The Evolution of the Idaw al-Hajj Commercial Diaspora
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Résumé


Abstract

This article constructs the general outlines of the precolonial history of the Idaw al-Hajj commercial diaspora, a grouping which linked the Black African Wolof states of northwestern Senegal with the Arabo-Berber world of the western Sahara. The Idaw al-Hajj maintained a broad commercial hegemony from the late seventeenth century until the gum boom of early nineteenth century. Over time, the 'White' Idaw al-Hajj of northwestern Senegal fully integrated themselves culturally into the Wolof world. The history of the Idaw al-Hajj demonstrates that the ethnicity identities of both 'White' Arabo-Berbers and 'Black' Wolof were contextual and subject to transformation as a result of changing historical circumstance.
The Evolution of the Idaw al-Hajj Commercial Diaspora

During the precolonial centuries 1600-1850, a commercial diaspora developed along a north-south trade axis which linked northwestern Senegambia with the western Sahara and North Africa. This grouping was known as the Idaw al-Hajj (in Hassaniyya 'the sons of the pilgrim'). Their network at its apex stretched from Wadan—one of the principal commercial towns in the western Sahara—south to the Trarza region in what is today southwestern Mauritania and across the Senegal river into the Wolof kingdoms of Waalo and Kajoor. The Idaw al-Hajj were not the first Saharan immigrants to establish themselves in northwestern Senegambia, but they were the largest and most significant grouping in the precolonial period. This commercial diaspora began to develop in the first half of the seventeenth century, at the beginning of a protracted trend toward increasing aridity which gripped the sahelian and savanna regions of western Africa (Brooks 1986). By the late seventeenth century they had established their dominant influence in the burgeoning gum arabic trade, and by the 1740s they became the key actors articulating the flow of grain from the Wolof states to the Bidan ('Whites') who were pastoral nomads on the northern side of the desert frontier. The Idaw al-Hajj were also participants in the trans-Saharan trade along the coastal corridor which sent Wolof slaves to the Maghrib in exchange for horses to mount the cavalry of the Wolof states (Marty 1919: 284; Webb 1995: 174 fn 55).

Following the French conquest of the lower Senegal river valley in the 1850s, the imposition of colonial authority stauched the flow of Black African slaves north, curtailed the political violence launched from the desert edge by desert warriors, and changed the rules by which the trade in gum arabic took place. The Idaw al-Hajj diaspora lost its singular

1. The author would like to thank David Conrad, Martin Klein, François Manchuelle, Abdel Wedoud Ould Cheikh, and David Robinson for their comments on earlier versions of this essay. A later version was presented at the panel Transformations in Saharan Identities, at the 1993 annual meeting of the African Studies Association in Boston, MA.

authority. Over time, the Idaw al-Hajj communities of northwestern Senegal intermarried with the Wolof and fully integrated themselves culturally into their Black African surroundings. The descendants of Saharan immigrants to Senegal adopted Wolof as their primary language, and by continuing intermarriage they became clearly distinguishable from their Bidan cousins in the Trarza. By the late nineteenth century, this process was so far advanced that these Idaw al-Hajj communities in Senegal would not figure in an ethnographic and geographic survey of northern Senegal; the more recently arrived Dakhalifa would be identified as the sole ‘Moorish tribe’ on the southern bank of the Senegal (Reclus 1884:139). Some of the most important Whites had become Blacks.

This paper draws upon Idaw al-Hajj oral traditions collected in the Trarza and upon the fragmentary documentary evidence which has survived in French and British archives to establish a general outline of the history of the Idaw al-Hajj commercial diaspora.2 It discusses the Idaw al-Hajj traditions of origin and dispersal, the evolution of their commercial network in the context of regional economy and Atlantic trade, and the eclipse of their commercial authority during the first half of the nineteenth century. In addition, this paper provides a corrective to the misleading sketch of the early history of the Idaw al-Hajj which was recorded by the late eighteenth-century French merchant S. M. X. Golberry and repeated by later generations of writers on Senegal.

The Story of Origins and Dispersal

The present-day Idaw al-Hajj accounts of their distant origins trace their genealogical descent from three pilgrims, originally from Hidjaz in Arabia, who are said to have established the town of Wadan in AH 536 (1141/1142 AD).3 At Wadan, over time they are said to have formed a com-

2. I collected Trarza oral traditions concerning the Idaw al-Hajj principally from three individuals. Mokhtar wuld Hamidun (Ulad Dayman) at the time of my interviews in the early 1980s was a research historian at the Institut mauritanien de recherche scientifique in Nouakchott. He had been collecting oral traditions in Mauritanian since the 1940s. He is the author of a multi-volume manuscript work in Arabic on Mauritanian life (Hayât Muritaniya), a few volumes of which are in the process of publication. Muhammad Salim wuld Baggah (Tendgha) was a renowned scholar based in Mederdhra. He was the author of a manuscript on the history of the Trarza emirate (Kitabu tarikhi biladi trarza). Ahmed Baba wuld Shaykh (Idaw al-Hajj) was widely considered to be an authority on the history of the Idaw al-Hajj. These interviews were conducted with the assistance of Muhammad al-Mokhtar wuld al-Mami (Ulad Barikallah) and of Muhammad wuld Muhammad Fall (Tendgha) who translated them into French. The page numbers to the interviews cited refer to their French language transcriptions which are in possession of the author.

3. Other versions of this tradition give the founding date as AH 535 or 542 (OBWALD 1986 324-324a). The year AH 536 was also the one in which Abdul Mumin Ibn Ali, who succeeded the Almohad reformer Ibn Tumart, was able to
munity with the Bafur, and the Tifrilla and Tamguna sub-groups of the Berber Masufa. In later centuries, four additional Sanhadja groups—the Idawbaj and the Lutaydat of the Lamtuna confederation, and the Ulad al-Hajj and the Siyam of the Ansar—are said to have joined the Tifrilla and the Tamguna. Over time these Sanhadja Berber groups and the Bafur groups are said to have formed a community known as the Hajjiin (‘the pilgrims’).

