

## **Da'wah methods applied by Shaykh Uthman bn Foduwe for the reformation of Muslims in (Hausa land) Northern Nigeria.**

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**ABSTRACT:** This research is on the da'wah struggle and its methods which were applied by Shaykh Uthman bn foduwe for the reformation of Muslim communities in Hausa land in Northern Nigeria. The research has shed more light on the people's favourable mass response to the Shaykh's da'wah which led to the total reform of the society (Tajdid) and establishment of a Caliphate known as Sokoto caliphate.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

His full name is Shaykh Abu Muhammad, 'Uthman bn Muhammad Foduwe (Foduwe is a Fulani title for a learned man or jurist) son of 'Uthman son of Salih son of Ayub, son of Harun, son of Muhammad gorde son of Muhammad Jibo son of Muhammad Sambo, son of Ayub, son of Masarana son of Ayub, son of Abi bakr son of Musa (Jakolo). Before the Da'wah of Shaykh Uthman bn Foduwe and the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate in Northern Nigeria, majority of the inhabitants were pagans embracing all forms of traditional disbelief including idolatry. Even though Islam was introduced into the area, but most of the people who accepted it were more concerned about its acceptance than its strict observance.<sup>1</sup> Thus, many of those who accepted Islam observed the religion side by side with paganism, hence the existence of un-Islamic trend of mixed Islam. According to Hiskett:

Hausaland (Northern Nigeria) before the *Jihād* (of Shaykh Uthman) was reduced to mere syncretism and superstition. *Bori*-spirit worship, divination and sacrifices to objects like trees and mountains had become common practices among Muslims who only professed the religion in theory, but upheld paganism in practice. The aim of the *Jihād* was to purify Islam based on the teachings and practices of the Holy Prophet and his companions.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, by the time Shaykh Uthman emerged, Hausa land (presently Northern Nigeria) comprised both Muslims and non-Muslims. Even within the Muslim population few observe their religion very strictly while great majority mixed it with traditional un-Islamic customs and traditions.<sup>3</sup> In *Nur al-Bab*, Shaykh Uthman classified the entire Hausa Society into three; namely pure Muslims who observed Islam very strictly and did not venerate any object; pure non-Muslims who did not accept Islam and are the majority, and Muslims who mixed Islam with veneration of trees and rocks.<sup>4</sup> They performed Islam in a corrupt and innovative form and negated the deeds of Islam by making sacrifices to trees, while others offered Islamic rituals but not in the way directed by the *Shari'ah*. Shaykh Uthman therefore showed his concern on the need to eradicate the widespread innovations and customs that contradicted the correct belief system of Islam and its devotional practices through preaching. The *Da'wah* and reform movement carried out by Shaykh Uthman bin Fodiyo in Northern Nigeria directly attacked the widespread of innovations and customs that contradicted the teachings of Islam. Anti Islamic customs promoted among the Muslims in all facets of life were suppressed and eliminated. The *Da'wah* also led to the formation of the Muslim *Ummah* guided by the caliphal system of administration in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century C.E. According to Sambo, Islamic Caliphate of Sokoto...

is that Islamic government which was based on the pattern of the orthodox Caliphal system founded by the Prophet of Allah Muhammad, (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and which he bequeathed to Islamic communities all over the world as a *modus operandi* for every Muslim *Ummah* to emulate and be governed by. The major sources of jurisdiction for this Caliphal system of government are the *Qur'an*, the *Hadith* (traditions of the Prophet (SAW) and the *Ijma'* (consensus of *Ulama*) and *Qiyas* (analogy) deduced by scholars of every epoch.<sup>5</sup>

This article is therefore an attempt to study *da'wah* Methods applied by Shaikh Uthman bn Foduwe for the reformation of Muslims in Northern Nigeria.

## II. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Previous studies on the *Tajdid* movement of Shaykh Uthman and his lieutenants are blessed with a variety of literature on a number of subjects. Many researchers have been carried out on a good number of the works of the Shaykh and his lieutenants in the areas of editing, translation and general discussions of their views on a number of topics. In this research, an evaluation or assessment of existing works known to the researcher that are relevant to the topic of research have been conducted. A survey of the numerous related works which are too many to be listed here, reveals that non have written specifically on the *da'wah* Methods applied by Shaykh Uthman bn Foduwe for the reformation of Muslims in Hausa land.

