

(Taha, 1996, p. 62) Thus, free will is seen as a premise for human rights and democracy. Conversely, he advocates socialism and justice in sharing resources. Ṭāhā also supported pacifism and rejected the assertion that *jihād* (in the sense of a holy war) is foundational in Islam. Likewise, he discarded polygamy, established gender equity, and called for the protection of women's rights in divorce. His final purpose was to remove all boundaries between classes and genders and to achieve absolute social equality. Thus, he has been described as a utopian, liberal, republican, progressive, spiritualist, neo-Şūfī, dissident, and feminist thinker.

Ṭāhā's political and intellectual impact during his life was limited to his followers among students and intellectuals in Sudan. However, after his death, his ideas became widely known and read throughout the Muslim world. His critical interpretation of Islamic law, particularly his criticism of how Sharī'ah is understood and implemented, is a major reason for his popularity. His idea of using Islam as a liberating religion has inspired a number of progressive Muslim intellectuals (such as Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im). His open vision toward non-Muslims also has inspired inter-religious relations based on norms of equal citizenship, and his hermeneutics have influenced critical thinkers such as the Syrian intellectual Muḥammad Shahrour. Ṭāhā's devotion, courage of conviction, and martyrdom are still relevant and challenge Islamist calls to implement Sharī'ah.

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ABDESSAMAD BELHAJ

TAKAFUL. See Islamic Finance.

TAL, 'UMAR IBN SA'İD. (c. 1797–1864), prominent West African writer and Tijānī leader. 'Umar ibn Sa'īd Tal, or al-Ḥājj 'Umar, as he is often called, exerted a profound influence on the spread of Islam and one of the Şūfī orders—the Tijānīyah—across a broad swath of West Africa in the nineteenth century. Through his writings, charisma, and military achievements, as well as through his descendants, he remains a prominent figure for Muslims in Senegal, Guinea, Mali, and other parts of West Africa.

'Umar was born in the late 1790s (1794 and 1797 are most frequently used) in the middle valley of the Senegal River, near the town of Podor. He was the son of a local cleric and teacher in a Muslim society dominated by the Fulbe (Fulani) people, who played a leading role in the spread of Islam across West Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These particular Fulbe often go by the name of Tokolor, which is probably derived from Takrūr, the name that Arab geographers gave to a Muslim state in the middle valley in the eleventh century. The people prefer to call themselves Haal Pulaar, "speakers of Pulaar" or Fulfulde, the language of the Fulbe. In the late eighteenth century, these Haal Pulaar created an Islamic state to which they gave the name Almate (derived from *imām*, the "one who stands in front" and leads in prayer).

'Umar showed a strong aptitude for learning as he pursued a curriculum in the conventional peripatetic pattern. In addition to his studies in Islamic law, theology, and literature, he accepted initiation into the Tijānīyah Şūfī brotherhood, which had begun in Algeria and Morocco in the late eighteenth century, under Aḥmad al-Tijānī. 'Umar then performed the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, a feat that had to be accomplished overland and was extremely rare for West Africans at the time.