

SOKOTO JIHADIST WRITINGS AS A BLUE PRINT TOWARDS SOCIO-RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA**BY****Tambari Sidi Yusuf: Department of Islamic Studies, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto;
E-mail: tambarisidi@gmail.com****Dr. Tukur Abubakar: Department of Arabic Language, Shehu Shagari College of Education,
Sokoto; E-mail: abubakartukur9@gmail.com****&****Aisha Abubakar Tsoho: College of Legal and Islamic Studies, Sokoto;
E-mail: aishaabubakartsoho@gmail.com****Abstract**

This paper aimed at exploring the Sokoto Jihadist writings as a blue print towards Socio-Religious transformation in northern Nigeria. The paper highlighted the level of intellectual and scholarly rejuvenation that characterized the nineteenth century Muslim regions of Nigeria culminated into the thriving rational awakening which consequently contributed to the emergence of Muslim scholars and researchers who ventured into general studies in different aspects of knowledge. The nature character and relevance of Sokoto Caliphate writings was theoretically addressed by scholars in the 19th century thereby trying to reposition and reshape the mental, intellectual and spiritual threads and fabrics of the Muslims about the importance and necessity for the study of the subject among the Muslims. On the other hand, this paper tried intellectually to set a phase and redefine borders and frontiers in the development of Sokoto Caliphate writings by fundamentally codifying and documenting thematically different fields of studies in order to encourage students and researches to study the area as a normal discipline in the curriculum and learning methods in the region.

Keywords: Sokoto, Jihadist, Writings, Blue print, Socio-Religious, and Transformation

Introduction

The period of the nineteenth century and its intellectual and academic attainments signified an accomplishment and crowning of all the scholarly and educational tradition that had existed for centuries in the northern region of Nigeria. It was a century considered as the melting point of both foreign and home-based intellectual legacies. The scholars of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries left behind their works which served as first hand information to the nineteenth century scholars. The same as they remained aware of those materials produced in other parts of the Muslim world, so they were with the books produced in Sokoto Caliphate over the centuries.

The triumvirates (Shehu Usmanu bin Fodiyo, Abdullahi bin Fodiyo and Muhammad Bello bin Shehu Usmanu Son) maintained that the main source of their educational development and attainment was the extended Islamic tradition of scholarship and a combination of local and international intellectual output. That was why Shehu Danfodiyo considered their works as part of the inherited treasures of the *Ummah* and not an isolated or invented norms.

Shehu Danfodiyo said: *All our works are explanation of what had been generally treated in works of previous scholars. The works of previous scholars are explanations of what was generally treated in the Book (Qur'an) and Sunnah.*" The caliber of jihadist's writings of the Sokoto caliphate tradition was indeed of highest repute that could be found in any society. They had the conviction that Islam is inseparable with knowledge; and that writings and spirituality were intertwined and aimed at bringing people closer to God and ensuring them comfort and happiness in both this world and the next.

The nineteenth century Northern Nigeria was indeed a historic time of intellectual revolution, which transformed the region as one of the greatest citadels of learning in the world. The book and literary

achievements were holistic and provided the newly established *Ummah* with all it required academically and intellectually.

According to Smith:

The academic ideals, the tradition of learning which the mujahidun sought to follow and develop were not, of course something, which they invented themselves. They were the time-honored ideals and traditions of scholarship, which had formed the basis of intellectual endeavor in the Islamic world for centuries: traditions and ideals which the ancient universities of the Islamic world had been founded to preserve...the Islamic idea of knowledge is universalist in nature embracing knowledge of God and his creation including knowledge of anything to be found in the universe (emphasis added)."

In this regard, Ismail noted that:

In the literature (produced in the 19th century Nigeria) there is everything, the poetry, the prose, the fiction, the true story, the parable, the anecdote, most of what we call the creative recreational art as well as the matters that pertain to faith, state, knowledge and the craft. It drew very well from the Islamic traditions of learning and writing, leaving us with a society that knows more about literacy and education than many whom think of it otherwise (emphasis added)."

