



Original Article

## The Methods of Uthman bin Foduye's Teaching and Preaching in Islamizing the Pre-Colonial Nigerian Society

Shuaibu Umar Gokaru<sup>a\*</sup>, Aizan Bt Ali @ Mat Zin<sup>a</sup> & Ahmad Faisal bin Abdul Hamid<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Islamic History and Civilization, Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya

\* Corresponding author, email; gokarushuaibu@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

Uthman bin Foduye (1754-1817) was born and raised in Hausaland (presently Northern Nigeria) where the inhabitants lived in a darkness of ignorance about Islam. This study is based on qualitative approach. The method of documentary used in the data collection. On the other hand, it employs the usage of documentary and inductive in data analysis. The findings reveal that Uthman bin Foduye has distinctive methods in teachings and preaching towards Islamizing the pre-colonial Nigerian society. He was distinguished with these methods among other scholars of Hausaland who had earlier before him intended to Islamize their societies but failed due to the lack of systematic methods in teachings and preaching. Additionally, the findings have further revealed that Uthman has successfully Islamized Hausaland and mobilized his disciples in a peaceful manner without quarrelling with the rulers of the land. It might be added that he, however, charged his disciples to base their lives according to the Islamic Shari'a, where upon, Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) are their main sources of reference. This research recommended that contemporary Islamic scholars should try to employ systematic methods in teaching people to understand the pure Islamic religion, which forbids associating any partner with Almighty Allah. They should also have to have bravery, tolerance, and sincerity like that of Uthman bin Foduye in discharging their missionary activities.

**Keywords:** Methods, Nigerian Society, Teaching, and Preaching, Uthman bin Foduye

### Introduction

Learning is the most important things that Uthman bin Foduye devoted his entire life on. He spent twenty years acquiring different sciences of Islamic knowledge under the distinguished scholars of his time. Among his teachers, apart from his father who taught him the knowledge of Qur'an, others are his paternal and maternal uncles. Out of his relations, the most influential among his teachers is Jibril Umar of Agadez, who was said invigorated and issued a licence to Uthman bin Foduye to impart what he learnt accordingly in order to change the traditional society of Hausaland to a well-organized Islamic society. It has been stated that Uthman bin Foduye received various licences of academic excellence from his teachers. This was the reasons why he excelled and produced various literature on different fields of Islamic knowledge. However, it is reported that 18<sup>th</sup> century was considered the era of the darkness of ignorance in

Hausaland. Consequently, Uthman bin Foduye appeared in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to call people back to the original Islam as taught by the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions. Basically, Uthman bin Foduye emphasized that knowledge is the foundation of social developments. This implies that without knowledge a society cannot develop to the high level of civilization. To substantiate this statement, Uthman bin Foduye in his chapter<sup>54</sup> of his magnum opus, *Bayan Wujub al-Hijrah*, has vividly declared that:

A person without knowledge is like a town without inhabitants. Therefore, the best thing that should be found in a Sultan particularly, and in people generally, is the love of knowledge and interest in listening to it, as well as reverence to those that have it. It is also of the most emphatic things by which he (the Sultan) will cause the subjects to love him. If a king (or a leader) is void of knowledge, he will ride on his soul's desire and hurt (harm) his subjects. He will be like an animal that goes through various roads without a halter (or leash). That animal could destroy whatever it passes over.<sup>1</sup>

The above quotation consciously suggests that knowledge is the most integral foundation for the development of one's life in this world and his success in the next life. Thus, the most developed society is the one that its leader is knowledgeable, this is because when he acts according to his knowledge no one among his subjects will be cheated, but otherwise he will judge out of his ignorance which to the extent may hurt his subjects. This shows that for a person to change or Islamize his society must be well versed in Islamic sciences that would enable him to do so. This may be the reason why Uthman bin Foduye spent many years while seeking knowledge and the behaviours of the people of Hausaland. Consequently, within a short time, he was able to Islamize the society by removing and eradicating social vices that were directly against the pure teachings of Islam.

### **The Approaches of Uthman bin Foduye in his Teaching and Preaching Activities**

To begin with, in what way Uthman bin Foduye disseminating his teaching and preaching. Hence, as noted that to Uthman, through the perpetual acts of teaching and preaching it can uproot whatever against the real teachings of Islam. Thus, the approaches that he used in achieving his target are the chief concern of this section. Moreover, the systematic approaches that have been adopted by Uthman are in itinerant/mobile and resident way. That is to say, he was an itinerant/mobile teacher, at the same time a resident teacher. These are the two approaches that Uthman applied in spreading his teaching and preaching careers. It could be said that Uthman has done this just to provide a new face of Islamic reform movement and to avoid the failure of unsystematic ways that have been followed by his teacher.