## III. METHOD

This research is qualitative in nature, it required the researcher to read the literature on the subject and analyses it using critical thinking, the analytical method is therefore used. It is a method which allowed the utilization of critical thinking to find out facts about the topic and decide whether a given claim is true or false. Attempts were also made to establish how the *da'wah* activities came into being and its method which leads to its spread and acceptance. This research therefore focuses on causes, effects and outcome of the *da'wah* activities of Shaykh Uthman bn Foduwe for the reformation of Muslims in Northern Nigeria.

## IV. RESULTS

This research has found that Shaykh Uthman started his *da'wah* at the early period of his age and he dedicated his time in explaining the fundamentals of Islam. The research also gathered that the *Da'wah* (preaching) of Shaykh Uthman received the response of many followers which encouraged him to continue and expand it beyond his home town to other parts of Hausa land. Also, in addition to open air preaching he also devoted his time to teaching and writing at the same time which helped in producing extensive texts (literature) to be studied by his students in the various study circles in Hausa land. The research also found out that Shaykh Uthman is a pioneer in encouraging women to seek for education and knowledge. His *da'wah* has helped purge the *Ummah* from the laxity and decline that accommodate it, it has also purge the religion from innovations and superstition practices that have crept into it, it advocate piety and simple life in the mind of the Muslims, and promoted strict adherence to Islam.

## V. DISCUSSION

Shaykh Uthman bn Foduwe started his preaching at the age of 20 in about 1188 A. H. /1774 C. E. He combined both preaching and studying at the same time. In the formative period of his preaching, he dedicated his time in explaining the fundamentals of Islam. His *Da'wah* (preaching) received the response of many followers which encouraged him to continue and expand it beyond his home town to other parts of Hausaland. In *Tazyin al-Waraqat* his brother Abdullah stated:

Then we rose up with the Shaikh helping him in mission work for religion. He travelled for that purpose to the east and to the west, calling the people to the religion of God by his preaching and his *Qasidas* in other languages and destroying customs contrary to Muslim law.<sup>6</sup>

He therefore travelled to the neighbouring states, starting from Kabi where he met its people and preached to them;

"He called them to the reform of the faith, and to Islam, and good works and to abandon customs contrary to them. Many of them repented, and travelled to him in groups, when he returned to his country, listening to his preaching, and God caused them to accept him for the first time. "<sup>7</sup>

Then he moved to Zamfara where he spent some five years calling several pockets of people who had not in fact accepted Islam yet. Shaykh Uthman and his lieutenants had to remain there preaching and admonition people to Islam. Shaykh Abdullah said:

Then we moved to the country of Zamfara to call its people to Islam. We remained there about five years, and it was a land over whose people ignorance was there theme; the majority of its people had not smelt the scent of Islam. They used to come to the sheikh gathering mingling with their women. He aggregated them, teaching them that mixing together was forbidden, after he had taught them the laws of Islam.<sup>8</sup>

Shaykh Uthman was to remain, for some 19 years, as an itinerant scholar always on the move. Where ever he went he stayed long enough to establish a community and always left behind some of his students and disciples to continue his job. It wasn't only preaching and teaching, however, as he had to be writing at the same