These assertions of a complex genealogical past, ennobled by the association with the original pilgrim fathers, are interesting, in part because they acknowledge the earlier influence of non-Berber and non-Arabic peoples. They suggest that the ethnic identity of the groups which migrated into the Trarza took shape in a Saharan trade community in the Adrar, beyond the direct influence of the Black African empires of Mali and Songhai. And they suggest that there were earlier transformations in ethnic identities along the western sahel before the Arabo-Berber or Bidan ethnicity, characteristic of the period ca 1600 to the present, began to take more definitive shape (Webb 1995).

Desert tradition has nothing to say about the early centuries of the Hajjiin. The story of the seventeenth-century Idaw al-Hajj migrations begins in oral traditions with the outbreak of warfare at Wadan.

‘They spent four centuries in Wadan and then moved on. This movement was due to a war that broke out between Tifrilla and Tamguna. The cause of this war was jealousy—there were two groups of children each belonging to one group or the other. Each had a water source. But in one there was a frog that could sing very beautifully. And since the other group was jealous, they stole the frog and

bring under his control the regions of the High and Middle Atlas which had been strongholds of the Almoravids (Abun-Nasr 1975: 107). For a discussion of the claim to Yemeni origins common among Arabo-Berber peoples of the western Sahara, see Norris 1962.

4. The term Bafur is generic and is generally applied to the pre-Sanhadja inhabitants of the western Sahara. Various ethnic identities have been proposed for the Bafur. H.T. Norris (1972: 139 fn 1), following Raymond Mauny, notes that Bafur (Bafour) is a vague and general term applied to pre-Sanhadja inhabitants of the western Sahara, part Berber, part Negro, part Semite.

5. According to Mokhtar wuld Hamidun, Al-Hajj Yacub was the eponymous ancestor of the Idawaqub of the Idaw al-Haji; and Al-Hajj Ali was the ancestor of the Idawbaj and of the Lutaydat. The Sanhadja groups named Tiris, Tamguna, and Tifrilla were absorbed into the groups which founded Wadan in AH 536. All took the name Idaw al-Hajj (Interview with Mokhtar wuld Hamidun, 6 May 1982, Nouakchott, p. 1). See also Norris 1972: 214-215.

6. The term Hajjiin referred broadly to the people living in the (eastern?) Adrar, designating a regional political affiliation. The Sanhadja and Bafur groups which made up the Hajjiin continued to maintain their various group affiliations. Mokhtar wuld Hamidun has also suggested that the very names Tifrilla and Tamguna are Wolof in origin (Interview with Mokhtar wuld Hamidun . . ., p. 11 [see supra fn 5]). If this is the case, it is likely that the Black African presence in the Adrar was more ethnically varied than has previously been thought.
put it in their water source. This is how the war started between the two groups in the [AH] 10th century.7

Interestingly, the frog sub-theme in the oral account appears to be a motif from the Mande world that survived among the communities of the Adrar, and therefore seems to be additional evidence of the centrality of non-Berber and non-Arab culture to the early communities at Wadan.8

According to oral tradition, those vanquished in the war migrated southwest toward the Gibla (Trarza and Brakna regions of Mauritania). At some later point, groups of the victors also began to drift toward the southwest, seeking better pasturage and more abundant groundwater. Some of these emigrants went to the central Trarza where they intermarried with Berber communities in the area surrounding Tigumatin, the important savanna town which linked the Wolof lands with the western Sahara and the distant Maghrib.9 Trarza oral tradition links the town of Tigumatin with Wadan and Tishit; all three towns are said to have been founded in the same year, and the links between Tigumatin and Wadan are said to have been strong. The Idaw al-Hajj migration is thus represented as taking place from one node of settlement and trade to another in a previously existing commercial network.

According to Trarza tradition, Najib, a man of the Ulad al-Hajj (a subgroup of the Hajjiin at Wadan), was the first Idaw al-Hajj to come to the Trarza.10 The Idaw al-Hajj account establishes the nobility of the early associations: the nucleus of the future Idaw al-Hajj grouping is said to have formed through intermarriage with the Tandgha, one of the five Berber groupings which made up the Tashumsha, the noble grouping of pastoralists in the region before the coming of the Arabs. Indeed, the Black African community in the region of Tigumatin is said to have been similarly ennobled by its descent from an immigrating ancestor, perhaps from Hausaland, by the name of Bubazzul.11 And during the early period of Idaw al-Hajj migration, the links between Wadan, the Trarza, and Senegal are said to have been direct:

7. Interview with Mokhtar wuld Hamidun . . . , p. 1 (see supra fn 5). Mokhtar wuld Hamidun interprets this story to mean that the causes were insignificant. Any number of interpretations might be offered, including one which holds that the story indicates conflict over water rights.
10. Interview with Mokhtar wuld Hamidun . . . , p. 3.
11. Interviews with Ahmad Baba wuld Shaykh, March 1982, Nouakechott, p. 1. The description of Tigumatin as having direct links to the Maghrib is found in other Trarza oral traditions. For a discussion of these trading connections and the significance of the legend of Bubazzul, see Webb 1995: 28-32.
'Najib, the father of the Idaw al-Hajj who lived in the Trarza, arrived 400 or 500 years ago. He had three sons: Wavij, who lived in Senegal with his descendants; Amin, who went north and who went to the Straits of Gibraltar; and also Atfagha Awback, who died at the age of 120. He spent his life in the following manner—forty years in the Trarza; forty years in Senegal; and forty years at Wadan—where he died.'^{12}

These traditions suggest that the expansion of Idaw al-Hajj influence in Waalo and Kajoor was due largely to economic factors, rather than to a deliberate effort to spread Islam.

In the Aftermath of Jihad

In the mid-seventeenth century, Nasir al-Din of the Ulad Dayman, one of the principal Berber groupings in the Gibla, issued a call for Black African riverine and savanna peoples to reform their practice of Islam. This call for reform was taken up by the lower orders of Black African societies and soon constituted a fundamental challenge to the Black African ruling authorities. Dissension along class lines broke out in the Black states. The conflicts were brought to a head when some Berber groupings launched a military campaign against the Black aristocracies (Curtin 1971: 14-18).