Before going any further, it is useful to know what is all about the role of resident teacher. Therefore, Gada has clearly viewed that "resident teacher is the teacher who lives in one place and established a school or centre where he teaches students. Such a teacher could be an indigene or an immigrant. At times, such a teacher would be given spiritual or political leadership as it used to happen to the early days. In the traditions of Hausaland, such scholars were appointed as Imams and custodians of the established Qur'anic schools. They became the

---

<sup>1</sup> Uthman bin Foduye, *Bayan Wujub al-Hijrah ala al-Ibad( The Hijrah Obligation)*, translated. & edited by Abubakar Buba Luwa and Suleiman Musa, in *Selected Writings of Uthman bin Foduye*, Vol. 3 (Gada-Biyu, Gusau, Nigeria: 'Iqra' Publishing House, 2013), 184.

consultants in the religious affairs of their people, in all the socio-religious functions such as naming ceremonies, wedding ties, and funeral prayers.”<sup>2</sup>

While mobile teachers, on the other hand, are “Islamic religious teachers who move from place to place with the sole aim of teaching religious knowledge. They could be those known as itinerant scholars in the early centuries of Islam. However, the mobile scholars as have had them in Hausaland could differ slightly from the early itinerant scholars since the former were those who moved together with children entrusted to them by their parents while the latter were those who moved individually visiting different places where they settled for a period of time and imparted knowledge of Islam to the people they met.”<sup>3</sup>

From the foregoing, it is vividly suggested that Uthman bin Foduye in his attempts to change the traditional society of Hausaland to an organized Islamic society was simultaneously followed all of those mentioned approaches. It could be said that he is a resident teacher and at the same time a mobile teacher. These methods are said to have great impacts in massive mobilization of his movement, 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.

However, to understand a clear picture of the above-mentioned approaches that employed by Uthman bin 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 hometown 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 bin 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 traditions 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.<sup>4</sup> This indicates that Uthman’s initial phase of transformation 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.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad Moi Gada, *A Short History of Early Islamic Scholarship in Hausaland* (Sokoto: Department of Islamic Studies, UDUS, 2010), 76.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 77-8.

<sup>4</sup> Abdullahi bin Foduye, *Tazyin al-Waraqat*, P. 5.

<sup>5</sup> See Ahmad Tahir, P. 85.

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.'<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> This suggests that Degel can say to be the first learning centre in the early period of Uthman's struggle to eradicate all the fabricated innovations in Hausaland and finally to establish an Islamic society.

### **Who are the Targeted People in Uthman's Teaching and Preaching?**

The above discussion has clearly depicted the first category of people that Uthman directed his teaching and preaching to, nevertheless, it is significant to broadly categorise them in order to further understand his philosophy of employing two methods in delivering his teaching and preaching. As a matter of fact, by considering all the surrounding of Uthman's struggle to establish an ideal society based on the dictate of Shari'a, it may conclude that those concerned in his teaching and preaching activities would not go beyond the following categories.

### **Ignorance of the Masses Concerning Islam**

While in his hometown, Uthman discovered that people were in a state of the darkness of ignorance about what Shari'a has prescribed concerning one's belief. Therefore, in his attempts to overcome such problem which, since he noted earlier in preparing ground for the manifestation of his mission, soon later, he encouraged the common people to study the basic knowledge for the necessary discharging of their religious obligations, after that, they should leave the explanations to the scholars.<sup>8</sup> It seems that people were convinced to study gradually, with this; they, however, inclined to receive the knowledge from Uthman. Thus, he philosophically invited them to know the fundamental principles of Islam, as will be seen in the coming paragraphs.

Before going any further to understand and appreciate the role of Uthman bin Foduye and his concerns regarding the ignorance of the masses about Islam, though, to understand the wisdom behind his being a resident teacher, it is important to note that his son, Muhammad Bello describes the nature of ignorance of people concerning Islam. In so doing, Bello said that it is so hard to find anyone among people of the Hausaland whose faith was pure and worship properly at the time of his father's appearance. Most of them were ignorant about Islam and rituals. Thus, Uthman bin Foduyecategorises them into different categories, in which among them there were those who were pure believers at the same time worshipped stones. And there were who pronounced Tawheed while at the same time mixed up Islam with blameworthy acts

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Moshe Tadiman, "a Research on Islam and Muslims in Africa". Retrieved from: <https://muslimsinfrica.wordpress.com/2013/03/15/caribbean-memories-of-slavery-and-the-myths-of-uthman-dan-fodios-sokoto-caliphate-dr-moshe-terdiman/>. Accessed on 1 February 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Isma'il .A.B. Balogun: "A critical edition of the *Ihya' al-Sunna wa-Ikhamad al-Bid'a* of 'Uthman b. Fudi, popularly known as Usumanu Dan Fodio" (University of London Ph.D. thesis, 1967), pp. 112-113.

which said to have inherited from their predecessors. It was in this situation Uthman bin Foduye started inviting them to Allah.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, as regards to the serious nature of ignorant people of Hausaland, more especially about the issue of purification, Uthman bin Foduye, to appreciate his role in reforming pre-colonial Nigerian society, has dedicated a considerable book for such purpose. The book is titled: "Ruling on the Ignorant People of Hausaland." In this book, Uthman categories the ignorant people of the Hausaland into two categories:

