 7.2 - Examples of Spirit-Caused Illnesses Treated by Bokaye in Zinder

Spirit	Illness
Doguwa	Withered arm or leg
Uwar Gona	Bloated stomach
Badaji	Swollen foot
'Dan Zanzana	Impotency
Mairu	Stomach pain
'Dan Bazabarma	Stomach pain
Magajiya	Fatigue
Bakal Aljana	Rolling on ground
Arne	Any unexplainable illness
Sambo	Headaches, stomach pain
Faral Aljana	Persistent fever
Bature	Swelling of any body part
Danko	Swelling
Inna	Withered arm or leg
Dadi	Person laughs continuously
Masoshiya	Itching
Tswanal aljana	Jaundice
Maimashi	Unexplained behavior (person wants to live alone in bush)
Iya	Unexplained behavior (person collects junk)
Lalimai	Unexplained behavior (person talks non-stop)
Makokiya	Unexplained behavior (person cries continuously)
Alasa	Headaches, heart pain, diarrhea
Mai Malam	Unexplained behavior (person continuously cites verses from the Qur'an)
Bakin Aljana	Miscarriage
Gimbia	Unexplained behavior (person becomes "a fool")

> brother had been "struck" by a spirit. He treated him with **turare**[4] and he got better.

In addition to treating spirit-caused illnesses, **bokaye**, like **malamai**, make **layu** and answer questions regarding the future. Rather than make **layu** using Qur'anic writing, **bokaye** make **layu** using various plant materials and animal dried parts. The principle is the same as the **layu** made by the **malamai**; it is carried, worn by the person, or placed in a strategic place to achieve its desired effect. The reasons people request **layu** from **bokaye** are similar to the reasons they request them from **malamai** (see Table 5.1).

A commonly requested **laya** is for protection during travel. A **bokanya** described to me a **laya** she made for a client which would guarantee safe travel. The **laya** was intended to protect the client during a trip to Niamey. She recounted the experience as follows:

> I gave a young man a **laya** to protect him during travel. He carried it with him during the trip. He took a 504 to Niamey with seven other people. During the trip the car went off the road and rolled over and over. Three people in the car died and four were seriously injured. The man I gave the **laya** to walked out of the car. He was not hurt.

Upon learning of the effectiveness of this type of **laya**, I asked her to make me one. Several days later I watched as she took the dried head of a male chameleon and stuffed it with various dried plant materials and the dried wing of a small bat. The chameleon head was then wrapped in a scrap of cloth and sealed in a piece of dried land monitor skin. I was told that as long as the **laya** was in my possession I would be safe during all my journeys.

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[4] Turare is the typical treatment for spirit-caused illnesses and consists of dried plant materials which are burned and inhaled by the afflicted person. Different plant materials are used depending on the afflicting spirit.

Bokaye also provide information regarding the future. The **bokaye** I spoke with and observed used cowry shells to learn information regarding the future. In some cases clients pose questions to be answered, other times the client simply asks to have his or her future told. A **bokanya** told me of one instance in which she used cowry shells to answer a question for a client:

> A man came and asked me if he should travel on a certain day. I used cowry shells to answer his question. When I threw the shells I saw that he should not travel on the day he intended. I told him he should wait but he said he had to travel that day. He traveled and was in an accident. He didn't get hurt but he could have been killed.

Bokaye are most commonly consulted when people need some sort of medicine. Based on their specialized knowledge of trees and plants, **bokaye** have the ability to make various medicines, some of which are used to treat illnesses caused by spirits. Four of the prominent **bokaye** I worked with in Zinder recounted their training to me. Notice the importance of spirits and past association with **bori** in their lives.

Bokar Gari[5]: Wearer of the Cowry Shell-Studded Hat

The first time I met with Bokar Gari he spoke with me in the entrance hall (**zaure**) of his compound (**gida**). Accompanied by Gambo Madou, I began to explain who I was; that I was an American who had been a Peace Corps Volunteer in Zinder, and then why I had come to talk with him and, more generally, what my research was about. He looked at me, in a manner I perceived to be suspicious at first, as if he was deciding whether or not to unload

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[5] I have substituted aliases for actual names. Bokar Gari, for example, means "**boka** of the town."

his vault of information on this retired Peace Corps Volunteer who decided to return to Zinder. After introducing myself, Bokar Gari agreed to meet with me from time to time to talk about his work.

A week or so later I returned with my research assistant, Gambo Madou, to talk with Bokar Gari about his work. As we entered his compound I noticed that it looked very similar to the other compounds I had visited in the town. Within the mud brick walled compound, which was bordered by neighbors on three sides, was an area for several goats and some chickens, a small cooking room (**gwadala**), a walled bathing area and latrine, and rooms for his wife and children. I greeted everyone and was given water to drink. Bokar Gari then opened a door to a room, which I soon recognized to be his office, and pulled back a piece of cloth which hung over the doorway. As I entered the small, dark room I was very aware that I had just left the compound which at first glance looked like all of the others.

The approximately six by eight foot room with a ten foot ceiling was Bokar Gari's office. On the walls were **bori** paraphernalia from days gone by, he claimed, relics, which he now used to adorn the inside of his work place. The walls were covered by an array of cloths, each belonging to a different spirit. Using his cane, Bokar Gari touched each cloth and named its owner: Inna, Baƙal Aljana, Halima . . . . In addition, a leather strap headdress studded with cowry shells, axes, miniature Qur'anic tablets, and a doctor's white lab coat hung from hooks on the walls. These objects, which belonged to, and identified various spirits, now served as adornments. Bokar Gari provided an interesting account of what **bokanci** is and it's relationship to Islam and **bori**.

Bokar Gari is 45 years old and a prominent **boka** who lives in the Zongo section of town. He inherited (**gado**) his work from his parents who were active

in spirit possession performances. From a young age his parents taught him about the spirits and the many different medicinal uses of various plants, roots and barks. Regarding his training he told me:

> I learned my work from my parents who did **bori**, it was inherited. I started to learn about spirits and the illnesses they caused from my parents when I was young. They taught me what plants to use to treat illnesses. Now everyone knows that I am the best.

Bokar Gari claims to have clients come to him for treatment and advice from all over Niger. He also makes trips to see clients and has traveled widely in Niger. Bokar Gari, also known as "**mai hular wuri**" (wearer of the cowry shell-studded hat) claims his abilities are known as far away as Senegal and Mecca. Regarding his participation in **bori** performances, he said:

> I used to do **bori** here but I don't do it now because the **malamai** stopped us from doing it, they didn't like it because they said it was contrary to our religion. Now I sell people medicines from my house.
>
> It has been about twenty years since I did real **bori** here. The people who say they do real **bori** now in Zinder are frauds, they are only looking for money, it is not real **bori**. I can still do it if someone needs me to, but I would have to do it secretly now.[6]

His comments on the unacceptability of **bori** performances in Zinder supports other **bokaye**'s statements, and what members of the general population told me.

Bokar Gari labels himself a Muslim and said that the **malamai**'s claims to the contrary are the result of professional jealousies. The **malamai**, he claims,

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[6] He told me, however, that people no longer wanted to attend **bori** performances. He now refers to himself as a **boka**, not a **d'an bori**. He has created a brochure in which he advertises his practice. In the brochure he refers to himself as a **boka**.

are frustrated because people continue to seek his services, services which the **malamai** also claim to be capable of providing. He has had discussions with **malamai** regarding his work, and he is convinced that the **malamai** secretly fear his abilities. "I am a Muslim," he told me, "I pray and fast like everyone here."

Bokar Gari's knowledge of spirits and the illnesses they cause include a wide range of afflictions. He is very active in publicizing his services but acknowledges the importance of providing his services discreetly. During one visit he said, "The **malamai** know who I am and what I do, it is not a secret. But the people who come and the reasons they come are no one else's business!"

Bokanyal Gari

While **bokanci** is often viewed as the work of men, women may also provide such services. One example is Bokanyal Gari, a 28 year old Muslim woman who is well known for her abilities in treating illnesses as well as making **layu** and performing **duba**. During my visits with Bokanyal Gari I saw many similarities between her work and the work of Bokar Gari. Bokanyal Gari lives in a large compound, perhaps 1000 square feet in area, surrounded by a mud brick wall on the outskirts of town. Inside the vast compound are only two small structures: a cement block room in one corner where she sleeps, and a thatch room, located at the other end of the compound, in which clients may rest while being treated. From the large open space of the compound one has a view of the surrounding countryside (**daji**).

Bokanyal Gari first learned to make medicines when she was a young girl. As is sometimes the case, she began learning how to make **maganin icce** because of an illness she suffered as a child and which involved an encounter with a spirit:

> When I was about seven years old I had a lot of pain in my legs. Sometimes I couldn't stand up to walk. Once it was serious and I was unable to stand for one month. At this time I had to crawl on the ground like an infant. One day I had crawled out to the bush and was sitting near a well. A little girl came up to me and gave me some medicine. The girl was not like me. She had only one eye and her mouth was vertical, not horizontal like ours. She gave me the medicine and told me to mix the medicine with water and bathe with it at nine different ant hills. It took me a long time but I bathed with the medicine at nine ant hills like she told me to do. After I bathed at the ninth ant hill the little girl came again. She gave me medicine for the pain in my legs. I rubbed the medicine on my legs and I could walk again. She taught me how to make the medicine as well as many others. She still comes and visits me regularly. She came last evening and sat where you are sitting now.

Bokanyal Gari always has a steady stream of clients waiting to consult her. After several visits I became used to passing the five or so clients who were waiting outside her door. It was also common for our discussions to be interrupted by someone requesting she make a house call.

The importance of maintaining the privacy of her clients is facilitated in part by the location of her compound. Like Bokar Gari, she acknowledged the tension which exists between **bokaye** and **malamai** in Zinder. Because she is a Muslim, Bokanyal Gari believes that the **malamai**'s criticism of **bokanci** is unrelated to the issue of religion. Echoing Bokar Gari's comment, she explained, "The **malamai** know that people come to me and that I am paid for what I do. They want everyone to come to them so they can get the money."

During my visits I also became aware of Bokanyal Gari's effort to set herself apart from the **y'an bori**. She considers herself a **bokanya** but not a **y'al bori**. I asked her if she had attended **bori** ceremonies at any point in her life, and she said that she had. It was during the period of her life, she recounted, that she

learned about various spirits, the illnesses they cause, and how to treat them. She consulted **bori** specialists when she had a serious recurrence of the pain in her legs, because sometimes the medicine her spirit gave her did not work and she had to undergo possession to get treatment. She insists, however, that she no longer participates in **bori** ceremonies.

Bokar Kasuwa

Unlike Bokar Gari and Bokanyal Gari, Bokar Kasuwa does not work out of his home, but rather out of an office located near the central market in Zinder. His circular shaped office, composed of a millet stalk enclosure and a thatch roof, is small and,at most, can accommodate a total of three people who sit on a short wooden bench. In front of his office is a plastic tarp upon which he displays various dried plant materials and animal parts which are used to make various medicines. These materials are used by Bokar Kasuwa in making medicines for clients, but are also for sale. Inside the cramped office space, the floor is crowded with bags of other plant materials used as medicinal ingredients. Once a client enters the office, a drape is pulled across the doorway. It was in this office that I met with Bokar Kasuwa in the presence of my research assistant, Gambo Madou, on numerous occasions.

Bokar Kasuwa, a 48 year old Muslim, is unique among the **bokaye** with whom I spoke because, although consultations take place in the privacy of his office, he has located his office in a very public place. His office, located adjacent to the central market in Zinder, is on a short, heavily traveled street (primarily pedestrians, not cars) where religious books such as the Qur'an and other liturgical materials are sold. In addition, pharmaceutical medicines brought to Zinder from Nigeria are also sold there. This area is a desirable place to work, as

he benefits from the large numbers of passersby attracted to the market.

This at first appears to contradict my generalization that the private nature of **bokanci**, which now provides a forum for treating spirit-caused illnesses (previously done in the context of **bori** performances), is being compromised. Why would someone who wanted to discreetly consult a **boka** go to one of the busiest avenues in Zinder? The answer lies in the manner in which he presents himself to the public. Bokar Gari does not participate in **bori** performances and was clear in stating the difference between having knowledge of treating spirit-caused illnesses and participating in **bori** . He also does not label himself publicly as a **boka**, although he told me that his work fits into the category of **bokanci**. Because he is aware of the way in which the **malamai**, alongside whom he has chosen to situate his office, regard **bokanci**, he markets himself as a **mai sai da maganin galgajiya**; that is, someone who sells traditional medicine. **Malamai**, majority Muslims, and reformers believe that traditional medicine (medicine made from plants) is effective and is not contrary to the Qur'an. Thus, Bokar Kasuwa has consciously attempted to present himself, in the public eye at least, as a traditional medicine seller, a category which does draw criticism from the **malamai** to the extent that **bokaye** do. After speaking with him, it was obvious, however, that he was providing the same services as other **bokaye** in Zinder. To support his claim to the title "**mai sai da maganin galgajiya**," Bokar Kasuwa showed me a government-issued document which recognizes him as the president of the Traditional Medicine Sellers Association for the **Département** of Zinder, a document which recognizes his abilities to make **maganin icce**.

Bokar Kasuwa learned his trade from his father who learned it from his father. Both his father and grandfather were also well known for their ability to treat many types of illnesses including those attributed to spirits. And now one

of his sons is following in his footsteps and learning to make these medicines. Clients are aware of the family tradition and effectiveness of these medicines.