Hunwick reports that there are about one hundred and thirty one (131) works of Shehu, (Ismail Balogun listed one hundred and fifteen for the Shehu), one hundred and eleven (111) to his brother Abdullahi, one hundred and sixty two (162) to his son Muhammad Bello and seventy five (75) (most of them Qasaids-poems- and translations) to his daughter Nana Asmau. One of the important factors for venturing into Jihadist's writings and discoveries by the 19th century Nigerian scholars was the open mindedness in their concept and practice of the essence of Islamic education. They became receptive of ideas and opinions without limit within the ambit of the law. As a result of that they became leading researchers and explorers in various fields of education. The concept and frame of mind upon which the religion of Islam as well its branches of knowledge were viewed and practiced served as the turning point in the intellectual heritage of the region. The scholars refused to confine the borders of Islamic knowledge to mere spirituality as was the tradition in the land; rather they incorporated teaching and writings. The introduction of this new approach to knowledge could well be viewed as the bedrock for Jihadist's writings, among Muslims in Northern Nigeria.

In the tradition of learning which they (the Sokoto ulama') followed, writings were not neglected. But it had no importance in itself, and only acquired importance while it was being used as a means of achieving the ends which their learning caused them to seek.

Statement of the Problems

The level of intellectual and scholarly rejuvenation that characterized the nineteenth century Muslim regions of Northern Nigeria culminated into the thriving rational awakening which consequently contributed to the emergence of Muslim scholars and researchers who ventured into general studies, into different aspects of knowledge. That unprecedented academic venture left an indelible mark in the singular and onerous contributions of Jihadists writings in the study of various aspects of Knowledge. The nature, character and relevance of the jihadist writing as a blue print towards Socio-Religious transformation In northern Nigeria was theoretically addressed by scholars in the 19th century thereby trying to reposition and reshape the mental, intellectual and spiritual threads and fabrics of the Muslims about the importance and necessity for the study of the subject among the Muslims.

On the other hand, they also tried intellectually to set a phase and redefine boarders and frontiers in the development of writings by fundamentally codifying and documenting thematically different fields of

studies in order to encourage students and researches to study the area as a normal discipline in the curriculum and learning methods in the region. As such this paper intends to explore the Sokoto Jihadist writings As a blue print towards Socio-Religious transformation In northern Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This paper is aimed at exploring the Sokoto Jihadist writings as a blue print towards Socio-Religious transformation in northern Nigeria. The specific examples of the study are:-

1. To track the history of Sokoto Caliphate and its contribution to Education in Northern region of Nigeria
2. To discuss the Significance of the Sokoto Jihadist writings
3. To discuss the writings of Sokoto Jihadist for the reformation of Muslim in the Northern Nigeria
4. To elaborate the Lessons for the contemporary period of Sokoto Jihadist writings.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature, it required the researcher to read the literature on the subject and analyses it using critical thinking, the analytical method is therefore used. It is a method which allowed the utilization of critical thinking to find out facts about the topic and decide whether a given claim is true or false. Attempts were also made to establish how Sokoto Jihadist writings contribute towards the socio-religious transformation of the Northern Nigeria and how its came into being and its method which leads to its spread and acceptance. This research therefore focuses on causes, effects and outcome of the *Writings of Sokoto jihadist* for the reformation of Muslims in Northern Nigeria.

Background of Sokoto Caliphate

The **Sokoto Caliphate** was an independent Sunni Muslim Caliphate in West Africa that was founded during the jihad of the Fulani War in 1804 by Usman dan Fodio. It was abolished when the British conquered the area in 1903 and established the Northern Nigeria Protectorate. Developed in the context of multiple independent Hausa Kingdoms, at its height, the caliphate linked over 30 different emirates and over 10 million people in the most powerful state in the region and one of the most significant empires in Africa in the nineteenth century. The caliphate was a loose confederation of emirates that recognized the suzerainty of the Amir al-Mu'minin, the Sultan of Sokoto. The caliphate brought decades of economic growth throughout the region. An estimated 1-2.5 million non-Muslim slaves were captured during the Fulani War. Slaves provided labor for plantations and were provided an opportunity to become Muslims.

