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Despite the time gap between the Maitatsine riots and the Boko Haram insurrection, the socio-economic conditions that sustained the risings in 1980 are relevant to the Boko Haram situation.

Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Response of the Nigerian State

Abimbola O. Adesoji

Nigeria has a long history of religious conflicts, some of the most virulent being those of the Maitatsine (1980s) and Boko Haram (July 2009). The latter matched the former in intensity, organization, and spread. Given the international attention to global terrorism, there is the likelihood that fundamentalist groups receive motivation, material, and ideological support or influence from a global jihadist movement. Unresolved national issues, including the weak economy, weak security and intelligence apparatuses, and the failure to define what the national culture and identity is, are critical factors. The precedent of Maitatsine and the government's handling of it suggest that government incapacity and lack of political will have served to encourage recurrence and question the state's capacity. This paper discusses the resurgence of violence under the guise of religious revivalism and draws parallels between the Maitatsine uprisings and the Boko Haram uprising. It examines the Nigerian state response to these uprisings. It concludes that unless the state addresses concretely and tackles bravely the conditions that can aid or fuel violent religious revivalism, uprisings may recur.

Introduction

Nigerians are a highly religious people, or so it seems. Religious sentiments and explanations, beyond being seen as the lifeblood of the people's fundamental reality and daily experience, have been offered to justify even mundane or politically motivated situations (Enwerem 1999:123). More worrisome is the gradual but steady growth of religious fundamentalism or extremism beginning in the 1980s (Suberu 1997:477–508). Although the politicization of religion became stronger in the late 1970s, religious fears and the use of religion for propaganda have been important features of Nigeria. This was evident in the attempt at allaying the fear of "religious minorities" in the old northern and western regions by the Henry Willink

Commission (Nigeria 1958:11, 26, 63), as well as in the Biafran secession of 1967–1970 (Laitin 1986:134). The Sharia debate in the Constituent Assembly during 1977–1978 was perhaps the first major conflict to polarize Nigeria along religious lines. At the heart of the conflict was the struggle for and against the provision for a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal in the proposed 1979 Constitution because of its implications for the secularity of the Nigerian state (Laitin 1982:416), but then this conflict did not result in the taking up of arms, as occurred in 1980.

The Maitatsine uprisings of 1980 to 1985 were the first major manifestation of Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria, although they built on the precedent set by the Shiite movement in the late 1970s and 1980s, in which Mohammed Yusuf, the Boko Haram leader, was a major player (Mohammed 2010). Yet they left in their wake the legacy of recurrent ethnoreligious crises, with attendant human and material losses.[1] Beyond being similar to the Maitatsine uprisings, the Boko Haram uprising of July 2009 indicated growing Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria, apparently in the face of the government's seeming unreadiness to tackle the menace. Apparently, the name *Boko Haram* could not have explicitly been given by the group to itself; rather, it could have been deduced from its basic belief, as well as its leader's views. Underlying the growth of fundamentalism in Nigeria are such factors as hardline position on religious beliefs, practices, and doctrines; social and economic dislocation; and the political patronage of religion. Growing global Islamic fundamentalism has provided ideological support and motivation to local groups where it has not provided materials and training supports. Ironically, given its approach, the government response to Islamic fundamentalism seems neither adequate nor enduring. The prompt trial of arrested culprits, bold and firm implementation of previous commission reports, and a more devoted handling of security reports and armed gangs, as well as better handling of known flash points and hot spots, would, in addition to serving as a deterrent, portray the government as a responsible and a responsive body. Apart from the seeming abdication in addressing issues that triggered and catalyzed previous uprisings, the more serious problems raised by the uprisings have perhaps been glossed over once the uprisings were quelled. The proliferation of fundamentalist groups and the recurrence of religious-related crises cannot be divorced from this seeming complacency on the part of the state. Government complacency itself could be explained by the ruling elite's patronage of religion, and by other factors. The Kala Kato[2] uprising of December 2009, which broke out barely five months after the Boko Haram incident, suggests that the deployment of the state's resources to quell insurrection is far from stamping out fanaticism.

Islamic fundamentalism is mostly restricted to northern Nigeria. Although this could be explained in terms of the dominance of Islam and its adherents in the region, it could imply the prevalence of factors and circumstances that made the region prone to extremism. Among such factors and circumstances are poverty and illiteracy, the existence and seeming proliferation of radical Islamic groups, and recurrent violent religious crises. Beyond

the ethnic backlash of recurrent religious crises in northern Nigeria, there is no apparent ethnic consideration in the emergence and operation of this movement. Thus, using northern Nigeria as the basis, this paper examines Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria in the context of the Maitatsine and Boko Haram Uprisings and considers the response of the Nigerian state.

Pertinent to the comparison of the Maitatsine and the Boko Haram uprisings is their relevance for a proper understanding of the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria, the need to identify their convergence and distinguishing factors, and reasons for the failure of government in tackling them. By appropriately categorizing them and examining their motivations and sustaining factors, a clearer understanding of their modus operandi, networks, and support base would be aided, necessitating a better government response, meant to prevent or deter future crises involving these or similar groups and check Islamic fundamentalism generally. This paper discusses the underlying factors for the outbreak and recurrence of the uprisings and accounts for the Boko Haram. It compares and contrasts the Maitatsine and Boko Haram uprisings and situates them in the context of Islamic fundamentalism and the challenge they pose to the Nigerian state, particularly given its seeming abdication, reluctance, or inability.

