

## KORANIC EDUCATION AND MILITANT ISLAM IN NIGERIA

CLYDE AHMAD WINTERS

**Abstract** – In this article the author outlines and discusses the influence of Koranic schools, and their students (*almagiri*) on the rise of fundamentalism and the spreading of militant Islam in Northern Nigeria.

The author contends that while Islamic fundamentalism is the banner of both the Western-oriented Muslims and traditional Nigerian Muslims, it differs in expression in Northern Nigeria. The article shows that these differences result from the influence of the Koranic schools on the traditional teachers (*ulama*) and their students on the one hand, and Western universities, Wahhabi Arabs, and Western-oriented teachers and their students on the other.

The origins of the Koranic school curriculum in Nigeria, the training of traditional Muslim teachers, and the lifestyle of the students are discussed. The author shows how certain socialization patterns found in the Koranic schools and 'almagiri' system seem congruent with the political attitudes and values stressed by spokesmen of militant Islamic sects in Northern Nigeria.

**Zusammenfassung** – Eine militante islamische Bewegung breitet sich in Norden Nigerias aus. In dem nachfolgenden Artikel umreißt und bespricht der Verfasser den Einfluß der Koranschulen und ihrer Schüler (*almagiri*) auf den wachsenden Fundamentalismus im Norden Nigerias.

Der Verfasser weist nach, daß während der islamische Fundamentalismus als Sammelbecken sowohl für die westlich orientierten als auch für die traditionellen nigerianischen Moslems dient, sich der islamische Fundamentalismus im Norden anders äußert. Der unterschiedliche Einfluß von Koranschulen auf die traditionellen Gelehrten (*ulama*) und ihre Schüler einerseits sowie auf westliche Universitäten, Wahhabi Araber und westlich orientierte *ulama* andererseits, steht im Mittelpunkt des Beitrags.

Der Leser wird über den Ursprung des Curriculums der Koranschulen in Nigeria, über die Ausbildung traditioneller Moslem-Lehrer und über den Lebensstil der *almagiri* informiert. Der Verfasser beschreibt wie bestimmte Sozialisationsmuster an Koranschulen und im *almagiri*-System mit den von den Sprechern der militanten islamischen Sekten im Norden Nigerias betonten politischen Haltungen und Werten übereinzustimmen scheinen.

**Résumé** – L'Islam militant est en train de se propager dans le nord du Nigeria. Dans cet article, l'auteur se propose de mettre en évidence et d'analyser l'influence des écoles coraniques et de leurs étudiants (*almagiri*) sur la montée du fondamentalisme dans le nord du Nigeria.

L'auteur montre que si le fondamentalisme islamique est la bannière des musul-

mans d'orientation occidentale et des musulmans nigériens traditionnels, il diffère, en revanche, par sa forme d'expression dans cette région du Nigeria. Cet article révèle que ces différences proviennent de l'influence exercée par les écoles coraniques sur les *ulama* traditionnelles et leur étudiants d'une part, et sur les universités occidentales, les *Wahhabi* arabes et les *ulama* d'orientation occidentale et leurs étudiants d'autre part.

Cet article apporte des informations au lecteur sur l'origine du programme d'études de l'école coranique au Nigeria, la formation des enseignants musulmans traditionnels et le style de vie des *almagiri*. L'auteur montrera d'une manière générale comment certains modèles de socialisation rencontrés dans les écoles coraniques et le système *almagiri* semblent être conformes aux attitudes et aux valeurs politiques prônées par les porte-parole des sectes islamiques militantes résident dans le nord du Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

Between 1980 and 1985, there were four major religious riots in Northern Nigeria staged by Islamic fundamentalists, devout Muslims who seek the establishment of rule by the sharia, (i.a. the Koran and the Sunna) and identify with Islam as an all-inclusive social order which has Allah as the sole legitimate lawmaker.

The participants in these 'riots' are predominantly products of the Koranic school system of Northern Nigeria. Although the Nigerian government has introduced Universal Primary Education (U.P.E.), it is not unusual for Muslim children to experience some Koranic instruction before attending a government primary school, or they may attend Koranic schools in the late afternoon and evening (Harber, 1984). The children of poor Muslims and rural Muslims usually receive a full Koranic education.