Although the British abolished the political authority of the caliphate, the title of sultan was retained and remains an important religious position for Sunni Muslims in the region to the current day. Usman dan Fodio's jihad provided the inspiration for a series of related jihads in other parts of the Sudanian Savanna and the Sahel far beyond the borders of what is now Nigeria that led to the foundation of Islamic states in the regions that would become Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, Chad, the Central African Republic, and Sudan.

Jihad Movement

Usman dan Fodio, an Islamic scholar and an urbanized Fulani, had been actively educating and preaching in the city of Gobir with the approval and support of the Hausa leadership of the city. However, when Yunfa, a former student of dan Fodio, became the sultan of Gobir, he restricted dan Fodio's activities, eventually forcing him into exile in Gudu. A large number of people left Gobir to join dan Fodio, who also began to gather new supporters from other regions. Feeling threatened by his former teacher, Yunfa declared war on dan Fodio on February 21, 1804. Usman dan Fodio was elected "Commander of the Faithful" (Amir al-Mu'minin) by his followers, marking the beginning of the Sokoto state. Usman dan Fodio then created a number of flag bearers amongst those following him, creating an early political structure of the empire. Declaring a jihad against the Hausa kings, dan Fodio rallied his primarily Fulani "warrior-scholars" against Gobir. Despite early losses at the Battle of Tsuntua and elsewhere, the forces

of dan Fodio began taking over some key cities starting in 1805. The Fulani used guerrilla warfare to turn the conflict in their favor, and gathered support from the civilian population, which had come to resent the despotic rule and high taxes of the Hausa kings. Even some non-Muslim Fulani started to support dan Fodio. The war lasted from 1804 until 1808, and resulted in thousands of deaths. The forces of dan Fodio were able to capture the states of Katsina and Daura, the important kingdom of Kano in 1807, and finally conquered Gobir in 1809. In the same year, Muhammed Bello, the son of dan Fodio, founded the city of Sokoto, which became the capital of the Sokoto state.

The jihad had created "a new slaving frontier on the basis of rejuvenated Islam." By 1900 the Sokoto state had "at least 1 million and perhaps as many as 2.5 million slaves", second only to the United States (which had 4 million in 1860) in size among all modern slave societies. However, there was far less of a distinction between slaves and their masters in the Sokoto state.

Much of the growth of the state occurred through the establishment of an extensive system of ribats as part of the consolidation policy of Muhammed Bello, the second Sultan. Ribats were established, founding a number of new cities with walled fortresses, schools, markets, and other buildings. These proved crucial in expansion through developing new cities, settling the pastoral Fulani people, and supporting the growth of plantations which were vital to the economy. By 1837, the Sokoto state had a population of around 10 million people.

Administrative Structure

The Sokoto state was largely organized around a number of largely independent emirates pledging allegiance to the sultan of Sokoto. The administration was initially built to follow those of Muhammad during his time in Medina, but also the theories of Al-Mawardi in "The Ordinances of Government". The Hausa kingdoms prior to Usman dan Fodio had been run largely through hereditary succession. The early rulers of Sokoto, dan Fodio and Bello, abolished systems of hereditary succession, preferring leaders to be appointed by virtue of their Islamic scholarship and moral standing.^[8] Emirs were appointed by the sultan; they traveled yearly to pledge allegiance and deliver taxes in the form of crops, cowry shells, and slaves. When a sultan died or retired from the office, an appointment council made up of the emirs would select a replacement. Direct lines of succession were largely not followed, although each sultan claimed direct descent from dan Fodio.

The major administrative division was between Sokoto and the Gwandu Emirate. In 1815, Usman dan Fodio retired from the administrative business of the state and divided the area taken over during the Fulani War with his brother Abdullahi dan Fodio ruling in the west with the Gwandu Emirate and his son Muhammed Bello taking over administration of the Sokoto Sultanate. The Emir at Gwandu retained allegiance to the Sokoto Sultanate and spiritual guidance from the sultan, but the emir managed the separate emirates under his supervision independently from the sultan.

