Historical Bedrock to Uthman Bn Foduye’s Notion on Society Building

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ABSTRACT
Uthman bn Foduye was a prolific scholar and at the same time Islamic reformer in the history of Hausaland. He emerged in the 19th century when the land was in the ‘darkness of ignorance’ or in the ‘era of decline’ with the mission to build his society based on the Islamic tenets. This paper scrutinises how Uthman bn Foduye initially studied his society and figures out its major challenges with the aims of reformation. The paper further examines the approaches that bn Foduye used in winning the minds of the people of Hausaland towards giving him a maximum co-operation to achieve his target. This research is based on qualitative approach. The method of documentary used in data collections. On the other hand, it employs the usage of content analysis, inductive and comparative in data analysis. The findings show that despite the various challenges and attacks encountered by Uthman bn Foduye from his contemporaries and traditional rulers of the Hausaland, he eventually achieved in establishing Islamic state known as the Sokoto Caliphate in Northern part of what is now the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Nevertheless, the findings have further revealed that most of the contemporary Muslim reformers have only failed to achieve their aims due to the lack of systematic approaches and holding of extreme opinions. It is therefore recommended that contemporary Muslim reformers should follow the approaches of Uthman bn Foduye in their attempts to reform and organise Islamic society.

Keywords: History, Muslim Reformers, Uthman bn Foduye.

INTRODUCTION
Uthman bn Foduye is an important figure in the organisation of Islamic society in the entire history of Bilad al-Sudan (West-Africa). Uthman bn Foduye was a Fulani1 origin with high intellectual and moral character. He lived from (1754-1817) and raised in the Hausaland where the inhabitants lived in a disarrayed society with gross oppression and aggressive exploitation of the people by the then traditional rulers. He grew up with the zeal of organizing his society towards socio-religious development according to the dictates of Islam. It is pertinent to note that Uthman bn Foduye was

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1 In Nigeria, certain light skinned people living in the Northern States of Nigeria are called the Fulanis or Hilanis. They
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intense to reform his society. Though he initially studied its problem and came up with the approaches that was most suitable for the circumstances at that time, that is to say in a manner that gives him a smoothly way to achieve his target. What inspired Uthman bn Foduye to reform his society was the ignorance of the masses concerning Islam despite the presence of many scholars in Hausaland, traditional beliefs were mixed with Islamic Shari’a.²

To understand and appreciate the role of Uthman bn Foduye in building society, it is significant to understand the various problems that helped him to develop his notion on such mission and the systematic approaches that he however used in eliminating the problems towards success. Accordingly, Uthman’s approaches of transforming the society that changed the central Sudan comprise three areas namely, the spiritual, intellectual, and the deep teaching in Sufism. Uthman was adherent of Qadiriyyah. Therefore, he never criticised it, except in such a way that deviates the teachings of Islam. He however faulted scholars who supported rulers against blameworthy acts for their personal interest. In return, he severely received plain harassment and disgraceful attacks from such scholars. Finally he emerged victorious over his opponents,³ and established the Caliphate that survived up till the British colonization of the region in the early Twentieth-Century. It is understood that despite Uthman bn Foduye was criticized by his contemporaries and attacked by the rulers of the land. However, these setbacks never deterred him from success in accomplishing his spiritual, social and political missions as he eventually succeeded in the establishment of an Islamic state known as the Sokoto Caliphate.

On the other hand, the ideas of Muslim reformers is a long facts in the history of Islam, ranging from the first century of Islam down to the 19th and twentieth-century respectively. Some were successful while others failed as a result of many factors. Nowadays, some people in the Muslim countries wanted to reform their societies based on Islamic teachings, but in one way the other they could not achieve due to the lack of sincerity and sound methods.

In order to understand who the Muslim reformers are, what are their objectives and when did it start. It is important to note that Abdulwahab El-Missri observed that the most famous among the Muslim reformers in the history of Islam are the Wahabiyyah Movement and the Sanusiyyah Movement. What popularised the Wahabiyyah Movement in the history of Islamic reforms is because of their strong fighting against social vices that had been rampant in the pre-Arabian societies. Their major target is to go back to the real sources of Islam, particularly the interpretation of the Glorious Qur’an. Surprisingly enough, they consciously reviewed the Islamic school thought of Hanbaliyyah, wherein they adopted its principles and writings. However, Ibn Taymiyah recognised it as the most acceptable interpretation of Islam. However, the Wahabiyyah movement, upon its formation have collaborated with the family of Saud in developing and codifying the official ruling ideology for the present Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.⁴

Conversely, Bediuzzaman Nursi considered religious reformers as servants of Allah that had been described in the Prophetic hadith concerning their appearance at the beginning of every century of Islam. Therefore, in his opinion they are followers of the Prophetic tradition not be considered as innovators. What he tries to highlight here is that the Muslim reformers did not innovate anything but rather strengthen the religion of Islam and called upon Muslims to practice Islam according to the pure teachings of the Prophet; in their attempts they only assure the presence of pure religion on

earth and remove any acts that contradicts the teachings of Islam. They would not allowed in any way the mixing of Islam with blameworthy acts or what Islam totally forbidden.\(^5\)

The importance of this study would not be over emphasized; this is because building and reformation of any society could not materialize without a sound methods as well as sincerity in undertaking the mission. In this regard, Uthman bn Foduye’s methods in building an Islamic society are a key area in this research. On the other hand, the issues and challenges of contemporary Muslim reformers are also in consideration for better solution when compare to that of Uthman bn Foduye.

**A Brief Biography of Uthman bn Foduye**

Uthman bn Foduye’s full name is ‘Uthman bn Muhammad bn ‘Uthman bn Salih commonly known as Ibn Foduye\(^6\) was born on Sunday 15th December, 1754 at Maratta a city in Gobir state of the Hausaland. He later came to be known as Shehu\(^8\) (Shaykh) ‘Uthman bn. Foduye.\(^9\) His descendants came from Futa Toro in present-day Senegal\(^10\).