According to the eighteenth-century account of Muhammad al-Yadali and to Trarza oral tradition, Ahmad ben al-Amin (Wuld Najib) proposed to Nasir al-Din a military attack against the Blacks. In league with a zwaya ('clerical groups') army, and with the additional enlistment of sixty men from Ujaft, the Idaw al-Hajj stormed south and conquered Jolof, Fuuta, Kajoor, and Waalo, although the success of this jihad was soon reversed. Then the conflict known as Shurbubba broke out between the hassani ('Arab warriors') and the zwaya, and spread throughout the Gibla and Gorgol regions.^{13}

According to Trarza tradition, during the struggle against the hassani, the Idaw al-Hajj at first fought with the zwaya forces. But in the middle

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12. Interview with Ahmad Baba wuld Shaykh . . . p. 11 (see fn 11). The figure of forty years is given to indicate a substantial period of time. In one of Ahmad Baba's recounts of this episode, Atfagha Awback was said to have spent twenty years each in the Trarza, in Senegal, and at Wadan.

A distant echo of this link between the Trarza region and that of Wadan can be found in the comment of the French merchant S.M.X. Golberry who published an account of his experiences in Senegambia in the years 1785, 1786, and 1787, and who asserted (1802: 212): 'L'oasis principale et capitale des Trarshaz [Trarza] paraît porter le nom de Hoden [Wadan].'

13. See Hamet 1911: 164-218, especially 175-176; interview with Ahmad Baba wuld Shaykh . . . p. 15 (see supra fn 11). For an interpretation that argues that the roots of the jihad can be found in a marked climatic trend toward increasing aridity and the emergence of a new pattern of regional economy, see Webb 1995: 32-35.
of this holy war the Idaw al-Hajj withdrew from the fighting and repudiated the war effort. The decision to withdraw from the warfare was significant. The Idaw al-Hajj thereby avoided the ignominy of final defeat in battle. Their renunciation of the use of force against the hassani bolstered their own religious prestige and authority at the same time that it legitimated the dominant position of the hassani.

Following the jihad, toward the end of the seventeenth century, some of the Idaw al-Hajj in the Trarza migrated south, into Waalo and Kajoor. This movement was still continuing toward the end of the eighteenth century. The Idaw al-Hajj now had the confidence of the ruling authorities on both sides of the desert frontier. This allowed for their unimpeded travel through militarized societies as peaceful merchants protected by magic. This movement extended Idaw al-Hajj influence all the way from Wadan through the farming communities of Waalo and Kajoor and into the courts of the Black aristocracies who had had their power reestablished by the military intervention of the desert hassani.

Once established in Wolof lands, the influence of the Idaw al-Hajj...
continued to spread. They attracted large numbers of *talibe* (‘students’) in the villages of Barale, Nder, Mbakoul, Waraq, and Sagha in Waalo. There, the Idaw al-Hajj became the religious advisors of the *lingeer*, the powerful female political figure in the region who was usually the mother or sister of the *brak*, the Wolof ruler of the Waalo. The largest grouping of Idaw al-Hajj settlements, however, was in the region of Njambuur on the border of Kajoor and Waalo. There they settled primarily in the villages of Ngali, Ngoumbelle, Nterbeti-Khadi, Muslaje, Ndakhoumpe, Nkeliman, Gadyel, and later, Wadan, between Louga-Guewel and Kebemer.20

By the late seventeenth century, the Europeans at Saint-Louis knew the ensemble of the Idaw al-Hajj in the Trarza, Kajoor, and Waalo by their Wolof name, the Darmankour.21 The origin of the term is unknown, but it is suggested to have meant ‘they have incorporated (or encompassed) everybody’.22 By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century the Idaw al-Hajj communities, both in the Trarza and in Njambuur, had established a trans-ethnic identity. Unlike the other

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20 Interviews with Ahmad Baba wuld Shaykh ... pp. 10-11; with Mokhtar wuld Hamidun, 17 Dec. 1980, Nouakchott, p. 2; GADEN 1912: 201-202. MARTY (1919: 268) lists the important villages as Ouasane (Wadan?), keur Bati Mqalil (Ngali), and Khadié (Nterbeti-Khadi). The town of Wadan in Njambuur was founded about 1827 (FLIZE 1857: 392). See also OULD AHMEDOU 1985-86: 9-10.

21 According to Mokhtar wuld Hamidun (p. 2, see supra fn 20), the meaning of the terms referring to the Idaw al-Hajj groupings varies according to the following usage. The term Darmankour is sometimes restricted to refer only to the Idaw al-Hajj settlements in Senegal. Other terminology for these groups is as follows. The descendants of Al-Wavij wuld Najib in Senegal are known collectively by their Wolof name Sugufara. Sometimes the meaning of the term Sugufara is expanded to include all Idaw al-Hajj in Senegal. The sub-divisions of the Darmankour/Sugufara are called Goumbella (which is said to be derived from the Berber group name Tamguna), Ndakhoumpe, Sadi, Teftel, Tandina, Hamar, Sabara, and Touéré. The names Sugufara and Ndakhoumpe are said to be Wolof in origin. Sadi, Teftel, Tandina, and Hamar are remembered as the names of groups which constituted the original grouping of the Idaw al-Hajj at Wadan. The name Darmankour was also rendered as Darmancour, Darmakour, d’Armanckour, d’Armancouir, Darmancourt, or Darmanko by the Europeans.

22 MARTY (1919: 259) suggested that the term ‘Dar mankou’ meant to join together (‘faire union’).
zwaya trading networks which operated from the western Sahara—the Kunta for example, or the Idaw Ali—the Idaw al-Hajj commercial networks in the savanna were permanent rather than seasonal. The Idaw al-Hajj did not serve as brokers for savanna merchants, but operated in the savanna states themselves as a cross-cultural community that bridged the worlds of the desert and savanna, the worlds of black and white Africa. And in the Atlantic sector trade, the Idaw al-Hajj dealt effectively with the Europeans and Afro-Europeans at Saint-Louis, who made up a parallel cross-cultural community, although this one was based on the integration of European and Black African cultures and showed little or no influence from the Arabo-Berber world of the desert.