The administrative structure of loose allegiances of the emirates to the sultan did not always function smoothly. There was a series of revolutions by the Hausa aristocracy in 1816–1817 during the reign of Muhammed Bello, but the sultan ended these by granting the leaders titles to land. There were multiple crises that arose during the 19th century between the Sokoto Sultanate and many of the subservient emirates: notably, the Adamawa Emirate and the Kano Emirate. A serious revolt occurred in 1836 in the city-state of Gobir, which was crushed by Muhammed Bello at the Battle of Gawakuke. The Sufi community throughout the region proved crucial in the administration of the state. The Tariqa brotherhoods, most notably the Qadiriyya, to which every successive sultan of Sokoto was an adherent, provided a group linking the distinct emirates to the authority of the sultan. Scholars Burnham and Last claim that this Islamic scholarship community provided an "embryonic bureaucracy" which linked the cities throughout the Sokoto state.

Economy

After the establishment of the Caliphate, there were decades of economic growth throughout the region, particularly after a wave of revolts in 1816–1817. They had significant trade over the trans-Saharan routes. After the Fulani War, all land in the empire was declared waqf or owned by the entire community. However, the Sultan allocated land to individuals or families, as could an emir. Such land could be inherited by family members but could not be sold. Exchange was based largely on slaves, cowries or gold. Major crops produced included cotton, indigo, kola and shea nuts, grain, rice, tobacco, and onion. Slavery remained a large part of the economy, although its operation had changed with the end of the Atlantic slave trade. Slaves were gained through raiding and via markets as had operated earlier in West Africa. The institution of slavery was mediated by the lack of a racial barrier among the peoples, and by a complex and varying set of relations between owners and slaves, which included the right to accumulate property by working on their own plots, manumission, and the potential for slaves to convert and become members of the Islamic community. There are historical records of slaves reaching high levels of government and administration in the Sokoto Caliphate.

Scholarship

Islamic scholarship was a crucial aspect of the Caliphate from its founding. Sultan Usman dan Fodio, Sultan Muhammed Bello, Emir Abdullahi dan Fodio, Sultan Abu Bakr Atiku, and Nana Asma'u devoted significant time to chronicling histories, writing poetry, and Islamic studies. A number of manuscripts are available and they provide crucial historical information and important spiritual texts. This role did diminish after the reign of Bello and Atiku.

Decline and Fall

European attention had been focusing on the region for colonial expansion for much of the last part of the 19th century. The French in particular had sent multiple exploratory missions to the area to assess colonial opportunities after 1870. French explorer Parfait-Louis Monteil visited Sokoto in 1891 and noted that the Caliphate was at war with the Emir of Argungu, defeating Argungu the next year. Monteil claimed that Fulani power was tottering because of the war and the accession of the unpopular Caliph Abderrahman dan Abi Bakar. However, following the Berlin Conference, the British had expanded into Southern Nigeria, and by 1902 had begun plans to move into the Sokoto Caliphate. British General Frederick Lugard used rivalries between many of the emirs in the south and the central Sokoto administration to prevent any defense as he worked toward the capital. As the British approached the city of Sokoto, the new Sultan Muhammadu Attahiru I organized a quick defense of the city and fought the advancing British-led forces. The British force quickly won, sending Attahiru I and thousands of followers on a Mahdist *hijra*.

The writings of Sokoto Jihadist and the reformation of Muslim in the Northern Nigeria

The scholars of Sokoto Caliphate wrote about a total of four hundred and seventy nine books (479), one hundred and thirty one (131) works of Shehu, (Ismail Balogun listed one hundred and fifteen for the Shehu), one hundred and eleven (111) to his brother Abd Allah, one hundred and sixty two (162) to his son Muhammad Bello and seventy five (75) (most of them Qasaids- poems- and translations) to his daughter Nana Asmau. Usman Dan Fodio wrote one hundred and fifteen books concerning his thoughts about religion, government, culture, poetry, logic, rhetoric, economy, trade, law and society. The Shehu was not only a war leader but also a scholar and poet in the classical Arabic tradition. Best known among his verse works is his panegyric to the prophet Muhammad, *Al-dālīyah (The Ode Rhyming in Dāl)*, that helped to spread the prophet's Sūfī order.