The Maitatsine Uprisings: Islamic Revivalism in a Secular State

In 1980, the first in the chain of Maitatsine riots broke out in Kano. Others occurred in 1982 in Kaduna and Bulumkutu, 1984 in Yola, and 1985 in Bauchi (Ibrahim 1997:511; Isichei 1987:194–208). The outbreak and recurrence of the uprisings have been well documented (Albert 1997:285–325, 1999a:274–309, 1999b:19–36; Clarke 1987:93–115; Hickey 1984:251–256; Hiskett 1987:209–223; Ibrahim 1997:509–534; Isichei 1987:194–208; Kastfelt 1989:83–90; Usman 1987:11–25). The Maitatsine movement, led by Muhammadu Marwa, a Cameroonian with a long period of residence in Kano, had as its professed objective the purification of Islam. *Maitatsine* is a Hausa word meaning 'the one who damns'; it is derived from the regular cursing or swearing of Marwa and alluded to his frequent, bitter public condemnation of the Nigerian state (Falola 1998:144–145; Stock 2004:415–417). His declaration of himself as a prophet and his abhorrence of Western technology and its products marked him out (Falola 1998:142–143; Isichei 1987:194–197).

There is scholarly agreement on the centrality of economic factors in the outbreak of the uprisings of 1980, although emphases differ. Lubeck (1985:369–390) explains the discontent in terms of economic dislocation, deprivation, and income inequalities, but with links to Islam; he sees the Yan Tatsine, the followers of Marwa, as belonging to the traditional Hausa class known in Kano as *gardawa*.[3] These were supposedly the students or disciples of the *mallams,* who teach, preach, and officiate to perpetuate the traditional northern Nigerian societal expression of Islam, characterized by the availability of koranic teachers, whose teaching and followership are

expected to strengthen and promote the spread of Islam and sustain its hold on society. These *gardawa,* according to him, were mainly seasonal migrants from the countryside into the urban centers, where they pursued part-time elementary koranic studies under the tuition of their chosen *mallams,* but at the same time were available as seasonal labor in such traditional urban occupations as dyeing, cap making, embroidering, market portering, and mud building and repairing. While these migrations relieved the strain on village grain supplies, these *mallams*—knowledgeable middlemen, who understood the interplay of supply and demand for labor in the big cities—made use of the migrants in addition to teaching them.

This pattern continued after political independence, until the period of the oil boom, when the delicate balance of traditional supply and demand in the petty mercantile and craft economy was devastated by bloating consumption, against a background of inflation (Lubeck 1985:369–390). This resulted in the translation of the *gardawa* from the respected status of recipients of Muslim charity in recognition of their spiritual worth into that of vagabonds, nuisances, and potential thieves. Thus, the oil boom and the new industrial capitalism it created bred the Yan Tatsine. But as Hiskett (1987:212–215) rightly observed, attaching such central importance to the merely economic distress of the discontents amounts to overemphasis. Economic deprivation, rather than being its genesis, could only have intensified their alienation, whether they were *gardawa* or *yan-ci-rani* (those who 'eat' or use or exploit the dry season). Isichei (1987:201–202) argues that the economic ills within which the movement flourished were in part the result of the profligate politics of the Second Republic and the indebtedness thus engendered, in part the consequence of world recession, and in part the consequence of the rapacity of the lenders, manifested in high charges for servicing debts. Added to this was the peculiar situation of the northern states, where the movement flourished, troubled, as it were, by local disasters like desert encroachment, drought, and a rinderpest pandemic. While acknowledging poverty as the driving force among many young men for whom Maitatsine became a focus, Clarke (1987:93–115) argues that the exclusion of the group from Nigeria prepared it to eliminate pagans considered as their enemies and saw in all who were Westernized, an evil force to be fought. The poor people, who, according to Hickey (1984:251, 253) had not benefitted from the oil boom, and whose distress was increasing with the rate of inflation, were victims of the confrontation with the Nigerian state and were particularly attracted to Marwa, with his condemnation of the hypocrisy and ostentation of the nouveau riche and the promise of redemption to God's righteous people.

Hiskett (1987:213–215) agrees with Lubeck's economic-distress thesis, but argues that the Yan Tatsine was not really made up of the *gardawa,* but rather *yan-ci-rani,* economic opportunists who seek the golden pavements of the big cities for what they can glean from them. As layabouts who have no firm motivation, either intellectual or religious, they have never enjoyed a respected status, but have always been regarded as a potentially turbulent class of vagabonds, thieves, and roughnecks. Both Isichei (1987) and Kastfelt

(1989:84), like Hickey, agree that the bulk of Mohammed Marwa's foot soldiers were recruited from the urban poor of northern Nigeria without necessarily labeling them, but Isichei (1987:201–202) qualifies them as young, jobless, and homeless men, brought in from the countryside to be involved in all manner of petty jobs, like barbing, cobbling, cap knitting, and petty trade. While collectively referring to them as the disinherited, he notes that the migrants from Sahel countries, like Chad and Niger, form a special category of the poor—a confirmation of Hiskett's position about the largely foreign identity of Maitatsine followers (Hiskett 1987:213–215).