This far-flung diaspora which stretched from Wadan to Kajoors contained communities in which the maintenance of Idaw al-Hajj identity had rather different meanings and involved radically different rules of marriage. At Wadan, for example, it is said to have been common for Idaw al-Hajj women to marry Kunta men and for Idaw al-Hajj men to marry Kunta women (this was likely an effort at dampening political conflict between the two groups). But to the southwest in the sahel this apparently was not the case. Fragmentary evidence suggests that in the Trarza the special politico-economic-religious position of the Idaw al-Hajj both in relation to the Ulad Ahmad ben Daman (the Trarza emirai grouping) and the cross-cultural Afro-European community at Saint-Louis was defended through rigorous restrictions on exogamous marriage. It is said, for example, that the Idaw al-Hajj used to chain up members of the qabila (‘tribe’) who dared to marry outside the confines of kin.23

The Diaspora in Place: The Idaw al-Hajj and Regional Commerce

In the post-jihad period the Idaw al-Hajj drew upon their religious and commercial ties with the Wolof, their commercial relations with the Europeans at Saint-Louis, and their special relationship with the Ulad Ahmad ben Daman, the Trarza emirai grouping, to build a maraboutic center of power in the Trarza and in Waalo. The growth of their prestige and authority in the post-jihad period was contingent upon the increase in political and military power on the part of the Trarza emirate in relation to Waalo and Kajoors, in part as a result of the climatological trend toward...

23. Trarza Idaw al-Hajj tradition stresses the fact that Idaw al-Hajj did not marry outside the qabila: ‘In the old days, the Idaw al-Hajj only married among themselves. If a man married outside of his tribe he was bound up with iron chains. It wasn’t until recently that the Idaw al-Hajj started to marry outside of the tribe. This situation is rare today. The Idaw al-Hajj were always limiting themselves when it came to marriage’ (Interview with Ahmad Baba wuld Shaykh . . . p. 11, see supra fn 11).
increasing aridity, and the rising fortunes of the export trade in gum arabic.

The fragments of oral data and tradition touching on the Idaw al-Hajj / Ulad Ahmad ben Daman relationship give some indication of the role of the Idaw al-Hajj in the politics of the Gibla. In the early period of the Idaw al-Hajj influence, the Idaw al-Hajj are said to have been the marabouts of the Ulad Ahmad ben Daman and the emiral family is said to have sought their advice and counsel regularly. The jamaa (‘council’) of each of the two groups convened jointly to choose from among the Idaw al-Hajj an alim (‘religious guide’) who made religious decisions for the wider region.\(^{24}\) The camp of the alim is said to have been the largest of the Idaw al-Hajj camps. In it was a large school composed of many buildings, and students from all corners came there to study.\(^{25}\) This assertion finds some indirect support in a late seventeenth-century French map that prominently depicts a ‘case de Chamchy [shamsh] grand Mufty’.\(^ {26}\)

The internal political organization of the Trarza Idaw al-Hajj was different from that of the other zwaya groups in the western Sahara. It had a single politico-commercial head who was known as the shamsh.\(^ {27}\) This title was likely derived from the name Shams al-Din (lit. ‘beacon of the faith’) which had been the name of an ancestor of the Idaw al-Hajj in the period before the migration to the Trarza. The date of the first exercise of this position of authority is not known. The earliest European notice of this title dates from 1686 when La Courbe recorded his voyage to Lake Kajoor (La Courbe 1913: 127), and this suggests that the creation of this titular authority postdated the jihad of Nasir al-Din.

In the aftermath of the jihad, elite Wolof, Bidan, and Afro-European participants in regional and international trade acknowledged the explicitly non-violent nature of the Idaw al-Hajj’s politico-commercial contract with the Trarza emirate, and all three groups tended to look favorably upon their commercial activities. For the Wolof political authorities, the desert marabouts were useful because they handled the trade from the

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\(^{24}\) In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the Idaw al-Hajj were sometimes referred to by the French as the ‘Auladelins’ (Labai 1728, I: 196). This appellation was probably derived from the Hassaniya term Ulad Alim. Philip Curtin (1975, I: 133 fn 13) notes that the eighteenth century French sometimes referred to the Darmankour as the Aladali. This appellation appears to have been derived as well from Ulad Alim or possibly from Ulad al-Hajji.

\(^{25}\) Interviews with Ahmad Baba wuld Shaykh . . . . pp. 9 and 12, see supra fn 11.

\(^{26}\) An anonymous map (ca 1697) held at the Bibliothèque nationale (Paris) entitled Carte de la Coste d’Afrique depuis le cap blanc jusques a la Riviere de Gambie, presenté a Mon.‘ De Pontchartrain, ministre et secret.‘ – destat, contr.‘ general des finances.

\(^{27}\) This title was also variously rendered as Chamchi, Chamchy, Chems, Chemchi, Chemchy, Sems, Sehems, or Shams by the Europeans.
coastal salt deposits. The patterns of exchange of goods and services which made up this internal trade in good measure involved the exchange of livestock and salt for grain and cloth. According to Trarza oral tradition, in the internal trade in Waalo and Kajoor, the Idaw al-Hajj enjoyed special consideration. The damel (‘ruler’) of Kajoor is said to have appropriated a part of other caravaners’ goods by threat of force, but the prestige of the Idaw al-Hajj is said to have protected their caravans in the north-south salt and livestock trade.

In the Atlantic sector, the Idaw al-Hajj were the principal merchants who handled the slave trade from the Wolof kingdoms to the Afro-European and European merchants at Saint-Louis du Sénégal as well as the trade north into the desert and beyond to North Africa. Few particulars of this aspect of Idaw al-Hajj commerce found their way into the historical record, although the behavior of the Idaw al-Hajj toward the Europeans earned them a general reputation in European circles as the most reliable of the “Moors.”