Based on the available information to Abdullahi bn Foduye, brother of Uthman bn foduye, concerning their main origin, he clearly stated that their town is Torobe, which is the town of those that had come from Futa. They are the uncles of all Fulanis, and Fufuled is their language because Uqbah bn Amir the righteous fighter who conquered the towns of the West (Morocco) (in general Africa) during the Era of Amr bn al-As in Egypt had come to them. Abdullahi further illustrated that they were one of the Roman tribes, and their king became Muslim without any fight. In consequence, Uqba got married to the daughter of their king, and her name was Bojjo Mango. He fathered all the Fulanis. However, Abdullah emphasized that this is the recurrent (hence prevalent) account in their place, and they have taken it from trustworthy people who used to come forth from the town of Futa. He therefore reiterated that he means scholars. Thus, those people from Futa Toro they were spoken the language of their mother, and they did not know the language of their father because of the scarcity of those who spoke the language at that time. It is reported that the children of Uqba were the first spoken the Fulfulde language. This is far from the truth. Conversely, languages had existed from the time of Adam, and because that the claim appears as strange. The word that is nearest (to the truth) is that they were spoken the language of their mother, and the Torobe (Fulani) did not have any basic language besides that one.\(^11\)

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6. Different terms are used in addressing Uthman bn Foduye. Therefore, ‘Uthman bn Foduye is the actual name to recognize him, but ibn is in Arabic which is equivalent to Dan in Hausa and Son in English respectively. Similarly, the word Foduye, is the Arabized name and Fodio is in English while on the other hand Fodiyo is in Hausa. It is understood that, these are the reasons why some people are addressing him as ‘Usman Dan Fodio or Danfodiyo and Foduye respectively. In order to avoid inconsistencies, this study uses ‘Uthman bn Foduye.

7. Usman M. Bugaje, “‘The Contents, Method and Impacts of Shaykh ‘Uthman Dan Fodio’s Teachings (1774-1804)’” (Master’s Degree, University of Khartoum, 1979), 14.

8. Shehu is in Hausa which is equivalent to Shaykh in Arabic meaning a great scholar or learned fellow in English.

9. Foduye or Fodio is a nickname of ‘Uthman’s father. Foduye is the Fulani term meaning “a teacher”. Therefore, Uthman bn Foduye means Uthman ‘son of the teacher’


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Similarly, the mother of Shaykh Uthman bn Foduye was Hauwa, the daughter of Muhammad bn Fatima bint Muhammad bn Abdussamad bn Ahmad al-Shareef bn Ali al-Yanbu’il bn Abdurraqzaq bn Yusuf bn Yusha’ bn Wardi Batul bn Ahmad bn Muhammad bn Isa bn Muhammad bn al-Hassan al-Sibti bn Ali bn Abi Talib and Fatima al-Zahra al-Battul the daughter of Muhammad bn Abdullah, the seal of the Prophets and the master of the Messengers, may Allah bless them and grant them peace. In addition to that, Uthman bn Foduye’s mother Hauwa bint Muhammad, especially through her mother Ruqayya, was linked to the branch of the family most renowned for its learning.

It is earlier mentioned that his appearance was foretold before his birth, therefore Uthman bn Foduye in his Fulani poem thanks Almighty Allah for the blessings that He gave him, in which he clearly says he believed that Prophet Muhammad’s appearance was foretold before his coming, likewise his appearance was foretold before he came. This clearly shows that Uthman bn Foduye has admitted the exposition on his appearance; it clearly shows his believe in mystical narrations.

Furthermore, it is pertinent to note that the detailed of Uthman’s childhood was not evidently known except what was found in some folklore in the Fulani literature which contains their various Karama (miraculous). This is an attractive literature which, however ongoing at the end of Uthman’s life. It is discovered that most of such literatures were gathered after his death. They contain mythical stories and miraculous that was repeatedly linked with the live of important personalities, particularly after their death. Numerous of those stories are connected to ‘Uthman. This however, should not be surprising if it is recalled that the Fulani authors observed for their perfect of writing in the literatures of the Orthodox period of Islam, and the fact that such folklores are verbally conveyed concerning Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself. This is a sufficient reason for some of the Fulani writers to covering their favourite leader in a like story. It is informative to note that ‘Uthman’s life has been compared closely to that of the Prophet. This is because Ibn Foduye’s desire for the change in the conduct and behaviours of the people in Hausaland is fully rooted in Islam and it derived its credibility from the historical origin of Islam. The model for the Sokoto Jihad movements was that of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)’s own movement to establish, sponsor and entrench Islam. The fact that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was a model for Ibn Foduye is not at all surprising, because one of the guiding principles of Islam is to follow the Sunnah, and imitate the life of the Prophet (pbuh). For example, in order to substantiate this statement, and to show the importance of following the Sunnah of the Prophet, in the Glorious Qur’an, Almighty Allah says “And whatsoever the Prophet (pbuh) gives you, take it; and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it). And fear Allah; verily, Allah is Sever in punishment.”

Moreover, for the similarities between the life of Ibn Foduye and that of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), it can be found in the poems of Nana Asma’ u, daughter of Ibn Foduye. She describes

13 The Shaykh’s descent from the Prophet is through Hawwa’ bint Muhammad bint Fatimah bint al-Shareef; Abdussamad derives his claim to being a Shareef through Moulay Idris of Morocco (see Infaq al-Maysur of Muhammad Bello. P. 181-2). Although, this would be known to the Abdullah, neither mentions it; instead the Shaykh refutes those who say he is the Mahdi on the grounds that he is not a descendant of the Prophet (see Tahdhir al-Ikhwan min iddi a’ al-Mahdiiyah of Uthman bn Foduye. p. 2).
14 See Alfa, p. 19.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
specific points of comparison between the two and their movements: initial periods of preaching a *Hijra* and a battle against all odds, itinerancy, attacks and desertion of troops, peace overtures, and amalgamation gesturing the successful end to the campaign. Interestingly, the fifth chapter of Nana Asma’u’s book carries the title: “Sokoto as Madinah: Imitating the life of the Prophet and Re-enacting History.”

