

INTERACTION BETWEEN ISLAM AND HAUSA CULTURE AFTER SOKOTO CALIPHATE IN NIGERIA AND THE ROLE OF COLONIALISTS

Mukhtar Umar Dagimun

Department of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies,
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto

Email: dagimu2012@gmail.com

Abstract: Islam provides full guidance on all aspects of man's life. It regulates the conducts of man to be in line with the tenets of the *Shari'ah*. Every community or tribe has their own customs, traditions, norms and values that bind them together. In the same vein, Hausa people were identified with their set of traditions and culture since time immemorial. Some of these customs were worthy of commendation while others were blameworthy. With the coming of Islam in the land and the reforms brought by different agencies, groups and individuals, Hausa culture were made to conform to the teachings of Islam. The Colonialists reached Hausa Land when Islam was firmly established. When they failed in massive conversion of the Muslims to Christianity, they resorted to promoting some of the Hausa cultures which Islam condemned and prohibited. This paper seeks to examine how Islam interacted with these un-Islamic Hausa culture as promoted by the colonialists and Christian missionaries to counter its teachings.

Keywords: Islam, Hausa Culture, Sokoto Caliphate, Nigeria, Colonialists

A. Introduction

Before the coming of Islam in Hausa land, Hausa people were holding unto their customs and traditions. Though some of their customs and traditions were found to be good and accommodated by Islam, yet some were found unacceptable in Islam. Despite the introduction of Islam, it was practiced alongside other syncretic acts such as magic, fortune telling, fetishism, superstitious beliefs, to mention a few. That was the condition of Islam in Hausa land before the emergence of Jihadist leaders. The prevailing evil practices and improper observance of the religion of Islam led to the Jihad of Shaykh Usman bn Foduye in 1804 which gave way to the establishment of Sokoto Caliphate. The Jihadists fought against these un-Islamic Hausa customs and venal Scholars before the coming of the colonialists in around 1903. In this regard, this paper examined the interaction between Islam and Hausa culture and how the colonialists and Christian missionaries helped in promoting these un-Islamic Hausa culture against Islam. The paper examines the effect of the interaction and analysed the results from Islamic perspective.

B. Definition of Concepts

Islam: *Islam* is from the word *salam* which means peace. It is derived from *aslama* which means to surrender or submit.¹ The definition of Islam consists of both literal and Technical meanings.

¹ M. A. Baydoun, *Mu'jam al-Tullab al-Wasiit*, Arabic-English, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Lebanon, 2006, p.47

Literally, Islam means *istaslama* which means to surrender, give up, give in, succumb, and capitulate and or to submit.² The same shade of meaning appears in some verses of the Qur'an.³

Technical Meaning of Islam: Both literal and technical meanings signify submission, however, Islam in its *shari'ah* meaning denotes total submission, obedience and surrendering oneself to the will or commandments of Allah (SWA), the Creator of the Universe.⁴ In a similar definition, Islam means submission, obedience and sincerity to the law of Allah (SWT).⁵ The meaning of Islam in this sense has been conveyed in some verses of the Qur'an.⁶

Culture: The notion of culture is very broad. It is defined as an expression of all forms of spiritual life of man- intellectual, religious, and ethical. It is best understood extensively as humanity's effort to assert its inner and independent being.⁷ Similarly, it is an embodiment of the people's way of life, the totality of their human experiences in relation to their environment and their complete design for living. It thus includes their socio-economic and political organizations, their religious beliefs and philosophies; their language and literature; their folklore and superstitions, their rule of social conducts and legal systems; and indeed their goals and aspirations.⁸

From the foregoing definitions, culture entails all aspect of man's life. Hausa culture therefore is the customs, practices and norms of Hausa people in their socio-economic, political and religious lives.