As a result of his popularity, people consult him at his office during the day, but also at his home during the night when the need arises. Regarding his knowledge of spirit-caused illnesses, Bokar Kasuwa said: "In many cases spirits cause illness. There are many spirits which can cause people to be ill. I know the spirits and I know which medicines to give."

An important point regarding his treatments needs to be made here. While he consults clients in his office on the street, he does not treat spirit-caused illnesses in his office. He explained that when such an illness is diagnosed he asks the person accompanying the afflicted client to bring him or her to his house. Because the treatment of spirit-caused illnesses generally involves the inhaling of burning medicine and is sometimes resisted by the patient, a private setting is needed.

Also like other **bokaye**, he acknowledged participating in **bori** performances in the past. I asked him why he no longer does this and he said that people no longer sought this form of treatment. I also sensed his keen awareness of the pressure from the **malamai** and, subsequently, general population to halt such practices. It is also for this reason that he has attempted to present himself as a traditional medicine seller, and not a **boka**, in the public eye. He is well aware that any public acknowledgment of having specialized knowledge of spirits may jeopardize his ability to maintain his office in the area it currently exists.

Bokar Kasuwa provides an interesting example of a specialist who is capable of treating spirit-caused illnesses, but has attempted to market himself as a traditional medicine seller rather than a **boka**. In so doing, he emphasizes his

knowledge of plants and their use in making medicines.

Bokar Birni

In Zinder's old town, the Birni, **bori** performances gradually became unacceptable and stopped being held earlier than in the other sections of the town. This is seen in the complete lack of **bori** performances in the Birni for the last twenty years while in the Zongo, a small, primarily immigrant community, still practices **bori**. The Birni, which was the original walled town of Zinder, prides itself as being an especially strong center of Islamic culture and its residents often view the Zongo as an area lacking Islamic culture. It is in the Zongo that one finds bars and nightclubs and a higher crime rate. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to meet a 60 year old retired **bori** specialist who lives in the Birni and talk with him about specialists who are capable of treating spirit-caused illnesses.

Bokar Birni now lives alone and earns a living as a **boka**. Interestingly, he was the only **boka** I interviewed who acknowledged being a non-Muslim at some point of his life. Regarding his training and knowledge of spirits,he told me:

> I quit practicing **bori** 16 years ago and began praying. It was at that time that I became a Muslim. I used to attend **bori** ceremonies and become possessed, but I don't anymore. No one practices **bori** in the Birni now. You have to go to the Zongo to see it.

> I learned to make medicines when I was a young boy. When I was young, I used to get severe headaches. One day a spirit named Malam Alhaji came and took me into the bush. I spent one year with Malam Alhaji in the bush. During that year I did not go into town. Everything I ate and drank was provided by Malam Alhaji. He taught me how to make medicine from trees and plants. One of the medicines he taught me cured me of my headaches. From that time Malam Alhaji was my spirit.

> I used to know about many spirits, but I don't work with them anymore. I know how to make the medicines which they taught me to make but I don't work with them anymore. Some people work with 200, 300, 500 or 700 spirits. I don't do **bori** anymore but I have a son who does.[7]

Bokar Birni said that even though **bori** performances are no longer held in the Birni, people still come to him for his services, especially if a spirit-caused illness is suspected. Like the other **bokaye** I have discussed, he treats such illnesses with **turare** in the privacy of his home.

Bokanci: A Source of Therapy

As I stated earlier, people consult **bokaye** for basically the same reasons they consult **malamai**; namely, to seek therapy for illnesses, to ask questions regarding the future or,to obtain **layu** for a variety of reasons. Although the **malamai** label the **bokaye** "non-Muslims," many majority Muslims grant them status as "marginal" Muslims. By doing this, majority Muslims legitimize their consultations with these specialists in light of the **malamai**'s claims that **bokaye** are "non-Muslims."

Notice how the **bokaye** were careful to point out to me that, while having done so in the past, they no longer practice **bori**. Their ability to prescribe and treat illnesses, however, is derived from those experiences. Pressure from the **malamai** (intensified over the past 20 years) has lead to the abandonment of **bori** performances. In response to this pressure, they have taken their trade behind closed doors where they can still use their expertise in meeting their clients' needs.

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[7] This son no longer lives in Zinder.

For many majority Muslims, then, consulting a **bokaye** is merely a means of attaining the proper treatment for an illness. One prominent **boka** in Zinder told me that many of his clients are the wives of **malamai**. In the minds of many **Zinderois, bokaye** are a practical source of medicine for a host of various illnesses and also provide other useful services. For these people consulting a **boka** does not represent the rejection of Islam, but rather, a search for **lahiya**. Thus, consulting a **boka**, if done discreetly, is an acceptable and appropriate action for many people engaged in **neman lahiya**.

Bori: Spirit Possession in Zinder

Spirit possession has long been a topic of interest to anthropologists. In the past twenty years, however, studies have shifted attention from "a concern for behavioral and psychological rationalization to an increased awareness of the importance of local contexts, cultural logics, human imagination, and creativity" (Boddy 1994). Studies by Boddy (1989), Brown (1991), Comaroff (1985), Janzen (1992) and Lambek (1981, 1993) have attempted to situate spirit possession in their local contexts. In addition, as Boddy (1994) points out, the category of spirit possession as an independent subject of inquiry has been challenged. Recent studies now seek to place spirit possession into the broader context of human societies by looking at it in relation to selfhood and identity, as a challenge to global political and economic domination and as a means of expressing an aesthetic of the human relationship to the world (Boddy 1994: 427).

To place **bori** in Zinder in its wider social and historical context, I analyze spirit possession by looking at it in terms of its relation to selfhood and identity and relevance for the construction of Muslim identities. In so doing, I take an approach which deviates from previous studies of **bori** in Hausa-speaking

regions of Niger and Nigeria. In the past scholars tended to provide explanatory models for the existence of **bori** and generally either viewed it as a vestige of a pre-Islamic religion, or, conversely, as a response to the Islamization of Hausa-speaking societies in which certain marginalized members of society (such as women) attempted to create forums in which they could have power.

In his early study of **bori** Tremearne (1914) argues that **bori** was part of a pre-Islamic religion. Similarly, Greenberg (1941) shows how **bori** among the **Maguzawa** (non-Muslim Hausa) in Kano and the surrounding area was part of a larger pre-Islamic religious complex based on a belief in, and worship of, spirits.

Other scholars have viewed **bori** as an arena for marginalized members of Hausa society, such as women, to have power. In these studies, **bori** is argued to be a response to the growing marginalization of women in Hausa-speaking societies which increased following the jihad of Uthman dan Fodio in the early nineteenth century. Paralleling Lewis's (1971) long-standing theory regarding cults of possession, Broustra (1967, 1972), in her study of **bori** in the Maradi region of Niger, believes that **bori** is a forum in which women can attain status generally unavailable to them in male dominated society.[8] More recently, Wall (1988) supports this theory based on his findings in northern Nigeria. Thus, as Coles and Mack have recently reiterated, **bori** is often viewed as "a reaction to Islam's strictures on women's social roles" (1991: 22).

In his study of **bori** in Kano, Besmer characterizes **bori** as a forum for marginal, or in his words, "deviant," members of society to come together for the purposes of curing spirit-caused illnesses. He concludes:

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[8] Onwuejeogwu (1969) makes a similar argument for northern Nigeria. For a contrasting view, see Echard (1991) for a discussion of how men play a dominant role in **bori** in Ader.

> . . . they [possession performances] provide a framework for the diagnosis and cure of sickness and misfortune believed to have been caused by spirits, a context for behaviour which would otherwise be considered as culturally inappropriate, a social organization for persons seeking self-help in socially stressful situations and who are considered deviants by the society as a whole, and a context for the expression of the social relationships within and between Hausa groups (1983: 146).

Regarding the way the general population viewed **bori**, he writes: "While the cult of possession-trance is officially condemned by devout Muslims, this attitude is not universally shared by the populace" (1983: 146). Based on this evidence, it appears that **bori** performances were not an uncommon sight in the Kano region of northern Nigeria in the early 1970s. Since the time Besmer conducted his research, it appears that there has been a dramatic decrease in the frequency of **bori** performances in that part of Nigeria, primarily due to the efforts of the **malamai** (Last 1991).

This is about the same time that **bori** appears to have begun to decrease in popularity in Zinder. **Bori**, as I have stated, is now viewed negatively and **Zinderois** are almost universal in their sentiments regarding its practice. Some people, who as children had attended **bori** performances for entertainment, do not allow their children to do so. Attending **bori** performances in Zinder is no longer acceptable under any circumstances.[9]

Rather than focus on the question of origins or function, Masquelier (1995), has emphasized meaning. She has shown how **bori** among the Mawri in

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[9] For the case of Ader, Echard (1991b) found Muslims who affiliated with the Tijaniyya brotherhood to be tolerant of **bori** and its followers. The Tijaniyya viewed the **bori** spirits as jinn who are mentioned in the Qur'an. Those affiliated with the Qadiriyya, however, were intolerant of bori and the **y'an bori**. This is not the case for Zinder, in which **Zinderois** universally reject **bori** as outside the sphere of Islam.

the Arewa region of Niger provides a discourse which focuses on the threat of uncontrolled consumption for a people facing socioeconomic changes resulting from colonialism and capitalism. By analyzing the semantics of sweetness in Arewa, for example, she is able to convincingly show how the various symbolic contexts of sweetness unite the contexts of prostitution, spirit possession and obstetrics. By adopting such an approach, one which focuses on the meaning of symbols and metaphor, Masquelier relates **bori** to the broader context of Mawri society in which individuals are faced with addressing the difficulties inherent in a consumer culture and the hardships which come with uncontrolled consumption. I believe that this type of approach, which recognizes the importance of relating **bori** to broader issues important to a given society, is the appropriate level for analysis.

Who Are the Yan Bori in Zinder?

The **ya'an bori** in Zinder are a community of immigrants composed of non-**Zinderois** Hausa-speakers and non-Hausa speakers from other parts of Niger. These people come from areas of Niger where the practice of **bori** is more common. The **ya'an bori** in Zinder are from the Hausa-speaking regions of Maradi, Dogon Dutse, and Magaria, as well as non-Hausa speaking regions such as Dosso. Thus, there is a distinction between the **ya'an bori** and **Zinderois** based on place of origin.

In Zinder, the small yet active group of people who practice **bori** are immigrants and are characterized by older women and some men who participate (in addition, the **sarkin bori** is a man). The men who participate do not fit the transvestite model as typically described for men who participate in

bori.[10]

The Social and Therapeutic Aspects of Bori

In Zinder, **bori** loses some of the properties described for rural **bori** in other Hausa-speaking areas but does not become mere entertainment as Last (1991) claims for the case of Kano. For the **y'an bori** in Zinder, **bori** plays an important role in their lives. Although they are a minority, immigrant community, the **y'an bori** practice **bori** for reasons which go beyond entertaining an audience.

In Zinder **bori** is practiced for two reasons. The first reason is to determine the cause and treatment of a spirit-caused illness. During one performance I attended, six older women and one older man became possessed and entered a room located off the center of the compound. Initially I thought the performance was over and that their exit was a sign for people to leave. After several minutes, however, the **sarkin bori** emerged from the room and signaled for me to come inside. I could hear shouting emanating from the dark room which was lit only by a dim kerosene lantern resting in one corner. Once inside, I positioned myself in another corner away from the lantern where I could watch events unfold in the anonymity of the darkness. What I witnessed was a discussion between spirits; that is, spirits speaking through the hosts they had possessed. The discussion, heated at times, was intended to determine what type of medicines should be prescribed for a person who had recently fallen ill with symptoms indicating a spirit-caused illness. There was disagreement over which medicine would be used and, ultimately, the sarkin **bori** decided.

It is interesting to note that medicines were being prescribed by the **y'an**

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[10] See Besmer (1983:16), for example, for this characterization.

bori for a patient who was not present. Based on a description of symptoms, the **sarkin bori** made a diagnosis and prescribed medicine. This is similar to the **boka** who prescribes medicine for spirit-caused illnesses based on symptoms or divination and does not require the ill person to go into trance.

The second reason **bori** performances are held is to entertain an audience; that is, a performance is held yet no one goes into trance. Rather than viewing this as mere entertainment, Besmer writes: "Periodic possession-trance rituals are largely ignored or treated as 'entertainment'. In fact, such performances are commonly used to promote cult solidarity, reaffirm cult obligations, whether or not they include possession-trance demonstrations" (1983: 3). Besmer's observation holds true for **bori** in Zinder. During many of the **bori** performances I attended there was no possession. People danced to the music and socialized; however, no one became possessed. Initially I thought it was due to my presence, but I soon learned that this was often the case.

The Setting of Bori Performances in Zinder

The **sarkin bori** of Zinder is in charge of deciding when and where **bori** ceremonies will be held. **Bori** ceremonies may be held throughout the year except during the month of Ramadan,during which time the spirits are tied up (**an ɗarme su**).[11] The **bori** ceremonies in Zinder are generally held in the Zongo at the home of either the **sarkin bori** or the **magajiya**.[12] Sessions generally begin in the late afternoon and last only a few hours. Typically, the musicians begin playing and people slowly trickle in. I noticed that it was generally the same group of about twenty or so people who came, with several newcomers present

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[11] Other people told me the spirits were unavailable because they were fasting as well.

