CONTESTED TERRAIN: ECONOMIC MIGRATION, ISLAMIC SHARIA LAW AND ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT The paper contends that ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria are affected by migration, and by the political context of belief in the country. This type of conflict emerges where ethnic/geographical and religious distinctions coincide. These distinctions in Nigeria's pluralistic society have been heightened by economic or labor migration, especially by Christian Southerners moving to the core Muslim areas in the North. This scenario has been the primary cause of recurring inter-ethnic conflict throughout the history of Nigeria's nationhood. This precarious situation has worsened recently, with the promulgation of Sharia law in the North. This new move takes Sharia away from its constitutional and historical domain in customary law in the North, and places it in the criminal/civil law domain. Although this move seems motivated by the political dynamism of contemporary Nigeria, and by politicians' quest for popularity, experience so far shows that it is the harbinger of future ethno-religious conflict in the country. Also, the recent Sharia law, apart from its political undertones, is a potent tool for restricting economic migration. Therefore, the state should rise above rhetoric and impressive but unenforced strategies of national integration, and mediate to enforce the secularity of the Nigerian nation.

Key Words: Sharia; Conflict; Secularity; Politics; Migration.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, ethno-religious conflict, which is a form of urban violence, has been reported in most major towns in Northern Nigeria, and even in the Southwestern town of Lagos. These conflicts, according to Ajayi (2002: 8), have included the Ife-Modakeke crisis in the Southwest, the religious-cum-ethnic crisis in Kaduna and Kano, and the Tiv Jukun conflicts in Benue State, all of which were accompanied by a needless loss of human life and destruction of material possessions. These conflicts feed on the religious and ethnic distinctions between populations in the North and the South of the country. This ethnic division coincides with both religious and geographical divisions. The Southerners are mostly Yoruba, Igbo, Ijaw, Efik, and predominantly Christian, while the Northerners are predominantly Hausa-Fulani and Muslims. In the words of Awofeso (1987: 18), "History had completed its conspiracy on Nigeria by bequeathing two world religions on the country: Christianity in the south, Islam in the north." However, these conflicts do not arise out of nothing: they develop in the context of an urban environment, in which migration and the pull of urbanization bring people from diverse socio-cultural and religious backgrounds to the same place, thus placing them in contest/competition for scarce resources in the society.

In the North of Nigeria, a new democratic backdrop and a tendency for eth-nic irredentism have given rise to a new form of religious law. The use of Islamic Sharia law as a political tool, in the present dispensation, was foreshad-owed by previous events in the country. In his insightful contribution to the subject, Noltshungu (1983) saw Sharia as a tool that would always be unearthed and used by politicians who were eager to achieve power, or were unsure of their political footing in the North. According to Noltshungu, no one should rule out entirely the possibility of political elites or aspirants to power using Sharia either to gain support or as a response to provocative opposition or con-troversy.

However, the history of ethno-religious conflicts in Northern Nigeria seems to convey the impression that these conflicts are used to limit internal migra-tion. In other words, these conflicts are usually between the indigenes and the migrants, and in such conflicts migrants or stranger-elements tend to lose their lives and property. This mind-set has not been erased by the nascent Sharia law in Northern Nigeria, with its inherent implications for urban ethno-religious con-flict. As a result, this paper attempts to trace the linkage between internal eco-nomic migration and urban ethno-religious conflict in the context of Sharia law in Nigeria.