The Encyclopaedia of Religion (2006) echoed the numerous Arabic prose works he had. The main thrust of the works is against all manifestations of indigenous, non-Islamic Hausa culture song, music, ornate dress, architecture, social mores, etc., and an insistence that these be replaced by Islamic alternatives. His works also influenced his society, and posterity, by disseminating the ideas of the Qādirī order of Sūfīs, to

which he was deeply committed. Some important titles worth mentioning include: **Talim al-ikhwan** where the Dan Fodio discusses philosophy of law, with jurisprudence as a vehicle of protest and dissemination of revolutionary principles. The Shehu further wrote in **Kitab al-Farq** on the question of leadership. In both works, the Shehu pointed out the oppressive policies instituted by rulers, illegal taxations levied on common people, arbitrary confiscation of property corruption by judges, perversion of the legal process, alteration of the sacred law to suit the interest of rulers and rich men, large-scale corruption in government and offered solutions.

According to Ibraheem Suleiman (1986) in his work “A Revolution in History: The Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio” listed some good titles and explained their subject areas, these titles include:

- i. **Hidayat al-Tullab.** The Shehu dealt with several issues relating to Islamic Law and Muslim society. The first of which was the very definition of law itself. Finally, the Shehu dealt in *Hidayat* with the issue of right and wrong in society. The work can be seen as an attempt to instil in his student a universal approach to law and to expand their attitudes to society.
- ii. **Umdat al-Ubbad.** Shehu provides guidelines for the minimum voluntary acts of devotions; prayer, fasting, Quranic recitation, remembrance of Allah and acts of charity. In a nutshell, this writing discusses spiritual training
- iii. **Al-Amrbt-maruf waalnahy anl-munkar.** The Shehu dealt with three broad matters in this treatise. Firstly, he looked at the philosophical call as a historical, social necessity, particularly at a time of social decay; secondly, he proposed basic guidelines for discharging this duty, finally, he tackled the issue of armed confrontation as it relates to a movement in the initial phase of the revolutionary process.
- iv. **Kitab al-Adab** dealt with more than fifteen issues devoted to matters relating to knowledge. Shehu also touched on the obligations a man owes to his wife, wife to her husband and mutual obligation between Muslims.
- v. **Ihya al-Sunna wa Ikhmad al-Bida.** The book is unique in two respects. It is a book of practical, social and moral education which focuses its attention entirely on Hausa society with the sole object of rectifying its wrong deeds and guiding it aright. There is no theory in it: everything it deals with was practiced by society. Secondly, it is a book of protest, albeit of a legal nature, albeit restrained. In a way it takes the line of al- Barnawi’s *Shurb al-Zulal*, except that the *Ihya* was written by Usman and is a textbook of *tajdid*. Its thirty-three chapters deal with the three fundamental issues of Shehu’s message: *Iman*, *Islam* and *Ihsan*, with *Islam*. The regulation of life in general took twenty seven chapters. Both *Iman* and *Ihsan* have one chapter each, and one chapter is devoted to the *sunna* in its broader sense and one to innovations.

Other titles are **Tariq al-janna** which dealt with moral ideals, **Wathiqat al- Ikhwan**, call for intellectual excellence and social manifesto. **Tanbih**, in this book, the Shehu mobilized women and defended his action in allowing women to attend his lectures, as justifiable and, indeed, sanctioned by law. **Bayan Wujub al-hijra** dealt with principles of warfare. While **Irshad ahl al- Tafrit**, seeks to guide the extremists to the right understanding of the fundamentals of religion.