It is the aim of this paper to outline the official curriculum of the Koranic schools in Nigeria, the evolution of this system of instruction and to discuss the effect the fusion of egalitarianism and authoritarianism experienced by the Muslim child while attending Koranic schools has on the popularity of *Yan Tatsine mallam* and radical fundamentalists (*Maitatsim*) in Northern Nigeria.

## **Koranic Schools in Northern Nigeria**

In 1973, there were over 20,000 Koranic schools in Northern Nigeria (Damachi, 1973). In addition, Nigeria has compulsory Islamic religious instruction in all primary and secondary schools supported by the federal government (Damachi, 1973).

The teaching of Islamic studies varies in the government-supported

schools, but as a rule it is very much less than the amount offered at a Koranic school, and in many cases provides the student with very little real information about Islam (Falola, 1981). As a result, most parents in Northern Nigeria support Koranic schools.

### **Social Class and the Nigerian Learned Muslim Community**

On the surface it would appear that the federal government's support of Islamic studies would encourage Nigerians to abandon the Koranic schools. But in reality, due to the differences in the goals and methods of the traditional Islamic education system and its teachers (*ulama*),\* as opposed to the Western system of Islamic studies and those teachers that support it, social tensions have been unleashed in Northern Nigeria.

These social tensions are the result of rapid socio-economic changes, materialism and the development of two distinct groups of teachers who represent two different social classes. Members of the teacher (*mallam*)\*\* class in Northern Nigeria view Islam from different perspectives, depending on the way they were educated (Winters, 1985)

The teachers can be divided into two groups: the *sufi* group and the Western-oriented group. The sufis represent the conservative system of Muslim education which stresses study of the Koran, Islamic classics and Arabic. The ultimate aim of traditional Muslims lies in the realization of the complete submission of man to Allah (Doi, 1972). It also seeks to give the student the self-confidence to achieve personal fulfilment in the real world.

The Western-trained teachers (who dominate the universities), leading Muslim organizations and the courts represent the 'progressive' system of Muslim education, which stresses a Western-oriented curriculum, English language instruction and a smattering of Islamic studies from an Orientalist perspective. Many Nigerian Muslims who study Islam in the West often only learn about Middle Eastern ways of life and the Arab's interpretation of the sharia. This, according to Westerlund (1982), can cause many non-Arab Muslims to lose respect for their own traditions and become less African and more Arab.

### **The Division of the Islamic Sciences**

The traditional Nigerian Islamic sciences are divided into two areas of study: the juridical class of studies which make up the Islamic science of society as a whole (*zahir*); and the mystical level of studies made up of occult knowledge, medicine and divination (*batin*).

Traditional instruction in the Islamic sciences is based upon the *ulama* system of teaching (Yahaya, 1984). Under this system a student is instructed in the Islamic sciences by a teacher (*mallam*) at his school or in his compound.

### **The Timbuktu Curriculum**

The traditional teachers (*ulama*), who are wholly products of the Koranic schools, follow the Timbuktu teaching tradition, and not the Suwarian tradition which is found in the western zone of Sudan. The founding father of the Timbuktu teaching tradition was Ahmad Baba, born in 1556, and the curriculum he organized to teach the Islamic sciences has been retained until today. In addition, a number of works written by West African scholars were adopted into and have greatly influenced the curriculum.

The level of Islamic education in most of the Islamic world has usually been of a low standard owing to the fact that the poor student could not afford to pay for his studies. In Nigeria, however, teaching youth the Islamic sciences was considered a duty for which the teacher (*mallam*) was not expected to receive payment. As a result, in the early history of Islamic education in Northern Nigeria, teachers depended on charity or 'voluntary non-statutory alms rendered for the sake of acquiring merit from Allah' (Doi, 1972).