C. Hausa Culture Before The Introduction Of Islam

Culture entails the whole life of a man from his birth to death. Wherever one finds himself, the habits and customs he practices is his culture. In the same vein, Hausa people were having their own customs and traditions since time immemorial. Before the introduction of Islam in Hausa land, *Hausawa* were identified with different set of culture, tradition and customs. Some of them were upheld by Islam while others were rejected. For instance, devil possessions (*Bori*), Fetishism (*Tsafu*), superstition, witchcraft (*Maita*), dancing Magicians, are condemned in Islam.⁹ Others include; naming and birth ceremonies, circumcision, marriage customs, death and burial, to mention a few.¹⁰ Some aspects of these customs may be in line with the teachings of Islam while others may be contrary. Before the coming of Islam, Hausa people were purely holding unto their customs and traditions which constitute their socio-political, economic and religious lives. They were not having a clear guidance of *Shari'ah* rather than their own norms, beliefs and practices.

D. Hausa Culture And The Arrival Of Islam In Hausa Land

² Bilingual Arabic-English Dictionary software

³ See Qur'an 3:83 and 2:112

⁴ Qamus al-Muhaddath, Arabic-English, Shamila software

⁵ H. A. Al-Hakimy, *A'lam al-Sunnah al-Mansurah li I'tiqad al-Ta'ifat al-Najiyah al-Mansurah*, Wizarat al-Shu'un al-Islamiyyah wal-Auqaf wa al-Da'wah wa al-Irshad, al-Mumalakat al-Arabiyyat al-Sa'udiyyah, 1422AH, p.6

⁶ See Qur'an 4:125, 31:22 and 22:34

⁷ J. Hastings et-al, ed, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IV, Charles Scribners's Sons, New York, 1974, p.358.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Some of these acts lead to shirk in Islam while others tantamount to committing sins.

¹⁰ See A. M. Bunza, *Gadon fede al'ada*, Tiwal Nigeria Ltd, Lagos, 2006, pp. 1-140

Islam was introduced very early in Hausa land through various means and agents. These include traders, barbers from North Africa, Itinerants Scholars, among others.¹¹ This was the period before the Jihad of Shaykh Uthman bn Foduye. Though Islam was introduced, yet it was not properly practiced. People were nominally Muslims and the Scholars were very corrupt. These venal Scholars legitimized atrocities and injustices committed by the authorities. These venal Mallams (*ulama' al-su'*) in their effort to establish order and protect their own interests, justified political corruption, immorality and all sort of evil on the basis of local custom (*al'ada*) and tradition.¹²

We can see from the foregoing that despite the introduction of Islam in the land, Hausa culture was given more priority over the religion of Islam. Consequently, some practices which of Hausa culture which go contrary to the teachings of Islam were practiced alongside the practices of Islam. This was one of the reasons that led to the jihad of Shaykh Usman bn Foduye which founded an Islamic State before the arrival of the Colonial Masters.

E. The Arrival Of Colonialists And Christian Missionaries In Hausa Land And Establishment Of Colonial Rule

Before the British conquest in present day Hausa land, Islam was the governing system of the land established under the Sokoto Caliphate. The Caliphate was administered under the principles of *Shari'ah*. Based on the treaties concluded with some Emirs, Chiefs and community leaders; the National Africa Company obtained a charter to administer the territories of the North. Consequently, the royal Niger Company (RNC) as it became in 1886, attempted to consolidate its position through military activity in order to keep away other European rivals and also to control the numerous communities of the region. This was the beginning of the end of the independence for the various states and communities in the Northern States. A protectorate was declared and Lord Lugard was appointed as high Commissioner. He embarked on military campaign to bring back the control of the vast areas under British.¹³

In 1901, Bida and Ilorin were conquered. In September, the same year, Yola was also conquered. Kontagora, Bauchi and Zaria were conquered in 1902. In 1903, Kano was conquered and Katsina submitted peacefully which gave way to the final confrontation with the Caliph at Sokoto. Before the end of the year 1903, the British forces under general Kenbell entered Sokoto and the Sultan Attahiru fled eastward. By 1903, the major polities of the Northern region were brought under the control of the British. This marked the beginning of the colonial rule in Northern Nigeria.¹⁴

From the above account, it is clear that the British conquered the North in 1903 which led to the collapse of the Sokoto Caliphate which governed according to the tenets of Islam.