**Uthman bn Foduye’s Education and Teachers**

Knowing the educational background of Uthman bn Foduye is of highest importance in this study. Hence, it is to understand the philosophy behind his knowledge and its subsequent outcomes and influences to his entire society. However, Uthman was totally dedicated his early life to learning. It is also reported that during his childhood, he dedicated his time mainly to understand the fundamental things of Islam. This system of education from childhood through youthful as well as the entire life time was the features of Uthman bn Foduye’s society, particularly among members of his tribe. Therefore, Uthman rose up in a similar way of some youth of his contemporaries into a well-known scheme of education. The summary of this scheme is significantly important vital to the understanding of Uthman’s early life and his mission. El-Masri observed that:

> Once a child acquired a fundamental knowledge of the faith, knows reading and writing, the student would then move to the erudite scholar to be in his company until he mastered different sciences in which he became famous; once he completed his education to the fulfilment of a master of a particular field he would after that be given a certificate to impart what he had been educated, on the permission of the scholar. In this regard the student would further travel to different scholars to study and collect certificates until he becomes a renowned scholar. However, this system would never cut at a specific age or stage, just in case an intellectual person was present who academically specialized in a particular field even though a foreigner or a resident many people would go to learn under him; this is the reason why Uthman bn Foduye continued traveling to study while at the same time he was teaching and preaching.

To understand and appreciate the intellectual ability of Uthman bn Foduye, it is significant to note that Waziri Gidado dan Laima, the secretary of Uthman bn Foduye, catalogued more than eighty-eight scholars from whom Uthman received knowledge from as far as the lands of today northern-Mali in the West to Darfur in today’s Western-Sudan in the East.

Uthman’s system of education contained in its syllabus a great multiplicity of themes that are not only related to Islam, but then in the etymology, syntax, grammar and prosody of the Arabic linguistic. Hence, it was frequently the medium of teaching. Major in the syllabus is Qur’anic exegesis and Prophetic traditions, as a result of which the Bukhari’ Authentic Compilation was the greatest used text. Next in significance was the study of the autobiography of the Prophet (pbuh) from his birth to death. Fundamentally, more importance was the study of Islamic jurisprudence comprising all aspects of rule, from private which include the law of mutual transaction, criminal, constitutional and so on to the rites. Comprised also in this syllabus was

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21 Ibid.
22 El-Masri, 435-48
23 Alfa,23
astrology Islamic sciences dealing with the universe in general, and *Taswwuf*. Accordingly, the teachers of Uthman bn Foduye, as Abdullah bn Foduye stated, were excessively to be reported.\(^{24}\)

Moreover, it was not astonishing for Uthman who certainly not spared a chance to increase more to his understanding. However, famous among numerous teachers of Uthman, in addition to his father, was his uncle who was an honest and pious scholar, he was Uthman Bidduri, it is reported that this scholar not only educated him but influenced him extraordinarily. Another scholar of truthful knowledge and also uncle to Uthman bn Foduye was Muhammad Sambo, who educated him the summarised book of al-Khalil. Similarly, another famous among his teachers was Abdul-Rahman bn Hammada who educated him the science of grammar and syntax. Following in the catalogue of his teachers was Jibril bn ‘Umar, a Tuareg scholar of extraordinary knowledge and revolutionary eagerness who had interaction with the Middle-Eastern Muslim world through his pilgrimage. Evidently, most of Uthman’s revolutionary enthusiasm is copied to this teacher whom Uthman himself greatly valued.\(^{25}\)

It is of great importance to note that the influence of Shaykh Jibrin ‘Umar to Shaykh Uthman bn. Foduye is highly interesting because Uthman travel to Aghadaez then stayed with Jibril for one year while he is studying. Following Jibril was going for his second Hajj, Uthman returned to home, since his father did not give him permission to follow his teacher to Mecca. It was in this situation they separated.\(^{26}\) This was happen in 1780. Eventually, in 1786-7, when Jibril resumed from Hajj, 'Uthman and his brother, Abdulllah visited him in which they stayed with him for certain days during which he taught them Islamic theology. He however, issued them a certificate to impart what he educated them."\(^{27}\)

Immediately, after Jibril's return from his second Hajj, probably during the above mentioned visit, he offered a “flag of conquest” to 'Uthman. This indicates that Jibril was the first person who gave Uthman support to change the political system of Hausaland.\(^{28}\) Further, the teachers of Uthman bn Foduye not only conveyed knowledge, but influenced him tremendously. For example, his teacher Jibril Umar and his uncle Uthman Bnduri were the most excellent. Basically, Jibril was the most influential person on Uthman, in spite of this; however, this did not prevent difference with them on a number of issues. What was exciting however is that this difference under no circumstances touched Uthman’s reverence for them (his scholars), as per as Uthman advanced in knowledge and move into his early maturity, his virtue and great easiness, excellent intelligent capacity and magnetic disposition started to attract followers from his instant society. He increasingly became renown among a group of new Muslim scholars and shared certain revolutionary thoughts.\(^{29}\) Furthermore, it was in this situation that Uthman bn Foduye recognized all over the Hausaland. His society however, became the compliant Islamic society. They were ready to follow and obey him whatever he command them to do. This is because of their full support to his missions which they believed Islam is the only way of life. The people of Hausaland were equally believed that Uthman is an intellectual person who mastered a various sciences in Islam. This prove that Uthman was able to reform his society.