### **The Influence of Uthman dan Fodio on Koranic Education**

Those teachers who were given no land to work were thus reduced to the status of beggars and therefore sought out charitable Muslims to patronize them. A teacher's student (called *almagiri* because they followed the traditional way of education) were required in turn to go from door to door seeking charity. Since most Nigerians desire an Islamic education for their children they usually gave aid to the student (Meek, 1925). Uthman dan Fodio, the Founder of the Sokoto caliphate, improved the status of teachers in Northern Nigeria, not least by supporting the acceptance of wages by the teachers (Shagari and Boyd, 1978). Although many continued to depend on charity as a way of procuring the necessities of life, teachers could be paid wages by those parents able to pay for their children's education. As a result of Uthman dan Fodio's commitment to learning, throughout the Sokoto caliphate, teachers initiated mass-literacy campaigns, which led to the establishment of numerous formal or nonformal educational institutes throughout the land. At Zaria, an early centre for Islamic studies in central Sudan, educational activity was given a new impetus as Muslims sought a

return to their Islamic roots. Consequently, Zaria achieved considerable fame as a centre for the study of Arabic grammar.

Two types of Koranic schools developed in Northern Nigeria: the tablet school (*Makarantar Allo*) and the higher school (*Makarantar Ilmi*). Some schools only taught preparatory (*i'badī*), primary (*ibtidāī*) and/or secondary (*ibthanawī*) studies. On account of the *ulama* system the teachers and students felt a close allegiance not only to one another but to their Sufi Shaykh (sheikh).

### **Colonialism and the Rise of the Western-oriented Ulama**

After the British colonized Northern Nigeria, traditional educators continued to have widespread support. Meek (1925), noted that in 1921, some 98.2 per cent of the Muslims were under the instruction of *mallams*. He also estimated that there were 30,381 Koranic schools in Northern Nigeria.

As the influence of colonialism increased, those *mallams* who were not patronized by rich traders and chiefs became increasingly poor. At the turn of the century, *mallams* were paid only occasional gifts of money, and upon the conclusion of the course of study they were given a present of a sheep or goat. Furthermore, the *mallams* received no support from the colonial government which considered Koranic courses as being an 'unofficial' form of education. Graduates of these schools seldom enjoyed the prospect of suitable employment in the colonial government or in the expanding westernized economy (Doi, 1972).

### **Alhaji Abdullah Bayero and the School for Arabic Studies**

An attempt to remedy this state of affairs was begun by the late Alhaji Abdullahi Bayero, who was the Emir of Kano in the 1930s. Under him, Muslim youths were encouraged to attend Western-oriented schools so that they could serve as administrators and agents of westernization in northern territories. Bayero organized the Northern Provinces Law School in association with the Native Authorities for the training of judges (*kadis*). This led to the return of the sharia system in the North and enhanced the status of the *mallam*. In 1947, the name of this school was changed to the School for Arabic Studies, and came under the management of the colonial government (Doi, 1972).

The efforts of Alhaji Bayero helped increase the number of Muslims attending government schools. But although Muslims could obtain a Western education, most of these institutions lacked instruction in Islamic studies.

As a result, many Muslims in the 1930s and 1940s took private lessons in Islamic studies in the evenings at the homes of well-known teachers.

In 1954, the government began to offer courses at the School for Arabic Studies to provide untrained junior primary school teachers with instruction in Islamic studies. As a result, between 1954 and 1961 two-thirds of the primary teachers in Northern Nigeria had received training in Islamic studies from this institution (Doi, 1972:10). By 1960, the School for Arabic Studies established a post-secondary course in Islamic studies and Arabic which evolved into the Abdullahi Bayero College. The aim of this effort was to direct students away from *Ilm* schools and higher Muslim institutions in Nigeria towards university and Western-oriented post-secondary education. Later, westernized members of the *ulama* developed a comprehensive plan in which Arabic and Islamic studies were made secondary to the westernized system of education so that Muslim students could proceed from the School to university.

Many Muslim youths went through this system of education and today hold high positions in government and business. This was the major base for the development of the Western-oriented Muslim Middle Class (W.O.M.M.C.).