[12] **Magajiya** is a title belonging to a high ranking female among the **yan bori**.

each time as well. The crowd was generally older women, although there were younger women and a few men present.

In a typical performance, the older women and the **sarkin bori** begin to take turns dancing in the center of the compound. Members of the audience placed coins on the forehead of the dancers which then fell to the ground. The coins are then collected and given to the musicians. This continues for up to an hour until someone shows signs of going into trance. When the musicians notice someone showing the initial signs of going into trance they quicken the pace of the music and surround the person. When the music reaches its climax the head scarf of the woman is removed, as if to release heat, indicating she is possessed.[13]

At this time the person circulates among the crowd but is usually attended to by a younger woman from the audience. Similarly, others follow and soon six, seven, or eight people are in trance together. The trance state lasts for up to an hour after which time the people calm down and rest, exhausted from the performance.

Summary

Bokaye are an important option for **Zinderois** engaged in **neman lahiya.** Like the **malamai, bokaye** are a source of **layu,** divination, and treatment for illness. **Bori,** on the other hand, is no longer a viable option for **Zinderois** seeking treatment for an illness. While there are still **bori** performances held in the town, they are considered off limits and are attended primarily by immigrants.

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[13] For an analysis of this metaphor see Darrah (1980).

Chapter 8

IDENTITY AS A PROCESS OF NAMING

Introduction

In Chapter 4 I conceptualized Muslim identity as an historical process. In this sense, I considered how various Muslim identities were created, maintained, and reproduced through time. Then, in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 "Muslim identity" referred to the existence of contrasting notions of what it means to be a Muslim in Zinder; that is, the various beliefs and practices which create distinctions among Muslims. In this chapter I examine identity as a process of naming. Considering identity as a process of naming reveals the attitudes people hold toward different forms of knowledge in Zinder. By attitudes I mean the ways in which people view these forms of knowledge and also, when relevant, the circumstances under which they draw upon them as resources. Viewing identity as a process of naming shows how identities, while on one level defined by religious ideology, are also socially, politically, and economically motivated. Also, I consider the attitudes people who embody these forms of knowledge hold toward each other. An analysis of these attitudes begins to demonstrate the interdependence of society and individual and thus demonstrate the dialectical relationship between structure and practice.

Identity as a Process of Naming

Louis Brenner describes identity as "a process of naming: naming of self, naming of others, naming *by* others" (1993: 59). In his study of Muslim identities in Mali he writes:

> Identities are constantly being constructed and reconstructed, by self and/or others, through continuing actions and discourse in a political context. Identities, both Muslim and non-Muslim, are formulated through the appropriation and reassortment of various elements or building blocks which may be religiously significant, but are also socially, politically and economically motivated. As complex clusters of attributes, they are subject to continuous reordering by self and others depending upon perceived aims, needs and constraints; they reflect political conflict and are representations of alleged social realities rather than essences in themselves (1993:59).

Brenner adopts this approach to analyze the construction of Muslim identities in the context of the national political scene in twentieth century Mali.

In his study, Brenner identifies the Traditional/Orthodox and Wahhabi/Sunni as contrasting Muslim ideologies. The Traditional/Orthodox group, similar to what I refer to as majority Muslims for the case of Zinder, is made up of Muslims who adhere to a Sufi-based ideology which had characterized the practice of Islam in Mali until the emergence of the Wahhabi/Sunni in the 1940s and 1950s. The ideology of the Wahhabi/Sunni represents a reform ideology which is similar to that of the reformers in Zinder.

As Brenner points out, the appearance of the Wahhabi/Sunni in Mali represents both "a historical rupture and a continuity" (1993: 62). It is a rupture in the sense that the Wahhabi/Sunni rejected the Sufi-based Islam of

the Traditional/Orthodox Muslims, a tradition which had characterized Islam in Mali for generations. The Wahhabi/Sunni, however, also represent a continuity because, according to Brenner, it is "one among a lengthy series of transformations in which Muslims have reordered and reorganized themselves to respond to new demands and new conditions" (1993: 62). This process of both rupture and continuity, which Brenner describes for the case of Mali, is also occurring in Zinder.

Comparing Intergroup Relations

Brenner's analysis focuses on five forms of knowledge (which he refers to as social formations) which impact the construction of Muslim identities in Mali; namely; the Wahhabi/Sunni, the Traditional/Orthodox, the secularists, the government/administration, and the international development community. By viewing each group in relation to the others, Brenner reveals how in addition to the debate between Muslims (the Traditional/Orthodox and Wahhabi/Sunni), there is also a confrontation between Muslim and secular identities. Regarding the inter-group relations of these contrasting forms of knowledge, Brenner writes:

> But we are interested not only in how these groups and their members act, but also in their *representations* of themselves and of each other; and it is precisely because these actions and representations are constantly interacting that we must attempt to examine the construction of Muslim identities as a single transformative system.
>
> As representations within discourse, the identity of *each* of these social formations is worked out with reference to *all* of the others (1993: 74-75).

In this chapter I compare inter-groups relations by examining the attitudes majority Muslims hold toward the **malamai**, reformers, **bokaye** and **y'an bori**. I also analyze the attitudes **malamai**, reformers, **bokaye** and **y'an bori** hold toward each other. The views majority Muslims in Zinder have regarding these forms of knowledge show how, on one level, the debate regarding what constitutes Muslim identity is based on religious ideology. At this level each group draws upon the Qur'an, historical precedent, or communal agreement to support their arguments. More importantly, a comparison of attitudes and inter-group relations supports Brenner's assertion that behind the religious debate are underlying social, political, and economic motivations which contribute to identity formation.

Majority Muslims' Attitudes Toward the Malamai, Reformers, Bokaye and Yan Bori

The Malamai

The **malamai**'s position as the religious authority of Zinder manifests itself in their daily dealings with their family members, students, clients, and neighbors. Majority Muslims recognize the **malamai** as the religious authority of their community and, as a result, **malamai** are shown respect and deference publicly. Because majority Muslims know the **malamai** view **bokanci** and **bori** as "un-Islamic," majority Muslims do not publicly discuss consulting a **boka** and do not attend **bori** performances.

Although most people no longer attend **bori** performances, we have seen that majority Muslims often consult **bokaye** for various needs, often, but not exclusively, for spirit-caused illnesses. A 22 year old man, for example, told me how he took his younger cousin to a **boka** for an illness which a

malam had been unable to successfully treat. The young man, who identifies himself as a Muslim, has attended Qur'anic school since he was a boy and hopes to continue his studies and one day become a **malam**. His younger cousin had suffered seizures for several weeks. Initially, a **malam** provided the boy with **rubutan sha**. When this failed and the seizures continued, it became obvious to the young man and other family members that his cousin's condition was beyond the abilities of the **malam**. As a result, the young man took his cousin to a **boka** who diagnosed the boy as having a spirit-caused illness and treated him with the appropriate medicine. As is often the case, the treatment involved placing the medicine in a small bowl and burning it as incense. The boy then was placed under a blanket where he inhaled the fumes which emanated from the burning medicine. Within days the boy's seizures stopped and he did not suffer a recurrence following the treatment.

The young man reported to the **malam** who made the initial treatment that his cousin had recovered. He told the **malam** the boy stopped having seizures, but he did not tell him a **boka** had also treated the boy. The young man realized that the **malam** would have criticized him for consulting a **boka**. As a member of the community and an aspiring **malam**, the young man was well aware of how his actions would be viewed by the **malamai**. However, given the serious nature of his cousin's illness, he felt he had no choice but to consult a **boka**. When I asked him if he considered the **boka** he consulted to be a Muslim he said, "Yes." He then qualified his response by adding "but not a good Muslim."

By consulting a **boka** discreetly, the young man was able to achieve two objectives; first, he found a successful treatment for his cousin, and second, he

protected and maintained his Muslim identity in the eyes of the religious authority in his neighborhood, something which his future depends upon.

While consultations with **bokaye** are done in private, the **malamai** are aware they take place. The **malamai** therefore maintain a constant critique of the **bokaye** by labeling them "non-Muslims." Thus, majority Muslims, while being aware of the **malamai**'s views on **bokanci**, will consult a **boka** if they feel it is necessary. For them these consolations are not "religious." Rather, **bokanci** is considered by many majority Muslims to be one of several options that a person may choose when engaged in **neman lahiya**.

Majority Muslims in Zinder recognize the **malamai** as the religious authority of their community based on the **malamai**'s expertise in matters pertaining to Islam. **Malamai** are consulted by majority Muslims for the services discussed in Chapter 5 and which include: **layu, rubutan sha, listahara, wuridi** and **adda'a**. These services, which are aimed at restoring and ensuring majority Muslims' success in both the long and short-term, are requested by people engaged in **neman lahiya**.

The Reformers

Because the reformers reject Islam as it exists in Zinder, majority Muslims label the reformers "non-Muslims." Majority Muslims provided emotional and strongly worded responses when discussing the reformers and their ideology. In the eyes of many majority Muslims, the reformers are "non-Muslims" attempting to capitalize on the poor economic conditions which exist in Zinder. The reformers' ultimate goal, majority Muslims argue, is to attract adherents as a means of achieving political goals.

The reformers are well aware of the negative view in which they are held by majority Muslims in Zinder. Reformers, however, deny accusations that they are "buying" adherents by providing financial assistance to new members. Rather, they claim, that as information regarding their position is disseminated, people in Zinder and the surrounding countryside people will realize that the reformers are correct. Thus far, however, this does not appear to be the case as the reform ideology has had little success in rural areas and is primarily an urban phenomenon. An older woman explained her view of the reformers as follows:

> Politics has brought them [the reformers]. Before politics we never heard from them, but now they are causing problems. I know what they say is not true and people do not like them. When I was a girl I began to study [the Qur'an] and I know what they say is not true.

Because they are aware of the negative way they are viewed by majority Muslims in Zinder, the reformers have at times canceled scheduled public teaching sessions for fear of violent conflict. I was invited to attend such a session in the Birni by a reformer shortly before the onset of Ramadan. However, on the day of the event I learned it had been canceled because, "it was not a good day to do it." It was clear to me that while the reformers had established an organized presence in the town, their activities were still limited at times by majoirty Muslims. This was due in large measure to the attitude of majority Muslims as much as it was the **malamai**.

Although the reformer ideology has not gained acceptance, in some instances majority Muslims alter the way in which they want the reformers to perceive them. The following example highlights the negotiable quality of Muslim identity in Zinder. A local merchant, who does not adhere to the

reformer ideology, rents his store from a reformer. Having become good friends with the merchant, I would often talk about my research and he would ask me questions about my work. One day I told him how I spent the morning interviewing a **malam** about the various types of **layu** that he provides for clients. I mentioned that I did not notice any **layu** hanging over the entrance of the store to protect his goods from thieves, something which is a common site in Zinder. He smiled and pointed to a ceramic model of a mosque which rested upon a shelf over the entrance to the store. "It's inside the mosque," he told me. At the time I did not realize the owner of the store was a reformer and I thought it a bit unusual that he would place a **laya** inside of the mosque instead of hang it on a nail as was often the case. It was not until several weeks later that I learned the owner of the store was a reformer. I then understood my friend did not want the owner of the store to come in one day and see a **laya** hanging over the door. He thought if the owner of the store saw a **laya**, he might become angry and ask him to sell his goods elsewhere. Thus, rather than risk a confrontation with the owner, my friend avoided the issue by placing the **laya** out of sight inside the model of the mosque. He thereby avoided angering the owner of the store while at the same time using a **laya** to protect his goods from thieves. This example shows how some majority Muslims, while disagreeing with the reform ideology, at times manipulate their Muslim identity so it does not conflict with reform principles. This reflects the negotiable nature of identity which will be fully developed in the following chapter.

Majority Muslims' attitudes toward the reformers represents an attempt to combat a challenge to the core of Muslim identity in Zinder. For Majority Muslims, a belief in the principle of **roƙon Alla** is an integral part of

Islam. The reformer's critique of Islam in Zinder seems to touch most aspects of religious life including the correct time to pray, the position of the arms during prayer, the role of the Prophet, the way in which respect is shown to parents, and the carrying out of various rites of passage such as weddings and naming ceremonies. Majority Muslims in Zinder realize that the reformer ideology is not advocating minor adjustments, but rather a revamping of the entire way Islam is practiced in the town.

It is understandable, then, that the reformers have met resistance from majority Muslims. The motivations which underlie the construction of Muslim identity for **Zinderois** are social. Majority Muslims in Zinder are proud of their history as a center of Islamic culture. The public reaction to the reformers is thus an attempt to maintain the religious and social values which have formed the core of what it means to be Muslim in Zinder for generations.

The emergence of the reformers has led, in Zinder, to what Eickelman and Piscatori refer to as the objectification of Muslim consciousness (1996: 37). They define objectification as the process by which fundamental questions regarding religion are asked by a significant number of believers such as: "What is my religion?" "Why is it important to my life?" and "How do my beliefs guide my conduct?" The emergence of the reformers has thus led to an intensification of consciousness in Zinder. This heightened awareness of what constitutes being a Muslim is the result, using Hodgkin's terminology, of "Islamism."

The Bokaye

The **bokaye**, like the **malamai**, are consulted by majority Muslims in Zinder engaged in **neman lahiya**. In Chapter 7 I examined the similarities between the services provided by the **bokaye** and **malamai** and stated that they are often in competition for clients. This suggests that, like the **malamai**, the **bokaye** also have an economic motivation behind their construction of Muslim identity.