In the Aftermath of the British Conquest of Saint-Louis (1758)

In 1758 the British conquered Saint-Louis du Sénégal. The change in European control opened up new opportunities for the Afro-European community at Saint-Louis, and over time this community began to expand.

In the years immediately following the British conquest, a significant shift in sahelian political relations also took place. According to Trarza oral tradition, following the military intervention of Trarza hassani in the internal politics of Kajoor about 1760, the Trarza emiral grouping received the right to pillage at will within Kajoor for a period of one month per year (Webb 1995: 41). Incursions of Trarza hassani into Kajoor and Waalo from 1760 onwards disrupted the larger social and political world of which the Darmankour of Senegal had become so integrally a part. The Idaw al-Hajj diaspora was dislocated, although little

28. The earliest detailed mention of these coastal salt deposits appears in Ogilby (1670: 346): ‘Between Beyhourt, and the French Fort, the whole ground in the bottom of the river Zenaga, is grown over with Salt, which they break up in great pieces with Irons, and dry it on the Land: thus dried, it grows very white; and which is more, that if it all be taken up in one day, the next will afford the like quantity; so that it is a perpetual Store-house of that necessary Commodity; nor are the quantities small, but sufficient to serve the whole Country, whereinto it is carried upon camels. The Profit arising thereby, the king of Cayor hath bestowed on his Priests; who for a Last of it, which is a Camels Load, take a Cape de Verde Garment, and a Tub full of Mille.’

29. Interviews with Ahmad Baba wuld Shaykh . . . . p. 8 (see supra fn 11). During the reigns of the last damels, Baba Jakhumpa, a member of the influential Ahl Hamdi faction of the Idaw al-Hajj in Senegal, was the marabout and Islamic counsellor of the last damels of Kajoor (Marti 1919: 265-266, 268).
detail about these events has survived in European records from this period.

What appears to have happened is that some of the Idaw al-Hajj along the Trarza-Kajoor segment of the diaspora moved east to the Brakna, joined forces with the principal zwaya group in that region, and participated actively in the export gum arabic trade there. Oral data from the Trarza indicate that one sub-grouping originally of the Trarza-Kajoor Idaw al-Hajj merged with the Idjejeba, a zwaya grouping in the Brakna region. The timing of this movement is problematic. The French historian, ethnographer, and administrator Paul Marty (1919: 262) suggested early in the twentieth century that the Idaw al-Hajj might have moved from the Trarza to the Brakna in the 1760s, returning to the Trarza by 1784, but he did not specify the sources which led him to this interpretation. The archival series which contain fragments of information about the Idaw al-Hajj do not mention such a return movement. Neither does the body of desert oral tradition.

The temporary and partial disruption of the Trarza-Kajoor segment of the diaspora and the subsequent establishment of Idaw al-Hajj influence in the Brakna region would help to explain the fictive lineage history transcribed by Golberry in his memoir of his years in Senegal during the mid-1780s. In a long passage (only the relevant parts of which are excerpted below) Golberry asserted a radically different lineage history of the Idaw al-Hajj which linked them with the Brakna hassani:32

'Suivant les traditions accrédités parmi les Maures des contrées méridionales du Zaarha, et conservées de générations en générations par les Marabouts qui sont leurs prêtres, la tribu des Brachknaz, et celle des Ouled-El-Haghi en formaient autrefois qu'une seule [...]. Cette tradition est généralement reçue parmi les Maures et les Nègres des bords du Sénégal, et on ne la révoque pas en doute. Ce qui est certain, c'est que les Darmanko ont pour les Brachknaz un attachement et une déférence qui ne sont jamais démentis [...] que dans toutes les circonstances les intérêts de ces deux tribus sont toujours réunis ...'33

31. Marty mentions a text by Lajaille to indicate that the Idaw al-Hajj were back in the Trarza by 1784. Pierre Labarthe's text (1802) does not mention such a movement. Neither does the 1784 text by M. de la Jaille stored in French archives (Archives nationales, Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence [henceforth AN-CAOM], Dépôt des fortifications des colonies [henceforth DFC], Sénégal et dépendances, carton 82, no 82. Côtes d’Afrique. Traite des noirs. M. de la Jaille, 2 juin 1784).
32. The contemporary oral account is consistent with the sketch of history which mentions briefly the immigration of Najib to the Trarza that appears in the shamshe letter to the French King in 1819. See 'Lettre de Schems Mohamed Karabat à Louis 18 (1819)', AN-CAOM, Sénégal et Dépendances IV, Dossier 16g.
33. Golberry 1802, I: 220-223: 'According to the received traditions of the Moors of the southern regions of the Sahara, and conserved from one generation to the next by Marabouts who are their priests, the Brakna tribe and that of the Ulad
Golberry's account is interesting because it underscores the speed with which lineage histories could be fabricated as needed to legitimate new political alliances, and it highlights the fact that a sub-grouping of the Trarza-based Idaw al-Hajj did indeed transfer its allegiance to the Brakna emirate in the years following the British conquest of Senegal. Yet it is also clear from other European documentation that the Idaw al-Hajj dominance of trade in the corridor linking Kajoor and Waalo with the Gibla continued. This appears most obviously in the records concerning the gum trade that extended from Portendick, on the Atlantic coast of the western Sahara, down to the Cap Vert peninsula.

