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## FOREWORD

Many Muslims scholars in Africa feel that there is a pressing need for a journal to bridge the academic gap between Africa and the rest of the Muslim world, and also to serve as a forum through which scholars can exchange ideas and develop research ties.

This task is being taken up by the INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA.. this is an academic institution set up for the purpose of strengthening Islamic culture in “Africa South of Sahara”. One of the challenges which we have to face is the lack of accurate information about this areas and the many misunderstanding about its history and societies, such areas of study have in the past been the monopoly of a few western scholars who have not always been unblessed vis-à-vis Islam and African Muslims.

The time is now ripe for Muslim scholars, who specialize in this area, to come forward and bring some balance to the world of research.

We are accordingly inviting our readers, to join hands with us, so that we may set this project moving, we hope that you will be able to participate by sending papers on any of the subjects mentioned below. It will also help if you would kindly circulate this journal among your colleagues and (or) draw our attention to any scholars whom you fell will be able to help in realizing this project.

Dirasat Ifriqiyya takes special interest in the following areas of specialization.

Islamic education in Africa.

The Arabic language in Africa.

The spread of Islam in Africa.

Islamic Da'wa and Christian missionary activities in Africa.

The cultural background of African Muslim societies and their impact on African practice of Islam.

Social economic and political relations between Africa and the rest of the Muslim World.

Institutions of scholarship in and ( or) having to do with Africa. The journal will publish essay in Arabic, English or French. It will initially be published twice annually.

Authors of papers accepted for publication are offered an honored in appreciation.



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- authors are requested to indicate their qualifications, their present occupation, address etc.
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*Dr. Abd al-Rahman Ahmed Osman.*

# Re- Occurrences of Religious Crisis in Northern Nigeria: Away forward

■ By DR. Muhammad Kyari,  
Department of History,  
University of Maiduguri

## مستخلص :

هذه الورقة أعدت لدراسة النزاعات الدينية المتكررة في شمال نيجيريا بالتركيز على الدين الإسلامي. وتأتي هذه الدراسة لأن معظم السكان الذين يقطنون في هذه المنطقة من المسلمين، كما أن النزاعات انفجرت بينهم . وتحاول هذه الورقة الإجابة على السؤال، لماذا يتجدد انفجار هذه النزاعات ؟، وما هي المعايير التي تمنع انفجار هذه النزاعات مستقبلاً من أجل تحقيق السلام والأمن الاجتماعي؟ .

## Abstract:

*This paper set to study the wave of religious crisis with emphasis on the Islamic religion. This is because majority of the people inhabiting the area are Muslims and the crisis erupt from the Muslims. Why are these crisis re-recurring and what solid measures would prevent their eruption, for a peaceful and secured society.*

## Introduction:

There are two types of religious conflicts and in broad term, the crisis that occur between followers of different religions ( known as inter-religious conflict) and the one that erupts between followers of

the same faith ( called intra-religious conflict). All of them happened and continue to happen in Nigeria and specifically in Northern Nigeria. This paper is concerned with the one happening between followers of the Islamic religion in Northern Nigeria. We will take a historical account and analysis of such crisis and proper solution to prevent future occurrences of such conflicts.

### **Pre-colonial Northern Nigeria:**

The pre-colonial northern Nigeria belonged to the former Borno and Sokoto caliphates, where the Muslim dominate. The middle belt, where the Idoma, Igala, Jukum and Plateau people and Tiv reside non-Muslims were in majority. Amidst the Muslims we found also, the Kingdoms and chieftains of Pabir-Bura, Bade that were not wholly islamised like Borno and Sokoto. In this mixed society, the people lived peaceful to some extent. They lived with their various governments, and undergoing considerable transformation and changes before the final onslaught from the European powers.