### **Wahhabism**

Clearly the *ulama* educated under the Western-oriented style of Islamic studies would have little understanding of the African Islamic tradition, because their views toward Islam were usually *Wahhabi* (the form of Islam practised in Saudi Arabia).

The influence of Saudi Arabia in Nigeria has grown rapidly since the late 1950s. In addition to the close religious ties which have developed (including a seat on the Muslim World League), the Saudis have offered support with regard to the granting of a large number of scholarships to young Nigerians wishing to attend secular and religious schools. *Wahhabi* influences in northern Nigeria are largely on account of those students, who having graduated from the School for Arabic Studies, attended al-Azhar University in Egypt and the Islamic University of Medina in Saudi Arabia. Graduates of these institutions are for the most part engaged in teaching Islamic studies in schools, are judges in the courts of law, or are civil servants.

### Rise of the W.O.M.M.C.

This dual system of education in Northern Nigeria, i.e. of the School for Arabic Studies and traditional Koranic school education, has led to the division of the *ulama* into three groups: 1) a partly westernized group, 2) a group completely westernized, holding high positions and seen as materialistic, and 3) a traditional group who mainly speak Hausa and are well versed in Islamic studies and Arabic.

The Western-influenced Muslims were recognized as being religious, although they worked for the colonial government (Hickey and Thompson, 1983). The Western-oriented Muslims are the products of the oriental school of Islamic studies. Most are familiar with the African *jihadist* period studied by European scholars, but they are heavily influenced by the Pakistani and Arab brand of Islam because of their studies at Western universities. In general the W.O.M.M.C. do not respect the *ulama* system of education and look down on the traditional *mallams* and their students because of their lack of English and because they have acquired only little Western education. Owing to their absorption in Middle Eastern studies, the W.O.M.M.C. no longer respect the sufis. According to Brownsberger (1983, pp. 224-25) and Hickey and McGaw (1981), the W.O.M.M.C. is considered to be corrupt, individualistic and materialistic.

### Ahmadu Bello and the W.O.M.M.C.

The westernized *ulama* has been greatly influenced by the late North Nigerian Premier, Ahmadu Bello. Under his leadership Muslims began to take over the Northern Nigerian bureaucracy. The Jamaat Nesril Islam (J.N.I.), an educational and missionary organization founded by Bello and affiliated to the Muslim World League, has spread *Wahhabi* ideas in Nigeria. In addition to training missionaries to preach Islam, the J.N.I. also operates a number of schools and colleges and sends students to study Islam in Saudi Arabia. An outcome of the Wahhabist influence is that it creates a dislike towards the sufis, who have always been the backbone of Nigerian Islam and who are products of the *almagiri* system (Clarke, 1982a).

The creation of the School for Arabic Studies and Bello's drive to put Muslims into government posts changed the outlook of W.O.M.M.C. towards the less educated groups of Northern Nigeria. Status in Northern Nigeria soon came to be measured by the type of education one received, either Western or traditional. Brownsberger (1983) has suggested that as Nigerians became employed in government posts they began to identify more with class, than with family, tribe or religious faith and became heavily involved

in corruption because of the strong sense of materialism among Nigerian public officials, as also among Muslims participating in the westernized economy.

### **The Traditional Teachers and their Students**

The traditional mallams speak little or no English and are predominantly products of the Koranic School (*Makarantar*). Many are first-rate teachers of the Islamic sciences and Arabic, but they lack Western training and are thus unable to teach in government-sponsored schools.

The Koranic school stresses discipline, and the student (*almagiri*) must regard his mallam as his father, his word as authority. The student learns in the Koranic school to obey the powers that be (Harber, 1984). Koranic schools share a common pedagogy and teaching is based on learning by rote.

Many mallams are against westernization, not only because it has caused them a loss of status and prestige, but also because of the abandonment by many Western-oriented Muslims of traditional Islamic values such as alms-giving.

There are three types of traditional mallams in Nigeria: 1) the mallam who teaches the Koran and Sharia (*malamin koyar korani da Sharia*); 2) the mallam who teaches the Koran (*malamin korani*); and 3) the mallam who divines and cures (*malamin tsubba*). The latter concentrates his studies on the area of the *Batin* sciences. About one in three mallams are sufi; the major sufi orders in Nigeria are the *Tijani* and *Qaderiyya* brotherhoods.