The **Fundamental Bedrock to Uthman bn Foduye’s Notion on Society Building**

It is clearly seen in the detailed biography of Uthman bn Foduye that he was an intellectual person who concerned with the development of his society, despite the fact that he has a targeted things to

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\(^{25}\) Bugaje, 16.

\(^{26}\) Balogun, 563.


\(^{28}\) El-Masri, 438.

\(^{29}\) Historically Ibid.
achieve in his society. This was in accordance with the statement made by Malumfashi in his interview:

Pointed out that Uthman, having acquired a vast knowledge of Islamic sciences, and received a paramount orientation from his teachers; he however decided to use his knowledge for the development of his society. Hence, he (Uthman) thinks that he was supplied with all the facilities to bring about a lasting change in his society. In so doing, Uthman has thoroughly studied his society and identified its problems which include religious, social, and political aspects.\(^{30}\)

In view of the above, it is reported that Uthman used to study the problems before finding the solutions to them.\(^{31}\) According to Bugaje, in order to maintain justice and appreciate the vital role played by Uthman bn Foduye, it is significant to describe the situation and complexity problems that are widespread in his society and hence gave him and his team the thought about to bring the change.\(^{32}\) This perhaps, the problems could be the basic factors to his thought on society reforms and bringing about all the necessary methods and approaches in a philosophical manner. Therefore, the problems that lead to the development of Uthman bn Foduye’s notion on society building will be deeply elucidated in the following discussion.

**Socio-Religious Challenges in Hausaland**

In Hausaland, one of the major problems that seriously called the attention of Uthman bn Foduye for the need of reforms is religious belief of the people. As Olayiwola observed that, despite there were groups of Muslims in the various region of Nigeria, non-monotheistic beliefs and practices were still prevalent. Mixed polytheistic practices and superstitions categorised social activities and religious faith of the people. Islamic rites were practiced at their times, but were recurrently complemented with native delusory practices and beliefs. Pacification of descendants and expenses reminiscent of people’s pre-Islamic involvements were continuously followed.\(^{33}\)

In view of the above, more dangerously, in Hausaland, hills, rocks, and mountains such as Dala Hill in Kano (in present-day north-western part of Nigeria) continued to be worshipped. Belief in *Iskoki* and their power to induce fortune and misfortune went side by side with faith in *Qadar* (destiny). Bokaye (superstitions) Masu duba (tellers) and Tauri were believed to possess supernatural power. Fortune telling was rampant and Malluma (scholars) were believed to have a fair share in the control of destiny.\(^{34}\) Among the Fulanis, superstitious beliefs like the belief in Keuto-tira which could be likened to the belief in spirit for the protection and multiplication of herds were common. Pulaku Ancestral codes of conduct which must be followed represented the Qur’anic and Hadith instructions on moral behaviours. People swore by Pulaku.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{30}\) Dr. Umar Faruk Malumfashi (Senior lecturer, Department of Islamic Studies, Bayero University, Kano, +2347030311330, Nigeria, personal communication held at his resident in Kano metropolitan, 16 September 2015).


\(^{32}\) See Bugaje, The Sakkwato Model, P. 6.


\(^{34}\) Ibid.

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To understand more about the traditional belief system of people in Hausaland which nevertheless touched the heart of Uthman bn Foduye and his lieutenants to find out the necessary steps towards changing the society, it is important to note that Murray Last has vividly declared that the Hausa supernatural world before the revolution of Uthman comprised of a bulky variety of spirits traced in a diversity of places. He further asserts that such spirits could be identified roughly in three groups. (i) spirits located in rivers, hills, wells, stones, trees, stones in tree; (ii) spirits in or near houses and towns acting as patrons of the inhabitant; (ii) spirits associated with animals. Mixtures are possible. In supporting this assertion, he referenced to the famous patron snake of Daura town which occupied a well. With varying forms and names, spirits were existent all over Hausaland. All of them could be respected, if not feared; a few may have required human expense; most of them could be appealed either by devotees seeking temporary ownership by them or by magicians in treatment to employ them on specific job.36

In addition to the above, traditionally, Last added that associated with the spirits as a class of intermediaries, priests, magicians (e.g. mayu), devotees (yan bori) some served the political establishment, but mayu, and sometimes yan bori, were generally social untouchable. However magicians on the other hand are generally of two kinds: the boka, a traditional healer and fortune-teller, who often comes from a family specializing in this useful form of magic; and the maye, an occultist, who works with a particular spirit and specializes in catching people's souls. Some mayu are said to have been born witches and cannot help it (like those having the evil eye); others have trained for the work. Both men and women can be mayu and they usually be indebted allegiance, at least in towns, to a leader who is strong enough to force them, if he wishes to disgorge their power.37

The above discussion illustrates clearly the traditional belief system that has been long existed in Hausaland, that is since prior to the revolution of Uthman bn Foduye up to the time of his struggling for change. Despite the efforts and good attempts made by Uthman as will be elaborated later. Nevertheless, this acts of traditional belief is even today exists but in a secret way, it may probably take the name of cultism. Basically, it could be understood that one of the major problems of people in Hausaland was the real ignorance of Islam. Needless to say, Hausaland was in darkness of ignorance. Islamically society of this nature needs someone to reform and organise it according to the dictate of Shari’a.

Political Milieu in Hausaland

The political set up in Hausaland is quite not accordance with the teachings of Islam. Hence, it must be undergoing change, but the person to initiate the job is the case. Therefore, Uthman bn Foduye realized that such un-Islamic political systems need to be addressed. But it must be in a systematic manner in order to avoid repeating the previous failure by those who had attempted to reform but failed.