1. The first, is the category of those who (take abath) wash off the impurity and perform the ablution for prayer and never go for al-Tayammum (dry ablution substitute) except for a reason. They avoid strange women (women of marriageable age that are not related to them). They revere Islamic scholars and ask them about the issues that confuse them in their religion. They never make amockery of the religion of Allah, and they have never heard refuting anything that is necessarily an integral part of the religion. Therefore, Uthman declared that these are certainly Muslims. All Islamic provisions are applicable to them. For it is never heard of them, as it is normally being heard of the people of Hausaland, something that contradicts the statement of testimony. Uthman finally supported his argument with Allah's saying: "And do not say to him who greets you with Salam that you are not a believer."<sup>10</sup>
2. Contrary to the first category, the second category is of those who never clean up themselves from impurity, never perform ablution for prayer. Their wives do not avoid relating to strange (men of age but not related) men. They neither revere Islamic scholars nor ask them anything that confuses them in their religion. In fact, they mock the religion of Allah and refute the fact that the dead shall be raised again. These certainly, are disbelievers. The Islamic provisions not applicable to them even they verbally recite testimony... in supporting the fact which testified that they are disbelievers, Uthman quotes this verse: "Say; Is Allah and His signs, and His Messenger, (PBUH) that you make amockery of you have no excuse, you are disbelievers."<sup>11</sup>

The aforementioned indicates that the first thing which Uthman invited people to, is the oneness of Allah that is Islamic monotheism and ruling about rituals. Evidence in this regard is what Uthman declared in his magnum opus, *Ihya; al-Sunnah walkhmadal-Bid'a*. For example, in chapter four of this book, he (Uthman) has clearly explained the principles of Iman, in which he emphasized that every believer must take his faith from the Glorious Qur'an since Almighty Allah has prescribed all the principles of Iman.<sup>12</sup> In supporting this argument, he made reference to the saying of Almighty Allah:

It is not *Al-Birr* (piety, righteousness, and each and every act of obedience to Allah, etc) that you turn your faces towards east and (or) west (in prayers); but

---

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Bello, *Infaq al-Maysur*, at pp. 58-61. Translated by Alfa Umar Muhammad Shareef in the introduction of his translation of *Ihya' al-Sunnah wa Ikhmad al-Bida'ah* written by Uthman bin Foduye, p. 20

<sup>10</sup> Qur'an, Surah al-Nisa, 4: 94, in Uthman bin Foduye, *Hukm Juhhal Bilad Hausa (Ruling on the Ignorant People of Hausaland)*, in Selected Writings of Uthman bin Foduye, Vol. 1. edited and translated by A.B. Yahya & Yasi Islam Nabingo (Gada-Biyu, Gusa, Nigeria: Iqra' Publishing House, 2013), Pp. 27-8.

<sup>11</sup> Qur'an, Surah al-Taubah, 9: 65-66.

<sup>12</sup> *Ihya' al-Sunnah wa Ikhmad al-Bid'a*, translated by Muhammad Shareef Farid, 109.

*Al-Birr* is (the quality of) the one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book, the Prophets...<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, in the same passage of *Ihya'*, Uthman asserted that:

The consensus of scholars upholds that whoever affirms the two testimonies, ruling of Islam is implemented on him. He could be married to a Muslim woman, can lead prayers and the animal he slaughtered can be consumed. The Muslims can inherit him and can inherit from them. He is to be buried in the graveyard of the Muslims.<sup>14</sup>

The foregoing indicates that for a person to be complete Muslim, he must believe in all the above-mentioned principles of Iman, as clearly sets out in the Qur'an. This implies that Uthman aims were only to reform his society in line with the teachings of Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) since they are sources of reference in his teaching and preaching.

Nevertheless, in another quotation, Abdullah further explains the level of ignorance of the people of Hausaland and how Uthman bin Foduye worried with their situation in teaching them the laws of Islam. He has this to say:

In Zamfara, we stayed therein for almost five years, and it was a land on whose people ignorance was overwhelming. Most of its people had never smelt the fragrance of Islam. They use to come to Shaykh Uthman's council mixing with their women. He separated them and taught them that it is forbidden for men and women to intermingle. He, therefore, taught them the pillars of Islam. However, some evil people spread therumour that the congregation was a meeting point for men and women.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, it should be noted that Uthman bin Foduye at a number of places in his writing and preaching, showed anxious about what most of the scholars of Hausaland were doing in leaving members of their families in darkness of ignorance without giving attention to them in order to teach them or to send them to school, so as to know their religious obligations. This was clearly mentioned in the essay of Muhammad bin Yusuf bin Salim bin Ibrahim. Wherein Uthman quoted that:

Scholars of Hausaland were day and nights together with their students teaching them the religion of Islam, but carelessly they left their daughters, sons, wives and their slaves without knowing anything about Islam. In fact, they considered them as wild animals that have not any benefit attached to them, or even as apot which once it breaks it would throw away as a waste. They were not concerned to teach them about the rights of Allah against them. It was in this case that Uthman bin Foduye called upon women do not to respond to the calls of any misguided scholar who commanded them to obey their husband by saying the success of women in this life in obedience to her husband. But in reality, they do not command them to obey Allah and His Messenger (PBUH). Uthman, however,

---

<sup>13</sup> Qur'an, Surah al-Baqarah 2: 177.