The **bokaye**'s construction of a Muslim identity has an economic motivation in that it affords them the opportunity to be part of Zinder society (that is, be a Muslim) while at the same time earn a living. While the majority of **malamai** and reformers label the **bokaye** "non-Muslims" (citing their beliefs as polytheistic), majority Muslims in Zinder generally grant them a Muslim identity, albeit some times a marginal one. Many people I interviewed told me that **bokaye** are Muslim, but that they are not "good Muslims" (**cikaken Musulmi**). Others told me the **bokaye** are Muslim because they believe in Allah. An older woman stated her views regarding the **bokaye** as follows:

> **Bokaye** are Muslims, but not good Muslims. I know a **boka** who did **bori** many years ago. Now he is a Muslim, he prays, he fasts. But I know he still works with spirits and that is not good. Many people go to him for medicine because he knows how to treat many illnesses. He doesn't do **bori** like he did before, but he knows the illnesses the spirits cause and he knows which medicine to give. I don't go to him for medicine, but I know many people who do.

A younger woman in her mid-20s echoed the older woman's views. When asked by my research assistant, Zara Mani, if she considered **bokaye** to be Muslims, she replied:

> They are Muslims because they believe in God, and they pray. But they also do things that other people don't do, they do things the **malamai** do not like. I say they are Muslim, but only God knows for certain who is a real Muslim and who is not.

Majority Muslim's view that **bokaye** are at least "marginal" Muslims is understandable given that many majority Muslims in Zinder consult, or have family members who consult **bokaye**. In recognizing the **bokaye** as Muslims, albeit imperfect Muslims, majority Muslims are in a sense legitimizing their consulting such specialists. The young man who took his younger cousin to a **boka** is an example of this. Therefore, it is in the interest of majority Muslims to grant the **bokaye** a Muslim identity, as it lessens, in their minds, the stigma of associating with what the **malamai** label as "un-Islamic."

The Yan Bori

In Chapter 7 I situated the **y'an bori** in Zinder society by stating they are generally labeled "non-Muslims" by **Zinderois**. Although the people who practice **bori** in Zinder claim a Muslim identity, majority Muslims do not accept this claim. Unlike the **bokaye**, the **y'an bori** do not serve majority Muslims in Zinder and thus, majority Muslims have nothing to gain from **bori** performances. I have detailed the potential benefits of consulting a **boka**; however, there are no benefits in associating with the **y'an bori** and reformers.

Majority Muslims view the **y'an bori** as "non-Muslims" because they are polytheistic. Majority Muslims argue that animal sacrifice, which

sometimes takes place during **bori** performances, is proof that the **yan bori** venerate deities other than Allah. A young man in his mid-twenties told me:

> **Bori** is not a good thing. It is an insult to God. Everyone knows this and that is why people don't go to **bori** performances. It is not good to go and watch, even if one doesn't participate. One should not even be in the audience. I don't know anyone who goes to watch.

It is interesting that now the **yan bori** are, for the most part, ignored by majority Muslims, in contrast to the reformers who are the target of unrelenting criticism. Two comments may be made regarding this point. First, the reformers actively speak out against Islam as practiced by majority Muslims in Zinder, and thus, the reformers are a real threat to Islam in the eyes of majority Muslims. Second, the **yan bori**, while also labeled "non-Muslims," for the most part mind their own business and are not perceived as a threat to Islam in Zinder in the same sense the reformers are. The **yan bori** are thus viewed by majority Muslims as "non-Muslims," but a threat which, unlike the reformers, does not interfere with their practice of Islam.

Intergroup Relations Among the Malamai, Reformers, Bokaye and Yan Bori

Malamai/Reformers

In Chapters 5 and 6 I discussed the contrasting religious ideologies of the **malamai** and reformers. By labeling the reformers "non-Muslims" the **malamai** reaffirm their own Muslim identity which is based on a belief in the principle of **rokon Alla**. Likewise, the reformers label the **malamai** "non-Muslims," citing **rokon Alla** as innovative and a deviation from the true path of Islam. The reformers reject the practices of the **malamai** described in Chapter 5, arguing that it is not possible for a person to have such a special

relationship with God. The reformers' claims have caused much spirited discussion within the community regarding what constitutes Muslim identity in Zinder.

An incident which occurred in 1992 outside the central taxi park in Zinder highlights the tension which exists between the **malamai** and the reformers. The confrontation was the result of tensions which developed over a period of about a year and a half. Although people adhering to the reformer ideology had lived in Zinder since the early 1970s, they had maintained a low profile. Reformers explained that until Niger's transition to an elected government in the early 1990s, the military government viewed social organizations, especially religious ones, as a potential challenge to its authority. Thus, maintaining a public appearance as a religious organization entailed the risk of governmental retribution. However, when it became apparent that there was to be a transition to an elected government in Niger, the reformers took the opportunity to begin speaking in public. This was done primarily in the form of public readings and commentaries on the Qur'an (**wa'izi**). At this time the reformers began to emerge publicly and, subsequently, form their Islamic association, ADINI, in 1991.

By July 1992 the reformers had emerged publicly for about a year and established themselves as a unified minority in Zinder society. Because the reformers did not conform to the views of majority Muslims in Zinder, they were denied permission by the **sarki** to have a Friday mosque. Although they had established a small mosque in the town, it was not officially recognized as a Friday mosque until July 1992. Until this time, some of the reformers held the Friday prayer outside the exit of the central taxi park. It was at this

location that the incident took place on July 3, 1992. I will provide two accounts of the incident to show how both sides viewed the confrontation.

The first account is from a reformer who is an office holder in ADINI. The significance of this event for the reformers became apparent to me during my discussion with this reform leader. When I asked him about the confrontation, he pointed to a calendar on the wall from 1992. Turning the pages until he reached the month of July, he put his finger on the day of July 3. "That was the day," he told me, proudly referring to the day which led to official recognition of their mosque as a Friday mosque. He recounted the incident as follows:

> There were thirty of us preparing to pray in front of the taxi park. It is a place we had prayed for some time. On that day we heard that we were being blamed for the lack of rainfall. We knew the real reason though. Really they are afraid of us, they are afraid of us. We thought there may be a problem, so we brought things in case we had to defend ourselves. We were preparing to pray and a large group of people came to prevent us from praying. They came with sticks, knives and other things. Before there was any fighting, many soldiers came and kept them away from us. I think there were 200 soldiers. From that time we have had our Friday mosque.

A **malam** who witnessed the event from across the street had a contrasting perspective on the confrontation:

> The **yan Izala** were causing problems. They came to pray in front of the taxi park in the center of town. They wanted to cause problems because that day they came with many weapons. They came with clubs, swords, bows, and arrows. When other people saw this, they became angry. The reason there was not a fight is that the government sent in soldiers to stop the **yan Izala** from praying and this prevented any fighting.

This event highlights several key aspects of the emergence of the reformers. First, there is a perceptible tension between the **malamai** and reformers. This tension has at times bordered on violent confrontation, something which is generally avoided in Zinder society. Second, the reformers are well aware that they are viewed as a threat by the **malamai** and majority Muslims in Zinder. And finally, the transition to an elected government in Niger brought with it freedom of speech and expression which has allowed the reformers to move into the public sphere where they can voice their beliefs.

The preceding example characterizes the general reaction of the **malamai** and majority Muslims to the reformers' attempt to redefine what constitutes Muslim identity in Zinder. During interviews, **malamai** were critical of the reformers. For example, an older **malam** in the Birni told me:

> What use are they? I do not see their usefulness. They say that **layu** do not work. If they are not effective, why does everyone have one? Why do people come to me and ask for them? My grandfather taught my father and he taught me about the Qur'an and religion. They taught me the right way. The **y'an Izala** are not Muslims. They insult the Prophet and their mothers, they are not Muslims.

Malamai claim the reformers are hypocrites because they do not follow their own teachings. According to the reformers, the **malamai** fail to adhere to the teachings of the Qur'an and have deviated from the "true" practice of Islam. The reformers, therefore, are concerned with purifying the practice of Islam in Zinder. The **malamai**, however, counter that it is the reformers who are guilty of deviating from the Qur'an. A 58 year old **malam** who lives in the Birni explained this to me in the following way:

> The **y'an Izala** say they do things according to the Qur'an, they do things as Mohammed did. But this is not true. They make the pilgrimage to Mecca in airplanes, did the Prophet do that? They get vaccinations to go to Mecca, did the Prophet get vaccinations? They wear watches to see what time it is, did the Prophet wear a watch? They do not do things as the Prophet did.

The **malamai** argue that Islam (as they practice it) has been central to the lives of **Zinderois** for generations. Many of the **malamai** I spoke with drew upon historical precedent to support their argument. A common theme which I repeatedly heard from the **malamai** was that they practice Islam like their fathers and grandfathers did. Because they practice "the" Islam, citing historical precedent, they see no reason to change their beliefs and practices. The reformers, because some of the leaders have been educated in the Middle East, are viewed as outsiders even though they are from Zinder.[1] The **malamai** also cite acceptance of their views among majority Muslims in Zinder as proof that their views are "correct." As one **malam** asked me, "Why would everyone agree with what we say and do if what we say and do is incorrect?" A 45 year old **malam** summarized these ideas when he said:

> My grandfather was a well known **malam**, my father is a well known **malam**, I am a **malam** also. We have always done things this way. If you ask people here, they will tell you the **y'an Izala** are not Muslims. They [the reformers] are not liked because people know what they say is untrue.

Thus, on one level the debate is couched in religious ideology; the **malamai** justify their position by citing acceptance of their point of view in

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[1] Brenner (1993: 60-61) indicates the same for the case of Mali.

the community as well as historical precedent. The reformers make their argument by citing passages from the Qur'an and other religious texts.

The following examples show how the reformers support their position with verses from the Qur'an. As we have seen, the reformers claim that the **malamai**'s belief in **roƙon Alla** is an innovation which deviates from the teachings of the Qur'an. During one interview with a reformer I asked him if he could cite a verse from the Qur'an which prohibits practices based on **roƙon Alla**. Without hesitation he picked up a Qur'an and cited several verses to support his claim. Regarding **listahara** for example, he cited sura 27, verse 66 which states:

> Is there a god with God?
> Say: 'Produce your proof, if you speak truly.'
> Say: 'None knows the Unseen in the heavens and earth
> except God.[2]

The reformers use this passage to support their view that only God knows what will happen in the future. Note that the **malamai** agree with this statement as they claim it is God who is providing the answers regarding the future. The reformers, however, reject the **malamai**'s claim that they are receiving the answers from God by arguing that it is impossible for humans to communicate in such a direct fashion with God. Reformers believe that only God knows the future and that this information can only be communicated via a prophet, not a **malam**. This, they say, is supported with sura 72, verse 27 which reads:

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[2] Translations of the Qur'an are from Arberry (1955).

Knower He of the Unseen, and
He discloses not His Unseen to
anyone,
save only to a Messenger as
He is well-pleased with; then He
despatches before him and behind him watchers,
that he may know they have delivered
the Messages of their Lord;

The reformers are similarly critical of the **malamai**'s claims that **layu** and **rubutan sha** are effective for treating or preventing illness and fulfilling the needs of clients engaged in **neman lahiya** discussed in Chapter 5. The reformers view such practices as fraudulent and hence ineffective. Regarding the use of **layu** a reformer stated:

> How can writing on a piece of paper enclosed in leather do something for you? If you carry a **laya** with you then all you are doing is filling your pockets with things. Only God can protect us or bring good fortune upon us. You need to place your faith in God, not **malamai**, who tell you they can help you.

Similarly, he criticized the prescription of **rubutan sha**:

> If a **malam** gives you some erasure to drink because you are sick, all you have done is drunk ink and water. This cannot make you better, only God can make you better. The **malamai** will tell you it is medicine, but it is only ink and water.

Therefore, the reformers believe that the **malamai**'s prescribing **layu** and **rubutan sha** are fraudulent and outside the realm of Islam. To support this assertion, a reformer cited sura 7, verse 195 which states:

. . . My protector is God
who sent down the Book,

and He takes into His protection the righteous.
And those on whom you
call, apart from God,
have no power to help you, neither they help themselves.

The reformer view of the **malamai** was summarized by one reformer who said:

> **Malamai** tell people that they can cure illnesses and predict the future. This is not true. The **malamai** cannot do this, no one can do this. If God wishes for someone to get better, he will, if the person does not get better, that is God's will.

Obviously, the reformers and **malamai** have significantly different ideas of what constitutes Muslim identity. Drawing upon verses from the Qur'an, reformers support their position with religious text. Likewise, the **malamai** in Zinder defend their position by citing historical precedent and arguing that they practice Islam as it has been practiced for generations in Zinder. This is further supported, the **malamai** claim, by majority Muslims who agree with the **malamai**'s point of view.

But beyond the ideological aspects of the debate are underlying motivations. For the **malamai**, the underlying motivations are social, political, and economic. The economic benefits they receive from their clients provide a portion of their income. In any situation one would expect them to resist such ideas; however, given the current economic crisis in Niger, the possibility of losing clients should reformer ideas catch on, is especially alarming for the **malamai**.

As the religious authority of Zinder, the **malamai** enjoy elevated social status, a position of respect, often consulted by people for advice on important

matters. This also reflects the political role they play in the town. If people in Zinder begin to adopt reformer claims that the **malamai** are frauds, then the **malamai** would lose not only money, but also their standing and ability to influence events in the community.