The sufi mallams are looked down upon by the W.O.M.M.C. and westernized *ulama* because they are seen as being unprogressive and fanatical and are believed to preach unorthodox doctrines since they refuse to subscribe – as Uthman dan Fodio did before them – to *Wahhabi* ideas (Winters, 1985b). Despite these drawbacks the sufis, on account of their devotion to tradition, are recognized as the force which has kept the spirit of Islam alive in Nigeria.

The popularity of Universal Primary Education (U.P.E.) has led to a decline in the number of students attending Koranic schools above the primary level; this is because more and more parents are trying to help their children acquire some form of Western education so that they can participate in Nigeria's westernized economy. As a result, the role and status of the traditional mallam have changed and continue to change.

Formerly, the mallam who taught the Koran and Sharia was respected. Today, however, many young people believe that the traditional teaching methods of these and other mallams is outdated (Clarke, 1982b). Many teaching mallams have therefore taken up divining and healing. The loss of



a reliable livelihood for many mallams has led to an increase in the number of millenarian movements in Northern Nigeria.

To survive in the urban areas to which the students (*almagiri*) have come to attend Koranic schools, students perform either practical or spiritual tasks to earn money in their host communities or they beg for alms. They therefore form a large casual-wage labour pool in urban centres.

Many children and young males participate in the *almagiri* system for two reasons: firstly, it removes male children and youth from the farm during the months after harvest when grain supplies have to be rationed out until the next harvest; and secondly, it gives rural youth the opportunity to acquire Islamic learning and scholarship, and also learn a trade or commercial skills. Thus the Koranic school experience offers rural youth the chance to obtain upward mobility as a mallam, engage in a trade or a craft and acquire the skills necessary for urban living.

The migration of rural dwellers to the cities has created an Islamic network which links the countryside to the city. Often relations established between a rural father and urban patron were continued by his sons. The Islamic network resulting from the interaction of a popular mallam and his student (*almagiri*) has made it possible for a peripatetic mallam to expand his sphere of influence over a wide expanse of territory, far removed from his urban compound.

The students (*almagiri*) can be divided into three age-groups: primary-age children (*kotso*); post-primary school-age adolescents (*tittibiri*); and post-secondary young men who study away from home in the charge of Koranic instructors (*gardi*). The students (*almagiri*) usually settle in urban areas and under the patronage of a mallam who gives the students a place to stay but is not responsible for feeding or looking after them (Yahaya, 1984). As a result, these students usually subsist from begging.

The school programme for a student consists of learning the Koran, Islamic studies, and a trade. The student studies the Koran or Islamic text for around 14 hours a day, advancing at his own rate and graduating from one level of studies to the next on the basis of personal merit and maturity.

During breaks from study, primary-age children (*kotso*) engage in begging at the homes of local Muslims at mealtimes. Most students beg during their breaks at 11 a.m., 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. each day and all day on Thursday and Friday, when they do not attend school. Student over 15 years of age rarely beg – as a result, primary-age children usually help maintain the post-primary school age adolescent. The latter, on the other hand, usually learn a trade during their breaks from study. Today many artisans and semi-skilled workers in Northern Nigeria are the product of the Koranic school system.

The objective of the contemporary Koranic school system is the prepara-

tion of Muslim youth well versed in the Koran, who are self-reliant and self-supporting. Thus, traditional Islamic education develops the child intellectually and ethically, while Western-oriented education in Nigeria only prepares the child for employment in government offices or modern business.

The fact that the students (*almagiri*) learn self-reliance and discipline in the Koranic school means that when they leave the Koranic system they understand the purpose of life. This helps give them the confidence to seek employment, rather than turn to crime as do some unemployed modern school-leavers (Yahahya, 1984).