Islam reached Kanem-Borno in the eleventh century, to Hausaland in the thirteenth, but Christianity reached Northern Nigeria with the coming of the British colonial power in the nineteenth century. Even through, it was recorded that, there were wars of conquest in Kanem-Borno, and the prominent Sokoto jihad, religion, per se was not a debatable issue by then. It was rather, political and economic matters that usually precipitated hostilities and chaos in the region.

### **Northern Nigeria from independence and growth of religious groups:**

The European colonial masters met with stiff resistance in Sokoto, where the Sultan Attahiru I lost his life in Satiru in march 1903<sup>(1)</sup>. TO reach compromise and to have peace installed, the agreement of

non interference with Islam was concluded between traditional rulers and the British colonial masters. The rulers hence assumed an autocratic position under indirect rule for the convenience of the British colonial power not for Islam.

With the attainment of political independence the whole country came under a secular constitution, But what kind of secularism was adopted? A real secular state does not exist, that is an atheists, state which has no concern for religion. The 1979 suspended constitution, provides for freedom of religion, association, and speech etc. Thus, interpretations varied, while others saw in it multi-religious society, others reading that government has no say in religious matters. For the Christian, secularism was already instituted in the Church following the renaissance, give God what is God's and unto Caesar what is Caesar's. This division between the spiritual and the mundane, will not have a place in an Islamic set up. This is because Islam has a say in virtually everything, from the social, political, economic matters.

The power therefore enjoyed by the leadership in the North was swept by the new structure and arrangement. When the traditional rulers loose political control, religious matters passed to the ulama with collaboration with the rulers. The ulama class in northern Nigeria belonged to the sufi brotherhoods or Tariqa- the Qadriyya and Tijjaniyya. And they take serious to God's call, preparing inward activities over out-awardness. The sufis are spiritualists than legalist, though a combination of both is honourable among the ulama .The members of the two brotherhoods relate warmly, nay with suspicion. But once the goal is same there should be no rancor<sup>(2)</sup>.

In the 1970s with the local government reform which had

as its immediate impact reduction in the powers of the emirs, many groups and dissents appeared. People started to organize public lectures, many mosques were built. But giving unlimited freedom, the structures that held the North in unity was seen to disintegrate. Apart from the brotherhoods, who believe in Qur'an hadith and the saying of the ulama, we also have the Qur'aniyun who believe only in the Qur'an then, in the late 1970s the Muslim students society influenced by the 1979 revolution in Iran became a recognizable force in the quest for the establishment of Shari'ah. Around the same time, the Jama'atu Izalatul Bid'ah wa ikamatissunnah was established. The later called for Qur'an and Hadith only. The emergence of these groups led to abuses fighting leading to skirmishes between them. The most prominent was the Maitatsine crisis of 1980. It started in Kano under the leadership of Muhammad Marwa alias Maitatsine. He was called Maitatsine because of the curse he showers on his opponents more especially the ruling class. What was seen as a "child play", gradually spread to various parts of the north, Maiduguri, Jimeta- Yola, Gombe etc. this conflict was destructive, causing lost of several lives and properties worth millions.

Muhammad Marwas who held from Marwa town in Cameroon was first deported from Kano during the reign of emir Sir Muhammad Sanusi in late 1950's. After the deposition of the emir, Marwa came back and continued with his nefarious activities. His followers were largely the Qur'anic pupils ( almajirai) who engaged in the memorization of the Qur'an. The fact that, they do not further their education to other fields and knew only the Qur'an is a major problem. At the place of their abode the Yan Awaki quarters, a government was established within a government. This is because they obey only Marwas, violate Nigerian laws, abuse people for using modern things

even trousers or with shirt with button etc. e finally declared himself a prophet, when attempt was made to arrest him for prosecution, it was vehemently resisted. The fighting with police was to their advantage.

The then president and Commander in Chief, Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari drew the army to quell the riots.

The followers of Muhammad Marwa that escaped from Kano continued with his mission in Maiduguri in 1982, where the prominent sergeant Akuya and host of other policemen lost their lives. Musa Makaniki and cohorts launched similar offensives in Jimeta-Yola, 1984 and Gombe in 1985.