time not only to produce the texts to be studied in the various circle he was creating but he had to reply to numerous questions and issues which his *Da'wah* was raising and reply critics who were busy trying to stop this rising wave of awareness of Islamic religion.<sup>9</sup> According to Balogun, Shaykh Uthman's preaching attracted large followers in his hometown Degel and in many places he went on preaching tours, like Kebbi and Zamfara kingdoms. On his return to his hometown people started coming to him in groups and consequently his hometown became popular. Both male and female flocked to his preaching assemblies.<sup>10</sup> Shaykh Uthman did not stop women from attending his preaching sessions, he in fact encouraged them. From the onset of his endeavour, Shaykh Uthman appeared to have been moved by the plight of women in Hausa land particularly the way they were denied basic education and exploited by society. He made this very clear as he observed in one of his many works on the subject, he state, " ...what many scholars of the Sudan do to their wives, their daughters and their slaves ... they leave them neglected like cattle without instructing them in what is obligatory upon them in connection with their creed, their ritual ablution, their fasting of Ramadan ... Nor do they instruct them on what is permissible (*mubah*) for them like buying, selling and similar things. Indeed they regard them as nothing but a pot which they use and when it breaks to pieces they throw it away.... One wonders at this their custom of leaving their wives and daughters in the darkness of ignorance while at the same time they teach their students every morning and evening. Indeed, the only motive in teaching their students is self-aggrandizement and nothing else." Turning to the women, the Shaykh encouraged them to seek for education and openly called upon them to rebel against what today can be called male chauvinism. " O' Muslim women" the Shaykh calls, "do not listen to the words of those misguided men who tell you about the duty of obedience to your husband but they do not tell you anything about obedience to God and His messenger"<sup>11</sup>

When Shaykh Uthman's followers increased in number and became a force to be reckoned with, he began to preach to the rulers and the kings of the Hausa states who, in the eighteenth century, have neglected the Shari'ah law and condoned customary laws in several spheres of Government i.e. taxation, appointment to judicial posts, inheritance, and the enforcement of legal punishments on offenders. In his *Bayan al-Bid'ah al-Shaitaniyyah* the Shaykh makes three specific charges; the non-enforcement of the *Hudud* (like the *Hadd* of adultery and fornication) on highly placed people who could pay a prescribed fine for committing an offence; appointing the ignorant and undeserving to judicial posts relegating the learned and making such post a hereditary succession irrespective of qualification; passing judgments on ignorance, passing judgments after receiving bribe, giving the eldest son the entire shares of inheritance depriving other relations of their legal share. If he died another eldest son will take over. These and other areas of un-Islamic trends became the subject matter of Shaykh's preaching to the rulers.<sup>12</sup> Where ever he went and where ever his works reached he attracted a following as people from the surrounding countries came to him, and entered his community for the proper practice of Islam.<sup>13</sup> The Shaykh and his students continued preaching, educating the wider public the most important issues of Islam, most of Shaykh Uthman's preaching focused on the basic issues of proper understanding of *Tawhid* before the correct performance of the routine acts of worship as the fundamentals and derivatives of the religion (*al-Usul wa al-Furu*). His students also followed his example.<sup>14</sup> This is in accordance with the Qur'anic and Prophetic emphasis of *da'wah* where the basic Islamic belief system was imparted first and foremost before the routine acts of worship. On this Muhammad Bello states;

Know that he presented the account of those Usul (fundamentals) in order and in the language of those present...and ...know that he presented those Furu (derivatives) in order and in the language of those present.<sup>15</sup>

The second emphasis of his *Da'wah* was on maintenance of Islamic standards of behaviour and admonition to follow the Sunnah and the third was on the quelling of evil innovations (the *bid'ah*) and on the refutation of customs foreign to Islam (*al-Awa'id al-Riddiya*) which was due largely to the prevailing ignorance of Islamic religion and its *Shari'ah* acts of worship and behaviour. The fourth was the explanation of the general meaning of the Shari'ah and encouraged his audience to appreciate the need for '*amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy an al-munkar* (commanding the right and forbidding the wrong). Apart from preaching and teachings, he also wrote numerous books on these subjects like, *Usul al-Din, Iman, Islam, Ihsan, Hidayat al-TullabIhya' al-Sunnah wa al-Ikhmad al-Bid'ah*, etc. The fifth deals with the refutation of certain misconceptions held by some scholars and students, these include the claim by some that the Shaykh was the awaited Mahdi, also, some students maintained that those Muslims who could not comprehend the debate of the Theologians on the Unity of Allah are unbelievers,<sup>16</sup> etc.