BACKGROUND TO THE SHARIA LAW IN NIGERIA

On March 23, 2000, an unfortunate man named Baba Bello Karegarka Jangedi had one hand amputated in Zamfara State, Northern Nigeria, for steal-ing a cow, and thus became the first victim of Sharia in an otherwise demo-cratic society. The advent of Sharia in the Northern part of Nigeria marks, per-haps, the attainment of a long-held political and religious desire. Hence, the romance between Sharia Islamic principles and politics nowadays in North-ern Nigeria should not be considered entirely novel. At the behest of the pre-dan Fodio Jihadists, the Islamic religion entered Nigeria around the 11th century, in Kanem Bornu, and by the 14th century it had spread into Hausa land. Islam was, from the outset, a state religion, because the rulers of the time had agreed to lead their peoples according to its tenets. However, even more significant was the fact that the Islamic way of life was perpetuated in Nigeria through a system of conquest. In other words, those people who were conquered militar-ily had little choice but to accept the assumed superior way of life of the con-querors. This was made particularly manifest in the jihad reformation that was led by Sheikh Usman dan Fodio, who successfully launched the Jihad between 1804 and 1890 and who had, by the late 1810s, finally succeeded in establish-ing a Muslim administrative system, or caliphate. The caliphate was a central-ized politico-religious system based essentially on the *Sharia, Hadith* and *Sunna.* The centralized stretch of the caliphate, its unquestionable religious authority and the apparent willingness of the people to obey it, made the Hausa-Fulani area a success story in the context of the indirect rule system of the British.

According to Kukah (1993), colonialism eventually put paid to the Islamic state building project initiated by dan Fodio. The defeat of the powerful Hausa-Fulani caliphate by the British derailed progress towards an Islamic Sharia state. However, the coming of colonialism did not totally eradicate Sharia fever among the Islamic faithful in the North. As a result, the post-colonial socio-political life of Nigeria has been dogged by the so-called Sharia question, which revolves around the compatibility of the pure Islamic faith with a non-Sharia socio-political environment. In other words, can Muslims live their faith to the fullest in the context of a non-Sharia setting?

However, the Sharia issue in Nigeria should also be seen as having important historical antecedents. In fact, it has been argued that the basis of the Jihad led by Usman dan Fodio was the establishment of an Islamic state anchored on Sharia principles (Kukah, 1993). In this sense, the Sharia project was, from its beginning, aimed ultimately at building a state in which politics and governance would be determined by the strict rules of the Islamic religion. Therefore, it is not surprising that, at the core of Sharia revivalism, lay the determination to make it impossible for the faithful to live under un-Islamic powers.

This understanding may have informed the willing reception of Sharia law by most Northerners because, in a sense, it signified the coming of age of a politically independent Northern Nigeria. Hence, while the building of an Islamic nation-state in Nigeria may still seem far-fetched, the crucial foundations are being laid by the promulgation of the new Sharia law in most Northern states, by means of a process that began in 1999.

Sharia courts have existed since the beginning of the caliphate in Northern Nigeria. These courts made use of the Koran in both oath taking, or swearing to tell the truth, by litigants, and in the passing of judgment by the Sharia judge, or Alkali. In 1900, the British colonial masters acknowledged that the Sharia court was on the same level as the customary courts. In other words, it was accepted that Sharia performed the normal roles of the customary courts in those areas of the North predominantly occupied by Muslims. The Sharia court was, however, accepted by the British on reasonable grounds. In the first place, Sharia courts predated the arrival of the British, and were both widespread and accepted in the Hausa-Fulani enclaves. Second, in accepting the Sharia, the British tried to rid it of any repugnant punishment practices. Therefore the British stated the following:

> These courts are to administer native law and custom prevailing in the area of jurisdiction and might award any type of punishment recognized thereby except mutilation, torture or any other which is repugnant to natural justice and humanity. (Keay & Richardson, 1966: 22)

From this humble beginning the Sharia court eventually grew to include a Sharia Court of Appeal, which was first established in Kaduna, in 1960. However, fundamental adherents of Islam who favor Sharia law are often inclined to argue that, by religious implication, the Sharia should not employ an appellate system whereby cases are referred from a lower to a higher court. In fact,

this was understood in some quarters to mean that Sharia law was being made compliant with the penal codes of Western society. In spite of this, the Sharia appellate system has been retained since the 1960s, in an obvious bid to modernize Sharia law, and to make it as just as possible.