Lord Lugard promised not to disrupt the pre-existing system of government but would make it more human and Democratic. Also, Traditional rulers, their courts, traditions and customs would not be interfered with in so far as they do not go against humanity and justice. Similarly, Christian missionaries will not be allowed into the land. Unfortunately, Lord Lugard made a law prohibiting preaching of Islam and he allowed Christian missionaries into the land to carry out their activities. He

¹¹ A. M. Gada, *Short History of Early Islamic Scholarship in Hausa land*, Nadabo Print production, Kaduna, 2010, pp.2-7

¹² Y. B. Usman, *Studies in the history of the Sokoto Caliphate*, Third press International Division of Okpaku communications co-operation, Lagos, 1995, p.7

¹³ S. Abubakar, "The Northern Province under colonial rule: 1900-1959", in O. Ikimi, (ed), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Heinemann Educational Books Nig. Plc, Ibadan, 1999, p.449.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.449-450

eroded the powers of the Emirs and made them as subordinates. Courts were taken over by the British and *Shari'ah* procedure systems in civil and capital punishments were changed. In educational system, western education was introduced to compete with the *Qur'anic* schools.¹⁵

We can now understand the implication of this colonial invasion in Hausa land as follows:

- The Caliphate which regulated Hausa social Habits was toppled by the colonialists.
- *Shari'ah* law which regulated Hausa culture had its powers curtailed by the colonialists as a result of which Hausa culture which are contrary to the teachings of Islam were revived.
- Islamic education through which Muslim passed on approved Islamic social habits was challenged by the western/Christian education.
- Missionary activities sought to change the social habits of the Muslims through Christianization and promoting western social habits.
- Preaching's by the Muslims were stopped.

This clearly shows that colonialists encouraged going back to some un-Islamic Hausa culture to counter the teachings of Islam.

F. Interaction Between Islam And Hausa Culture During Colonial Period

Before the arrival of the colonialists, jihad was fought by Shaykh bn Foduye against the evil Hausa culture and the activities of the venal scholars. The Jihad was victorious and an Islamic state was established. The position of Islam was consolidated and as the state religion which dominated the life of the people culturally and otherwise. Islamic state survived for hundred years before the coming of the colonialists in 1903.¹⁶

It is clear that Hausa culture after the Jihad and before the coming of the colonialists was made to conform to the teachings of Islam. After the coming of the colonialists, some un-Islamic Hausa cultures were promoted by the colonialists in their effort to dilute, distort and counter the teachings of Islam.

G. The Colonialists And Christian Missionaries In Promoting Un-Islamic Hausa Culture To Counter The Teachings Of Islam

Seven years after the death of Shaykh Usman bn foduye (May Allah have mercy on him), European explorers met Caliph Muhammad Bello in 1824 and later in 1826-1827. The first visit featured a dialogue on historical and religious matters, while the second visit was to foster a cordial relationship between the Caliphate and the king of England. Other explorers were also in contact with different parts of the Caliphate. Though they were not missionaries or colonialists, they supported European expansion. They compiled detailed information on the history, culture, commerce and geography of the region. In reality, they were sponsored by the European governments and trade or

¹⁵ See Ibid, pp.454-464

¹⁶ T. G. O. Gbadamosi and J. F. Ajayi, "Islam and Christianity in Nigeria" in O. Ikimi, (ed), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Heinemann Educational Books Nig. Plc, Ibadan, 1999, p.347.

missionary organizations. Consequently, the explorers' information and accounts of the Caliphate became assets to the colonialists and missionaries.¹⁷

It is important to note that, with the combined effort of the traders, explorers and missionaries, the area was easily conquered. So, they believe that destruction of the Caliphate will bring about mass conversion to Christianity and curtailed the spread of Islam. In the end, the Caliphate was overthrown, and the socio-political, economic, educational and religious aspects of the land fell under the control of the imperialists and Christian missionaries. This gave them the ample power and opportunity to attack the various aspects of Islam and the Muslims. Having failed to have massive conversion to Christianity, they turned over a new leaf. That was the method of promoting un-Islamic Hausa culture against Islam.