When Goreé was restored to French control by the peace of 1763, the Idaw al-Hajj endeavored to open up an overland gum route that would pass through Kajoor to allow desert gum caravans to trade with the French. The initiative was successful to the extent that a gum comptoir was opened up along the mid-Senegambian coast, seemingly at the site of the present-day city of Dakar. But apparently little gum flowed south.\(^{34}\) In part, this may have been because the French at Goreé were of several minds about how best to pursue the gum trade. In 1773, for example, Abbé Demanet departed from Goreé to trade for gum arabic at Portendick. There, in addition to loading some 500 tons of gum largely in exchange for bills of credit that were accepted by the Idaw al-Hajj chief on the spot, he indicated that Governor Boniface of Goreé would agree to set up a new trading post at Dakar or at Rufisque if the gum caravans showed up in sufficient number.\(^{35}\) This initiative seems to have been botched, owing to the inexperience in negotiations with the desert traders...
manifested by M. Dubon, the new director of the Compagnie de la Guyane.36

The Darmankour decision to extend credit to the French at Portendick proved disastrous. The debt was never repaid in full and the Darmankour chief, Mazamba Jakhumpa, was forced to flee to a neighboring state (this was likely the proximate cause of the Idaw al-Hajj movement to the Brakna). And the Darmakour trade axis between Kajoor and the Trarza probably suffered additional vicissitudes as a result of the large-scale raids into Waalo by the Trarza hassani in 1775 which left the kingdom of Waalo devastated. In any case, by the 1780s, the regional authority of the Idaw al-Hajj had been temporarily circumscribed by a combination of events that included the shift in power relations between the Trarza emirate and the Wolof kingdoms of Waalo and Kajoor and the fall-out from the disastrous decision to accept bills of credit from the French. And the northernmost sector of their commercial diaspora was additionally troubled. The rise to dominant influence of the Kunta in the 1760s at Wadan meant diminished authority for the Idaw al-Hajj there.

By all events, by the late eighteenth century, the Idaw al-Hajj in the Gibla were forced to enter into a new period of accommodation with the Trarza emiral grouping. As a French merchant observed (Lamiral 1789: 85):

‘Les Maraboux, Darmankous, sont les plus proches du Sénégal, & entièrement voués au commerce; c'est eux seuls qui traitoient avec nous autrefois. Mais comme ils ne sont rien moins que guerriers, qu'ils sont plus timides que des femmes, & qu'ils n'ont d'autres armes que leurs chapelets, ils se sont laissés dépouiller de presque tous les avantages du commerce par les Trazzas qui sont belliqueux et entreprenants. Cependant comme ces peuples sont très superstitionnaires, ils n'ont pas voulu tout envahir, parce qu'ils craignent l'effet de prières & des malédictions de ces Maraboux; mais ils les ont relégués dans un petit coin, & semblent ne leur plus rien laisser que par commissération. Cela ne diminue pourtant en rien le respect profond qu'ils ont pour eux en matière de religion.’37

36 ‘Lettre de M. Armeny de Paradis à Gorée, 23 juin 1778’, ANF C6 17.
37 ‘The Darmankour marabouts are the closest to Senegal and are entirely devoted to commerce; they alone used to trade with us in earlier times. But because they are in no way warriors, and because they are more timid than women, and because they have no weapons other than their prayer beads, they have let themselves be stripped of nearly all their commercial advantages by the Trarza, who are belligerent and self-serving. Nevertheless, because these people are very superstitious, they [the Trarzas] did not want to take everything away because they were wary of the prayers and curses of these Marabouts; but they have relegated them to a small corner and seem to accord little to them except by way of commissération. This in no way diminishes the profound respect that they have for them in matters of religion.’ A similar view was expressed by a French administrative official: ‘Les autres maures ont une singulière vénération pour ceux-ci [the Darmankours]; ils craignent autant leur prières que nous redoutions autrefois les foudres du Vatican, à l’exception des brigands des environs de Portendic qui se sont affranchis de ces préjugés’ (M. Eyries,
Yet this loss of authority was only relative. The Idaw al-Hajj remained the most influential commercial diaspora in the regional trade between sahelian, riverine, and savanna zones, and they maintained their commercial relations with North Africa, sending a yearly caravan north to Marrakish. According to a document from 1783, the Idaw al-Hajj used the route north along the Atlantic coast to Wad Nun (Webb 1995: 88 fn 55), apparently in preference to what was the more frequented route through the Adrar, probably because of the loss of Idaw al-Hajj influence to the Kunta at Wadan.

Although surviving records are few for the period 1790-1818, it appears that the decline of the Atlantic slave trade from Senegambia weakened the linkage between the Idaw al-Hajj communities in Njambuur and Waalo and those in the Trarza at the same time that the rapid expansion in gum exports drew more and more desert zwaya into the gum trade. The Idaw al-Hajj communities on either side of the Senegal river began to take on different characteristics. At least by 1820, the Europeans at Saint-Louis began to differentiate between the two. As the French Governor of Senegal noted:

"Les Maures du Sénégal diffèrent beaucoup d’eux sous le rapport de l’aptitude au trafic; le leur n’est pas borné à celui de la Gomme; ils parcourent tous les états nègres situés entre le Sénégal et la Gambie, et se sont rendus les arbitres du commerce dans tous ces pays. Il paraît même constant que malgré l’abolition de la traite des nègres, leurs spéculations ont continué à s’étendre en se portant sur d’autres objets."

38. ‘The Moors of Senegal are quite different [from those of the northern bank of the Senegal] with regard to their commercial aptitude. They are not limited to the gum trade; they travel throughout all the Black African states between the Senegal and Gambia rivers, and handle the commerce in all these countries. This activity seems constant despite the abolition of the slave trade, as they have expanded into other trades’ (Le Gouverneur au Ministre, Bureau d’Administration, 26 mars 1820, ANS 2 B 5).

The Heyday of the River Trade in Gum Arabic

Over time, the desiccation of the western sahel meant that the locus of the principal gum markets shifted to the south. The gum arabic trade of the first half of the eighteenth century had been exported in good measure from points along the Atlantic coast. But as the coastal markets at Arguin and even at Portendick became more treacherous owing to the increasing aridity which jeopardized animal transport, the gum trade became concentrated on the Senegal river. With the growing demand
for gum arabic in European markets, sharply rising prices were communicated to the desert harvesters, and the gum trade spread through the Gibla (Webb 1995: 114).