Hickey (1984:252, 254) also locates the cause of the risings in the rejection of the secularity of the Nigerian state by the fanatical groups within Islam to which Marwa belongs. Whereas the 1979 and subsequent constitutions had defined the secularity of the state, extremists in the Shiite movement, Izala movement, the Muslim Students Society, and other organizations had consistently rejected the constitution and openly advocated the establishment of an Islamic state. Implicitly, the Shiite movement, like others, provided a breeding ground and a profound source of inspiration for latter groups, like the Maitatsine and the Boko Haram, having existed much earlier and having held strong views, which the latter movement popularized to the extreme. Characteristically running through the fundamentalists' doctrines are the declaration that the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a *dagut or taagut* (evil), unworthy of allegiance on the part of good and upright Muslims; sustained attacks on police posts and personnel; encouragement of members to drop out of schools; and the declaration that working in any form of government employment is unlawful. These doctrines predispose the groups to violence. But in what could not be immediately or presently understood, the Izala movement condemned the excesses that characterized the Boko Haram group. While Isichei (1987:202) sees the Maitatsine movement as one of different militant Muslim movements in northern Nigeria, both Hickey (1984:252, 254) and Clarke (1987:96–111) see Maitatsine as rather belonging to the Mahdi tradition, whose major centers in Nigeria are Kano and Borno. But the un-Islamic practices that Marwa was allegedly involved in, like the use of human organs for the manufacture of charms and drinking human blood, while differentiating the movement, make its categorization difficult. Although Mahdism is not explicitly referred to in the Qur'an, it is a popular thought that at the end of time, a man from the family of prophet will appear who will be called the Mahdi. His ability to strengthen Islam and make justice triumph will attract large followership to him and give him dominance over the Muslim realm. Maitatsine's perception of himself as a *mujaddid* (reformer) following in the footsteps of Sheik Usman dan Fodio, or, more explicitly, as a prophet, could be understood from this perspective (Albert 1999a:285; Federal Government of Nigeria 1981:15). Related to this is Albert's categorization of the insurgents as political adventurists, who wanted political power to effect their reformation of the society. Given the perceived level of social injustice, which should catalyze popular grievances but was generally tolerated, coupled with their abhorrence of

secular authority, the Yan Tatsine, like other fundamentalist movements, believed in violent and radical transformation of the society through open revolt. Kano, given its notoriety as the hotbed of crises dating as far back as 1953, and with the prevalence of other triggering factors, provided a natural haven and perhaps a starting point of the revolution (Albert 1999a:298–299).

A conspiracy theory about the motivation for and sustenance of the discontent is worthy of examination. This is viewed in two different ways by Isichei: first, as a Machiavellian device of the ruling class, meant to divert attention from the dismal facts of life haunting various homes in Nigeria; second, and as perceived by people in government, as a front for a Mafia that is operated, manipulated, directed, and financed by unpatriotic Nigerians in connivance with foreign elements to destabilize the country (Isichei 1987:205). Clarke (1987:114) refers to the impact that the success of the revolution of 1979 in Iran could have had on Maitatsine. The Aniagolu Tribunal of Inquiry, which investigated the Kano riot of 1980, dismissed the involvement of Muammar Gadhafi of Libya and the Mossad of Israel and other suspected foreign elements in the riots, but it admitted the porosity of the Nigerian border, which exposed the country to uncontrolled infiltration (Federal Government of Nigeria 1981:36).

Given their perspectives and approach to the application of strict Islam, though with some colorations, both the Maitatsine and the Boko Haram movements are broadly defined as fundamentalist groups. Viewed from a cognitive perspective, fundamentalism expresses exclusivity, particularity, literality, and moral rigor. Viewed from a cultural theological framework, it expresses opposition to religious and cultural liberalism in defence of orthodoxy and religious traditions. From a social movement perspective, it represents organizational and ideological uniqueness, in regard to other types of religious movements. It stresses the authority of scripture and the necessity of righteous living, and places emphasis on right doctrine and the necessity of organized warfare against the forces of modernism (Danjibo 2009:4; Komonchak, Collins, and Lane 1993:212, 411). Thus, from the Maitatsine uprisings of the 1980s, Nigeria had experienced ferocious conflict and crises supposedly induced by religion but influenced by extraneous considerations. This climaxed in the Boko Haram uprising of 2009. Running through these uprisings and riots is the disposition toward violence; followers saw those outside their groups, irrespective of ethnic and religious affiliations, as enemies that must be crushed.

The Boko Haram Rising: Old Tune, New Players

The Boko Haram riots lasted from 26 to 30 July 2009 and spread across the states of Bauchi, Kano, Yobe, and Borno, where it was most extensive, perhaps because Borno was the base of the leader of the movement. The immediate cause of the riot was the sacking of the group's hideout at the Dutsen Tenshin area of Bauchi on 26 July 2009 by a joint security team,

in which nine of its members were arrested and materials for making bombs and other weapons were confiscated. This led to reprisal attacks two hours later by the group members on police formations in Bauchi and eventually in the other three states (Bakare, Adedeji, and Shobiye 2009:5; Owuamanam, Falola, and Shobiye 2009:2–3). The riot was quelled after the capture and the killing, supposedly in police custody, of its leader, Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, and a fierce battle with his followers, some of whom were arrested (Adedeji 2009). Yusuf, a *gardi,* was a product of the madrasas school system; he had dropped out of the Western education system. It is estimated that more than seven hundred lives, mostly of the sect members, were lost, while public buildings like police stations, prisons, government offices, schools, and churches were destroyed (Nwankwo and Falola 2009:2; Oyegbile and Lawal 2009:67–71).[4] With the death of its leader and its known sponsor, Alhaji Buji Foi, and the scattering of its members, and in the absence of any official report so far, it is difficult getting precise information on the group. From what is available, however, it would appear that the group has been around for some time, as long as ten to fifteen years, and operated under different names in the past. Such names included Ahlusunna wal' jamma hijra, the Nigerian Taliban, and the Yusufiyya (Fasure 2009:2; Omipidan 2009a:48).[5] Although popularly referred to as Boko Haram, it would appear that the group has no specific name for itself, but following its resurgence after its suppression in 2009, it referred to itself as "The Group of the People of Sunnah, Call, and Jihad" and claimed affinity with the North African branch of Al-Qaeda (Agency Reporter 2010). Its leader, Yusuf, was claimed to be one of the Shiites under the leadership of Ibrahim El Zakzaky originally, and that when the Kano-based Jama'atul Tajdidi Islam (JTI) of Abubakar Mujahid broke away from the Shiites, in the 1990s, Yusuf became a member of the JTI and was even the *amir* (leader) of the group for Borno State (Suleiman 2009:19–23). His radical transformation, born out of his long-term dream of reforming society, could explain the radicalization of the group under his leadership to assume a hardline position after its erstwhile leader, Abubakar Lawal, had left for the University of Medina, Saudi Arabia, for studies (Oyegbile and Lawal 2009:68). Obviously, Abubakar Lawal did not play a prominent role in the group thereafter, perhaps following his alienation.