The reformers in Zinder claim that they have no motives behind their emergence other than the purification of Islam in Zinder, and, more generally, Niger. During interviews with reformers they repeatedly told me that their sole goal was to rid Zinder of "un-Islamic" practices, including those related to **rokon Alla** as well as **bokanci** and **bori**. The reformers' goal is to convince people in Zinder that a true Muslim should not believe in the "innovative" practices of the **malamai** any more than they should believe in the efficacy of becoming possessed during a **bori** performance.

In the case of the reformers, the underlying motivations behind their construction of a Muslim identity appear to be social and political. As noted earlier, the emergence of the reformers in public coincided with Niger's transition to an elected government and its accompanying social freedoms. Although the reformers deny that they have political aspirations, the **malamai** and majority Muslims disagree. The **malamai** and majority Muslims argue that the reformers are interested in attracting a following with the goal of influencing local and national politics. As Umar (1993) shows for the case of Nigeria, their view is understandable. Because the reform ideology is a relatively new phenomena and the reformers a small minority, we will have to wait to see if this is indeed an underlying motivation. What is certain is that the reformers are actively engaged in seeking followers and are vigorous in spreading their views. It is clear they are attempting to wrestle the religious authority of the town away from the **malamai**.

Malamai/Bokaye

Similar to their relationship with the reformers, the **malamai** in Zinder have an antagonistic relationship with the **bokaye**. While the reformers are labeled "non-Muslims" by the **malamai** for criticizing Islam in Zinder, the **bokaye** are labeled "non-Muslims" because, according to the **malamai**, they are polytheistic. However, the **bokaye** I interviewed in Zinder labeled themselves "Muslims" and denied the **malamai**'s accusations that they are polytheistic. The **bokaye** claim a belief in Allah; they fast, pray and do, according to one **boka**, "what other Muslims in Zinder do."

The **malamai**, however, point out that by claiming they have the ability to work with spirits, the **bokaye** break the fundamental tenet of Islam; that is, there is one God, Allah. The **bokaye** counter that the spirits are not gods, like Allah, but rather entities which are an everyday reality which must be dealt with. The **bokaye** argue that they provide services based on their knowledge of these spirits (the illnesses they cause and appropriate treatments, for example) but that this expertise is not incompatible with a Muslim identity. After all, one **boka** told me, the spirits are acknowledged to exist in the Qur'an (as jinn). The **malamai** counter that even though the Qur'an states that jinn exist, it is impossible for a human being to see or associate with a spirit, as doing so would result in death.

The **malamai** argue that the **bokaye**, because they acknowledge other "gods," cannot be considered Muslim. Underlying this view, however, is an economic motivation. In looking at the services provided by the **malamai** and **bokaye**, we see that they are similar. Thus, the **malamai** and **bokaye** are in competition for clients. Like the **malamai**, the **bokaye** provide clients engaged in **neman lahiya** with various treatments for illnesses (both

preventative and curative) as well as perform divination and provide **layu**. By attempting to undermine the **bokaye**'s credibility in the eyes of the public (by labeling them "non-Muslim"), the **malamai** are discrediting a source of competition. The **malamai** claim they are capable of providing treatment for spirit-caused illnesses and thus argue there is no need to consult **bokaye**. The **malamai** believe they are capable of treating such illnesses using "Islamic" prescriptions.[3]

This economic motivation is also related to the **malamai**'s claim to being the "official" source of such services. While competing for clients' payment for services, the **malamai** also want to be recognized as the legitimate source for such services. The **bokaye** infringe upon this legitimacy by claiming to be able to meet the needs of people engaged in **neman lahiya**. As we will see in the next chapter, majority Muslims engaged in **neman lahiya** will access a variety of alternatives at their disposal when necessary. Thus, the relentless criticism leveled by the **malamai** against the **bokaye** is economically and socially motivated.

The **bokaye**'s view of the **malamai** is best characterized as polite and indifferent. The **bokaye** in Zinder are confident and self-assured in their practices and the need for their services is confirmed by the large numbers of clients they have. Whereas the **malamai** were generally negative in their comments regarding **bokaye**, the **bokaye** had the attitude, as one **boka** explained, that, "The **malamai** have their way and we have ours. It is up to the people to go where they want."

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[3] Unlike the **bokaye** and **yan bori**, the malamai do not recognize spirits by name or physical characteristics. Rather they are able to diagnose an illness as spirit-caused and treat it with layu, **rubutan sha**, **wuridi** or **adda'a**. The **malamai** do distinguish between good spirits and harmful ones (as seen in the Qur'an).

One **boka** told me how he often had conversations regarding **bokanci** with a **malam** who lived in his neighborhood. According to the **boka**, the **malam** was critical of **bokanci** because of its association with spirits and hence "un-Islamic" nature. Regarding one conversation the **boka** recounted:

> He [the **malam**] asked me why I continue to work with spirits. I told him that people need my help and that I can do things he cannot do. He disagreed and told me it was not good to work with spirits. He said he can do anything I can do. One week later one of his wives came to see me for some medicine for persistent headaches because the **rubutan sha** her husband gave her did not relieve her pain.

Thus, like the **malamai**, the **bokaye** have economic motivations for constructing a Muslim identity which permits them to do their work and earn a living.

Malamai/Yan bori

The **malamai**, as they do with the **bokaye** and reformers, label the **y'an bori** "non-Muslims." While the **malamai** have long argued that **bokanci** is un-Islamic, they have been unable to persuade the general population of Zinder to stop consulting **bokaye**. However, as discussed in Chapter 7, **bori** performances in Zinder are considered by almost all **Zinderois** to be outside the sphere of Islam. Recall that several of the older **bokaye** I interviewed specifically indicated that it was the persistent pressure from the **malamai** that contributed to the decrease in people requesting such performances.

The case the **malamai** make against the **y'an bori** is similar to that made against the **bokaye**; namely, they consider the **y'an bori** to be polytheists. In the minds of the **malamai**, **bori** ceremonies are public displays in which

bori "gods" are appeased with animal sacrifices. The musical accompaniment and spirit possession are cited by the **malamai** as further evidence of the "un-Islamic" nature of **bori**.

I have discussed the **malamai**'s underlying motivation for labeling the **bokaye** "non-Muslims" and the case is the same for the **y'an bori**. As a source of therapy for illnesses, **layu** and divination, **bori** specialists are a source of competition for the **malamai**. Thus, as with the **bokaye**, there is an economic motivation for the **malamai** to label the **y'an bori** "non-Muslims."

As we have seen, however, the **y'an bori** label themselves "Muslims." They acknowledge Allah as the only "god" and accept Mohammed as his prophet. Similarly, they pray, fast and, as the **sarkin bori** of Zinder illustrates, make the pilgrimage to Mecca when they have the means. In their minds the practice of **bori** is not incompatible with a Muslim identity. **Yan bori** in Zinder argue, like the **bokaye** do, that the Qur'an acknowledges the existence of spirits.

For the **y'an bori**, attendance at **bori** performances has importance in their lives for several reasons. First, many of the **y'an bori** have become adherents of the group because they have established a relationship with a spirit which afflicted them earlier in their lives. As the literature on **bori** indicates, such relationships are lifelong and **bori** ceremonies are the forum in which people maintain allegiance to the spirit which afflicted them. Second, for the **sarkin bori** and the musicians who must be in attendance for the performances to take place, there is an economic motivation. The **sarkin bori** is paid by clients for the services he renders in treating illnesses. Similarly, the musicians, who are necessary for a **bori** performance to take place, are paid for their services. Because there are so few people in Zinder

who attend the performances, there is only one set of musicians in the town who provide the musical accompaniment for all **bori** performances. As a result of the limited demand, these musicians are from time to time unavailable in Zinder because they are traveling to other towns to provide their services. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, as we saw in Chapter 7, **bori** performances provide a forum, a social event, for people who have similar beliefs to come together. The atmosphere is often festive and lighthearted at **bori** performances in Zinder.

Reformers/Bokaye

Like the **malamai**, the reformers label the **bokaye** "non-Muslims" on the grounds that they are polytheists. Like the **malamai**, the reformers argue that polytheism is the greatest affront to Islam. Thus, because **bokaye** are viewed by the reformers as acknowledging the existence of other "gods," they are considered "non-Muslims." To justify this assertion, a reformer cited the following two passages from the Qur'an:

> And when Lokman said to his son,
> admonishing him, 'O my son, do not
> associate others with God; to associate
> others with God is a mighty wrong' (sura 31:17).

> And whosoever calls upon another god
> with God, whereof he has no proof,
> his reckoning is with his Lord;
> surely the unbelievers shall not prosper (sura 23:117).

The reformers also argue that the **bokaye** are unable to help people as they claim because only God is capable of doing that. This is the same

argument the reformers make against the services offered by the **malamai** and sura 7, verse 195 was again cited as evidence of this.

The **bokaye** view reformer criticism in the same manner they do the criticism leveled against them by the **malamai**. **Bokaye** in Zinder explained that they have always received such criticism from the **malamai**. The reform ideology thus represents a repetition of the same attacks they have endured from the **malamai** throughout history. As one would expect, the reformers' criticism has not affected the number of clients the **bokaye** have nor the belief on the part of their clients that the **bokaye**'s treatments are effective. Regarding the emergence of the reformers, one **boka** told me:

> The **yan Izala** are like the **malamai**. They say what I do is not good and that I should not do it. I do not talk to them but I know that is what they say. This is the same thing the **malamai** say. I sell people medicine and treat them because they come to me for help. If people did not find my services useful, they would not come to me.

When I asked him if he had noticed a change in number of people seeking his services since the emergence of the reformers, he said:

> Many people come to see me because they know I am the best **boka** in the region. The **yan Izala** tell people that it is not good to go to a **boka** but they [the people] do not listen. When you come here don't you see people coming and interrupting us? Don't you see people outside waiting to come in?

This example indicates that majority Muslims continue to seek the services of **bokaye** in Zinder, despite the efforts of the **malamai**, and now reformers' attempts to convince them otherwise.

Similar to the **malamai**'s view of the **bokaye**, the reformers' criticism of the **bokaye** is on one level based on religious ideology. As the examples cited from the Qur'an show, the reformers argue that the **bokaye** are polytheists and hence "non-Muslims." The reformers, however, are also politically and socially motivated in their construction of Muslim identity. The reformers are concerned with combating any social phenomenon which is contrary to their beliefs and hence an obstacle to the implementation of their religious ideology in Zinder. As a source of authority, albeit one related primarily to the treatment of illness, the **bokaye** represent an obstacle for the reformer goal of an Islamic society based on their ideology. If the **bokaye** were merely selling traditional medicines made from plants, they would not be the target of reformer criticism. However, because the **bokaye** are perceived by the reformers as acknowledging many "gods," they are viewed by the reformers as a threat to Islam and thus something to be reckoned with. The **bokaye**, as stated earlier, have an underlying economic motivation for their construction of a Muslim identity. The **bokaye** earn a living based on their ability to treat illnesses and provide other services for people engaged in **neman lahiya**.

Reformers/Yan bori

The reformers regard the **yan bori** in the same manner they do the **bokaye**. In the eyes of the reformers there is no difference between the **yan bori**, who hold public **bori** performances, and the **bokaye**, who work behind closed doors. Members of both groups are labeled "non-Muslim" because, according to the reformers, they are polytheistic. A reformer explained this in the following way:

> Anyone who says he can work with spirits is lying. The people who do this are not Muslims. The **bokaye** and the **y'an bori** are the same. The **bokaye** and **y'an bori** tell people they can provide medicine for spirit-caused illnesses but it is a lie.[4]

Thus, the reformer's ideologically based criticism of the **y'an bori** is the same as that leveled against the **bokaye**.

The **y'an bori** in Zinder are familiar with the reformers but have had no direct contact with them. **Bori**, according to the **y'an bori**, has been unaffected by the reformers. One young woman who attends and participates in **bori** performances stated:

> What we do is none of their business. They don't like it, but what can they do about it? Do you think they will ever come here to try to stop us? Many people say they don't like **bori**, but no one ever comes to try to stop us from doing it. If people don't like it, they don't come.

One might think that the reformers accusing majority Muslims of being "non-Muslim" might create a backlash against traditional practices such as **bokanci** and **bori** as the **malamai** and majority Muslims attempt to re-establish their "Muslimness." It appears, however, that this is not the case. While there are examples of attacks on bars in Zinder in 1992 as well as attacks on women who were accused of dressing "inappropriately" in public, the **y'an bori** were ignored. The **y'an bori** told me that they are aware that they are labeled "non-Muslims" by **Zinderois** but they are left alone. This

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[4] This was also stated by **malamai** who also characterized the work of the **bokaye** and **y'an bori** as a "lie" (**ƙarya ce**). This is significant because stating someone is lying is a serious accusation in Zinder society.

indicates that the center stage for the debate of what constitutes Muslim identity is now occupied by the reformer/majority Muslim opposition. Thus, while the reformers view **bori** as an "un-Islamic" practice, they are currently preoccupied with a greater debate; namely, that between themselves and the majority Muslims in Zinder. As a result, the **y'an bori** in Zinder are unaffected by the emergence of the reformers.