Significance of Sokoto Caliphate Writings to the Northern region of Nigeria

For reasons far too numerous to mention, the study of Islam in Africa is significant and Usman Dan Fodio occupies an important position in the history of Sub-Sahara African mass mobilization to Islam. Some of the reasons that made the manuscripts valuable include:

- i. The manuscripts are amongst the finest in existence and are internationally renowned for the overall high quality and scope of the material.
- ii. The manuscripts comprise the collections range in date from the seventh century to the early years of the eighth century.
- iii. The collections manifest the scale of the Shehu’s success and achievement, in the area of mass mobilization and the sheer force of his character.

- iv. Together they illustrate in exquisite form and detail the history and development of Islam in the Northern Nigeria
- v. The collections clearly stated the methods used by Usman in raising the generation that transformed the Hausa land in Nigeria.

Through the systematic study of the manuscripts, the prosodic and rhetoric values of these manuscripts can be brought to limelight for the literary benefit of contemporary scholars and students of literature.

Lessons for the Contemporary Period

The wisdom and lessons that should be drawn from the achievements of sheykh Usman Danfodiyo, Malam Abdullahi Fodiyo and Sheykh Muhammad Bello along with the various flag bearers who established the emirates works made great efforts to establish a new society based on the time-tasted and time-honored principles of justice and the rule of laws. There is no doubt saying that the principle of justice and the rule of law in governance firmly rooted is scholarship, is the caliphate's mote enduring legacy 200 years later, books written by the caliphates leaders on the management of public trust and the betterment of society were relevant in their time, they are relevant today and will remain relevant to eternity as we reflect on the glorious history of the Caliphate, therefore we must not forget to draw inference and lessons for the contemporary period. In this respect there are three critical issues around which the caliphate was established which, further, more, underscore its greatness and ensured the durability of its value and institutions over the years.

The basic teaching of Usman Danfodiyo was on good governance. He set out its principle and lived by its transparent examples. He was therefore a reformer. Changing society for the better is always difficult, at times even painful. Reforms cannot be cosmetic, otherwise relief for citizens will be ephemeral. It must be profound of total involving change in attitude at all levels and an overhauling the institutions that will sustain and guarantee positive change. The second important factor is tolerance. In it great diversity stretching from Masinal in present Mali Republic to Nikki in Benin Republic, an from Maradi in Niger Republic to Tibati in Cameroon, various ethnic groups, economic communities, religious groups and even religious sects peacefully existed of course, the glory of the pass is always a reference point of how communities should live harmoniously with one another irrespective of whatever difference exist. The leaders of the caliphate not only laid the ground work but also provided the model for cooperation and integration in our sub-region and in the world.

Conclusion

From what has so far been mentioned above, it is clear that none of the later scholars in Hausa land have done what the Ulama of Sokoto caliphate does in uplifting Islam through da'wah. Their writings were to date relevance to contemporary Muslims needs and throughout Northern Nigeria Shaykh Uthman is regarded as the most pious, educated and revered scholar of repute whom all the contemporary scholars emulate. In light of these salient achievements in fields of writings recorded in the past two hundred years in the Nigerian areas of the defunct Sokoto Caliphate, it is pertinent to appreciate the value and high status Islam accords to all fields of knowledge generally without exception. Our call and appeal is for academics and researchers, to study these materials with a view to finding out their efficacy in the provision of alternative to the public in the contemporary period. The revelation is also another milestone in understanding the level of neglect of Sokoto Caliphate writings among Muslims today, which had no basis in the Muslim civilization and history. Thus, the earlier Muslims embrace writings like their forebears did the better for them, in order to break the shackles of backwardness, dependency, poverty, disease and also compete favorably with other nations of the world.

Suggestions

1. Much of the Hausa population had settled in the cities throughout the region and became urbanized.
2. Much of the population had converted to Islam in the centuries before; however, local pagan beliefs persisted in many areas, especially in the aristocracy.

3. A number of the preachers were linked in a shared Tariqa of Islamic study. Maliki scholars were invited or traveled to the Hausa lands from the Maghreb and joined the courts of some sultanates such as in Kano.

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