<sup>14</sup> Uthman bin Foduye, *Ihya al-Sunnah wa Ikhmad al-Bid'ah* (Reviving the Sunnah and Suppressing the Innovation), Vol 1, translated by Abdul-Hafeez Isma'il Ojoye & et als, (edt) by A. B. Yahya (Gada-Biyu, Gusau, Nigeria: Iqra' Publishing House, 2013), 80.

<sup>15</sup> Abdullah, *Tazyin al-waraqat.*, 5.

emphasized that this is nothing but only to have self-glorification or to be popular among their students.<sup>16</sup>

The above quotation shows the deep concern of Uthman bin Foduye regarding the education of the people of Hausaland particularly the women. It may be assumed that Uthman believed that women will serve the foundation of society, so their knowledge is of great importance in order for the society remains knowledgeable about religious obligations particularly members of the family, for example, the children.

It should, however, be noted that, during Uthman's struggle and tour for teaching and preaching, an important event occurred which needs to be mentioned here. Although the mission was still in Zamfara, the Sultan of Gobir, Bawa (who was said the most powerful King in Hausaland during his time), invited all the 'Ulama' of his state to his court at Magama, during 'idul-Adha. (Sacrifice Festivity: the tenth of Dhul Hijjah) and gave them gifts. All of them accepted the Sultan's gifts except 'Uthman who stood in front of him and demanded instead five things from the Sultan:

1. To allow him to call people in Sultan's province
2. Not to stop anybody who intends to respond to his call
3. To treat with respect any man with a turban
4. To free all the (political) prisoners
5. Not to burden the subjects with taxes<sup>17</sup>

Immediately, the Sultan Bawa responded to the demands of Uthman, saying "he has assuredly granted him all that he has requested, and Bawa accepted that Uthman does all the things that he wants to do in this land. It was, for this reason, Abdullah says they thanked Allah and returned back to Degel establishing religion while others came back with wealth.<sup>18</sup>

Analytically, Hamza and Isa Maishanu have pointed out that Uthman meeting with the Sultan of Gobir won the hearts of many people. Most of the scholars present during the 'Id al-Kabir celebration joined the rank and file of his supporters. This also enlarged his respect throughout the area and subsequently was to set the stage for future conflict with subsequent rulers of Gobir. According to them the privilege granted to the Uthman by Sarkin Gobir Bawa were clear indications of the political dimension which the Uthman's movement was gradually assuming. Added that the call for the release of political prisoners and the abolition of uncanonical taxes were both social and political matters, while the wearing of turbans and veils were suggestive of the uniqueness of Uthman's followers: the Jama'ah, which gradually was developing into a separate, confident community.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, in describing the methods of Uthman bin Foduye's public preaching and his approach to the people, Muhammad Bello, a productive writer like his father, elucidates in a long quotation saying that his father:

---

<sup>16</sup> Uthman bin Foduye, *Tanbih al-Ihkwan ala Jawaz ittikhaz al-Majlis li ajli Ta'alim al-Niswan Ilm Furud al-ayan min Din Allah ta'ala al-Rahman*, edited by Aminu Bukhari Sokoto, Nigeria, 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> El-Masri, 441.

<sup>18</sup> Abdullahi bin Foduye, *Tazyin al-Waraqat.*, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Maishanu, *The Jihad and the Formation of the Sokoto Caliphate*, 125.

Once he went to a place to deliver a lecture, he used to sit calmly and greeted people with the greetings of Islam three times in a laudable voice... While delivering his lecture, he never showed any anger to those who were sending questions; rather he would stop and answer their questions before proceeding. Uthman never afraid of the presence of scholars who attended his lecture, he used to speak to them on what is acceptable to him. This is nothing but a little among his distinctive characters in his mission of preaching. His main intention was to teach ignorant people and remind the neglectful scholars...<sup>20</sup> Muhammad Bello, May Allah be pleased with has further described his father's methods of teaching and preaching, whereupon he says "He used to go out every Thursday to give admonition to the people... Many people used to join his lectures... He would go out in some of the nights after 'Isha prayer diligently conveying the knowledge of Islam and important wisdom. He used to go out after the 'asr prayer to give instructions in the sciences of *Tafsir* of *Qur'an*, Hadith, Jurisprudence (fiqh) and Mysticism."<sup>21</sup>

Thus, intelligently and sympathetically the masses were ready first to comprehend and to accept Islam and Uthman's ideas of changing their ailing society. Despite that, from the above quotation, it is silently suggested that Uthman's approach in teaching and preaching was in a polite manner, without any embracement to the ignorant people who were forcing questions while he is delivering a lecture. This indicates that whoever wants to invite people to practice Islam and abstain from evil acts, he must be tolerant and so kind otherwise people will go away from him and would never listen to him.