H. Un-Islamic Hausa Culture Promoted By The Colonialists And Missionaries

As enemies of Islam and Muslims, Colonialists and Christian missionaries were not ready to uphold to the norms and values of Islam. Thus Allah says:

And never will the Jews and Christians approve of you until you follow their religion. Say indeed the guidance of Allah is the only guidance. If you were to follow their desires after what has come to you of knowledge, you would have against Allah no protector or helper.¹⁸

Their hatred against Islam is thus made clear to us in the above verse. So when they took over the control of the Muslim territory in the North, they realized that 90% of the Muslims would not renounce their religion. So, they adopted the other way round. Many of the Hausa culture prohibited by Islam were promoted through various ways. Some of the popular ones include; *Bori* cult, wine drinking, traditional dancing and cultural clubs, prostitution, gambling, *Tsafi* (magic), Superstition, Festivities and ceremonies, Cultural preservation method, Dancing magicians, Marriage customs, Death and naming ceremonies, drama and folklore, Wrestling, boxing, football,¹⁹ among others. Some of these cultures were prohibited by Islam while others were accepted. The colonialists however, encouraged and legalized many of those prohibited to the extent that some Hausa Muslims do not consider them to be sinful in Islam. Some of these customs are analyzed below:

WINE DRINKING: Before the coming of the colonialists, Hausa people were used to wine drinking known as *burkutu*. This was promoted by the colonialists having understood that Islam prohibited it. Different types of wines and method of its production were introduced. This researcher learnt that among some of those who patronize beer parlours in many Hausa cities and towns are Muslims. According to Malam Umar Ango, before the coming of Islam and the Jihad of Shaykh Usman, Hausawa used to take wine known as *burkutu*. However, it was promoted to the various types of wines we have today by the westerners.²⁰ This shows clearly how the colonialists and Christian missionaries promoted this act of wine drinking.

¹⁷ See M. U. Bunza, *Christian Missions among Muslims: Sokoto Province, Nigeria, 1935-1990*, Africa World Press, Inc., Trenton, 2007, pp.13-15. See also A. E. Barnes, *Making Head Way: The Introduction of Western Civilization in Colonial Northern Nigeria*, University of Rochester Press, U.S.A, 2009, pp.132-167.

¹⁸ Qur'an 2:120

¹⁹ See I. Madauci, Y. Isa and B. Daura, *Hausa Customs*, N. N. P. C Ltd, Zaria, 2008, p.68-77.

²⁰ Malam Umar Ango, (40yrs), H.O.D, Waziri Junaidu History and cultural bureau, Sokoto, interviewed on 23rd August, 2014.

GAMBLING: This is the act of trying to win (usually) money by playing cards.²¹ Gambling is also part of Hausa culture, but the way and manner they practiced it was purely traditional in nature. *Hausawa* used some local objects such as mango nuts or stones usually designed and played on the sand. In place of this, white man introduced different types of cards meant for that purpose. With the current technological development, it has been computerized.²² Hausa people still practice this culture particularly in rural areas. Gambling and wine drinking are prohibited in Islam. Allah says in the *Qur'an*:

O you who believe, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, (sacrificing on) stone alters (to other than Allah), and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful.²³

BORI CULT: This is known as *Iskoki* (jinns) worship. It is one of the Hausa traditional religions before the coming of Islam. *Bori* cult comprises *Bori*, *Tsafi* (magic), and *Camfi* (superstition). Before the Jihad, Hausa people interacted with jinns both black and white for fulfilling their needs such as protection of lives, and properties. Jinns are worshipped since they lay down conditions which contravene the real teachings of Islamic *Aqidah*. Despite strong footing of Islam, these practices still exist among some *Hausawa* Muslims.²⁴ According to Malam Nura, the Jihadist fought successfully against some of these evil practices but with the coming of the colonialists, they were promoted. They helped in the preservation of Hausa culture to the extent that some of the un-Islamic ones were documented by them.²⁵ Islam does not accept acts of syncretism. Muslims must be fully practicing believers.²⁶