### **Shaykh Uthman's Methodology of propagating Islam**

Preaching and *Da'wah* in Islam is one of the means of conveying the knowledge of Islam which is very significant and compulsory upon all Muslims, each according to his effort. Allah (S. W. T.) state in the Qur'an;

Say thou: this is my way: I do invite unto Allah, on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes, I and whosoever follows me. Glory to Allah and never will I Join gods with Allah.<sup>17</sup>

Allah (S.W.T) also state;

And who is better in speech than he who invites to Allah's (Islamic monotheism) and does righteous deeds and says" I am one of the Muslims.<sup>18</sup>

The same is the sayings of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W) that:

The best of you is he who learns the Qur'an and taught it to others.<sup>19</sup>

In accordance with the above verses and Hadith, *Da'wah* has to be carried out following certain methodology to acquire the desired objectives. The act of preaching and educating in the field of *Da'wah* are not easy tasks. They not only demand massive effort and God-fearing character, but also instigate a comprehensive systematic approach that is based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. Without such a proper approach, the success of the efforts of inviting to Islam is a remote possibility.<sup>20</sup> It is in line with this that, Shaykh Uthman acquired and maintained a profound knowledge of the Book of Allah, Sunnah of His Prophet, (S. A. W.) and what is in agreement to it from the works of scholars. This knowledge is not meant for his own consumption only, but also for the purpose of *Da'wah*, teaching and conveying the religion of Islam to others taking into consideration the statement of Allah;

(and remember) When Allah took a Covenant from the People of the Book to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it; but they threw it away behind their backs and purchase with it some miserable gain and vile was the bargain they made.<sup>21</sup>

In accordance with the above instruction of conveying the Knowledge of Islam to the people and coupled with poor religious understanding of the masses of Hausa land, necessitated constant movement from place to place and undertaking long journeys to remote destination in Hausa land for the purpose of delivering open air preaching and teaching the people. Shaykh Uthman and his lieutenants travelled far and wide correcting people's faith and destroying innovations contrary to Islam. According to Bello;

When the Shaykh rose up to call to (the path of) Allah and admonish the servants (of Allah) and destroy the issues of disbelieve and evil customs and (also) to revive the Sunnah and educate the people on worship of Allah and devotional practices in order to show them (the path) of Allah...many whom Allah guided went to him and many people entered the religion of Allah in troupes.<sup>22</sup>

Wherever Shaykh visited he also left some of his students to continue with the *Da'wah* and teaching, thereby forming a band of callers in accordance with the statement of Allah;

Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong; They are the ones to attain felicity.<sup>23</sup>

Thus his pupils and disciples were trained to continue with *Da'wah* along the line he had set. They employ wisdom in admonishing and deliberating on issues. They face opposition and obstacle in their *Da'wah* especially from the kings and venal scholars, but they persevere in patience. This is in accordance with Qur'anic injunction where Allah states;

Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and Most Gracious: for thy Lord knows best, who have strayed from His path and He is best aware of those who are guided.<sup>24</sup>

Shaykh Uthman according to Abdurrahman Mahi have used various methods of *Da'wah*, one of which include, utilizing wisdom and beautiful preaching in training the public, he directed them towards the understanding of proper Islamic teachings.<sup>25</sup> Also, the Shaykh employed various methods for alleviating un-Islamic trends in Hausa land. First, he teaches and wrote many works to guide the people to the right path. Besides his writings in Arabic, he also has several works in Fulfulde and Hausa *Ajami*. In addition to his writings, he also taught Islamic studies subjects and Arabic language, which includes *Tafsir* (exegesis), Hadith, Fiqh and other works of scholars. Again, he used similitude by giving examples in his preaching. Not only that, he also use terms which draws love and affection to the Muslims, like, O my brothers, O Muslim brothers, etc, for example Shaykh Uthman wrote in one of his books, O my brothers, know that the companions of the Prophet, their followers and followers of followers of companions have reached the highest stage in following the Sunnah of the Prophet and abandoning innovations, follow their example so that you may prosper in both worlds.<sup>26</sup> Muhammad Bello tells us how Shaykh Uthman used to start his preaching:

...Know that, I witnessed that when he wanted to come out for the people, he would stand in the corner of the house for a while to say something. Then he went to the people. I asked him, what is that you have been doing? He replied,; I was renewing the *Niyya* (the intention) and pledging to Allah to be sincere in what I was going to say and I was begging Him to help the people comprehend what I was saying (teaching)<sup>27</sup>