Bokaye/Yan bori

A consideration of the relationship between the **bokaye** and **y'an bori** in Zinder does not contribute to an understanding of Muslim identity construction, but it does reflect the **bokaye**'s attempt to legitimize their services in Zinder. Because the **bokaye** and **y'an bori** both claim the ability to treat spirit-caused afflictions, the **bokaye** want to be viewed as *the* specialists for such treatments. In order to achieve this goal, the **bokaye** argue that the **y'an bori** in Zinder are frauds who are interested in profit rather than the "true" practice of **bori**. As I stated in Chapter 7, many **bokaye** in Zinder are retired **bori** specialists who have abandoned the public possession ceremonies which accompany **bori** performances. The **y'an bori** in Zinder, the **bokaye** claim, are merely providing entertainment for members of their group. The **bokaye** view these bori performances as staged performances held to generate an income for the musicians and leaders of the group. A prominent **boka** who stopped participating in **bori** performances about 20 years ago stated his views regarding the **y'an bori** in Zinder as follows:

> Have you seen them [**bori** performances]? If you go and see them you will know what they do is not real **bori**. What they do is for play, it is not real. They want people to come and give them money, that is all they want, money. If they saw me coming they

> would be afraid because they know I would see that what they do is fake.

Such criticism is an attempt by the **bokaye** to establish themselves as the legitimate providers of such services in Zinder. Although **Zinderois** do not attend **bori** performances, the **bokaye** are interested in maintaining their position as the experts for such services. Portraying the **yan bori** as "frauds" is their way of attempting to do this.

Summary

In order to further an understanding of Muslim identity construction in Zinder and attempt to bridge the gap between objectivist and subjectivist views of culture, I have analyzed the attitudes **Zinderois** hold toward various forms of knowledge in Zinder. I also explored the ways members who embody these forms of knowledge view one another. An analysis of these relationships leads to the conclusion that underlying the different religious ideologies regarding what constitutes Muslim identity are social, political, and economic motivations. Each form of knowledge has its own stake in how Muslim identities are constructed in Zinder.

These attitudes illustrate the dialectical relationship between individuals and society. Social guidelines regarding Islam (as set forth by the **malamai**) are understood by majority Muslims. Majority Muslims generally follow, or at least acknowledge, these guidelines. Hence, being a Muslim involves following the five pillars of faith, a belief in the principle of **rokon Alla**, and avoiding what the **malamai** determine to be "un-Islamic." The category of "un-Islamic", from the **malamai**'s point of view includes **bori**, **bokanci** and the reformer ideology. Pressure from other majority Muslims

and the experiencing of one's self through Mead's "generalized other" results in majority Muslims adherence, in this public sense, to these guidelines. In this chapter we have seen this influence and the constraints the **malamai** place on individuals.

However, we have also seen individuals' actions impact society which brings with it the possibility of social change. The emergence of the reform movement is an example of this. Similarly, although the **malamai** have long spoken against **bokanci** in Zinder, individuals continue to seek the services of **bokaye**.

An analysis of these attitudes thus indicates that both objectivist and subjectivist perspectives are necessary for a full understanding of cultural phenomena which in this case is why there are various Muslim identities in Zinder. However, as the attitudes people hold toward these forms of knowledge show, it appears, as Ricoeur and Lambek argue, that it is by looking at the actions of individuals that go against societal guidelines that we learn the most about culture.

Thus, the attitudes majority Muslims hold toward, and manners in which they draw upon, these forms of knowledge as resources highlights the dialectical nature of the relationship between individuals and society and hence structure and practice. The religious authority of Zinder, for example, make it clear that consulting a **boka** is against the rules. However, when necessary, many majority Muslims engaged in **neman lahiya** do seek the assistance of **bokaye** in a discreet fashion. In other situations, such as attending a **bori** performance, majority Muslims seem to adhere relatively strictly to societal edicts against such actions. The social habitus of individuals is the source of these actions which are not, as Bourdieu and

Ortner argue, conscious decisions on the part of individuals (for example, I cannot go to a **bori** specialist so I will go to a **boka**), but do indicate that these actions are objectively organized strategies. This analysis of the attitudes Muslims in Zinder hold toward forms of knowledge shows how habitus is the, "dynamic intersection of structure and action, society and the individual" (Postone **et al.** 1993: 4).

Chapter 9

NEMAN LAHIYA: THE SEARCH FOR WELL-BEING

Introduction

In this chapter I draw upon case studies to show the importance of Mead's concept of self and its relevance for considering individuals' actions. This in turn helps to explain the negotiable quality of identity. A consideration of the actions taken by people engaged in **neman lahiya** indicates that people's attitudes toward different forms of knowledge may change depending on the circumstances. The dialectical relationship between society and individuals continues to emerge here, thus reflecting the dialectic which exists between structure and practice. Analyzing what people do when they are engaged in **neman lahiya** further suggests that a consideration of both structure and practice is needed to fully understand Muslim identity construction in Zinder. However, it is by studying people's actions that we gain an understanding of culture.

The Concept of Neman Lahiya

In Hausa, **lahiya** is a state of well-being which indicates that various aspects of one's life are in a positive or harmonious state. As Wall writes, "the Hausa word **lafiya** has a broad range of connotations referring to the proper ordering, correct functioning, and general well-being of human

affairs" (1988: 170). Thus, in Hausa greetings, "**lahiya lau**" ("in a state of well-being") is the standard response to questions such as: How are you? How is your work? How is your family? How are your children? And, How is your husband/wife?[1] When an aspect of a person's life is disrupted, because of illness or some misfortune, attempts are made to re-attain a state of well-being. Similarly, attempts are made to maintain and ensure a state of **lahiya** when a person's life is in harmony. This process is known as **neman lahiya**.

Thus, **rishin lahiya** (a lack of well-being) may be used to describe various situations including illness or, to describe other disruptions or imbalances in a person's life such as a need for employment, a lack of business success or a desire to marry and have children. People engaged in **neman lahiya** thus seek to re-attain well-being in the short term, as in the case of illness. But also, it can involve a search for long term success as well. Finding employment which will provide the income necessary for a man to marry and support a family, for example.

By considering individual processes of **neman lahiya**, I learned about the actions people take to either once again establish a state of **lahiya**, or ensure a continued state of well-being in the future. Of particular interest is how people's attitudes toward various forms of knowledge may change. As Lambek (1993) notes, "people's attitudes to any given knowledge change over both the short and the long term, according to their needs, goals, and interests." In Zinder, this proved to be the case and was most evident when considering the actions of people engaged in **neman lahiya**.

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[1] "**Lahiya lau**" is the standard reply to these questions even if this is not the case. If a person, his or her work, or member of the family is not in a state of well-being, this may be discussed after the initial greetings.

TABLE 9.1: Examples of Ailments and Treatments Given by Malamai

Hausa	English	Treatment
ame	vomiting	**rubutan sha, laya, adda'a**
ciwon ciki	stomach ailment	**rubutan sha, adda'a**
ciwon ido	eye ailment	**rubutan shafawa**[2]
cutal iska	spirit-caused ailment	**rubutan sha, laya, adda'a**
ciwon kafa	foot/leg ailment	**rubutan shafawa**
ciwon kai	head ailment	**rubutan sha, laya**
ciwon kunne	ear ailment	**rubutan sha, laya**
ciwon zuciya	heart ailment	**rubutan sha**
faral masasara	yellow fever	**rubutan sha, rubutan shafawa**
fuka	asthma	**rubutan sha, laya**
haɓo	bleeding from nose	**adda'a**
hajijiya	dizziness	**rubutan sha, laya**
kwancece	lack of fetal movement	**rubutan sha**
naƙuda	labor	**rubutan sha**
zazzaɓi	fever	**rubutan sha**

[2] In this case the erasure is used to wash the eyes.

TABLE 9.2 - Examples of Ailments and Treatments Given by Bokaye

Hausa	English	Treatment
ame	vomiting	**maganin icce**
ciwon ciki	stomach ailment	**turare, maganin icce**
cutal iska	spirit-caused ailment	**turare, laya**
ciwon ƙafa	foot/leg ailment	**turare, maganin icce**
ciwon kunne	ear ailment	**maganin icce**
fuka	asthma	**turare, maganin icce**
hajijiya	dizziness	**turare, laya**
hauka	madness	**turare**
kumburi	swelling	**turare, maganin icce**
rama	weight loss	**turare, maganin icce**
tamowa	weight loss (children)	**maganin icce**
tari	cough	**maganin icce**
tonshan	high blood pressure	**maganin icce**
zabura	startling, seizures	**turare, ƙiri**
zawo	diarrhea	**maganin icce, laya**
zazzaɓi	fever	**maganin icce**

Options for Individuals Engaged in Neman lahiya

I have described in detail the various services provided by **malamai** and **bokaye** in Zinder which are sought by people engaged in **neman lahiya**. We have also seen how **malamai** and **bokaye** offer similar services and are hence in competition with each other for clients. Tables 9.1 and 9.2 provide examples of illnesses treated by **malamai** and **bokaye**. In cases of illness, people also have the option of seeking treatment at a government run clinic (**dispensaire**) or hospital in Zinder, from street pharmacists known as **kemises**, or from Nigerian medicine sellers who sell **maganin icce**. A look at Tables 9.3, 9.4, and 9.5 indicates that people in Zinder consult these other options while engaged in **neman lahiya** for many of the same illnesses they consult **malamai** and **bokaye**. In the cases where illness is not the motivation for engaging in **neman lahiya**, the choice is between the **malamai** and the **bokaye**.

Thus, people in Zinder have numerous options to choose from as they attempt to re-attain, or ensure a continued a state of, well-being. Following a description of the other options sought for cases of illness I will present case studies to illustrate the actions taken by people engaged in **neman lahiya**.

Government Run Clinics and Hospital in Zinder

People who are ill in Zinder have the option of going to one of the government run clinics in the town or the hospital. The clinics are staffed by trained medical personnel but there are no medical doctors. Personnel at the clinics can treat common illnesses or minor injuries such as cuts but refer more serious conditions to the hospital.

TABLE 9.3 - Examples of Reasons People Go to a Clinic or Hospital

Hausa	English
aihuwa	childbirth
ame	vomiting
attini	dysentery
ciwon ciki	stomach ailment
ciwon hakori	tooth ailment
ciwon ido	eye ailment
ciwon kafa	foot/leg ailment
ciwon kai	head ailment
ciwon ƙashi	bone ailment
ciwon kunne	ear ailment
faral masasara	yellow fever
haɗarin mota	car accident
hajijiya	dizziness
ƙurji	boil
masasara	malaria
sanƙarau	meningitis
tamowa	weight loss (children)
zawo	diarrhea
zazzaɓi	fever

TABLE 9.4 - Examples of Ailments for Which People Purchase Medicine from Kemises

Hausa	English
ame	vomiting
attini	dysentery
ciwon ciki	stomach ailment
ciwon ido	eye ailment
ciwon jiki	body ailment
ciwon kai	head ailment
ciwon kunne	ear ailment
fuka	asthma
hajijiya	dizziness
ka sha ka fashe	vitamins
ƙurji	boil
majina	congestion
masasara	malaria
mura	cold
raɓa	weight loss
tamna gaba	joint ailment
tari	cough
zawo	diarrhea
zazzaɓi	fever

TABLE 9.5 - Examples of Ailments for Which People Purchase Medicine from Nigerian Medicine Sellers

Hausa	English
ame	vomiting
ciwon ciki	stomach ailment
ciwon ƙafa	foot/leg ailment
ciwon kai	head ailment
ciwon kunne	ear ailment
faral masasara	yellow fever
fuka	asthma
hajijiya	dizziness
haƙori	tooth ailment
rafia	weight loss
zawo	diarrhea
zazzafi	fever

The hospital in Zinder, which is staffed by doctors, is viewed by many people as being a place to go only as a last resort, for cases where all else has failed. This perception is no doubt in large part due to the fact that the hospital often lacks equipment and supplies necessary to help people. Thus, people who go to the hospital are usually very ill and often die, leading to the conclusion that the hospital is a place to go to die, rather than get better. In the hospital, like the neighborhood clinics, diagnoses are made, but there is often no medicine to give to people. As a result, people often now bypass the clinic/hospital and go directly to the **kemises** who peddle pharmaceutical drugs on the streets of Zinder.

Maganin Kemis: Prescription Medicines Without a Prescription

In the early 1990s various medicines, including pharmaceutical drugs imported from Nigeria, began appearing for sale on the streets in Zinder, as well as many other parts of Niger. Some of these drugs, which could previously only be obtained with a doctor's prescription at a pharmacy, became readily available on the street and for a relatively inexpensive price. The government of Niger no longer confiscated such medicines as there were shortages in Niger's pharmacies and the drugs that were available in the pharmacies were often prohibitively expensive. Realizing that people needed access to such medicines, the sale of such imported medicines was no longer prohibited. The drugs are sold primarily by young Nigerien men known as **kemises**[3] in Hausa.

A **kemis** may operate out of a small shop or be seen carrying medicines around town on bicycle or on foot. A person wishing to purchase a medicine

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[3] This comes from the English word "chemist."

describes the ailment to the **kemis** and provides relevant information such as the age and weight of the person in need of the medicine. The **kemis**, who has been trained by a larger distributor of the medicines, then prescribes a medication. At the time of my research the main distributor of these medicines was located in the taxi park in Zinder. The distributor explains the use and dosage of each medicine to the seller who then heads off to sell the products.