The foregoing outlines the essential nature of the Sharia legal system in Nigeria prior to the recent imposition of a blanket Sharia law. In addition, the 1979 constitution recognized the Sharia court and its appellate system, but restricted it to the areas of customary and native law, which are also the concerns of the customary courts. In spite of this, the 1970s saw Northern politicians undertake the renaissance of the Sharia quest. According to Udoidem (1997), the Sharia controversy that occurred during the 1976 constituent assembly deliberations changed the nature of religious conflicts in Nigeria. In his view, "Unlike in the civil war, where religion was hiding under politics, under the sharia, politics was now hiding under religion" (Udoidem, 1997: 162). However, the recent imposition of Sharia law in the North can be considered extremely radical, for two reasons. First, it covers the whole gamut from customary civil law to criminal law, which hitherto had been the preserve of the normal courts. Second, the new system of Sharia allows forms of punishment that should be considered repugnant to natural justice and humanity. In this case, the law allows torture, mutilation and severance of limbs, death by stoning, flogging, etc. This is a fundamental departure from the 1900 spirit that gave recognition to the law.

However, even more profound and disturbing in this new wave of Islamic Sharia law is the Alkali area courts' history of protecting the privileged, and of entrenching the long years of feudal inequality in the North. These conservative courts constituted the foundation of Sharia enforcement; they have been accused of representing anything but justice, and of serving the interests of the privileged classes to the detriment of the poor, all in the name of God. Kukah (1993) captured well the inadequacies of these area courts:

> Due to official inertia and unwillingness to effect fundamental structural changes in the light of new social and political realities, what is clear is that these courts have therefore come to be feared as their powers have only been bolstered as the sons of some of these judges and traditional rulers have risen to prominence and therefore have only sought to consolidate the base of their privileges … The refusal of certain members of the ruling classes who benefit directly and preside over these institutions to face the realities of the corruption … has infested these courts that are run in the name of God. (1993: 130-131)

The import of the above views can be fully understood only by appreciating that, by their very nature, these courts are not based on any form of strict separation of powers between the judiciary and executive. In fact, this would be asking a great deal in the Northern feudal oligarchies, where the Emir, or traditional ruler, is essentially the embodiment of both the sacred and the secular. These courts are, by implication, very far removed from the masses, and

they may, in fact, be serving the needs of the elites who run them. Hence, the resurgence of Sharia in Northern Nigeria, especially at the behest of politicians, may be an instance of the age-old ploy of using religion to control the political consciousness, and the aspirations, of the people. Sharia was first introduced in the Northern Nigeria state of Zamfara on October 27, 1999 (Eneje, 2001). Incidentally, this state has not so far witnessed any religious crisis following the introduction of Sharia, unlike other states, such as Kaduna, where Sharia has been used to foment crisis. The situation in Zamfara can probably be explained by the low number of migrants in the state, and by the absence of the pre-introduction tension that was generated in some other states, in which the introduction of Sharia may have been largely a political gimmick.

ECONOMIC MIGRATION AND URBAN ETHNIC RELIGIOUS CONFLICT: ECONOMIC PULL VERSUS SOCIAL PUSH

Migration from one geographic zone to another within a particular nation, whether for a short period or for long domicile, is a fact of modern life. Indeed, scholars (Held, 1995; Ohmae, 1995) are wont to argue that globalization has, as it were, obliterated, or made almost meaningless, the boundaries between different nations. One would expect this diminishment of a sense of boundaries to be even greater within the internal confines or territory of a given nation. As a matter of fact, modern states are proud of having no restrictive internal boundaries. In other words, citizens are free to move from any one zone of the country to another, without any form of hindrance or control, as happens in international movement. By the same token, citizens are free to live in any part of the country, and are guaranteed full protection from molestation, and from encroachment on their basic human rights, as long as they remain law-abiding.

In Nigeria, the above scenario is adequately covered by the constitution and by the rhetoric of office-holders. However, the stark reality is very different. Thus, internal migration in Nigeria is subject to both primordial and religious considerations, which effectively set limits on such movement.

Economic migration, or the movement of people from one geographic zone of Nigeria to another in search of better economic opportunities, has a number of fundamental characteristics. In this case, migration is mostly from the South of the country to the North. Even though people from the North also migrate to the South, such migration involves a relatively small percentage of people and is mostly transient and seasonal in nature: for example, the movement of the nomadic Fulanis to the South of Nigeria in search of greener pastures, or a market for cattle.[1] This said, a number of Northerners are located in major towns in the South, such as Lagos, Port Harcourt, Onitsha, Umuahia, Aba and Benin. However, this number pales into insignificance when compared to the number of people from the South to be found in such Northern towns as Kano, Kaduna, Katsina and Maiduguri.