CULTURAL PRESERVATION: This is a method introduced by the colonialists in preserving Hausa cultures which contradicts the teachings of Islam. They introduced some programs in a bid to revive Hausa culture. Indeed, they have contributed to the preservation of Hausa culture with a double face; for their amusement and to counter the Islamic values. They encourage cultural activities and legalize things forbidden by Islam such as drinking, intermingling between sexes among others. It is through their effort today that we have departments of culture all over. In Kebbi state, the department of culture was established along side with the state itself with the main motive of uplifting the cultural heritage of the state. The most popular cultural activity in the state is the Argungu cultural and international fishing festival.²⁷ The popular Kanta Museum in Argungu was also established for more than 30 years with a view to preserve the cultural heritage of Kabawa.²⁸ From the foregoing, if one examine carefully, this cultural festival is keeping the cultural heritage of *Kabawa* people alive many of which involve magical practices.

Virtually, all the states in Nigeria have cultural ministries or departments and the sole mission of these ministries is to provide public positive-oriented services in the realm of preservation, presentation, promotion and propagation of the rich cultural heritage of the people.²⁹ In Sokoto state, the former

²¹ *Chambers Universal Learners' Dictionary*, Spectrum books Ltd, 1999, p.281

²² Malam Umar Ango, *ibid.*

²³ Qur'an 5:90

²⁴ I. Madauci, Y. Isa and B. Daura, *Hausa Customs*, N. N. P. C Ltd, Zaria, 2008, p.77.

²⁵ Malam Nura Aliyu, (39yrs), H.O.D, Kebbi State History Bureau Library, interviewed at his office on 8th August, 2014.

²⁶ Qur'an 2:208-209

²⁷ Malam Nura Aliyu, *ibid.*

²⁸ *Zaruma, Mujallar Jihar Sokoto*, A Hausa cultural magazine, No.7, 1988, p.26

²⁹ www.lagosstate.govt.ng/entitles.php, retrieved on 8th August, 2014

department of information and culture was upgraded to a full pledged Ministry of Information, Youth, Sport and culture in January, 1994. The state council for arts and culture has participated in various state and National outings that are focused on the promotion of the cultural norms and values. The council has initiated research on the formation of a state festival to be held at lake, Natu, Dansadau, Gummi and Kalmalo hills. The council has also introduced a cultural magazine known as *Zaruma* which educate people on the cultural development of the people. In addition, Waziri Junaidu History Bureau was established to preserve historical and cultural materials. It facilitates the preservation, collection, documentation of historical, archeological and people outstanding of culture.³⁰ It is believe that Muslims can however utilize these ministries and departments of Cultures in line with the dictates of the *shari'ah* as against the motive behind their introduction by the colonialists. For instance, they promoted Hausa traditional dancing and music which encourage mixing of males and females together. Under the ministry of youth, sport and culture, there is cultural troops who are been sponsored to observe cultural music and dancing during ceremonies and festivities. And they comprise both males and females moving together, eating, among others.³¹ These can lead to illicit sexual intercourse which Muslims are warned not to come even near to it.³²

I. Hausa Films And Drama

Records have it that the colonial masters introduced the region to the world of film through establishing a company called Colonial Film Unit (CFU) at the beginning of the 20th century. The film unit of the Northern Region (present day Kano and other states) took over its activities years after. Thus new films were made to celebrate and, thereby, bond people to the Empire. *Dan Arena a London*, for instance, is on 'how the typical Northerner would conduct himself in London'. Other types of films included those on traditional/political personalities (like the late premier of the region, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello), on independence, on the political process such as elections, and on political parties. The post-independence period marked the emergence of private production companies and the appearance of a rash of historical and cultural documentaries like: *Hausa Marriage*, *Hawan Sallah*, *Kano Heritage*, *The Sallah Dubar*, *A Ballad of Katsina* among others. The company has, also to its credit, produced more films such as *Ruwan Bagaja* and *Kulba Na Barna* among others. But these are, however, not produced as an entity-film but as drama series/serials broadcast on the local television stations, for example the National Television Authority (NTA) and City Television, Kano (CTV), now called Abubakar Rimi Television Authority, Kano (ARTV). Some of those artists made the earlier actors and actresses of the present day films.³³