A different claim was that he left the Taliban because of their extremist tendencies but with a vow that his group would not relent until an "independent and a just State devoid of anything haram had been established" (Omipidan 2009a:43–44). It would appear that he prepared himself for the leadership role which he played in the Boko Haram sect with his membership of other fundamentalist groups. It is not impossible that the Boko Haram sect was just one facet of the fundamentalist movements, the true extent of which is yet to be fully determined. The severance of his link with the Taliban, if it actually happened, could have been informed not by their extremist tendencies, but by the desire to actualize his long-term dream of reform, which perhaps was being slowed down by those less passionate

The name *Boko Haram* is derived from a combination of the Hausa word *boko* 'book' and the Arabic word *haram* 'something forbidden, ungodly, sinful'. Literally, it means 'book is sinful', but its deeper meaning is that Western education is sinful, sacrilegious, or ungodly and should therefore be forbidden. Characteristically, the sect was not only opposed to, but outrightly rejected, Western education, Western culture, and modern science. It embraced and advocated the propagation of, and strict adherence to, Islam by everyone, regardless of whether it was wanted or not. In line with this objective, the sect sought the adoption or imposition of Sharia across all the states in Nigeria (Bumah and Adelakun 2009:40).[6] Ironically, Yusuf, the sect leader, enjoyed the best of what Western technology could offer in the form of exotic cars, the latest communication equipment, and the best medical services. In addition, his desire to prepare for his jihad encouraged his sending people abroad for medical training—a development that alienated some of his members (Madunagu, Shobiye, and Chiedozie 2009:2). Membership in the group cut across the broad spectrum of the society, but a preponderant number came from among the poorest social groups. Thus, beyond former university lecturers, students, bankers, and commissioners and other officers of state, membership extended to drug addicts, vagabonds, and generally lawless people. The common denominator binding the group membership together was the desire to overthrow the secular government and propagate Islamic law, but Yusuf's oratory would seem to have been a contributory factor (Michael and Bwala 2009:3; Omipidan 2009a 43–44; Olu 2009:9).

Despite the time gap between the Maitatsine riots and the Boko Haram insurrection, the socioeconomic conditions that sustained the risings in 1980 are relevant to the Boko Haram situation. The situation had gotten worse with regard to mass poverty, inequality of opportunities, improper use of resources, revulsion of injustice, lack of educational opportunities, ignorance, corruption, and unemployment (Ale 2009:8; Enwerem 1999:125; Usman 1987:21). These problems swelled the army of vulnerable people, whose disillusionment and impoverishment made them easy prey in the hands of a demagogue like Yusuf. *The Times of London* saw the uprising as a symptom of the social breakdown that has made Nigeria prone to violence.[7] The north, which may be the poorest region of the country, has been the most frequent origin of fanatical uprisings (Ibelema 2009:18; Makinde 2009:6). There is no conclusive link with jihadist movements outside Nigeria yet, but the modus operandi[8] of the group, fashioned, as it were, after the Taliban in Afghanistan, has generated curiosity. Given its large followings and the claim that it had sent members to Mauritania and Algeria for training, it could be that the modeling was simply to acknowledge its source of inspiration. It could have been meant to attract sympathy and support from the Taliban or related groups. Also, links may actually exist but have not been conclusively proved. Speculation in the Nigerian and foreign press about the activities of such groups as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combats in Algeria, Tablighi clerics from Pakistan, and Wahhabist missionaries

from Saudi Arabia in Northern Nigeria, as well as the reported training of fundamentalists in Al-Qaeda camps in foreign countries are proof, however tenuous (Alli 2009:1, 8; Oyegbile and Lawal 2009:69; Soboyede 2009:14).

There were financial supports for the sect from within Nigeria. Many of them are not yet known, but the example of Alhaji Buji Foi, a former Commissioner in Borno State, is common knowledge. Other speculated sponsors included prominent northern religious leaders and businessmen. Motivations for such support could include belief in the group's cause, given the level of persuasion, the desire to promote religion, and sowing for future goodwill. The givers could be Yusuf's disciples, admirers, partners, or associates. They could be ignorant of the import or ramifications of what the group represented, but with their support they inadvertently became part of the conspiracy to levy war against the state.

The role of partisan politics and political patronage in the sustenance of the sect is obvious. It would appear that the introduction of Sharia in some northern states beginning in 1999 encouraged some closeness between Yusuf and some of the ruling and/or aspiring politicians, as their decision aligned with his plan to promote strict adherence to Islamic law, but he was perhaps disappointed, as the type of Sharia that was introduced across some northern states fell short of the standard that he had expected. He could have thought that the officeholders were not serious Muslims, or their knowledge of Western education was hindering or limiting them. His fraternization with politicians possibly informed his willingness to use his group to assist them to secure political power, which would in turn be used to protect and advance his career (Omipidan 2009b:5–6). His disappointment following his abandonment could have hastened his desire to effect a change through violence.

Mohammed Yusuf stated that he was invited to Yobe State during the buildup to the 2003 elections in the wake of Sharia implementation in some northern states. When the election did not assume the direction that his host thought it would take, his group was abandoned to its fate before the state government ordered its members to leave the state. His relationship with the political elite explains why on one occasion when he was arrested, his release was facilitated by a politician who obviously supported him and/or his ideology (Omipidan 2009b:5–6). When it is considered that the Maitatsine riots broke out during the tenure of a civilian president in 1980, the link of the rise of Yusuf to political patronage could be understood. The thesis that politicians who patronized religious leaders for support or protective charms used them as a tool and later discarded them or unleashed them on innocent people best describes Yusuf's situation (Adam al Ilory 2009:23). It goes along with the explanation that politicians were mostly the backers of the murderous groups who needed the group members' violent disposition to achieve their political and, by extension, economic ends (Muogbo 2009).