Even among the Southerners, however, the majority of migrants to the North

are the Igbo-speaking people of Nigeria, from the Eastern region. Business-men and itinerant merchants from this area of Nigeria constitute over 80% of the migrant population in the North. They present a picture of a highly mobile and restless people, whom Igbokwe (1996) saw as basically driven by the pop-ulation density of the Eastern region. Hence, the only way to lessen the pres-sure of population, and to create new economic niches, is by migration to areas of lower population density. However, the lure of the Northern cities for these migrants cannot be entirely explained by the simple logic of population pres-sure or congestion. Equally germane is the remarkable reputation these Northern towns have established, over time, as centers of commerce. Kano, for instance, in addition to being one of the centers of the initial urbanization in Nigeria, has a business and commercial pedigree dating back to its prominence in Trans-Saharan trade. According to Zakaria (1997), the lure of Kano as a lucrative economic center has long attracted migrants to the city. This attraction, and the commercial myth, is not limited to Kano alone, but includes other major towns in the North, such as Kaduna, Katsina, Maiduguri and Jos, each of which boasts a very high stranger or migrant population.

It is also interesting that these migrants are not really economic neophytes, or those who are basically at the margins of economic life in the North. In the case of the Igbo, Zakaria (1997) has argued that they have made remarkable strides in business in Kano, and are in control of the extensive auto-parts and building materials businesses in the town.

The point is, then, that economic migration, which threatens the economic space of the indigenous population, tends naturally to draw their ire. The pros-perity of migrant workers is contrary to the dominant notion of labor migrants as those who provide cheap labor for the economic growth initiatives of the host society. In this context, migrants are ideally located in marginal economic pursuits, and in those areas of work in which the indigenes feel it is loathsome to become involved. In other words, migrants are expected to occupy the unvi-able economic positions, and to serve as a pool of cheap labor to be utilized to boost the economic base of the host society.[2]

Therefore, whenever the economic position of migrants changes from that which is expected, i.e., when the migrants become prosperous, a cause of con-flict is triggered. In the case of Nigeria, the shaky foundation of nationalism, and the mutual distrust of the various ethnic groups, worsen an already bad sit-uation.

MIGRATION, SHARIA LAW AND URBAN ETHNIC CONFLICT

Undoubtedly, urban ethnic violence can be related to migration, which results mainly from the need for economic benefits. In Nigeria, there is a widespread pattern of internal economic migration across the country. However, even within the internal boundaries of a state, migration for economic purposes invariably results in the coming together of heterogeneous social groups. Such heterogene-

ity is often made more severe by religious differences, and by primordial political contests, as in the case of Nigeria. In fact, scholars have identified the old colonial urban centers, which are the end points of rural migration, as bastions of contemporary ethnicity and the conflict surrounding it (Nnoli, 1978; Udoh, 1998).

Ethno-religious bickering was at the forefront of conflict between migrants and indigenes in the North of Nigeria decades before the advent of the new form of Sharia. In this sense, conflict on the basis of ethnic or religious differences has been a regular feature of most Northern urban areas. However, the introduction of the Sharia in the present political dispensation, and its politicization, has not only heightened this conflict but has also added more venom to it. In this case, the coincidence of religious fundamentalism and political interests has led to a gulf appearing with respect to interaction between different groups. Even more poignant is the fact that the present Sharia religious fervor, while serving the piety of adherents, has ironically boosted the political base and clout of the politicians who championed it, largely for political reasons.[3]

Equally, it would be unhistorical for anyone to disregard the economic motives behind ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria. As Anugwom and Oji (2004) have reported, the 1932 rift in Jos, Northern Nigeria, between the Igbo and Hausa ethnic groups, which almost snowballed into violent conflict, was propelled by competition between the two groups over skilled and unskilled job openings in the colonial civil service, as well as by petty trading interests in the region. Cohen (1971) also reported a 1934 conflict between the Hausa and Yoruba communities over the control and determination of the price of kola-nut, a highly priced commodity in the local market.