The gum trade had nearly doubled from approximately 500-600 tons per annum in the mid eighteenth century (with wide interannual variation) to approximately 1,000 tons per annum by the 1780s. And then following the French reoccupation of Saint-Louis in 1816, a gum boom began to unfold that transformed the political economy of the lower Senegal. Gum exports doubled again by the 1830s to 2,000 tons per annum (ibid.: 99-100).

During the gum boom from the 1820s to the 1840s, as more and more zwaya entered the gum trade, the Idaw al-Hajj of the Trarza relinquished a part of their commercial monopoly. The Trarza emir established his own river gum market where emiral authorities collected tax revenues directly from the gum merchants a mere kilometer or two from that of the Idaw al-Hajj, and through the heyday of the nineteenth-century gum trade, the emir increased his authority throughout the Trarza. The augmentation of Trarza emiral power slowly worked to circumscribe Idaw al-Hajj influence in the river trade. As early as the mid 1840s, Anne Raffenel (1846: 330) could describe the Idaw al-Hajj as merely occupying a small enclave within the Trarza territory. Yet, although their commercial authority along the river was diminished, vestiges of their influence remained. The Idaw al-Hajj still set the prices for gum at the Trarza markets on the Senegal river and along the Atlantic coast, and they effectively determined the price of gum at the Brakna market as well.

European records during the heyday of the gum trade are much more detailed than those of earlier periods. During the emirship of Muhammad al-Habib (1827-1860), both the shamsh and Trarza emir exercised authority in their respective spheres, and they had what amounted to a pact of mutual defense. The Trarza emir, by virtue of the military forces he could call into action, was able to help secure safe passage and hospitality for the trading marabouts within the region of the lower Senegal river valley. And through their travels, the merchant clerics provided political information to the emir. The shamsh himself was something of a minister of foreign affairs during the emirship of Muhammad al-Habib, often acting as an intermediary between the emir and the French at Saint-

39. ‘Lettre de Schems Mohamed Karabat à Louis 18 (1819)’, AN-CAOM, Sénégal et Dépendances IV, Dossier 16g: CAILÉ 1851.
40. Along the north bank of the Senegal river and up into the desert along the major gum routes, desert brokers dispersed, looking for caravanners whom they could conduct down to the river to a client ready to purchase the gum. The French called these brokers ‘maîtres de langue’ because they spoke Hassaniyya and understood the Wolof, Pulaar, and French which was used in the river trade. The Ulad Banyuk were the premier brokerage group, and they were identified strongly with the Idaw al-Hajj (Interviews with Ahmad Baba wuld Shaykh . . ., p. 12; see supra fn 11).
Louis. In these years when open hostilities broke out between the French and the Trarza, the non-violent commercial contract of the Idaw al-Hajj lent the Shamsh immunity from physical intimidation, and he was generally able to move with impunity between the parties in conflict.  

The Idaw al-Hajj continued to enjoy special perquisites which were recognized by the European and Afro-European community at Saint-Louis. The Idaw al-Hajj received the same tax on gum traded at Saint-Louis as did the emirs of the Trarza and the Brakna. But as the emir of the Trarza began successfully to interpose his authority to that of the Idaw al-Hajj, less gum flowed to their escale and thus their revenues declined. In June of 1841, the Shamsh Ahmad Mawlud, seeking relief, wrote the Governor of Saint-Louis to request a new site for the Idaw al-Hajj escale. As their influence vis-à-vis the Trarza diminished, so did their influence with the Afro-European commercial diaspora at Saint-Louis. In 1847, in a major concession, the Darmankour agreed to accept taxes on the volume of gum traded rather than on the tonnage of the boats. This meant that revenue payments would be sharply lower in years of low volume trade. By the end of the Franco-Trarza war (1854-58), the Idaw al-Hajj had lost almost entirely their privileged position in the gum trade. Article 9 of the Franco-Trarza peace treaty of 1858 stipulated that the Darmankour would take their gum to Dagana and that

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41. By the 1830s, the French archives provide some evidence that the Idaw al-Hajj were severely compromised and practiced some dissimulation in this posture of non-violence. At least occasionally, the Idaw al-Hajj lent shelter and refuge to bands of warriors in between the warriors’ attacks on the Waalo and extended goods, arms, gunpowder, and food to the Trarza emirai groupings when the French attempted to cut off the flow of customary taxes to the emiral family (see for example, ‘M. le Gouverneur à M. le Ministre, 14 juin 1828’, ANS 2 B 12). But even in turbulent times, the Idaw al-Hajj emissaries provided a vehicle through which the hostile parties could try to negotiate an end to the hostilities. For a chronological listing of raids and disturbances in the lower Senegal river valley at this time, see Note concernant les démêlés qui ont existé entre la colonie du Sénégal et Amar ouldou Mokhtar, Roi des maures Trarzas, depuis 1819 jusqu’en 1828, AN-CAOM Sénégal IV, 16e. The Shamsh was present to assist with the negotiations between the French and the Trarzas in 1829; see Relation des Palabres qui ont eu lieu pour la Paix avec les Trarzas, en mars 1829, AN-CAOM Sénégal IV, 16e. According to Paul Marty (1919: 108-109), after the marriage of Muhammad al-Habib to the lingeer of Waalo, the French tried to rein in the Trarza by making treaties with the Idaw al-Hajj. In a treaty of 13 August 1842, the French tried to suppress the political violence carried out in Kajoor by the Whites by getting the Idaw al-Hajj to agree to send representatives to the French at Saint-Louis in case of litigation with the Wolof or of interviews with the damel.


43. ‘Lettre de Chems Ahmed Merloud a M. le Gouverneur, juin 1841’, AN-CAOM, Sénégal IV, dossier 19h.