The Maitatsine and the Boko Haram Uprisings: Two of a Kind

Both the Maitatsine and the Boko Haram uprisings have things in common. Fundamentally, both were fanatical Islamic sects, whose basic beliefs differed from those held by the majority conservative Muslims in Nigeria. Both levied war on the Nigerian state, the intensity of which almost compromised her security. In both instances, the persistence of the aggression, despite the police involvement in quelling it, led to the deployment of the national army and air force to suppress it. Obviously evidence of its elaborate planning and organizations, their persistence and spread cast them in the mold of insurrectionists. The Maitatsine uprisings persisted for five years in five states: Kano, Kaduna, Borno, old Gongola, and Bauchi; the Boko Haram riots spread across Bauchi, Kano, Yobe, and Borno over a five-day period. The number of lives lost in the uprisings is further evidence of their intensity.

In philosophy and objectives, both sects were similar in rejecting Western civilization and its products, and the enforcement of strict Islam. Their acknowledgement of the use of violence could have informed the stubbornness and general lawlessness of members. This accounted for their brush with the law at different times, yet it did not mellow them: rather, they were emboldened to become more lawless. The deportation of Muhammadu Marwa from Kano in the 1960s and his imprisonment in 1973 hardened him the same way that the regular detention of Mohammed Yusuf did not deter him (Albert 1999:284–286). But in what is clearly hypocritical of the duo, they were involved in practices that negated their doctrines: for Marwa, it was his involvement in charms and amulets, mostly with human parts; for Yusuf, it was his revelry in Western technology, which he officially abhorred (Hiskett 1987:215–217). (It is possible that he too made use of charms, but no conclusive evidence of it has come to light.) These groups were linked in a curious way: it was claimed that Yusuf's father had started the Boko Haram ideology in the 1960s before he was banished from Gashua by Emir Umar Suleiman, who had both Western and Islamic education, because of his condemnation of Western education; at the outbreak of the Maitatsine riot in Kano, he reportedly came with the intention of participating in the jihad, but was caught in the crossfire (Omipidan 2009a:49). If this information is anything to go by, Yusuf's sect merely continued from where his father's efforts stopped. Isichei (1987:194) and Hiskett (1987:220) give the other name of the Maitatsine movement, as Kalo Kato or Yan Kala Kato, meaning 'Those who say, "A mere man said it"', in apparent reference to the teaching that the Prophet's dicta were of human, and not divine, origin. The same name described a group that started a riot in Bauchi in December 2009 under its leader, Mallam Sale Badamasi. Beyond the in-fighting within the group, which claimed links with the Maitatsine sect of the 1980s, its major grouse was the unjust killing of Boko Haram members for preaching against what they considered as a reality (Abubakar and Mohammed 2010; Michael 2010:13). What could not really be proved conclusively now is if the Kala Kato riot was not a continuation of the Boko Haram riot, a resurgence of

the Maitatsine movement of the 1980s, or perhaps another face of the hydra-headed monster that Islamic extremism is gradually assuming in Nigeria.

The preponderance of foreign elements among relatively large followings characterized the groups. These foreign elements, mostly from Chad and Niger, together with other members, could have had their interest sustained by their commitment to the groups' cause, belief in a righteous heavenly reward for their zeal, as well in the leadership, and, in the case of Boko Haram, the demagoguery, of Yusuf. While pointing to the inability to properly define identity in the north, the involvement of foreign elements indicates the extent to which militants could go to recruit followers. Characteristic of the followings was their gallantry. The willingness and determination to destroy or be destroyed explains the convergence of members sometimes with their families on their major centers, once a jihad was to be launched. For the Boko Haram in particular, which perhaps boasted of few well-to-do members, like Buji Foi, the sale of their properties for the acquisition of arms or the donation of the proceeds to the group was the height of fatalism (Oyegbile and Lawal 2009:71). The emphasis on training by Boko Haram, obviously an improvement on what obtained with Maitatsine, as well as the assemblage of explosives, is an additional factor in the groups' confrontation with the security agencies (Madunagu, Shobiye, and Chiedozie 2009:2). They had their headquarters in Kano and Borno respectively, two important centers of Mahdist tradition in Northern Nigeria. Of all the other places, these centers featured prominently in the commencement or spread of the riots. The growing notoriety of Bauchi, the third prominent place affected by both groups' activities, could have to do with its strategic placement in the interaction between the two centers and a consequence of the effort to integrate it into the original networks. The Kala Kato riot of December 2009 in Bauchi supports this claim.

In their bid to actualize their objectives through violence, almost every other person and group outside the groups fit into the mode of an enemy. Apparently, a manifestation of their fanatical orientation, which Nigeria's secularity and the growing suspicion among Muslims have compounded, it is a loud warning that only the fanatics—or, to put more appropriately, only the group members—are safe. It is a reminder of what should have been done, but was neglected or wished away. The seeming condonation, vacillation, fear, or apathy on the part of the government apparently strengthened the hand of the fanatical sects. Contrastingly, prompt, carefully considered action and response on the part of government in the form of firm but fair handling of potentially explosive situations, and devoid of the usual fire-brigade approach, would have made a difference.