We would do well to understand that, although all forms of migration imply some economic exchange, most forms of labor or economic migration represent cases of economic opportunism. In this sense, such migrants and strangers do not confine themselves to obscure jobs or to the filthy areas of the urban environment, but readily take charge to become a major force in the economic sector of the host society. Thus, in reality, a thin line separates economic migration from economic opportunism. Regarding economic opportunism, migration or movement is not necessarily undertaken because of a dearth of jobs or economic openings in the migrant's home; it may arise from the desire to seek greener pastures, to achieve prosperity, and to reap the perceived abundance of the new society. Therefore, migrants, or stranger-elements, often compete for available jobs and economic space with the local population. Against the background of a Nigerian nation-state pockmarked by ethnic politics and clannish affections, this may be interpreted as a situation in which migrants exploit the benevolence of the hosts in order to attain economic benefits.

From an economic point of view, the adoption of blanket Sharia law has radicalized many things in the North. This process of radicalization has centered mostly on the economic and business pursuits of strangers. In most of the North nowadays, the sale of alcohol, and the operation of hotels and other businesses seen as against the principles or spirit of the new law, have been

officially banned. Apart from a radical limitation of the choice of business open to the migrants, economic pursuit now takes place strictly according to Sharia tenets.

The massive destruction and looting of the property and economic goods of migrants in present day ethno-religious conflicts in the North have given the problem an economic tinge. Thus, those conflicts that provide opportunities to undermine the economic stake of non-indigenes may be driven by displeasure with the economic prosperity or the aggressive business posture of the stranger-elements. In this sense, ethno-religious conflict becomes the expression of the economic disenchantment of the indigenous elements of the society. Conflict then becomes a disguised form of struggle for economic space between different groups in the urban environment. Indeed, a better appreciation of the above economic logic can be attained by understanding the antecedent social forces driving Sharia in Nigeria. One major impetus to the introduction of Sharia doctrine in Nigeria came from the formation of the Izala Movement.[4] This society was formed in the mid-1970s and has as its basic aim the practice of Islam according to Sharia, the purification of Islam, the abolition of innovations in Islam (ibid'a) and the practice of Islam strictly in accordance with the precepts of the Koran and Sunna (Udoidem, 1997). The Izala group, which criticized the earlier Jijanniyya's innovations, such as folding the arms while performing salat (kablu) and sitting by a white cloth while doing salat[5] (Udoidem, 1997: 163), was highly instrumental in spreading the Sharia doctrine of pure and unadulterated, and often fundamental, Islam. It also saw the onset of the mobilization of civil society groups in the Northern part of Nigeria, for the enthronement of Sharia.

Following on the heels of the Izala, the 1980s saw the phenomenal emergence in Northern Nigeria of wide-ranging religious disturbances powered by subaltern forces, and known as the Maitatsine riots. These began in 1980, in Kano state. The Maitatsine riots, perhaps more than any other event, showed the economic rationale of the religious disturbances that occurred under the guise of Sharia. In the first place, the riots were undertaken by an urban subaltern populace, or talakawas, who also saw Sharia as a subterfuge for economic revival.[6] In this case, the Maitatsine movement, which was launched in Kano in 1980 by Alhaji Muhammadu Marwa, was not only a religious uprising but also, to an equal extent, a socio-economic uprising by an oppressed and poor section of the indigenous population.

The massive destruction of economic goods and of the businesses of migrants, in addition to the loss of life that this form of ethno-religious conflict entails, lends credence to an economic motive behind the violence in the North. After all, especially mapped out for destruction are those areas of business in which the migrants have a virtual monopoly. Even some of the advocates of, and sympathizers with, the Sharia are equally cognizant of its economic motive.[7] In fact, the introduction of the Sharia in Zamfara state, for instance, has been ascribed to the governor's[8] concern for the poor and the less privileged (Emeje, 2001). Therefore the Sharia and its associated conflicts may

be seen as beyond religion and politics and, instead, as a guided reaction of the autochthons against the increasing economic presence of the allochthons in the North. It is on this basis that the Sharia (when guided by a covert socio-economic agenda) militates against inter-group harmony, and creates the objective conditions for unending bickering in the urban milieu, where people from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds interact. The threat that Sharia law poses for people from places other than the North, and for migrants, is that a fundamental application of the Sharia principle would render the state powerless to guarantee the protection of the rights of non-believers. A crucial cornerstone of the Sharia is the acceptance (by the faithful) of its superiority to the state. In the Islamic political system, the state is inferior to the Sharia. However, even beyond this, there is the fact that the Sharia itself lays down the general norms and functions of the state as well as those of all the public institutions of the state (see, Kukah, 1993).