### **U.P.E. and Nigerian Muslims**

Traditionally, Muslims all over the world have resisted Western education, and as a result many Muslims in Northern Nigeria were opposed to the introduction of Universal Primary Education (U.P.E.) in 1976. Many mallams were primarily opposed to U.P.E. because they felt it would spell the ruin of the Koranic school system (Clarke, 1982b). Damachi studied the feelings of Muslims in Kanuri towards Western and Islamic education and found that many Muslims fear sending their children to secular schools because they feel that for both boys and girls the primary school experience 'induces unsatisfactory behaviour including pride, disrespect, rudeness, lying, laziness, alcoholism, adultery and sexual excess' (Damachi, 1973, p. 157).

### **The Oil Boom**

During the oil boom of the 1970s the lot of the traditional and westernized *ulama* changed drastically. During this period the influence of the westernized *ulama* increased as a result of government support. Oil revenue was channelled to this progressive social group through their participation in business or public service as teachers in the government-run schools. On the other hand, the income of many mallams decreased markedly as more affluent Muslims abandoned the Northern Nigerian tradition of giving alms to students (*almagiri*).

The reason for the decline in income of the *sufi* teachers was that inflation had begun to eat away at the extra income of the average Muslim, who supported the unpaid traditional clerics and *mallams*. Inflation has been on the rise in Nigeria since 1970. The Lagos retail price index indicated a 100 per cent rise during 1974-1976, 30 per cent in 1977, and 40 per cent in 1978. It

fell to 11.4 per cent in 1979 and 10.2 per cent in 1980 (Kraus, 1982). Since 1980, the inflation rate has risen to 20 per cent or more by 1983, and in early 1984, inflation in food prices was up to 50 per cent (Moseley, 1984).

This, along with the fact that 55 per cent of the labour force that earned its living or subsistence through agriculture did not share in the Nigerian oil boom, meant that inflation eroded the real income of the average Muslim wage earner who supported the traditional teachers (*ulama*). During this period the W.O.M.M.C. increased their affluence and materialism, and rapid socio-economic change and conspicuous consumption led to both rural and urban social strains and a radicalization of the sufi teachers. The teachers, who had lost their traditional sources of income as Nigeria's westernized citizens forced their patrons to become unemployable in the modern economy, began to see westernization and the teachers that supported it as being un-Islamic. The W.O.M.M.C., due to their education and training, looked upon the teachers as being un-Islamic, and unprogressive, because the mallams continued to reject efforts by the Federal government to increase the westernization of Northern Nigeria (Winters, 1984).

## Discussion

Political problems in Northern Nigeria are caused by differing socio-economic status and inequality among Muslims educated under diverse and opposing systems of instruction: one Western-oriented and the other tradition-bound and based on Islam. Westernized teachers regard begging both by the physically disabled and by practising *almagiri* as the major problem of Northern Nigeria (Adamu, 1973; Yahaya, 1984). This causes problems because the primary-age children (*kotso*), many as young as five years old, migrate without parental protection from village to urban areas in search of Koranic education (Adamu, 1973, p. 54).

Most Muslims willingly feed the students (*almagiri*) because the rural population depends on this annual migration of the students as a method of relieving their parents of the responsibility for education and maintaining their children at a time of the year when there is barely enough food to live on (Yahaya, 1984).

There are two major migration seasons in Nigeria: one which lasts from October to May (*cirani*), and one which lasts from August to October (*kadar raba*). It is interesting to note that most of the religious riots in Nigeria take place during the *cirani* migration periods when many migrants are in urban areas seeking education or employment. True, the children experience many hardships during these migrations, but this suffering is considered meritorious, ('service in the way of Allah') and helps initiate the child to manhood.

There has been a downturn in the Nigerian economy since the oil boom of the 1970s. Jobs are scarce and prices for food have increased. In 1965, the government imported 46.5 million naira worth of cereals; by 1980, this figure had risen to 1.5 billion naira. Total food imports in 1980 surpassed \$2.9 billion. Increasing inflation has thus made it harder for many Muslims to continue to give adequate alms to the students. The W.O.M.M.C., for their part, believe that the 'almagiri' system should be stopped, a view attacked by the students (*almagiri*) and radical fundamentalists (*Maitatsine mallams*) as being un-Islamic because Islam acknowledges begging by the poor and the needy and encourages alms-giving by the well-to-do. This means that those members of the affluent strata who refuse to share their food and resources with the beggars and *almagiri* are seen as being unislamic – although they may be well learned in *Wahhabism*.