### **The Traditional Rulers of Hausaland**

This is the second group that Uthman worried about their ignorant about Islam. Therefore, the proceeding shows how he gradually taught people of Hausaland and reformed them to differentiate what is Islam and what is not. To understand how important role Uthman played in teaching and preaching ignorant people about Islam, it is pertinent to note that, he was never confined himself only to the common people, but rather, he extended his missionary activities to the ruler of the Hausaland. In this regard, it has been stated that Uthman is not used to going to the Kings, nor did he has any relationship with them. However, when his people became numerous and his affairs became famous in the palace of Kings and others, he found it necessary to go to them. In consequence, he first went to Sultan Bawa, the King of Gobir, and explained the correct Islam to him, instructing him to keep to that, and to establish justice in his land. Then he (Uthman) returned to his homeland and was able to call (people) to religion on that account, in the sense that people who did not have the fear of Allah were afraid of rejecting Uthman's instruction. This is because of his connection with the Sultan Bawa...<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, to understand the nature of Uthman's approach of preaching, it is significant to note that Uthman, while meeting with the Sultan of Gobir, Bawa, he showed wisdom and sensitivity in preaching Islam to the rulers of Hausaland. His approach was neither

---

<sup>20</sup> Isma'il, U. S. A, "Towards an intellectual history: some reflections on the literature of the Jihad and the caliphate", Sokoto Seminar 1975, 4. Quoted from Abdullah bin Foduye. *Tazyin al-Waraqat*, 20-21.

<sup>21</sup> Muhammad Bello. *Infaq al-Maysur*. Pp. 94-95. Quoted in Muhammad Shareef translation of *Ihya al-Sunnah*, 32.

<sup>22</sup> 'Abdallah bin Foduye, *Tazyin al-Waraqat*, 5.



confrontational nor violent; it is clearly simple. He showed respect to them but advocated before them the tenets of Islam without any fear. He handled Bawa in such a manner that he granted all his requests,<sup>23</sup> as categorically mentioned before.

The above indicates that Uthman was fearless about saying the truth. His contact with the then powerful ruler of Hausaland shows his good determination in order to let the words of Allah and His Messenger prevail Hausaland. In another way, it is a good attempt which indirectly teaches the contemporary Muslim scholars to be sincere and generous in disseminating their knowledge without any bias or supporting blameworthy acts for worldly interest, as in the case of those who regarded as political scholars. Nowadays, it becomes so difficult for most of the contemporary Muslim scholars to approach a Kings or powerful politicians to admonish them or to advise them about areligious matter. This is because of fear of losing their jobs and what they often get from them.

### **The Venal Scholars and their Activities**

This is the third category that Uthman targeted in his missionary reform. Despite the successful achievements that he recorded through his teaching and preaching methods, while at the same time writing, nevertheless, he encountered a massive criticism from worst scholars of Hausaland. This happened not because on his sticking on the message of the Glorious Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH), but rather because of the rapid spreading of his mission all over the Hausaland. It was because of this criticism, later they attack him with various accusations. Among which, he was misguiding the people of Hausaland.<sup>24</sup> However, Abdullahi bin Foduye mentioned that when they arrived ata place called Daura in company of Uthman bin Foduye, an erudite scholar of Borno origin (presently a state in North-Eastern part of Nigeria), the scholar who was called Mustapha, and was known with his nickname, Gwani which meant an expert (hence erudite scholar), came to them, meeting them with his poem in which he instructed Uthman bin Foduye to prevent women from attending his admonition.<sup>25</sup>

On the above-mentioned accusation by Mustapha Gwani, Uthman therefore said to Abdullah that you are the right person to respond to him. Hence, in replying to Gwani, Abdullahi initially stated that it is religiously obligatory based on the consensus of scholars, to do the lesser of two evils concerning religion and the worldly affairs. Relying on this rule, Abdullah vividly responds to Mustapha that "the evil of leaving women in ignorance of what they do not know their (religious) obligations, and they do not basically know Islam, that evil is greater than the evil of their mixing with men. Then Abdullahi asked him that he should understand this ruling.<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, it has been reported that most of those scholars who are accusing Uthman Dañwa were connected with the ruler's palace; their own target is to protect their interest not the religion of Islam. Therefore, whatever the blameworthy acts that were prevalent in the land were not concerned about them. To understand some of their whims, Uthman bin Foduye stated that:

---

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

Among their misunderstandings is that some of them (i.e. scholars) tolerate worthless customs on the grounds of the saying, which is widespread in the lands that the custom of a land is Sunnah. But this is untruth and confusion according to the consensus of opinion (*ijma'*) because a custom should not be abided if it contradicts the Sunnah (of the Prophet)... Uthman further asserted that he was told by someone of the brethren that he heard some of them say 'Forbidding evil in the land of evil is the real evil'. And for this reason, they do not blame each other for committing an evil. I take refuge with Allah the exalted; this is one of the features of the Jews.<sup>27</sup>

Given this understanding, it becomes clear that Uthman bin Foduye has specifically compiled a special treatise to remind people of the necessity and permissibility of women's education outside the home, on the condition that it is to understand the Islamic rituals. Hence, the treatise was purposely to refute the arguments of venal scholars against his teaching and preaching in Hausaland.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Analysis of Uthman bin Foduye's teaching and Preaching Methodologies**

The previous discussion outlines various methods used by Uthman bin Foduye in changing the Nigerian society. Hence, the methods ought to be extracted in order to shed more lights on the rational wisdom behind implementing them. Therefore, the following is an attempt to understand some of the important methodologies that may be assumed the factors that persuaded the minds of the people of Hausaland towards joining Uthman's movement. This may be unique methods or something else as can be seen in the following discussion.