In respect to the effects of politico-economic problems that had been penetrated Hausaland, Hamza and Isa Maishanu have pointed out that half a century of fighting overwhelming most of Hausaland must have had serious consequences on both the state and society in the region. Continuous fighting similar to that in Gobir during the late 18th century has the tendency to bring about serious displacement in the society thereby affecting its politico-economic life as well as its peace and strength. War and instability are negating to the pursuance of commerce and industry that have been

37 Ibid.
the life-line of Hausaland. Undeniably, the destructive half a century of warfare affected the prosperity of the region, and the states in the area generally turned more autocratic and arbitrary. Apart from the insecurity to which the peasantry was subjected, the subject people were overburdened with heavy taxation and extortion by the ruling class. In Kano, for example, Sarkin Kano Kumbari Dan Sherafa (1713-43) was said to have nearly destroyed the Kurmi Market because of his propensity for extortion. This led many commercial groups to migrate to Katsina.

Hamaza and Isa Maishanu added that the Ulama on the other hand, were not secured either as the Sarki levied taxes on them. Similarly Sarkin Kano Baba Zaki (1768-76) was very oppressive of his subjects to the extent that even the nobility, a class that had enjoyed relative security and prosperity in Hausaland, was not spared from his oppression. This class was "subjugated in every way and compelled to fight" for Sarkin Kano Baba Zaki. In Gobir, which was at the epicentre of activities in this period, life was very difficult and unbearable for the common man. These could be among the reasons that led to the gradual decline of Hausa state.

It should be noted that the political instability in Hausaland was rooted in the separation of leadership between the Hausa people and their counter-part, Fulani. To understand this declaration, Adeleye pointed out that politically, the Fulanis had remained aliens in Hausa land and Borno despite the fact that they had lived there for centuries. Without any regard to the substantial number of learned men among the Fulanis, they suffered the disabilities of second-rate citizens at the hands of Hausa rulers. Though some Fulanis were observed to have served in the governments of many states in very high places, but this was not in their right as representative of Fulani groups, but rather on individual merits. In a similar manner, J.D Fage has also argued that, appointments notwithstanding, the Fulanis had no voice in the selection of rulers.

The reason for consequence isolation of Fulani, as noted by Adeleye was a common bond of ‘Pan-Fulanism’. It is argued that the isolation of the Fulani as a group created solidarity among them, with scattered groups in different localities in Hausa land and Borno, nursing deep feelings of resentment against existing governments. Resentment at their total lack of political power had induced the view that the Jihad was more of a desire for the expression of Fulani nationalism than a religious confrontation.

However, in detailing the tyrannical nature of the rulers of Hausaland, particularly the Gobir ruler, Hunwick has declared a number of things: a) the ruler, by his action, had shown himself not to be a Muslim, and the land is to be considered a land of Islam or a land of unbelief, according to the religion of its ruler; b) the unbelief of the Sarki of Gobir was shown by the way in which he followed certain non-Islamic practices such as the veneration of rocks and trees, consultation with magicians and soothsayers, the imposition of illegal taxes, the banning of the wearing of the veil for women etc., and c) by the way he attacked and persecuted other Muslims. Given this condition,


40 Ibid.


Usman bn Foduye took advantage of the political contradictions and began to preach Islam and mobilising the people against the state, as will be seen later.

**Uthman’s Sociocultural challenges in Hausaland**

Despite the existence of Islam in Hausaland, since around fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, yet the strength of Islam at that time was not able to eradicate the blameworthy customs and practices that are prevalent. Moreover, it is earlier noted that Islam before the reign of Usman bn Foduye was totally mixed with traditional customs. This perhaps inspired Uthman to think about all the necessary steps that will bring about change in the then society. This is because, he (Uthman) concludes that all the blameworthy customs that were practiced are un-acceptable in Islam. For example, Ahmad Tahir observed that the socio-cultural issues that Uthman has constantly complained in his writings are the evils of the indigenous social customs. Almost all the customs he describes are to-day observed among the nomad Fulbe (the desert Fulani). Tahir further pointed out that the nomads have social ceremonies relating to circumcision, initiation, marriage and death. These ceremonies unlike those of other Africans are relatively simple and are devoid of complicated religious rituals.

The crucial point here is that, Usman bn Foduye had earlier before the commencement of his job of society reformation and organization in line with the dictate of Islamic teachings; and nonetheless in his attempts to study his society problems, has come to the conclusion that those who commit blameworthy customs are too, the major problems of his society. He however noted that why people in Hausaland do not repent from blameworthy customs is because of what they have found their fathers, chiefs and Shaykhs practicing. This implies that they were static on the footsteps of their fore-fathers. For example, in his book entitled *Nasa’ih al-Ummah al-Muhammadiyyah*, Uthman considers blameworthy customs in the fourth category of satanic parties which have appeared in *Bilad Sudan*. Therefore, among the long list of blameworthy customs which Uthman gives are the social mixing of the sexes, and distorting the principles of Islamic law of inheritance, in which when a man died his brother will take all his property without leaving any share to his relatives, claiming that in the absence of his brother, he will stand on his position. However, the elder son of a deceased person will inherit his step mother, since to them she is part of the deceased property. So also, other un-Islamic customs is, women will publicly dance in their attire or provocative forms in the presence of men. At the same time they used to send their wives to markets to buy and sell while they sit at home. Moreover, another customs which is totally un-Islamic is that, they were allowed their wives to travel un-accompanied by their Muharrams. All these were the major negative factors that are prevalent in *Bilad al-Sudan* which Uthman shortlisted and preparing a ground for change.