Most members of the W.O.M.M.C. hope to bring the inequality inherent in the Saudi Arabian system of *Islam-Wahhabism* to Nigeria. *Wahhabism* encourages legalism and the outward expression of Islamic rituals such as prayer at the local mosque. This is in sharp contrast to the traditional West African view of Islam as a dynamic force which can be used to better mankind.

The ultra-conservatism of the *Wahhabis* and their reliance on a literal interpretation of the Koran lead them then to reject in general all manifestations of popular Islam. Furthermore, the fact that Muslim communities in different countries have adopted the civil laws and social practices of the sharia, leading to different views as to the nature of Islam, is not understood by the W.O.M.M.C.

Unlike *Wahhabism*, which emphasizes ritual as the sole determination of proper Islamic behaviour and does not place the responsibility on the individual to serve his community, or fellow man, the African form of Islam places emphasis on the individual to live righteously and help his fellow man to find a place in the hereafter. therefore, when the W.O.M.M.C. attempt to spread *Wahhabism* they run counter to West African Islamic tradition.

*Maitatsine* groups, because of their adherence to the traditions of social welfare established by Uthman dan Fodio and others, are finding their ranks being swelled by poor and disadvantaged Muslims who, fleeing the droughts and poverty of their rural backgrounds, are driven to urban centres in search of employment. It is not surprising, therefore, that many *mallams* and Muslims see the resurgence of Islam in Nigeria as a means for the downtrodden to obtain equality, a resurgence which they hope will lead to the establishment of an Islamic state in which a social climate is created which allows every individual to realise his full potential. Having not profited from modernization in rural and urban areas, many Muslims have thus returned to a strict adherence to the ethics and values of Islam.

The 'almagiri' system has encouraged the development of a close relationship between Muslims in different towns who may have studied under the same mallam and/or lived in the same compound during the seasonal migration.

Familiarity to co-operative living in the compound of the sect makes them very open to the preaching of militant *mallams* calling for a redistribution of wealth in Nigeria, and total elimination of all aspects of modernization.

The traditional *mallams* of *Maitatsine* persuasion who preach against corruption among government officials, materialism, heavy taxation, unjust rule and subordination of Muslims to non-Islamic rule therefore find many followers among the *almagiri*.

In the past, when the Nigerian Muslims had their own economy, there was no need for a social security system. In the past, *zakat*, contributed by all well-to-do Muslims was used to assist the indigents and provide public welfare for the progress of the state. In addition, the well-to-do freely gave a part of their wealth, and food to the *almagiri*. Today, theoretically, this function is supposed to be taken over by the state, but in practice those who live in poverty find themselves without support.

## Conclusion

As a result, many Northern Nigerian Muslims have become militant due to the values taught at Koranic schools, values which stress unity between Muslims, alms-giving and communal living. The basis for the Islamic resurgence among Muslims according to Dr. Valikiotis (1981: 171) is simple: 'All evil and corruption, by definition, derives from deviation from Islam, and conversely all good and progress flow from the assertion of the supremacy of Islam. The dichotomy is simple and exclusive, and therefore revolutionary'.

The Koranic schools have served as 'welcoming structures' that help rural students adjust to life in urban centres during the *ci rani* season. This has meant that at the end of the season, the student of militant Islamic sects have returned to the countryside, giving rise to a large rural network of followers who have helped to spread fundamentalist ideas and Islamic militancy in Nigeria.

Owing to the conflict between the W.O.M.M.C. and traditional *ulama* – especially the *sufis* – many Nigerian Muslims have become Koranic integralists. These Muslims rely totally on the Koran for their guidance, since Muslims consider it to be the word of Allah, rather than the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. The Koranic integralists believe that by following the Koran they have greater moral authority than the

W.O.M.M.C. and/or *Wahhabis*, and that by following the Koranic school system they will help to check the encroachment of western civilization on Islamic values in Northern Nigeria.