The use of poems in preaching and teachings towards destruction of bad customs and un-Islamic trends assumed an important role in Hausa land. This is so because its inhabitants were very fond of songs in both Fulfulde and Hausa languages and it is very easy for common people to memorize and comprehend the teachings of the Sokoto Caliphate scholars through these poems.<sup>28</sup> According to Bugaje:

Since a substantial part of their audience were not literate, Shaykh Uthman and his lieutenants also composed poems in local languages carrying essentially the messages (of Islam) in simpler but poetic form and therefore easy to understand and remember. Apt in their expressions, passionate in their appeal, melodious in their tune, these poems took Hausa society by the storm, pervading the streets, market places and farms and invading homes, schools and courts. They soon rose to the top of the chart of the time and remained at the top for decades, replacing the vain and vulgar songs that had formed a significant part of the Hausa-Fulani *Jahiliyya*. To the men when at work and to the women while in their kitchens, these poems seemed to evoke tempo and vitality. They eventually became to the ordinary men and women what books were to students and scholars.<sup>29</sup>

Another method employed is translating Shaykh's poems in more than one language. According to Kani, the Shaykh's son, Isa b. Fudi is a translator for the Shaykh and has composed and translated 500 poems in addition to a substantial number of Shaykh's poems translated into Hausa. On different occasions the Shaykh's daughter Asma' rendered some of the Shaykh's poems from Fulfulde into Hausa. Up till today, the Sokoto Caliphate scholars' poems were being sung on different occasions in Hausaland.<sup>30</sup>

Another method employed is preaching in more than one language. According to Bello Sa'id, Shaykh Uthman (and other Jihad leaders) was not only preaching in Fulfulde and Hausa Languages but he was preaching in *Tamajek*, one of the *Tawariq* languages. This is in order to capture the attention of all the major tribes living in Hausa land.<sup>31</sup>

Another method employed in preaching is beginning with what is of primary importance, then with next in importance and so on. For instance *Tawhid* is the first priority then obligatory duties, then sound morality etc,

Another method of conveying their *Da'wah* is that they are role model among their people. They abide by that which they are calling to in their belief, the acts of worship, their attitude and all their procedures reflect the role of a caller to Allah, as good exemplary personalities, of good moral behaviour who had higher regard for the truth and they were trustworthy in their deeds. They worked according to the injunctions of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* of the Prophet (S.A.W) fearing no one except the Almighty Allah.

...I wish not, in contradiction to you, to do that which I forbid you. I only desire reform as far as I am able. And my guidance cannot come except from Allah, in Him I trust and unto Him I repent.<sup>32</sup>

This is one of the characteristics and morals which they possess, acting upon their own *Da'wah*, and they are a good example of what they are calling to. They are not like those who calls to something and then leaves that thing himself. Nor should they be someone who forbids an action and then does that action himself. This they achieve acting according to the statement of Allah, the Most High, in the Qur'an;

O you who believe, Why do you say that which you do not do. Most hateful it is with Allah that you say that which you do not do. Q. 61:2-3

Also Allah SWT states:

And who is better in speech than he who invites (men) to Allah, the Most High, and does righteous deeds and says I am one of the Muslims. Q. 41:33

They also admonish their students to refrain from giving *Da'wah* without knowledge, wisdom, leniency and sound debate. This is because, the Jihad leaders are also aware of the condition and level of knowledge of the people they are admonition. Shaykh Muhammad Bello condemns strongly giving *fatwah* by ignorant people. He state:

And concerning what some of the people of the country of the Sudan used to do, which is that a student or a common man will go forth in admonition, teaching and guiding people without knowledge. This is a great tribulations and distress. 'I could not emerging seeing an ignorant person procrastinating himself. He has not even known some of what is obligated on him, than to talk of doing what we have mentioned... (i.e. *Da'wah* without knowledge).<sup>33</sup>

## VI. CONCLUSION

From what has so far been mentioned above, it is clear that none of the later scholars in Hausa land have done what *Shaykh* Uthman did in uplifting Islam through *da'wah*. His writings were to date relevance to contemporary Muslims needs and throughout Northern Nigeria *Shaykh* Uthman is regarded as the most pious, educated and revered scholar of repute whom all the contemporary scholars emulate.

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