To understand the discussion, it is of great importance to note that in all the existing Muslim communities in Hausaland, hosts of hateful customs and beliefs were enforced upon Islam. In Borno (a state in the present north-eastern part of Nigeria), where Islam made its advent at an early

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47 Ahmad Tahir, Pp. 143-4.
age and the kings have comparatively good record of the knowledge of Islam, the case was in no way different. Nur Alkali reports of continuity of the traditional belief of the divine Kingship centuries after the penetration of Islam\footnote{Nur Alkali, Kanem Borno under the Sayfawa (a study of origin, growth and collapse of a dynasty (PhD thesis: Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria-Nigeria, 1978), p.40.}, head or Kla was appease. Marital blessings were sought by performing certain rites running round an apple tree. During and after the rites, Kaulu leaves were extensively applied on the bride and new groom.\footnote{A. M. A. Nguru, The Life and Contribution of Sheikh Lawan Usman Abba Aji (Bachelor Degree Project: University of Maiduguri, 1991), p.41.} These types of odious customs were also found at Muslim naming ceremony, installation of Kings, and other social ceremonies in Borno.\footnote{Ibid.}

It is understood from the above discussion that the rational wisdom of Uthman bn Foduye’s mission is to change and organize his ailing society that blameworthy customs were rampant. Hence, he classified the problems into various categories for the smooth achieving of his target. Basically, Uthman’s thought is clearly manifested in the activities of Ethno-religious, socio-cultural and politico-economic in Hausaland. However, from the foregoing, one cannot deny the efforts that Uthman bn Foduye wants to make. His depth studying of the major problems of his society was nothing but to bring a change that will eradicate all the problems. Accordingly, in any reformation or revolution one has to be systematic, otherwise, he will not succeed. One must first understand what he wants to do and how to do. By identifying the major problems in any giving society, one can easily provide the necessary steps and approaches that will guide him to arrive at final conclusion of bringing a new society that frees from any un-Islamic customs or mixing Islam with traditions.

The Approaches of Uthman bn Foduye in his Society Building

This section focussed on the approaches used by Uthman bn Foduye in dealing with the previous mentioned challenges towards building his society to an Islamic state. However, for the purpose of understanding the discussion, the approaches will be divided into two, that is Uthman bn Foduye’s approaches in evolutionary and revolutionary aspects. Hence, the purpose of this categorization is to understand and differentiate the nature of his reforms from the one that results in battle and the other in peaceful manner. Thus, under each of these approaches, we will discuss various factors that contributed to the successful organization of Uthman bn Foduye’s society.

Evolutionary Approach

Uthman bn Foduye’s aims of reforming his ailing society must be understood through the context of evolutionary approach. By using evolutionary approach, we mean the gradual process that Uthman bn Foduye follows in organizing his jama’u without any act of fighting. Basically, at the initial stage the process that used towards winning the minds of his people was in peaceful manner. This was because neither by force nor through any fighting. It was systematically organized approaches, which in one way or the other convinced people to accept him as a leader and Islamic reformer. However, the approaches varied according to their themes. More importantly they include ethical and intellectual approaches as we can elaborate in a separate discussion of each under the following.
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Ethical Factor

It is believe that for a person to be a leader must be excelled in good characters in his deeds and utterances. This is because it will guide him to win the minds of people to incline and support him towards achieving his aims. Thus, one of the most important things that guides Uthman bn Foduye got the co-operation and support of his Jama’a was his mystical experience and various miracles that have been displayed before and after his appearance. Similarly, Uthman bn Foduye was a follower of Maliki school of thought and a Qadiri Sufi order by affiliation. Despite that, Uthman bn Foduye relies upon the Qur’an, the Sunnah and ijma’ (a consensus of Muslim scholars) to substantiate his all point of view. Therefore, whatever in variance with these sources he would be rejected.

Uthman bn Foduye, as it earlier said that he initially got the cooperation of people in Hausaland due to the outstanding characters that he displayed. For example, in all the banu ‘Öl-Fulani, to which Uthman bn Foduye belonged was not only the largest section of the Torankawa, but also enjoyed the highest reputation for learning and piety. The most learned among them in the eighteenth century was Uthman bn Foduye’s father, Muhammad Foduye (the learned). A certain veneration and prestige were attached to Uthman bn Foduye’s family as the heirs and custodians of a rich heritage of learning and piety which predisposed society to accept the religious and intellectual leadership of a section of that family… This explanation, quite in accord with traditional Islamic thinking, illustrates the way in which Hausa society looked at such family and helps to explain why Bn Foduye was found acceptable as a religious leader from the early age.

It is pertinent to note that Uthman bn Foduye’s ethical approach had played an important role in organizing his society in Hausaland. Although, it is agreed that religion played a vital role in uniting people of different tribes. Virtually, Islam extinguishes any tribal differences, in which everybody would be considered brother to one another. Therefore, Uthman bn Foduye based on his sincere mission builds the society that because of compliant teachings of Islam moulds the life of people ideologically, socially and morally.

Intellectual Factor

As stated earlier that one of the major challenges encountered by Uthman bn Foudye in his efforts to reform and organize his society was that of the venal scholars in one hand, and traditional rulers on political issues on the other. Nevertheless, societal organization could not be possible without the interplay of intellectual approach and other factors. Thus, it has been reported that Uthman bn Foduye in his attempt to change the traditional society of Hausaland to an organized Islamic state, has adopted a systematic methods of being a resident teacher and at the same time a mobile teacher. These methods is said to have great impacts in massive mobilization of his people, while significantly it caused the rapid circulations of his mission to everywhere in Hausaland within a limited period of time. The detailed discussion of these approaches will be elucidated in the coming paragraphs.