This understanding of the Sharia gives rise to three scenarios for urban conflict in the North of the country. In the first, a good understanding of the Sharia law leads the migrant to believe that the state is powerless to protect him or his basic rights. Therefore, utilizing primordial ethnic linkages, migrants become engaged in the process of building a strong solidarity against any likely menace from the indigenes, or the Islamic faithful.

In the second instance, the faithful recognize the supremacy of the Sharia and the apparent irrelevance of the secular authority, and may be driven towards a religious Jihad that is aimed, ultimately, at enthroning a national Islamic state. However, its immediate target is the significant number of un-Islamized migrant 'infidels' within the geographic boundaries of Islamized Northern Nigeria.

Third, the state (within the region, as represented by the governor) adopts an indifferent attitude to the plight of the migrants, while riding the crest of Sharia-propelled popularity. The local politicians are convinced of strong support, and use the Sharia as bargaining chips for resources at the center.

However, a clear appreciation of the above three scenarios, and of how they have given rise to increased levels of ethnic conflict in the urban areas of the North, where people from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds reside, can only be achieved against an understanding of the nature of the Nigerian state, and its inherent ethnic problem. Nigeria can be seen as a state that is divided by historical and political antecedents into North and the South. The North, or what was formerly called the Northern protectorate, had a different colonial administration to the Southern protectorate, until the historic amalgamation by Lord Lugard in 1914. However, prior to this amalgamation, the two zones had lived separate social, religious and political lives. In the North, the Islamic religion was dominant, and the Emirs held the reins of authority. The Jihad had almost succeeded in creating a monolithic North, as a result of the Fulani's defeat of the other, smaller Northern Kingdoms, and of the Hausa city-states. The colonial powers encountered a well-consolidated political arrangement, and found indirect rule irresistible. In the North, the indirect rule system proved effective. The South, however, had a different socio-religious history. With the excep-

tions of the powerful Yoruba Kingdoms and the Benin Kingdom, the South was a domain of tiny kingdoms and liberal acephalous societies. This made indirect rule difficult to apply throughout the South. The unification of the North and the South in 1914 did nothing to erase the fundamental differences between the people.

Religious differences have reinforced this divide. Thus, the North is predominantly Hausa-Fulani and Muslim, while the South is peopled by at least four major ethnic groups, and a large number of minority groups.[9] In addition, Christianity is the dominant religion of the South. However, even beyond these socio-political and religious differences, the prospects for harmonious inter-group relationships have been undermined by the politicization of these primordial differences.

As a result, the political scene in Nigeria, from the immediate pre-independence period to the present, has been shaped and reshaped by ethnicity (Anugwom, 2000). In this situation, the ethnic factor has been used as a veritable tool in the contest for scarce resources - political, economic and social - in the country.

A number of scholars have seen the ethnic problem as related to the inability of the state to deliver the rule of law (Uroh, 1998; Idowu, 1999). The state in Nigeria has, ironically, weakened the moral and political basis of solidarity across groups, and has thus reinforced the divisive character of ethnicity. The failure of the political class to rise above primordial loyalties, and to engender positive forms of nationalism, has set the scene for unending strife between the different groups in the country. These differences, and the strife they cause, become even worse where existing social distinctions are further sharpened by religious fundamentalism, as in the case of Sharia law in Northern Nigeria. It is, therefore, only against the background, briefly outline above, that one can appreciate the resurgence of urban ethnic conflicts in Nigeria since the introduction of Sharia law in 1999.