1. In his teaching methodology, he first started with teaching people about Islamic monotheism and rituals. Uthman bin Foduye did so in order to guide them how to purify their *iman*, to perform prayers, fasting during Ramadan, giving alms and pilgrimage. In a nutshell, to understand the clear teaching methodology of Uthman bin Foduye, Muhammad Bello, his son, mentioned that he used to go out every Thursday to deliver sermons to the people. Also, he says that he (Uthman) used to go out after '*Isha* prayer to deliver a lecture, yet he used to go out after '*Asr* prayer to instruct people on various sciences which include the science of Qur'an, Hadith, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf*<sup>29</sup>. Thus, these show that Uthman bin Foduye excelled in systematic teaching methodology, in which, every day has its own themes for discussion.

2. From the side of his preaching, Uthman bin Foduye was regarded as a resident and yet an itinerant scholar who was touring from one place to another, but something surprisingly is his sound methodology in preaching. For example, it has been said that he is instructing the people with multiple languages, that is to say, he is preaching in his mother tongue, Fulfulde, and Hausa language respectively. This was so amazing to his people, because wherever he found Hausa people he talks to them in Hausa, likewise the Fulani of his tribe. Therefore, using a multiplicity of languages is no doubt guides Uthman bin Foduye's acceptance in the eyes of the people of Hausaland. To substantiate this statement, it is important to refer to the Qur'an, in order to

---

<sup>27</sup> Al-Hajj: "Meaning of the Sokoto Jihad", Sokoto Seminar, Nigeria, 1975, 7.

<sup>28</sup> For the detailed explanation on this issue, see Uthman bin Foduye. (nd), *Kitab Tanbih al-Ikhwan 'ala Jawaz 'Ittikhidhi al-Majlis li 'ajli Ta'alim al-Niswan 'ilma Furud al-a'yan min Din Allah Ta'ala al-Rahman*. Arabic Manuscript edited by Aminu Bukhari Sokoto, 2-12.

<sup>29</sup> Muhammad Bello, 31-32.

understand that Allah's Messengers were all sent not, except with the languages of their people. For example, Almighty Allah says:

And we sent not a Messenger except with the language of his people, in order that he might make (the Message) clear for them. Then Allah misleads whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And he is the All-Mighty, the all-Wise.<sup>30</sup>

This suggests that for any instructor or reformer to be understandable by his people he should talk to them in their own language, otherwise most of them will not understand him. Yet, it will take the time to know what he wanted to deliver.

3. Perseverance is another approach used by Uthman bin Foduye in conveying his mission. Up to the end of his teaching and preaching, he never shows discouragement in touring to a different part of Hausaland. It is understood that he instructs people in both town and villages. Therefore, for someone to achieve his aims, must be perpetuated and sincerely, it is not a matter of using force or any other means unless when it is warranted. For example, preaching according to Sulaiman "is the effort to transform society, is basically a peaceful process which should not be disagreeing or create deliberate tension or complaint, he added that there is no way in which people can be changed through force. If using force it becomes necessary, it should not be invited from the person whose job or assignment requires peace and cognitive."<sup>31</sup>

4. Nevertheless, in his preaching, he (Uthman) used a sound philosophy which to some extent when he was invited by the Sultan of Gobir, he refused to accept his gifts, but instead, he demands five things. And yet, all the requested five things were not concerned him, rather they concerned his people. This caused people of Hausaland understood that his mission is for their survival. Then they considered him as their teacher and at the same time a leader. To support this assertion, Olamide has opined that Uthman preaching must be considered not only for religious reform but also for the reformation of economic and political aspects of the land. Therefore, it was because of this, the oppressed people of Hausaland "Talakawas" join him against the rulers of the said land. They wanted to have a new system of administration since they were economically oppressed. Equally, the Fulani who were said influential economically and politically supported the government of Hausa States in order to fight against the emergence of Uthman's movement, so that they could maintain their financial position.<sup>32</sup> Despite that, Uthman has successfully defeated them in collaboration of the majority of those who supported him. And finally organized a peaceful movement of change. With these, one cannot deny that Uthman bin Foduye at the initial phase of his movement did not engage in any acts of fighting.

## Conclusion

The foregoing discussion describes that Nigerian society was originally Islamized by Uthman bin Foduye and his disciples. This may be true when one glances at the historical situation of Nigerian society before and after the advent of colonial masters. It is understood that what helped Uthman bin Foduye to successfully achieve in Islamizing the society was because of his

---

<sup>30</sup> Qur'an, Surah Ibrahim, 14: 4.