### Notes

- \* The word *ulama* is an Arabic word. It is the plural of *alim*. This term refers to the instructor of the collective body of those knowledgeable in the Islamic beliefs and dogma. Since a teacher is one who instructs or imparts knowledge or skill, I used the term teacher to refer to the Arabic word *ulama*.
- \*\* The word *mallam* (pl. *mallamai*) is the Hausa equivalent of the Arabic word *muallim*, 'teacher' or 'literate person'. I have chosen to use the term *mallam* in this paper to give the analysis of the traditional education system a Nigerian character. There is no other word in English to define this person except 'teacher'. Therefore, I want the terms *ulama* and *mallam* to appear in the published version of this paper as they now exist.

### References

- Adamu, H. al-Rashid. *The North and Nigerian Unity*. Ahmadu Bello University: Zaria, 1973.
- Brownsberger, W.N. 'Development and Government Corruption: Materialism and Political Fragmentation in Nigeria'. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. 21 (1983), No. 2, pp. 215-233.
- Clarke, P.B. *West Africa and Islam. A History of Religious Development from the 8th Century to the 20th Century*. London: Edward Arnold, 1982a.
- Clarke, P.B. 'An Old Order Changeth'. *West Africa*. (29 November 1982b), pp. 3076-3077.
- Damachi, U.G. *Social Change and Economic Development in Nigeria*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973.
- Doi, A.R.I. 'Islamic Education in Nigeria 11th Century to the 20th Century'. *Islamic Culture*. (January 1972), pp. 1-16.
- Falola, T. 'The Teaching of Islamic History in Nigerian Schools'. *Islam and the Modern Age*. 12 (November 1981), pp. 229-234.
- Harber, C.R. 'Development and Political Attitudes: The Role of Schooling in Northern Nigeria'. *Comparative Education*. 20 (1984), No. 3, pp. 387-403.
- Hickey, J.V., Staats, G.R. and McGaw, D.B. 'Factors Associated with the Mecca Pilgrimage among the Bokkos Fulani'. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. 14 (1983), No. 3-4, pp. 217-230.
- Hickey, J.V. and Thompson, W.E. 'Politics and the Emergence of Alhajis among the Bokkos Fulani'. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. 16 (1983), pp. 212-222.

- Hill, P. *Population, Prosperity and Poverty*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Kraus, J. 'Nigeria under Shagari'. *Current History*. (March 1982), pp. 106-110.
- Mbon, F.M. 'Islam in West Africa: Some Sociological Reflections'. *Islam and the Modern Age*. 12 (1981), No. 4, pp. 220-228.
- Meek, C.K. *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria*. Vol. 2. New York: Negro University Press, 1925.
- Moseley, R. 'Corruption Drains Nigeria Riches'. *Chicago Tribune*. (8 January 1984), pp. 1 and 10.
- Rahman, F. 'The Islamic Concept of State'. In Donohue, J.J. and Esposito, J.L. (eds.) *Islam in Transition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 261-263.
- Valikiotis, P.J. 'Islamic Resurgence: Critical View'. In Cudsi, A.S. and Dessouki, A.E.H. (eds.) *Islam and Power*. Baltimore: Hopkins University Press, 1981, pp. 169-171.
- Westerlund, D. *From Socialism to Islam? Notes on Islam as a Political Factor in Contemporary Africa*. Uppsala: Scandinavia Institute of African Studies, 1982.
- Winters, C.A. 'Religious Problems in Nigeria'. *Talking Drums*. (30 April 1984), p. 7.
- Winters, C.A. 'The West African ulama and Islamic Movements'. *Islam and the Modern Age*. (May 1985a), pp. 121-125.
- Winters, C.A. 'Maitatsinism in Northern Nigeria: We Need to Know More'. *Contemporary Review*. 246 (June 1985b), No. 1433, pp. 286-289.
- Yahaya, D. 'Koranic Schools and the almagiri'. *Sunday Triumph*. (21 October 1984), p. 5 and (4 November 1984), p. 3.