Furthermore, to understand a clear picture of the above mentioned approaches that employed by Uthman bn Foduye in manifesting his teaching and preaching activities, it is extremely important to note that, he (Uthman) began his mission at the age of twenty (1774-75) at his home town Degel. Later on, he started traveling with his brother, Abdullah and other followers, assisting him in


disseminating religion of Islam. However, Uthman further went to the East and the West (everywhere), calling people to the religion of Allah by means of admonition and composing poems as well as reciting them in the local languages (Fulfulde and Hausa). He was also discussing traditions that were contrary to the religion of Islam. It was at this time that many people from various and distance places come to join his movement. Abdullahi in one occasion stated that they remained with Uthman bn Foduye in the town of Degel until later they went to the town of Kebbi (presently, a state in North-western part of Nigeria). Therein, he called people to various things namely to the right paths and faith, Islam and kindness, he further instructed them to abandon the tradition that were contrary to the Islamic Shari’a. in consequence, many of them repented, and when Uthman returned to Degel (the main centre of his movement), they came to him in groups listening to his admonition. It was because of this that Allah made him acceptable at first. Later on, his mission spread to the lands, until his people became numerous.54 This indicates that Uthman’s initial phase of transformations was simultaneously going as a resident and a mobile teacher.

Additionally, Tahir opines that, initially, Uthman preaching lasted for twenty years from 1774-1793, thus, however took the method of tours in the course of which he delivered sermons, taught and wrote textbooks, treatises and poems The sermon and poems were in the people's languages. Mostly in Fulfulde, the Uthman’s mother tongue. He had to resort to tour and to composing poems in the languages of the people he was trying to preach who were in fact Muslims but whose Islam he challenged.55

Philosophically, from the beginning, Uthman did not concern his preaching to the pagan who had never accepted Islam. Rather, he was concerned to the Muslims who have mixed Islamic practices with traditional pagan rituals. These in the views of Uthman were unacceptable in Islam. This is the reason why his movement was considered as a revival of faith. Hence, Uthman himself was called a Mujaddid or a ‘Reformer of Faith’.56 It has been reported that Uthman made Degel his centre for mobilization of students; he hoped to be an exemplary town. Therefore, he stayed there for 20 years, teaching, preaching and writing.57 This suggests that Degel could said to be the first learning centre in the early period of Uthman’s struggle to eradicate all the fabricated innovations in the Hausaland and finally to establish Islamic state.

**Revolutionary Approach**

The major concern of this section is to highlight the efforts of Uthman bn Foduye and his Jama’ a in the organization of Islamic state which finally results undertaking JihEd against the rulers of Hausaland. It is important to note that revolutionary approach is the change that results in a war. Although, it is significant to bear in our mind that Uthman bn Foduye did not revolt against the rulers of Hausaland until when they tried to assassinate him. Thus, he called upon his people to take arms is an act of Sunnah. This is the reason why he commanded his people to engage in battle with the enemies of Islam.

54 Abdullahi bn Foduye, Tazýn al-Waraqat, P. 5.
55 See Ahamd Tahir, P. 85.
56 Ibid.
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Military Factor

This is the last approach that Uthman bn Foduye and his Jam‘a, undertook on their effort to organize Islamic society based on Islamic tenets. It is understood from the preceding, the various methods and approaches of Uthman bn Foduye in his mission. Confidently, Uthman bn Foduye was then satisfied to launch Jihad against the un-Islamic government of the Hausaland. Hence, he believed, it was enough to do so, since he educated his community, and they understood what is all about the difference of Islamic government and un-Islamic ones. It was in this situation that Uthman bn Foduye expressed the need for an Islamic government when the Hausa rulers tried to eliminate him and his community.

It is noteworthy that, as the power of Gobir decline under Naifata (the then Sultan of Hausaland). Consequently, perhaps his son, Yunfa succeeded him, and became Sultan. It is said that there were ties between Yunfa and Ibn Foduye; men like Abdullah were very suspicious of Yunfa’s intentions. The following year, Yunfa tried to kill Uthman bn Foduye at Alkalawa. Thus, Uthman bn Foduye wrote many books, in which he clearly described the obligation of Hijra from dar al-Kur to Dar al-Islam, and the obligation for the appointment of commander of the Muslim believers. Such among books are; Wathıqat ahl- al-Sudan, Kitıb Bayan Wujıb al-Hijra alal 'Ibıd and Ması’ il al-Muhimmah, it was in this book, Masa‘il, Uthman bn Foduye stated clearly the obligations of emigration and jihad against pagan states. In addition, he mentions specific complaints, such as the illegality of selling the Fulani as slaves, seeing that most of them were Muslims. This insistence on the particular instead of on usual in the theoretical works of the Uthman bn Foduye.

Finally, this infuriated the Sultans of Hausaland who, as a reprisal for the humiliation restrained and attacked 'Uthmın's followers living in their domains. But their action only gave further support to 'Uthmın. Thereupon, he gave to each of the fourteen trusted companions a flag, blessed them and sent them out to fight in the name of Allah. The whole of the Hausaland was consequently plunged into Jihad, and by 1225 CE/1810 AH 'Uthmın and his lieutenants had gained control of practically all the Hausa States. It seems that this marked the establishment of the Islamic state that later known as the Sokoto Caliphate.

Issues and Challenges of Contemporary Muslim Reformers

In the introduction of this paper, discussion has been made clearly as to the origin and objectives of the previous-mentioned Muslim reformers. As stated that among the qualities of Muslim reformer, most be a pious, not innovator but a follower of the Prophetic teachings. If that is the case, nowadays, many in the Muslim countries wanted to reform Islam, but lacked such qualities and sound approaches to undertake the mission. Some of them instead of reforming Islam they blindly turn to be a group of extremists who have totally deviated from the path of Islam and its teachings.