<sup>31</sup> See Ibrahim Sulaiman, 74.

<sup>32</sup> Ayoola Akinkunmi Olamide, "Usman Dan Fodio's Jihad: A Cross Between A Religious and Political Movement". Retrieved from: <http://www.articlesbase.com/writing-articles/usman-dan-fodios-jihada-cross-between-a-religious-and-political-movement-3912169.html>. Accessed on 01 February 2016.

distinctive methods that he initially and continuously adopted in his missionary activities. The methods are said to be unique in nature, because nor one among his predecessors did the same. Nigeria in its historical setting, a multi-religious state, despite that he finally and formally established an Islamic society. However, the tradition of Islamic learning in Nigeria continues to be the same as in the time of Uthman bin Foduye, even though there are some modifications in the systems. The discussion played a substantial role in highlighting the various methods that any scholar needs to be adopted in Islamizing his society. Because most of the methods of Uthman bin Foduye's teaching and preaching resembled that of Allah's Messengers, such as his perseverance, tolerance, and using a multiplicity of languages or rather the language of his people are among the factors responsible for his success. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Islamic nature of Nigerian society and the reasons for the Muslims majority of its population today, was the impacts of Uthman bin Foduye's teachings and preaching. Evidently enough, with the total population of Nigerian Religions, based on overall statistics, Muslims have constituted about 50% of the population while about 40% are Christians and finally, about 10% are pagans<sup>33</sup>.

## References

- A. M. "Ethno-Religious Relations in the Sokoto Caliphate: Lessons for Contemporary Africa." In e. b. Yakubu (ed.), *The Sokoto Caliphate: History and Legacies, 1804-2004. Vol. 2*. Kaduna, Nigeria: Arewa House, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2006.
- Abdul-Aziz, A.-F. O. *Islam in Nigeria: One Crescent many Focuses*. Shomolu, Lagos: Sakirabe Publishers, 2007.
- Abdullahi bin. Foduye. *Tazyin al-Waraqat. (1813/1228)*. Ed. & trans. M. Hiskett. I.U.P, 1963.
- Abdullahi bn Foduye. *Diya' al-Sutanwagairihi min al-Ikhwan fi Ahammi ma Yadlubu minhum fi haza al-Zaman (A Guide to the Sultan and other Brothers)*, ed. By Suleiman Musa, and trns. By Abubakar Buba Luwa in, *Selected Writings of Shaykh Abdullahi bn Foduye, Vol. 3*. Gada-Biyu, Gusau, Nigeria: Iqra' Publishing House, 2013.
- Abubakar, S. *The Lamibe of Fombina*. Zaria. Nigeria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1977.
- Abubakar, S. *Notes on Sakkwato Jihad*. Kaduna, Nigeria: Joyce Graphic Printers & Publishers Co, 2003.
- Adamu, Y. M. "Learning Scholarship in the Sokoto Caliphate: Legacies and Challenges." In H. Bobboyi & A. M. Yakubu (ed.). *The Sokoto Caliphate: History and Legacies, 1804-2004. Vol 2*. Kaduna, Nigeria: Arewa House, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. 2006.
- Adeleye, R. A. "Hausaland and Borno." In Ajayi, J.F.A. and Crowder, M (eds). *History of West Africa, Vol 1 (2nd. ed)*. London: Longman Group Ltd, 1971.
- Bello, A. The Influence of Early Muslim on the Jihad Leaders of the Sokoto Caliphate. *A Journal of Islamic Sciences and Muslim development* 10, (2014).
- Bello, M. *Infraq al-Maisur fi Tarikh Bilad al-Tukrur*. London: C. E. J Witting, 1957.
- Bivar, A. D. Wathiqat Ahl Al-Sudan: A Manifesto of the Fulani Jihad. *The Journal of African History* 2, 2 (1961): 235-243.

---

<sup>33</sup> Nations Encyclopaedia: Nigeria-Religions. Cited from: <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Nigeria-RELIGIONS.html>. Accessed on 20 May, 2016.