Marwa's declaration of himself as a prophet distinguished him from Yusuf, whose claim was the strict application and enforcement of Islam. Marwa was identified by a vast majority of the northern Nigerian population, including Islamic scholars, as clearly heterodox and fringe, given the loose attachment of his group to mainstream Islam and his rebellious and nonconformist disposition. His use of Islam as a vehicle for the propagation of

his cause notwithstanding, the un-Islamic practices that he was involved in betrayed him. This contrasted with Yusuf, whose desire for change informed his disposition. Whereas Marwa was more of a political pawn, Yusuf was more of a player. Beyond serving on the Borno State Shari'a Board, he was a member of several other Islamic movements. Neither movement had any deep intellectual base—a product of noninvolvement or alienation of intellectuals from them. Marwa's ascription of the status of Prophet Muhammad to himself, as well as Yusuf's rejection of the concept that the world is spherical, the theory that rain comes from water, and other scientifically proven facts, point at the poor intellectual base of the movements, the involvement of some university teachers in Yusuf's movement notwithstanding (British Broadcasting Service 2009).

Islamic Fundamentalism and the Nigerian State

A major challenge faced by the central government in Nigeria since the return of civil rule in 1999 was the introduction of Sharia law in some states in northern Nigeria, with Zamfara blazing the trail. The law now operates in twelve of the nineteen northern states, with varying manifestations (Nmehielle 2004:730–759; Ostien 2007:171–120. Going by constitutional provision, the adoption of Sharia law meant the existence of dual legal systems in those states, as well as the adoption of state religion, contrary to the provision of section 10 of the 1999 Constitution, which states expressly that "the Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion" (Federal Military Government 1999). But even at that, the Boko Haram in particular criticized the limited application of Sharia and condemned the insincerity of the state governors, whom it accused of politicizing it. This explains why the full implementation of Sharia not only in the north, but the whole of the country, was the advertised cause of the jihad. Like Boko Haram, but for different reasons, the federal government under Olusegun Obasanjo condemned the adoption, which it saw as unconstitutional, a political phenomenon that would soon "fizzle out."[9] One of the governors who introduced Sharia became the country's president and ruled until 5 May 2010, when he died; some of them are currently facing trial for corrupt practices while in office—a vindication of sorts of the critics of Sharia adoption.[10]

Viewed from a broader perspective, the adoption of Sharia appeared like an effort to pacify a section of Muslims who had consistently agitated against the secularity of the country, and perhaps were seen as a threat to the tenure of the political officeholders or a support base that could not be neglected on the basis of political calculation. The undue emphasis on religion as a basis for differentiation and mobilization accounts for this, but the measure appeared not strong enough to appease these elements which, when they would not embark on insurrection like Marwa and Yusuf, would not check it before it degenerated, or feebly condemn it. The potency of Islam in

legitimizing power by northern traditional rulers was an open door to Islamic fundamentalism from the start. As far as Hickey (1984:254) is concerned, this position or ambivalence of these elements was not dictated by the lack of belief in the extremists' position: the difference is over method, rather than ultimate aims. The extremists insist on a unitary view of the society, which sees no difference between the state and religion, and they advocate making Nigeria an Islamic state, administered according to the principles of Sharia. For them, all Muslims belong to the *umma* (community), and the idea of a secular state is atheistic or syncretistic. Apart from challenging the Muslim affirmation of religious principles, especially Sharia, the imposition of secularity according to them amounts to a cultural affront on a significant portion of the population and reduces them to the status of second-class citizens. Although this view is claimed to be a Quranic injunction, it does not enjoy popular acceptance among liberal Muslims, who maintain that such a view does not imply the need for Islamization of Nigeria, nor does it endorse nonacceptance of the constitutional provision of the secularity of the state (Ibrahim 1998:39–66; Ilesanmi 2001:529–554; Imo 1995:58–59). Pertinent also is the failure of governance and its labeling as a tyranny that must be discarded, prompting the leadership and members of the movements to risk death to pursue what they consider the path to Islamic justice (Danjibo 2009:4).

Even before the Boko Haram and Maitatsine riots, fundamentalist groups like the Shiite had advocated a fanatical position that, in a wider political sense, meant the rejection of the secular authority ab initio (Suleiman 2009:19–23). Although Shiite fundamentalism was initially at the level of advocacy, its impact on violent fundamentalist groups could not be wished away, yet the approach of the same government whose legitimacy is being questioned to the problem of Islamic fundamentalism could at best be described as lackadaisical. Beyond the usual approach of brutally suppressing insurgence and constituting tribunal or commission of enquiry, government has not taken concrete steps toward addressing the problem. Before the Maitatsine risings, Marwa was a law unto himself. This attitude earned him deportation and imprisonment, yet he still led one of the bloodiest riots in the history of Nigeria. The experience of Yusuf was not markedly different. After the Maitatsine riot of 1980 and the seemingly uncoordinated trial of his arrested followers, many of them were released on the basis of what Isichei identified as their sheer numbers and the uncertainty about the most appropriate charge to level against them. The last batch of 923 was pardoned on 1 October 1982, in what was later blamed as misguided clemency (Isichei 1987:197). With the swelling of the prisons following the Boko Haram incident, the usual complaints of how to handle them have begun again (Adedeji 2009:11). Implicitly, it would appear that once a fundamentalist escapes being killed during the suppression of his insurrection, he can as well be sure that he will take part in the next one, other things being equal. This nondeterrence has arguably encouraged a culture of impunity and promoted a circle of violence; hence the recurrence of religious-related crises in Nigeria.

This culture of impunity pervades governance in Nigeria. The nonrelease of commission reports, whether administrative, investigative, or judicial, has compounded the situation. It has created in people deep feelings of distrust for governments in the handling of crises and their perpetrators. On 9 June 1985, there was a rumored Maitatsine attack in Yola, in which Fatima Garba, a three-and-a-half-year-old girl, was murdered by a man suspected to be a Maitatsine follower. The murder, close to the base of the Maitatsine followers during their 1984 uprising, and the state and local governments' poor handling of it, out of fear or negligence, portrayed government as being incapable of handling crises and protecting its citizens (Kastfelt 1989:85–88).