44. ‘Traité conclu entre Chems, chef des Marmankours [sic], et Monsieur le comte de Bourdon de Gramont, chevalier de la Légion d’honneur, Gouverneur du Sénégal et Dependances, 1e mars 1847’, AN-CAOM, Sénégal XIII, dossier 26.
customs taxes on it would be paid to the Trarza emir. Only if Darmankour gum was transported to Saint-Louis would the customs tax be paid to the shamsih.\textsuperscript{45} The era of Idaw al-Hajj commercial hegemony was drawing to a close.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the Idaw al-Hajj in the Trarza continued to be regarded as possessing special spiritual prestige.\textsuperscript{46} But with the rise to influence at Butilimit of Shaykh Sidiya al-Kabir of the Ulad Ibiri, a new center of zwaya power emerged in the Trarza, in the northeast (Stewart 1973). A definitive shift in the balance of zwaya authority took place in the early twentieth century at the moment of French colonial incursion into the western Sahara.\textsuperscript{47} During the French pacification of the desert, the hassani suffered defeat and never fully regained their regional authority. The prestige of the Trarza Idaw al-Hajj, so closely connected to that of the Ulad Ahmad ben Daman by the turn of the twentieth century, declined, as other zwaya groups gained greater influence.

In Njambuur and Waalo, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the settled Darmankour were becoming known as the Sugufara and were becoming Black. They continued to exercise a diffuse localized political and spiritual authority into the twentieth century. Meanwhile the expansion of the peanut export economy of the lower Senegal opened up new

\textsuperscript{45} Conseil d'Administration. Séance du 30 juin 1864, Extrait n° 1’. AN-CAOM, Sénégal IV, dossier 45.

\textsuperscript{46} But even in the years of declining influence in the gum trade, the political and spiritual influence of the Idaw al-Hajj remained tangible. One of the great spiritual guides of the Idaw al-Hajj, Baba wuld Muhammadhin wuld Hamdi, in particular, played a singular role in the affairs of the Trarza emiral family, after the death of Muhammad al-Habib in 1860. His personal authority is said to have been so strong that he was able to offer refuge to feuding members of the emiral family, to reverse the decisions that had been taken by the emir, and even to cause one emir to be replaced by another. According to oral tradition, there was even a Trarza emir who said, 'I am not the emir. The emir is Baba wuld Muhammadhin wuld Hamdi'. Two other groups are said to have had influence with the emiral family: the Ahl Mutali (Tandgha) and the Ahl Muhand Baba wuld Abayd (Ulud Dayman) (Interview with Mokhtar wuld Hamidun, 27 Apr. 1982, Nouakchott, p. 5). For details about the social organization of the larger Idaw al-Hajj grouping in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Marty 1919: 262-271.

\textsuperscript{47} According to Idaw al-Hajj tradition, the French went first to see Muhammad Aghrabat, the shamsih of the Idaw al-Hajj, to ask him if he would lend his authority to guarantee the security of the French military commander, Coppolani, in the desert. The shamsih refused. He said that the Bidan could well profit by trading with the French, but that the installation of the French in the desert would bring dishonor to Islam. The shamsih then wrote a letter to the chiefs of the other tribes encouraging them to resist the French. It was only when the French saw that he was firm in his resolve that they went to see Shaykh Sidiya Baba wuld Shaykh Sidiya Muhammad of the Ulad Ibiri. Shaykh Sidiya showed the French the letter written by the shamsih, and then he himself wrote a letter to the other tribes arguing for the acceptance of the French military initiative, holding that the desert was at war and that the French would bring peace (Interviews with Ahmad Baba wuld Shaykh . . . , p. 13, see supra fn 11).
commercial opportunities for Trarza zwaya who with transport animals could move the legumes to markets along the new colonial railroad through Kajoor. Many zwaya groups were drawn to meet this market demand. Here were the beginnings of the large scale immigration of desert merchants into Senegal that would play such an important role in the political economy of the region in the twentieth century.

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The oral traditions of the Idaw al-Hajj, in combination with fragments of information which have survived in European archives, allow for the construction of a broad outline of the history of the expansion and decline of the Idaw al-Hajj commercial diaspora. This outline is at variance with the thumbnail sketch of Idaw al-Hajj history which was published by Golberry in 1802 and repeated by various writers on Senegal down to the present day. The Golberry text recounts a lineage history fabricated by a sub-group of the Idaw al-Hajj who were forced by dint of economic and political circumstances to flee the Trarza-Kajoor segment of their trade axis in the second half of the eighteenth century, to establish themselves in the Brakna, and to legitimate their new allegiances through a lineage idiom.

Even accounting for the period of disruption in the late eighteenth century, it is clear that the Idaw al-Hajj maintained a broad commercial hegemony for a period of approximately one hundred and fifty years, from the late seventeenth century into the first half of the nineteenth century. During the gum arabic boom, in the 1830s and 1840s, the Idaw al-Hajj lost their singular trade position in the lower Senegal river valley. After the imposition of colonial rule in the 1850s, the Idaw al-Hajj communities in northwestern Senegal came to identify themselves as Wolof, while those to the north of the Senegal river maintained their Bidan ethnicity.

Historians have long recognized that the ethnic identities of Black African groups were contextual and subject to transformation as a result of changing historical circumstance. The history of the Idaw al-Hajj demonstrates that this was also true across the desert frontier between the cultural worlds of sahelian pastoral nomads and Wolof sedentary agricultural peoples, between ‘White’ Arabo-Berbers and ‘Black’ sub-Saharan Africans.

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ABSTRACT

This article constructs the general outlines of the precolonial history of the Idaw al-Hajj commercial diaspora, a grouping which linked the Black African Wolof states of northwestern Senegal with the Arabo-Berber world of the western Sahara. The Idaw al-Hajj maintained a broad commercial hegemony from the late seventeenth century until the gum boom of early nineteenth century. Over time, the ‘White’ Idaw al-Hajj of northwestern Senegal fully integrated themselves culturally into the Wolof world. The history of the Idaw al-Hajj demonstrates that the ethnic identities of both ‘White’ Arabo-Berbers and ‘Black’ Wolof were contextual and subject to transformation as a result of changing historical circumstance.

SUMMARY


Key Words/Mots clés: Mauritania/Mauritanie, Senegal/Sénégal, trading diaspora/diaspora marchande, migration/migration, ethnic and racial identity/identité ethnique et raciale, Wolof/Wolof, Moor/Maure, White/Blanc, Black/Noir.