A brief Survey of Contemporary Challenge of Islam

John L. Esposito vividly explains the contemporary challenge of Islam, in which he opines that:

The history of contemporary Islam is a story of challenge and response, tension and conflict, atavism and creativity or renaissance, retreat and advancement, religious and intellectual retenchment, reformation and revolution. It has been dominated by two major struggles: the first, the wars of independence at the turn of the twentieth century, when much of the Muslim world struggled to free itself from dominion by European powers; and the second, in the latter half of the century, the internal battle

58 Murray Last, 13
59 Ibid.
over religio-cultural identity and integrity associated with Contemporary Islamic revivalism and the reassertion of Islam into public life.\textsuperscript{60}

From the foregoing, what would be highlighted here is the second struggle as opines by Esposito. Although, the major challenge of contemporary Muslim reformers is how to deal with such challenges and in what way they have to approach it toward success. Therefore, attention should be made to the approaches of Uthman bn Foduye for better solution in today’s struggle. Hence, it might not say that Uthman bn Foduye was hundred percent perfect in his approaches, even though he has something to be questioned, such as his sudden condemnation of the activities of the rulers and the people of Hausaland. Despite that, his vast knowledge of Islam is of great importance to be considered and the various methodologies that employed in manifesting his mission.

However, what would be the target that has been repeating in this paper is the Islamic reforms of Uthman bn Foduye which some of the historian considered as the ‘Fulani revolution’. Therefore, in comparing the approaches of Uthman bn Foduye in his Islamic reforms and society building, various things would be considered as a major challenge to contemporary Muslim reformers. Thus, this discussion will be enumerated and analyse some of them in order to serve as a matter to be considered to whoever wants to reform his society. They are as follows:

1. Nowadays, Muslim reformers in most of the Muslim countries are not well verse in the science of history which will guide them to understand the impacts of the previous Muslim reformers to their societies. History must be studied for the purpose of differentiating what is right and wrong from past generations. The importance of history is to understand yesterday, today and tomorrow for better realization of what will promote and develop society. Nonetheless, some Muslim reformers are not quite knowledgeable on different sciences of Islam; and yet they wanted to reform their society.

2. Needless to say, Muslims who wanted to reform their societies lacked systematic approaches. They were doing it by force through attacking and condemning people activities without teaching them to understand the positive of what they are doing. However, most of the Islamic reformists no doubt need to be taught the fundamental principles of Islam, just to understand what is lawful and unlawful. They went further to criticise the government and its leaders instead of meeting with them in an Islamic manner. Their aim is to establish Shari\textsuperscript{\textregistered}ah by whatever means. Based on the observations of what is presently happening in most of the majority Muslims countries, it may be concluded that among those who totally lacked systematic approaches in their missions are Boko Haram in Nigeria, ISIS in the Middle East, and Taliban in Afghanistan among others. Confidently, these groups are more terrorists than Islamic reformers.

3. The aforementioned groups of militants lacked sincerity, perseverance, and continuity in their missions. Islamically, perseverance is very important in any acts of reformation. For a caller to be succeeded, he has to possess such qualities. It is not the matter for one day to get success, but has to be continuously doing. If one is sincere no matter how the accusations or criticisms will not negate him to tell the truth. To understand the importance of tolerance

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and perseverance, it is important to refer to the Qur’an, where Almighty Allah mentioned the case of Prophet Nuh (A.S) while he is discharging his assignment. Allah says:

And indeed We sent Nêh (Noah) to his people, and he stayed among them a thousand years less fifty years (inviting them to believe in the oneness of Allah (Monotheism, and discard the false gods and other deities); and the Deluge overtook them while they were Zalimun (wrong-doers, polytheists, disbelievers).  

In another place, Allah says He said

“O my lord! Verily, I have called to my people night and day (i.e. secretly and openly to accept the doctrine of Islamic Monotheism. “But all my calling added nothing but to (their) flight (from the truth)…”

The above verses teach us the importance of MuwÉzabah that is perseverance in inviting people to the doctrine of Tawheed. It also understood that inviting people to Allah is not the matter of one day, one year, one decade and others, but it is a matter of continuity and delivering in a sound methodology. With this, it is not an exaggeration to say that most of the groups who wanted to reform Islam lacked such qualities.

Conclusion

It is understood from the foregoing discussions that Uthman bn Foduye played a substantial role in his struggling to reform and organize his society. Significantly, his life accommodated various things that could make him to be remembered at any time. His life is clearly depicted that he is a man of integrity and well verse in all the religious sciences. It is not an exaggeration to say that he inherited knowledge from the grass root. This is because his father was a renowned scholar in Hausaland (Northern Nigeria). Although, Uthman’s own family was knowledgeable, his son, Muhammad Bello and Nana Asma’u’s scholarship proved that. Additionally, it is understood that Uthman bn Foduye’s knowledge influenced him remarkably in undertaking his mission; he first stayed long while studying his society and its challenges. He eventually discovered that Hausaland has a lot of challenges in socio-religious, sociocultural and political aspects. His notion on society building is no doubt developed out of those challenges that he discovered. He employed a various strategies and systematic approaches towards dealing with such challenges. It was in this situation he encountered a various accusations and criticisms from his contemporaries and the then rulers of Hausaland. It has been said that their accusations were not because of his insistence on Qur’an and Haith of the Prophet, but rather because of his fame that is rapidly spreading all over the Hausaland. Hence, Qur’an and Sunnah as well as Muslim consensus was his book of references. Particularly, the life of Prophet was his model in all aspect of life.

On the other hand, Uthman bn Foduye’s success was rooted on sincerity that he expressed in his mission. This is how later succeed against his enemies and finally established Islamic Caliphate that survived up till 1903 when the British colonialists over thrown the Caliphate. It is understood that Uthman bn Foduye’s chronology of his intellectual activities contributed his success. These are the major challenges that this research discovered for the contemporary Muslim reformers. Hence, they lacked systematic approaches and sound methodologies along with other qualities that would give them smooth success to their target. It is therefore recommended that Uthman bn Foduye’s approaches need to be employed.

61 Qur’an, Surah, Ankabut, 29:14
References


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