A concern, which seemed to be expressed more by expatriates than Nigeriens, regarding such medicines relates to a lack of quality control and professional training on the part of the sellers. Expatriates, and some Nigeriens, are suspicious of these imported drugs and believe they are potentially dangerous. Such skeptics claim that it is impossible to be sure that what is stated on the outside of the package is what is inside the package; that is, that the contents could do more harm than good. Even if the drugs are legitimate, the fact that untrained (in the sense of pharmaceutical or medical training) people are selling these medicines is a potential problem. I have come to several conclusions regarding these points. First, I heard of no cases in which a person attributed negative effects to taking counterfeit drugs. It is possible that some of these drugs may be mere placebos in that they do not contain "medicine" but they do not appear to be harming people. Second, the **kemises** who sell the drugs appear to be prescribing the drugs in the manner and dosages indicated on the packages (which are generally in English). Thus, I also did not encounter examples of people who experienced adverse effects because of grossly improper dosages. The potential for this, however, is always present.

Thus, many people in Zinder find **kemises** an inexpensive and reliable

source for medicine given the shortages in the official pharmacies. People I spoke with told me that they bought medicines from **kemises** because they are inexpensive and effective. Many people complained that even if they went to a clinic or the hospital the medicine the doctor prescribed was unavailable in the pharmacies. Even when the medicine was available, it was too expensive for them to buy. Often, people explained how they went to a clinic or the hospital to be diagnosed but upon receiving a prescription took it to a **kemis**, not a pharmacy. Many people now go directly to a **kemis** and describe their problem and receive medicine rather than making a trip to a clinic or hospital.

Medicine Sellers from Nigeria

Another, but less commonly used source of medicine, are young men from Nigeria, especially from the Jos region, who sell **maganin icce**. These young men can be seen walking around town and heard playing their flutes to announce their presence in neighborhoods of Zinder. Less than a fourth of the people I spoke with had ever bought medicine from these medicine sellers. These medicines are similar to those provided by **bokaye** in that they are made from plant materials and often taken in the form of **turare**. Most people in Zinder, however, are unfamiliar with these medicine sellers and do not purchase medicine from them.

Case Studies[4]

When I began learning about the various ideas people in Zinder held

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[4] As in previous chapters, the names of all people in these case studies have been changed.

regarding what constitutes Muslim identity I thought I would be able to uncover an organized "system" based on socio-economic factors which would allow me to explain this diversity. I believed that a consideration of factors such as gender, age, class/status, occupation and education would explain differences in opinion. Thus, I expected to present my conclusions by making statements such as: Older women in Zinder tend to believe. . . , Young males who have attended Qur'anic school believe. . . , or Young married women who attended government schools believe . . . . As Lambek experienced for the case of Mayotte, during my field research I soon realized that there was no neat and tidy system waiting to be uncovered, but rather a complex setting in which people's attitudes were fluid, changing over time (both the long and short term) as well as in day to day life as individuals moved from social encounter to social encounter. The case studies included in this chapter are representative of the actions people engaged in **neman lahiya** take. I have selected these examples because they represent the broad and varied spectrum of actions taken by people in Zinder to re-attain a state of **lahiya**. The first set of examples represent actions people take in cases of illness and are aimed at solutions to problems in the short term; the second, drawn primarily from examples presented in earlier chapters, are related to longer term notions of well-being.

Neman Lahiya in the Short Term: Seeking Treatment for Illness

Case 1

Halima, a woman in her early twenties and the mother of a 4 year old boy, attended Qur'anic school throughout her childhood and continues to study the Qur'an at home. She did not attend primary school. Her father,

who is now deceased, was a **malam** who was known for the efficacy of his **layu** and **rubutan sha.**

Several months ago her son, Ali, experienced a persistent fever. Initially she believed that he had malaria and treated him with nivaquine.[5] When the fever continued, Halima consulted a **malam** who provided **rubutan sha**. Ali drank the **rubutan sha** but did not get better. Finally, Halima took him to a **boka** who diagnosed Ali's persistent fever as being caused by a spirit. The **boka** gave him a treatment of **turare** and also gave him some **maganin icce** to take orally at home. In several days the fever was gone.

Case 2

Ousseina, another young mother, has a ten year old daughter who had suffered from breathing difficulties for the past several years. Ousseina did not attend Qur'anic school, but attended primary school. In an attempt to resolve her daughter's problem, Ousseina consulted numerous specialists. Initially she took her daughter to a **malam** and received **rubutan sha** and **layu**. After the **malam's** treatments failed, Ousseina consulted a **boka** who treated her daughter with **maganin icce**. Again, her daughter continued to have breathing difficulties. She then purchased medication from a **kemis.** The medication she purchased was for the treatment of breathing ailments but it did not help. When that failed she went to the hospital where her daughter was diagnosed with asthma. The medicine the doctor prescribed, however, did not relieve her daughter's suffering and she continues to have breathing problems.

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[5] Nivaquine is a quinine based treatment for malaria readily available in Zinder.

Case 3

Abdou, a 32 year old **almajiri**, regularly treats his children using **rubutan sha, layu** and **adda'a**. He told me that he can treat common illnesses but that for more serious ailments he takes his children to a **malam**. His four year old son, for example, had recently recovered from stomach pain. Abdou explained how he gave his young son **rubutan sha** and several hours later the stomach pain was gone.

Last year, however, Abdou's eight year old son had unexplained swelling of his left hand, a condition Abdou knew he was unable to treat. Abdou took his son to a **malam**. The **malam** said that the swelling could be caused by a spirit and performed **adda'a** while doing **tohi** over the boy's hand. Abdou said that the boy's hand remained swollen for several days after that but that it then began to return to normal size.

Case 4

Mariama is a 34 year old mother of four children. She attended both Qur'anic school and middle school. Mariama recounted an experience she had with a **boka**. Within the past year her seven year old son began waking up at night in an agitated state (**zabura**). When this happened, she had difficulty getting him to go back to sleep. In the morning, however, he was fine and had no recollection of the events from the previous evening. She was concerned that a spirit was menacing her son so she took him to a **boka** to find out what was happening to him. The **boka** attributed the episodes to a mischievous spirit and gave her some incense to burn in the boy's room before he went to sleep. This, the **boka** told her, would chase the spirit from the boy's room and allow him to sleep through the night. Mariama did what

the **boka** told her and the boy has had no problems since.

Case 5

Oumarou, a 40 year old trader, attended Qur'anic school as a child but did not attend primary school. Recently his three year old son suffered from weight loss. He took his son to the hospital where he received rehydration fluids (**ruwan gishiri**). After leaving the hospital, however, his son continued to lose weight so Oumarou took him to a **boka** who diagnosed the boy as having **tamowa.**[6] He was given **maganin icce** which was taken in his food. Shortly thereafter, Oumarou's son began to gain weight again. I asked Oumarou why he did not take his son to a **malam,** and he explained that the **malamai** can treat uncomplicated problems like stomach aches and head aches. However, a serious illness, he explained, had to be treated at the hospital or by a **boka.**

Case 6

Hadiza is a 20 year old married woman who did not attend primary school, but attended Qur'anic school for four years as a child. She described how last year she frequently experienced dizziness (**hajijiya**). She initially went to a **malama** who gave her **rubutan sha,** but this did not alleviate her dizziness. She then went to the hospital where she received an injection (**allura**), but she did not know of what), but the dizziness continued. Finally, she went to a **boka** who treated her with **turare** and gave her a small **laya** to prevent the dizziness from returning. Following the **boka**'s treatment she

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[6] A condition in which a child loses weight. Mijinguini (1994) defines **tamowa** as general weakening of the body (in children) caused by malnutrition.

has not experienced any dizziness.

Case 7

Amina is a 28 year old mother of four children who attended primary school and several years of Qur'anic school as a child. Within the past year her one year old daughter was ill with severe diarrhea (**zawo**). Amina told me that she first tried to treat the child herself with a medicine she bought from a **kemis**. The child continued to suffer, so she took her to a **boka**. The **boka** gave the child **maganin icce** to be taken orally and a **kiri** to be worn around the child's waist. Several days passed and the child did not get better. Following the visit to the **boka,** Amina went to a local clinic and was given some medicine for the child. It took some time, but in about ten days her daughter recovered.

Case 8

Fatima, a 20 year old woman who did not attend Qur'anic or primary school, was seven months pregnant with her third child when she stopped feeling fetal movements. This condition, known as **kwancece**, is immediate cause to consult a **malam**. Fatima recounted how she noticed the fetus had stopped moving and was taken by neighbors to a **malam**. The **malam** prescribed **rubutan sha** in an attempt to reinvigorate the fetus. Unfortunately, the baby did not survive.

Fatima explained that there was no question of going to any specialist other than a **malam** for the problem. Although the **rubutan sha** did not work in her case, she told me (and other women confirmed this), that for many cases it is successful.

Case 9

Hassan, a 35 year old mechanic who attended Qur'anic school for five years as a child, told me about the time his sister's four year old son began to fall down. The boy had never experienced problems walking in the past and Hassan and his sister suspected the falling down to be the result of **cutal iska**. They took the boy to a **boka** who confirmed their suspicion. The boy was treated with **turare** and given a **laya**. The boy, who is now seven years old, has not experienced the problem again.

Actions Taken by Individuals Engaged in Neman lahiya

The case studies presented above are representative of various actions taken by individuals engaged in **neman lahiya** in Zinder. Often, this includes consulting several of the forms of knowledge present in Zinder. The case studies indicate that, in cases of illness, the options available to people are: home treatment, **malamai**, **bokaye**, government run clinics/hospital, **kemises** or Nigerian medicine sellers.

Some people believe that the **malamai** are capable of treating all ailments, including those caused by spirits. Others, however, believe **malamai** are able to treat less serious ailments but not serious ones. Thus, in case 3, Abdou took his son to a **malam** to cure the swelling in his hand which he believed to be caused by a spirit. Conversely, however, Oumarou in case 5, recognizing his son's continual weight loss to be a serious problem, took him to the hospital and when that failed, a **boka**. In Oumarou's mind these were the best choices given his son's condition. In this instance it is understandable that Abdou, an **almajiri**, might place greater faith in the **malamai**'s ability to treat his child, regardless of the ailment. Oumarou,

however, had attended Qur'anic school as a youth and held great respect for the **malamai**. Based on his experiences though, he concluded that for serious ailments it was best to go to the hospital or a **boka**. Notice how for both cases the ailments were resolved by the specialists chosen by the father.

In cases 2 and 6, Ousseina and Hadiza, both consulted a **malam**[7] first before choosing other alternatives. In Ousseina's case, she took her daughter, who suffers from breathing problems, to a **malam**. Similarly, Hadiza consulted a **malama** after experiencing dizziness. In neither case, however, did the **malam**'s treatment work and both women sought other alternatives. These cases present examples of people who, unlike Oumarou in case 5, felt it appropriate to consult a **malam** even in the face of a serious ailment.

In case 1, Halima, the mother of 4 year Ali, first tried to treat his fever at home using nivaquine. When this failed she took him to a **malam** who prescribed **rubutan sha**. In this case, when the nivaquine failed to alleviate Ali's fever, Halima realized that his ailment was not malaria as she had thought. As a result, she determined that it was something which had to be treated by a specialist, and she chose a **malam**. The **malam**'s treatment, however, also failed to cure Ali and she continued her search for a successful treatment.

The cases discussed above include various ailments for which people consulted **malamai**, including fever, breathing problems and swelling. As Tables 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, and 9.4 indicate, these are also ailments treated by other specialists in Zinder. Case 8, however, provides an example of a condition (**kwancece**) which appears to be exclusively in the domain of the **malamai**. During my discussions with people in Zinder I learned that people made

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[7] Ousseina a **malam**, Hadiza a **malama**.

different choices regarding which specialists they chose to consult. I then began asking if there were certain ailments or conditions for which only one specialist was appropriate. Many people told me that when a fetus stopped moving during pregnancy that a **malam** had to be consulted immediately. Men and women explained to me that only a **malam** has the ability to request the assistance of God to reinvigorate the fetus.

Based on these examples we see that **malamai** are consulted for a wide range of ailments and conditions, even though they are not always successful at producing the results desired by clients. While not all people consult a **malam** first, in the early stages of a condition or even at all (see, for example, cases 4, 5, 7 and 10), the **malamai** are a primary option for individuals engaged in **neman lahiya**. It is difficult to predict using socio-economic factors who and when a person is likely to consult a **malam**. The cases discussed above involved men and women, people of different ages and people with different educational backgrounds and occupations. During my discussions, people told me that the most important factor in this decision was past experience and personal preference.

Bokaye are consulted at some point in cases 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. In case 4 we see how Mariama, suspecting that a spirit is the cause of her son's startling awake at night, takes him to a **boka**. The treatment, burning **turare** in his room before he went to bed at night, proved to be effective. Similarly, in case 9, Hassan suspected his nephew's falling to be spirit-caused and he took him to a **boka**. The boy was treated with **turare** and given a **laya**. As in case 4, the problem was resolved and the boy did not experience the falling down again.

The actions of Mariama and Hassan in cases 4 and 10 are typical for

ailments which are suspected of being spirit-caused. However, as the actions of Abdou in case 3 show, not everyone who suspects a spirit-caused ailment heads off to the nearest **boka**. For Abdou, a **malam** was able to provide treatment. It should be noted, however, that cases 4 and 10 are more typical when spirits are suspected to be the cause of an ailment than case 3.