- Bologun S.U. Arabic Intellectualism in Africa: The Role of Sokoto Caliphate. *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* vi, 2 (1985).
- Bologun, I. A. *The Life and Work of Uthman Bin Foduye: The Reformer of West Africa*. Lagos, Nigeria: Islamic Publication Burea, 1975.
- Bologun, I. A. *The Life and Works of 'Uthman Dan Fodio: The Muslim Reformer of West Africa*. Lagos, Nigeria: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1975.
- Bugaje, U. M. *The Sakkwato Model* . Sokoto, Nigeria: Muslim Enlightenment Committee Niyzamiyyah Islamiyyah School, Sakkwato, 1980.
- Bugaje., U. M. "The Contents, Methods, and Impact of Shehu Usman DanFodio's Teachings (1774-1804)." (M.A Dissertaion. Khartoum, Sudan, University of Khartoum, 1979).
- Foduye, A. b. *Ida al-Nusukh. Edited and trans. Hiskett M. Zaria*. Nigeria: Northern Region Literature Agency, 1958.
- Foduye, A. b. *Tazyin al-Waraqat (Decorating Pages with Some of my Poems), Translated and edited by Abubakar Buba Luwa and Sulaiman Musa, in Selected Writings of Shaykh Abdullah ibn Foduye, Vol. 2., Gida-Biyu, Gusau, Nigeria: Iqra' Publishing House, 2006.*
- Foduye, U. b. Nasa' ih al-Ummah al-Muhammadiyah (Trans. By M. Hiskett) in "An Islamic Tradition of Reform in the Western Sudan from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century",. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, n.d.
- Foduye, U. b. *Nurul al-Bab, and Tamyiz al-Muslimin min al-Kafirin, transl. by Jafar Kaura*. (n.p.p): (n.p.), n.d.
- Foduye, U. b. *The Book of the Differences between Government of the Believers and Non-Believers, tran. And ed. Hiskett M*. Sokoto: Sokoto State government, n.d.
- Foduye, U. b. *Ifham al-Munkirin alyya fima Amuru al-Nas'wama anhahun 'anh*. Cairo: (n.p.), 1959.
- Foduye, U. b. *Bayan Wujub al-Hijrah alal 'ibad, ed. And trans. By F. H. El-Masri*. Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1978.
- Foduye, U. b. *Reviving the Sunnah and Suppressing the Innovation, Vol 1, translated by Abdul-Hafeez Isma'il Ojoye& et als, (edt) by A. B. Yahya*. Gada-Biyu, Gusau, Nigeria:: Iqra' Publishing House, 2013.
- Foduye, U. b. *'Usul al-'Adl liwilat al-Umurwa Ahl al-Fadl (The Principles of Justice for Men with Authority and Honour), edited by Suleiman Musa, and translated by Abubakar Buba Luwa in Selected Writings of Uthman bin Foduye*. Gada-Biyu, Gusau, Nigeria: Iqra' Publishing House, 2013.
- Foduye, U. b. *Hukm Juhhal Bilad Hausa (Ruling on the Ignorant People of Hausaland), in Selected Writings of Uthman bin Foduye, Vol. 1.edited and translated by A.B. Yahya & Yasi Islam Nabingo*. Gada-Biyu, Gusau, Nigeria: Iqra' Publishing House, 2013.
- Foduye, U. b. *Kitab al-Farqbayna Wilayat ahl-al-IslamwaBayna Wilayat ahl al-Kufr, tran. And ed. Hiskett M*. Sokoto, Nigeria: Sokoto State Government, n.d.

- Foduye., U. b. *Bayan Wujub al-Hirahalal 'Ibad (Arabic Text). Edited and Translated by Sulaiman Musa & Abubakar Buba Luwa in Selected Writings of Uthman bin Foduye, Vol. 3 .* Gada-Biyu, Gusau, Nigeria: Iqra' Publishing House, 2013.
- Gada, A. M. *A Short History of Early Islamic Scholarship in Hausaland.* Sokoto, Nigeria: Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Department of Islamic Studies, 2010.
- Gwandu, A. A. "Aspects of the Administration of Justice in the Sokoto Caliphate and Shaykh's Abdullahi bin Foduye's Contribution to it." In S. K. Rashid (ed), *Islamic Law in Nigeria: Application and Teaching.* Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, n.d..
- Gwandu., A. A. "The Vision and Mission of Shaykh Abdullahi Fodio." in H. Bobboyi and A. M. Yakubu (eds.), *The Sokoto Caliphate: History and Legacies, 1804-2004. Vol. 2.* Kaduna, Nigeria: Arewa House, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2006.
- H. F. C. Smith. 'A Neglected Theme of West African History: The Islamic Revolutions of the 19th Century. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, (n.d.).
- Hiskett, M. *The Sword of Truth: The Life and Times of the Shehu Usuman Dan Fodio (Islam and Society in Africa).* United States: Northwestern University Press, 1994.
- Hogben, J. *An Introduction to the History of the States of Northern Nigeria.* Ibadan, Nigeria: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- The Oxford English Dictionary* ) Vol. X P. 402. Clarendon Oxford Press, Second Edition, 1989.
- The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings, English Revised and Edited by Saheeh International .* Al-Muntada Al-Istalami, London: Abul-Qasim Publishing House, 1997.
- Umar, M. S. *Islam and Colonialism: Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria to British Colonial Rule.* Brill Leiden-Boston: The Netherlands Library of Congress, 2006.
- Uthman bin Foduye. "Najm al-Ikhwan Yahtaduna bihi fi Umur al-Zaman." Edited by A.B. Yahaya, and translated by Abubakar Buba Luwa in *Selected Writings of Shaykh Uthman bin Foduye, Vol. 3,* Gada-Biyu, Gusau, Nigeria: Iqra' Publishing House, 2013.
- Uthman bin Foduye. *Tanbih al-Ikhwan ala Jawaz ittikhaz al-Majlis li Ajli Ta'alim al-Niswan ilm furud al-a'ayan min Din Allah Ta'al al-Rahman, ed. by Bukhari Sokoto.* Sokoto: Nigeria, n.d.