The famous American anthropologists, Brian Larkin, traces that the production of Hausa videos developed out of older forms of popular culture in northern Nigeria. *Wasan Kwaikwayo*, or drama, has a long tradition in Hausa society and continues to be popular. It was also, asserted that the Hausa video film was literally born in 1990 with the first Hausa language film, *Tirmin Danya* in Kano, northern Nigeria". The local film industry is called Kannywood (name-styled after Hollywood, Bollywood, Nollywood of the U.S, India and Nigeria, respectively). It was recorded that between 1990

³⁰ "This is Sokoto State", A Handbook, Ministry of Information, Sokoto, 1993, pp.61-62.

³¹ Mal. Zayyanu Garba Layya, (32yrs), Civil servant, Interviewed at Argungu on 23rd August, 2014, Malam, Abdullahi Umar, (35yrs), Civil servant, Argungu, interviewed at Argungu on 23rd August, 2014.

³² Qur'an 17:32

³³ M. M. Ibrahim, Hausa Film: Compatible or Incompatible with Islam and Hausa Culture? As quoted in A. U. Adamu, Transglobal Media flows and African popular Culture: Revolution and Reaction in Muslim Hausa Culture, Lecture for African Studies Association, U. K. Biennial Conference, University of London, 2006.

and 1997, the Kano-Kaduna axis produced some fifty video films. Hausa film industry today, makes up over 30% of the Nigerian film industry.³⁴

Hausa film and Drama which stem from Hausa drama (*wasan kwaikwayo*) was promoted by the Christian and western colonial masters in Nigeria. The colonialists have indeed promoted some un-Islamic Hausa culture against Islam and they are still in operation.

J. Conclusion

Hausa people were known for their culture and traditions since time immemorial. With the arrival of Islam, some of them were condemned such as *bori* cult, magical practices, among others. In the early 18th century, Shaykh Usman bn Foduye was made to fight Jihad against these evil customs and made Hausa culture conformed to Islamic teachings. He successfully established an Islamic state which survived for hundred years. In the early 19th century, the colonialists and Christian missionaries overthrown the Caliphate and established the colonial administrative system. When they found it difficult to change the people's religion, they took another option by promoting Hausa culture to counter the teachings of Islam. It was through their effort that some of the un-Islamic cultures survived to this day.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adamu, A. U. (2006). *Transglobal Media Flows and African Popular Culture: Revolution and reaction in muslim Hausa Popular Culture*. London: U.K Biennial Conference, University of London.
- Barnes, A. E. (2009). *Making Headway: The Introduction of Western Civilization in Colonial Northern Nigeria*. U. S. A: University of Rochester Press.
- Baydoun, M. A. (2006). *Mu'jam al-Tullab al-Wasiit, Arabic-English*. Lebanon: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah.
- Bunza, A. M. (2006). *Gadon fede Al'ada*. Lagos: Tiwal Nig. Ltd.
- Chambers Learners' Dictionary. (1999). np: Spectrum Books Ltd.
- Gbadamosi, T. G. (1999). *Islam and Christianity in Nigeria*. In O. I. Ikimi, *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan: Heinmann Educational Books Nig. Plc.
- Hastings, J. S. (1974). *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (Vol. IV)*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Madauci, I. I. (2008). *Hausa Customs*. Zaria: N. N. P. C. Ltd.
- Bunza M. U (2007), *Christian Missions among Muslims: Sokoto Province, Nigeria, 1935-1990*. Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc.
- "This is Sokoto State," (1993), *A Handbook*, Ministry of Information, Sokoto.
- Usman, Y. B. (1995). *Studies in the History of the Sokoto Caliphate*. Lagos: Third Press International Division of Okpaku communications corporation

³⁴ Ibid