The lack of political will to tackle religious fundamentalist has had other results. These include the reluctance to check the growing armies of well-known but equally dangerous sects still operating in the country and armed gangs that could provide a ready pool of recruits for potential extremists. There is also the problem of poor funding and organization of efficient intelligence services, inadequate and uncoordinated response to the available reports, derelict handling of known flashpoints and hotspots, and the reluctance to unmask the influential sponsors and backers of extremists. Their different perception by the Nigerian state notwithstanding, sects like the Izala and the Shiite qualify as extremists groups. Whereas the Izala is not overtly violent, given its persuasive approach to Islamic evangelization, and even when it has not engaged the state in any conflict, its violent clashes with the Tarigahs and the attendant breach of public peace showed its capability for violence. The Jama't Izalat al Bid'ah Wa Iqamat as Sunnah (Society for the Eradication of Innovations in Islam and Reestablishment of the Sunnah, in which *sunnah* is the 'practice of the Prophet'), formed in 1978 under the leadership of Sheikh Ismaila Idris bin Zakariyyah, sees every kind of Tarigahs (Brotherhood) as un-Islamic, seeks to eradicate all forms of innovation, and advocates firm establishment of the Sunnah. So it seeks to purify Islam. Its contention that members of the Tarigahs cannot lead prayers inspired most of the violence that erupted in many mosques in most of the major cities of the north through the 1970s and early 1980s (Amara n.d.; Falola 1998:242–244; Hickey 1984:252; Ibrahim 1997:513, 518–520). Idris (1936–2000), an imam in the Nigerian Army from Bauchi State, spent several years inviting people to Islam on the basis of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and against all forms of innovation, such as the celebrating Mawlid (the Prophet's birthday), naming ceremonies, and visiting the tombs of the saints. He established the headquarters of his society in Jos, Plateau State.

The Shiites, also known as the Islamic Society of Nigeria, emerged in Nigeria in the late 1970s under the leadership of Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, a 1979 first-class graduate in economics at the Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria. His reputation for radical Islam dates back to his undergraduate days at university in the 1970s, when he led the Muslim Students Society, during which period he sponsored some demonstrations. But the group leadership's earlier links with university students provided it with a intellectual and revolutionary foundation (Albert 1999b:81–87; Best n.d). Its objective is the

establishment of an Islamic state governed by Sharia through preaching and subtle social influence. It has sympathy for the state of Palestine, and abhors Israel and the United States of America. The Shiites did not hide their disdain for the state police and the judiciary, all of which they consider instruments of evil, personified as Satan (Olugboji 1995:6). Although these sects are elitist, in that many of their members are educated and gainfully employed, and appear less dangerous, their goals are revolutionary or reformist, and their recourse to arms is not impossible, particularly in the case of the failure of their present strategies. Their predisposition to violence, even when it is not professed, as seen in their clashes with other Islamic groups, is pertinent. While the Izala had been at loggerheads with the Tarigahs, the Shiites had engaged their breakaway group, the Yan Tauri, and other Muslims they considered liberal in violent confrontation in 1996, 1997, and other times. Besides, the Shiites clashes with the police during their processions and anti-West protests indicate what they are capable of (Akhaine and Abuah 2009:1–2; Albert 1999a:286–288). Beyond these occasional confrontations and the long detention without trial of El-Zakzakky, these sects have continued to exist.

The existence of "street boys" (unemployed youths) and armed gangs like the Almajirai, Yan Tauri, Yan Daba, Yan Banga, and Yan Dauka Amarya in Northern Nigeria has made some parts of the north, like Kano, hot spots. These gangs are mostly the product of a desire to resort to violence as a coping mechanism, characteristic of the structural adjustment years. Yan Tauri, which has a longer history and is described as economic opportunists, and professional mercenary soldiers, who are prepared to offer their services to whoever hires them, together constitute a handy instrument, which could be used by anybody to start a civil disturbance (Albert 1997:285–325; Dawha 1996:4–14; Ya'u 2000:161–178). Their existence aids fundamentalism considerably.

The inability or reluctance to tackle Sharia operators and checkmate the fanatical sects and armed gangs could be evidence of political patronage, political laxity and rivalries, or a combination of both. The patronage of religion by the political elite could explain the situation where the elite in government vacillate in making decisions or are indecisive on issues that require prompt action. This perhaps was evident in the case of Yusuf, just as it is with other potentially dangerous groups. In contrast, the state's failure to check the growth of Marwa's movement and arrest Marwa owed to political laxity and power rivalries among politicians and security agents. Rivalry between Kano State, controlled by the People's Redemption Party (PRP), and the federal government, led by the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and for which Marwa became a useful pawn, contributed to the dimensions and outcome of the Maitatsine crisis in Kano (Falola1998:139–140). The desire by NPN to take over Kano led it to attempt unorthodox means to portray the PRP government as incompetent and weak, as well as create credibility problems for it. Marwa fit into this plan and enjoyed heavy patronage from the NPN. Beyond the initial reluctance of the federal police force to check

the menace that Marwa's group represented, politics played with the inquiry into the Maitatsine crisis in Kano by both the federal and state governments marred its credibility.

The police and other security agencies are often blamed for not nipping fundamentalist activities in the bud, or for being responsible for their escalations, but what is not often stressed is the state's failure to arm them adequately and motivate them for better performance. The intelligence organization as presently constituted has been described as normal security intelligence used for personal protection of government officials and highly placed people. This is in addition to the problem of nepotism in the structure of the security organizations, failure of political officeholders to fund intelligence gathering and administration, and absence of proper coordination among different security organizations in the exchange and processing of intelligence information (Soyinka 2008:28–31). Related is the inability of state governors as the chief security officers of their states to control the security forces, which are under the control of the federal government. In the age of global terrorism, given the national and international outrage against religious extremism, there could not have been a better time for the country to translate the sympathy and effusion on the Boko Haram riot, to tremendous security capital to probe the national spread and the speculated international connections of the various fanatical groups operating in the country. Implicitly, the ability of the state to respond adequately, comprehensively, and promptly to future risings is not strengthened.