The Muslim student's society was not engaged in conflict with Muslims but always at loggerhead with government on the issue of Shari'ah implementation. As pointed above, the youths were influenced by what happened in Iran. The M.S.S. at ABU had many of its members expelled for engaging the radical socialist/communist supporters in campus. Ibrahim al-Zak-Kaky led a group of brothers in calling for Shari'ah implementation.

Other youths from MSS saw the need to form an umbrella of graduates of MSS thus, the Muslim ummah came into being. This groups had intellectuals like Ibrahim Suleiman, Usman Bugaje, Salihu Abubakar, at the fore front. None of these groups is fighting Muslims. But the Izala group came to fight fellow Muslims over interpretation of some verses. There were many instances of fighting in mosque as who is to be an Imam, or rather the Izala will prefer to have its oven mosque as who is to be an Imam, or rather the Izala will prefer to have its own mosque instead of the established traditional mosque on minor issues. The group of al-Zak-zaky became not only tilted to

Iran but embraced the shiite doctrine, so there were reported clashes in Zaria recently in 2010.

To crown it all, a more radical and impatient group, Yusufiyya, followers of Muhammad Yusuf popularly addressed by the press as Boko-Haram came up. This group not only rivaled all of the above, but showed that they were slow and pro-status-quo. They were provoked by the men of “operation flush” which ultimately led to violent clash<sup>(3)</sup>. The people of not only Maiduguri where the crisis started are facing the consequence but the whole country is in jeopardy. The rise of this group and the subsequent security problems being faced in Borno State is like a “set up”. The fact that, the leader and a former commissioner, Buji Foyi were extra-judicially killed, and many of those arrested were either killed or discharged for want of evidence points to a cover up.

The crisis which this group has brought could not be matched with Maitatsine or the pre-colonial Rabih’s attack on Borno.

### **Conclusion:**

The paper looked into Northern Nigerian society at pre-colonial time, colonial and post-colonial periods. The Northern Nigeria society lived in peace and to some extent in harmony with individuals and neighbours. The paper observed that freedom (unlimited) introduced by independent Nigeria has given many groups and individuals the opportunity to revolt and also clash with fellow Nigerians both Muslims and non-Muslims. These crisis or conflicts has a long devastated effect not only on the North but the country at large. The conclusion one draws from this is that individuals are left in pool of ignorance, while the government itself being ran without direction.

The government and people must be in same direction not par-

allel one. Nigerians are religious while the government wants to be secular. Its secular position seems undefined. So, if justice and equity is practiced all will be going at the same path, unmolested and will lead to peace harmony and sustainable development.

**Recommendations:**

- As a matter of fact, the paper posed these recommendations for the government to implement:-
- Government should implement the recommendation of the various committees and commission set up to investigate religious crisis in Nigeria.
- There is the need to provide effective educational structure and programme. The education we acquire must be of benefit to Nigerians her and hereafter, through the integration system.
- Traditional methods of conflict management, like using rulers and religious leaders must be employed.
- Those employed must be paid adequately and the unemployed by provided with stipends as a security measure.
- Regulatory boards and commission be set up to check excesses or contradictory vies.
- The prophet of Islam whom Muslims emulate, live side by side with Jews, Christians and pagans. The Muslims, Christians and others need to be educated to live in peace. The recent Egyptian example should serve as a lesson. At Tahrir square Christians, guarded Muslims to pray vice-versa.

- Justice and equality will go a long way in providing final solution to all our intra and inter-religious conflicts.

**Endnotes:**

(1) Last, M. the Sokoto Caliphate, Longman 1979

(2) Muhammad, M. )47) Oral Interview, Maiduguri 15/1/33 = 10/12/11

(3) See, Imam M.S. and Kyari, M. ‘ Yusufiyya and the Nigerian State’ for details.

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