For other people, **bokaye** are consulted when other attempts, such as home treatment, **malamai**, or the clinic/hospital fail. Recalling case 1, we saw how Halima first tried to treat Ali at home and then sought the services of a **malam**. Halima told me that the fever was not malaria and that it had been diagnosed by a **boka** as being caused by a spirit. Following a treatment of **turare** and **maganin icce**, the boy recovered. Thus, in this case, Halima's decision to consult a **boka** was the result of other alternatives failing.

Similarly, Oumarou's son in case 5 recovered from his weight loss after being treated by a **boka**. The boy's ailment, which was not attributed to a spirit, was cured with **maganin icce**. In this instance, like case 1, the choice of a **boka** followed the failure of another specialist, in this case a doctor at the hospital. This parallels case 6 in which Hadiza was successfully treated by a **boka** for her dizziness. After a **malama**, and then a doctor at the hospital fail, Hadiza consulted a **boka** who treated her with **turare** and gave her a small **laya**. Following the **boka**'s treatment, Hadiza no longer experienced dizziness.

Bokaye, however, like the other specialists, are also not always successful in treating ailments. In case 2, for example, Ousseina took her daughter to a **boka** following the unsuccessful treatment with **rubutan sha** and **layu** from a **malam**. Unfortunately, the **boka**'s prescribing **maganin icce** also failed to provide any relief and Ousseina continued her search for **lahiya**.

Also, in case 7 Amina took her one year old daughter to a **boka** to get treatment for severe diarrhea. The **boka**'s prescription of **maganin icce** and **kiri** did not help Amina's daughter.

Based on the examples presented in this chapter, the government run clinics and hospital appear to play a less important role for those engaged in **neman lahiya** than do **malamai** and **bokaye,** and this is true. In case 2, for example, Ousseina does not take her daughter, who had serious breathing difficulties, to the hospital until after visiting a **malam, boka** and buying medicine from a **kemis**. The hospital was the final option. In the end, Ousseina's daughter continued to have problems as no one was able to help her.

In case 7 Amina first bought medicine from a **kemis** to cure her daughter's diarrhea. When this did not work, she took her to a **boka**. Also, in case 2 Ousseina bought medication from a **kemis** to treat her daughter's breathing problem. In these two cases the medicine purchased from the **kemis** did not resolve the problems of the two girls. In general, however, people told me that the medicines they buy from **kemises** are effective, especially medicine for headaches and stomach ailments.

Neman Lahiya and Long Term Notions of Success

In Chapters 5 and 7 I presented examples of people engaged in **neman lahiya** who consulted **malamai** and, to a lesser extent, **bokaye** to assure long term success in life. As these examples indicate, the search for well-being may be interpreted, in some cases, as related to long term notions of success. Recall that **malamai** were consulted for **layu** to prevent the theft of valuable possessions, to assure success in business, and to prevent a husband from

taking a second wife. Other reasons given for requesting **layu** include: finding money to purchase a house, to have children, to stop fighting with a spouse, to prevent a wife from leaving, and to prevent a husband from being unfaithful. Similarly, **wuridi** and **adda'a** were requested by clients in an attempt to ensure long term success. Such services were requested to ensure a successful harvest, to ensure success in business, to make a person popular, to become pregnant, to get married, and to bring rain. All of these examples represent a concern on the part of individuals for their long term success in life.

Bokaye are also consulted in order to assure long term success in life; however, to a lesser extent than **malamai**. As I pointed out in Chapter 7, **bokaye** are most often consulted in cases of illness, particularly **cutal iska**. There are examples, though, of **bokaye** providing services to protect the long term interests of clients. The prescription of **layu** to assure safe travel is one example. In addition, the following case of Ibrahim provides another example.

Ibrahim, a man in his late 30's described to me his desire to find a woman to marry and begin a family. Ibrahim, who did not attend primary school or Qur'anic school as a child, was married once and divorced. For the twelve years since his divorce he tried to keep himself employed so he could save money and remarry. However, he was unable to save money and at times had to rely on other people to provide him with money so he could buy food to eat. The odd jobs he managed to find did not provide him with enough money to remarry and maintain a household.

During the past several years Ibrahim has regularly consulted **malamai** and **bokaye** to assist him in finding a new wife and the financial means to

support a household. **Malamai**, Ibrahim told me, have provided him with **layu** and done **wuridi** for him. **Bokaye** have also provided him with **layu**. Ibrahim explained that he consults both **malamai** and **bokaye** in order to increase the chances of being able to remarry and support a household. Notice that in addition to consulting two types of specialists, he also consulted several of each type of specialist.

Ibrahim's case is interesting in that it is an example of a person who actively employs both **malamai** and **bokaye** simultaneously in an attempt to secure his long term goals. Ibrahim, in addition to consulting **malamai** for **layu** and **wuridi**, also obtained **layu** from several **bokaye** to increase the chances of his gaining the financial means to marry and support a household.

These examples suggest that in cases involving short term concerns, primarily those related to illness, majority Muslims in Zinder seek the services of both **malamai** and **bokaye** in addition to other options. However, when the long term interests of individuals are involved, it is the **malamai** who are generally consulted. All of these examples highlight the concept of individual cosmologies (Landau 1995).

Reformers and Neman Lahiya

The actions of reformers engaged in **neman lahiya** differ significantly from actions taken by majority Muslims. Reformers reject the efficacy of the services provided by the **malamai** and **bokaye**. Reformers told me that when faced with illness or other disruption in life, people should pray to God for a resolution to their problem. They acknowledge that in cases of illness specialists such as those found at the clinics and hospital are able to diagnose and prescribe medicine. Pharmaceutical drugs, whether they are obtained

from a pharmacy or **kemis** are accepted as effective treatments. One reformer I met, for example, makes his living as a **kemis**. Also, they believe that **maganin icce** can be effective in treating illnesses. Such medicines are appropriate for treating problems including headaches, fevers, and stomach ailments. Thus, when reformers are ill they may go to a clinic or hospital, buy medicine from a **kemis** or **mai sai da maganin galgajiya**. In terms of assuring long term success in life, reformers advocate practicing Islam piously and correctly as outlined in Chapter 6.

The Significance of Neman Lahiya for Understanding the Construction of Muslim Identities in Zinder

A theme which has run throughout this and the preceding chapter is that the attitudes of people in Zinder to various forms of knowledge, which can assure both short and long term success in life, are flexible and given to change. As we have seen, a person's attitude toward a given form of knowledge may change based on the situation. Thus, for example, although **bokaye** are labeled "non-Muslims" by the **malamai**, majority Muslims continue to consult **bokaye** in Zinder. In the face of the **malamai**, majority Muslims do not discuss such consultations, but among families and friends it is known that such consultations take place. People's attitudes towards various forms of knowledge are constantly adjusted and fine tuned based on the needs and goals of the individual. Thus, a person may agree with a **malam** one minute that **bokaye** are "non-Muslims" and frauds who should be avoide, only to then accompany an ill nephew to a **boka**.

It is difficult to predict what people engaged in **neman lahiya** will do because individual cosmologies vary; that is, there is great variation in the

actions of majority Muslims. Some people consult the **malamai** first when engaged in **neman lahiya** but will not hesitate to consult other forms of knowledge if the **malamai** cannot help them. Others believe that for certain ailments, such as **cutal iska**, that it is better to consult a **boka** first. It is clear, however, that **malamai** are consulted much more frequently than **bokaye** in assuring long term success in life. **Bokaye**, though, in terms of providing short term solutions, are a viable option which exist alongside the **malamai**.

Summary

An analysis of the actions of people engaged in **neman lahiya** furthers an understanding of how Muslim identities are constructed by showing that people's attitudes toward different forms of knowledge change according to circumstances. Thus, among majority Muslims, a Muslim identity is demonstrated publicly by acknowledging Allah, praying, fasting, giving alms and, when possible, making the pilgrimage to Mecca. Alongside these guidelines, however, one encounters a wide range of actions which reflect what, at times, appear to contradict stated views regarding different forms of knowledge; that is, regarding what, according to the religious authority, Muslims should and should not do. These personal cosmologies are what make it difficult to uncover an organized system.

Chapter 10

CONCLUSIONS

This analysis of Muslim identity construction in Zinder provides a useful vehicle for mediating the opposition represented by objectivist and subjectivist approaches to the study of culture. In this study I have drawn upon practice theory in order to further an understanding of Muslim identity construction in Zinder and thus gain insights into the relationship between structure and practice. Viewing the case of Zinder in the framework of an anthropology of knowledge also advances an understanding of these issues.

The research site for this study was Zinder, a town in the Hausa-speaking region of south-central Niger. By first looking at the history of Islam in Zinder, and considering identity as an historical process, I showed how Islam was the mechanism by which different individuals and groups of people negotiated their position in this community. At the time Zinder was founded, ca. 1812, traditional beliefs and practices played a significant role in many Muslims' lives. In the middle of the nineteenth century Zinder was ruled by a **sarki** who publicly participated in such ceremonies. However, with the increase in the importance of trans-Saharan and regional trade networks, a Muslim identity void of such practices became typical of the upper classes.

This new identity was maintained and reproduced through the efforts of Tanimu who became **sarki** in 1851. With the advice of prominent **malamai** who were members of the Qadiriyya order, Tanimu made Islam the

"official religion" of Damagaram. In addition, there were also respected **malamai** of the Tijaniyya and Sanussiyya orders attempting to influence the actions of the **sarki**. But for most Muslims, however, these orders were of little importance.

Throughout the twentieth century the practice of Islam continued to intensify under the guidance of the **malamai**. During this period the **malamai** criticized "un-Islamic" practices such as **bokanci** and **bori**. By mid-century we saw that representatives of Ibrahim Niasse were living in Zinder attempting to attract followers and influence Islamic practice. A diachronic perspective thus portrays the struggles which have taken place over the institution of Islam, a struggle which continues today.

Today's struggle is occurring in the context of two simultaneous movements; an "Islamic resurgence" led by the **malamai**, and "Islamism" represented by the emergence of an Islamic reform movement. The "Islamic resurgence" in Zinder, which began in the mid-1970s, was likely fueled by President Kountche's efforts to forge a national Islamic identity in Niger. The increase in attention paid to Islamic practice and religious celebration has continued through the 1990s. With the transition to an elected government in 1991, an Islamic reform movement emerged publicly in Zinder and subsequently spread to other regions of Niger. The reformers, who actively criticize the practice of Islam in Zinder, are involved in a struggle over the institution of Islam with the **malamai** and majority Muslims. As I pointed out, and has been the case in northern Nigeria where a similar reform movement developed in the 1960s, majority Muslims in Zinder have closed ranks and set aside any differences they had in order to confront the greater threat posed by the reformers. Today, the **malamai** and majority Muslims

focus their attention on the reformers who have established themselves as a small, yet growing minority in Zinder.

Considering identity in terms of contrasting beliefs and practices within the Muslim community furthers and understanding of the diverse interpretations of what it means to be a Muslim in Zinder. My presentation of ethnographic data on the **malamai**, reformers, **bokaye**, and **yan bori** illustrates this diversity.

Considering identity as a process of naming reveals that in addition to the ideological debates over Islam are underlying social, political, and economic motivations. Analyzing the attitudes majority Muslims hold toward various forms of knowledge, as well as how those who embody these forms of knowledge view one another, shows the continuing struggle over the institution of Islam in Zinder.

Drawing upon case studies, which depicted the actions taken by majority Muslims engaged in **neman lahiya**, we saw the importance of individual cosmologies. As the case studies showed, the actions of majority Muslims engaged in **neman lahiya** varied thus highlighting the lack of an organized system.

An understanding of Muslim identity construction in Zinder provides the medium for addressing the broader concern of the dissertation, which is an attempt to bridge the gap between objectivist and subjectivist perspectives as they relate to the study of cultural phenomena. Using practice theory as a framework for considering this problem, I draw two conclusions. First, following Bourdieu, a consideration of Muslim identity construction in Zinder supports the argument that both objectivist (i.e., structural) and subjectivist (i.e., event-focused) perspectives are necessary for a full

understanding of cultural phenomena. Bourdieu's notion of habitus reflects the role both structure and practice play in the lives of individuals. This model allows for the analysis of individuals' actions in a manner which does not attribute these actions to strict adherence to societal rules, nor does it attribute actions to individuals acting upon self-interest in a conscious manner.

Similarly, Lambek, in formulating an anthropology of knowledge, argues that both structure and practice play a role in understanding culture. In doing this, however, Lambek, following Ricoeur, concludes that although both play a role in the study of culture, it is in looking at what individuals do that we learn the most about culture.

This leads to the second conclusion of this study. A consideration of Muslim identity construction in Zinder supports the assertion that a consideration of what people say and do is where we learn the most about culture. In analyzing the attitudes majority Muslims hold toward various forms of knowledge in Zinder, and the actions of those engaged in **neman lahiya**, we saw the influence society has on individual action; that is, individual's action are to an extent guided by societal expectations. However, as this study shows, individuals also influence society. The diverse interpretations of what it means to be a Muslim in Zinder exist because of individual cosmologies. Mead's concept of self accounts for this negotiable quality of Muslim identity as individuals change the attitudes they hold toward the various forms of knowledge based on the way in which they wish to be perceived by others.

Thus, in studying culture, one need not choose between an objectivist or subjectivist viewpoint; that is, it is not an "either/or" proposition. The

case of Muslim identity construction in Zinder, viewed in the framework of practice theory, supports the contention that both perspectives contribute to an understanding of culture. Hence, we see that while society provides structure for individuals and thus influences their actions, individuals also influence society. This relationship makes explicit the dialectical relationship which exists between structure and practice.

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