The porosity of the Nigerian borders has made it possible for foreigners who share ethnic and religious affinities with Nigerians to slip into the country and enlist or otherwise join the fanatics' army. As posited by Kazah-Toure (2004:41–61), a Hausa man from Niger Republic carrying a Nigerian passport and illegally settled in Katsina State is considered a better indigene than an Igbo man born, bred, working, and paying tax in the same state. Obviously, ethnic, linguistic, and religious affinities breed the unity on the one hand and explain the difference on the other. The usual response of the Nigerian state has been to deport the identified foreigners, who easily find their way back. For those not identified, business continues as usual. A more comprehensive response should have included a better policing of the border, a better motivation of the immigration officers to check corruption and aiding of illegal border crossing and a better arming of officials to engage the deviant and strongheads. Similarly, comprehensive national civic registration as was started in 2004 with detailed security features and a strict enforcement of compulsory birth and death registration by the National Population Commission would have generated basic citizenship data for effective monitoring and control of movement into the country. Although the 2004 experiment failed (because of a combination of corruption and poor political will), it was worthwhile. Even when some foreigners would still have registered under the scheme, their monitoring would have been better enhanced. The poor definition of national identity and culture, even among Nigerians, given the prevalence of divisive tendencies, has not provided a base upon which to

build a virile national citizenship with national outlook and pride as a basis for opposing destructive religious and ethnic-induced cross-border affinities.

Conclusion

Islamic fundamentalism appears more deep-rooted than the approaches adopted by the government to address it. Hurried, superficial, and uncoordinated attacks, even on the symptoms, by the government are an indication of poor understanding or deliberate negligence. Given the danger it poses to the country and global security and the more serious response from nations across the world, a more focused, pragmatic, and dynamic approach to resolving the challenge of Islamic fundamentalism is required on the part of the government. This would involve identifying and appropriately categorizing Islamic groups with a view to determining, much earlier, groups with a propensity for violence. The privacy and influence of religion notwithstanding, government involvement in regulating it such that its practice does not breach public peace or constitute a danger to the well-being of the state deserves encouragement. Relevant in this regard is the enlistment of mainstream Islamic leaders and mostly Muslim traditional rulers, mainly from the north, in the process of identification, categorization, and monitoring, to prevent jaundiced and politically motivated teaching from spreading. It would involve seeing fundamentalism as it is, without seeking to make political gains out of it while seeking to address the problem of failure of governance that provides a basis for an excuse for militancy in different forms. Pertinent is the consideration of the predisposing and triggering factors located in the types and nature of Islamic religious groups, and security, economic, and societal structures. Beyond addressing all the triggering factors capable of igniting and fueling militancy, the government should review its policy of patronage of religion, with a view to leaving it in the private realm. Trivializing or politicizing religious militancy makes religion a potent threat to national security and development. The employment or application of these measures, rather than the usual fire-brigade approach mostly employed to quell insurrections and other religious crises, would address more concretely the problem of fundamentalism and contribute to preventing a recurrence. Wishing the problem away or pretending it is not there, or not as serious as the government approach seems, is to sit on a time bomb. Already, the recurrence of intraethnic and interethnic religious crises, mostly with an ethnic bent, is a timely warning.

NOTES

1. Out of 178 cases of clashes recorded by Shehu Sani from 1980 to 2004 that took place in Northern Nigeria, 104 were related to religion. In fact, most of the purely communal clashes

took place in the Middle Belt, where the number of Muslims was lower than in the far north (Sani 2007: 61–185).

2. Kala Kato is interpreted as 'Those who say, "A mere man said it"' in apparent reference to the teaching that the Prophet's dicta were of human, not divine, origin. It was used by Muhammed Marwa to justify the declaration of himself as a prophet. The adoption of the name by Mallam Sale Badamasi could mean the continued existence of the Maitatsine group, despite its brutal suppression in the 1980s, or an attempt to revive it (Hiskett 1987:220; Isichei 1987:194).
3. *Gardawa* in Kano usage are adult students or grown-up disciples of town-dwelling *mallams* who, though they may once have been Almajirai, are no longer seasonal migrants. Their status is thought of as an intermediate one between that of *almajiri,* the beginner in elementary Qur'an studies, and that of fully fledged *mallam* (Hiskett 1987:213).
4. See also Anonymous 2009a.
5. The name *Nigerian Taliban* gives an insight into the nature of the group, its ideology, its modus operandi, its source of inspiration, its likely support, and where its sympathy derives from. See "Who or What is Boko Haram" (Culled from Reuters) *Sunday Tribune* (Ibadan), 2 August 2009.
6. See also *National Life* 2009.
7. The attention the Boko Haram crisis attracted around the world points to its importance and the concern that it raised (Anonymous 2009b).
8. It involves imposing on people and enforcing strict ways of life based on the group perception and interpretation of Islam, engaging Western ideology and culture in a strict contest, usually involving violence and armed insurgents, and being fatalistic, resulting in massive deaths on the part of the groups and their targets.
9. This statement was credited to President Olusegun Obasanjo during his visit to Harvard University after Zamfara State's proclamation in 1999; see Nmehielle 2004:754.
10. They are Alhajis Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, Attahiru Bafarawa of Sokoto State, Sani Yerima of Zamfara, and Saminu Turaki of Jigawa, respectively. With the exception of Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, they are currently facing anti-graft charges. With the exception of three amputations for theft, carried out in the very early days of Sharia implementation, the political ambition and calculation of the governors hindered them from implementing some of the hard decisions of the Sharia courts, like stoning to death for *zina* (adultery) and severe forms of *qisas* (retaliation or retribution) . Rather, the persons on whom such sentences were imposed were quietly dealt with in other ways (Ostien 2007:203).

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