Sharia, and the social conflict and economic repercussions for non-indigenes it brings, are best typified in what Odey (2000) aptly called the Kaduna[10] mayhem. The Kaduna religious inferno of February 21, 2000 was sparked off by a dispute over the introduction of Sharia law to the state. It might be helpful to describe the Kaduna incident in the words of Odey (2000), who has provided one of the best accounts of that riot.

On Sunday, February 20, 2000, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Kaduna advised Christians to come out en masse the following day to stage a peaceful demonstration against what the Christians in the state perceived as the wrongful use of the State machinery to impose sharia on the multi-religious, multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan city of Kaduna—all in contradiction with the secularity of the Nigerian state. Prior to the demonstration, CAN made concerted efforts to obtain a permit from the same police that granted a permit to the Muslims. But the request was turned down. That was the last straw that irrevocably pinned Kaduna, the sprawling cos-

mopolitan city of the North, to the bloody walls of religious Armageddon on February 21, 2000.

The Christians who did not see any reason why they should be denied the privilege given to their Muslim counterparts in a country that guarantees freedom of religion and peaceful demonstration went ahead and embarked on their own demonstration on Monday, February 21, 2000. While the Muslim youths demanded the introduction of the sharia law and threatened to pull down the heavens if it was not introduced, the Christians, on the other hand, carried anti-sharia placards and chanted anti-sharia slogans as they marched peacefully through some major streets in Kaduna to the Government House where they presented a letter in which they stated their own position to the Deputy Governor of the state, Stephen Shekari.

They were on their way back from the Government House when an unsuspected crowd of armed Muslim marauders descended on them. By the time the world knew about what was happening, Kaduna had been thrown into one of the most violent religious riots it has witnessed in its long history of religious violence. (Odey, 2000: 99-100)

POLITICS, SHARIA AND ETHNIC CONFLICT

Recently, ethno-religious conflicts have become a more or less common feature of the socio-political landscape of Nigeria (Osaghae, 1994; Otite, 1990; Anugwom 2000; etc.). This unending strife has fed on the politics of primordialism and clientelism, which have both been constant elements in the politics of the country. This sort of politicking, which works to the detriment of development, was well captured by Joseph (1987) in his idea of prebendalism, which he considers the bane of democracy in Nigeria.

Nigeria, then, can be seen largely as a modern state in which primordial and clannish loyalties hold sway. Therefore people see their allegiance and commitment to their ethnic or social group of origin as paramount, and superior to national allegiance. This problem is by no means peculiar to Nigeria. Indeed, it is quite common in Africa. The problem has been traced to the fact that African states did not discard the characteristics of ethnic kingdoms before they were granted independence. Indeed, Jackson (1990) saw the ethnic problem over most of Africa as linked, from the outset, to the fragile nature of African states. For Jackson, these states were merely 'quasi-states', and thus structurally unable to meet the myriad challenges of nationhood.

However, at this point it may be more important to ask whether African states are irredeemably primordial, i.e., whether their 'quasi-state' origin is, in fact, unchangeable. Idowu (1999) addressed this concern by arguing that, in the case of Nigeria, the inability of the leadership to deliver the rule of law without pandering to ethnic and sectional interests rekindles endless primordial loyalties among the groups of a plural society.

Be that as it may, Adegbesan (1987) has argued that religion cannot really be

considered a new factor in Nigerian politics. In a similar vein, in Nigeria, religion can be seen, more often than not, as intertwined with the fates of aspiring national politicians. It is in this sense that it becomes an inevitable instrument in the hands of the power brokers of the country (Kurfi, 1983). Given this reality, religion has come a close second to ethnicity in mobilizing people in Nigerian politics. It is little wonder that, most of the time, ethnicity and religion are inseparable in conflict situations in Nigeria. Even more to the point is the fact that both ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria have political underpinnings (Igbo & Anugwom, 2002; Udoidem, 1997).

All this means that religion has acquired a more than primordial significance in contemporary Nigeria. Thus, religion, like ethnicity, has an clear instrumental value in today's Nigeria. In this sense, religion is a veritable avenue to political power in Nigeria. In a Nigerian state in which resources are not allocated via free market mechanisms or on the basis of social justice, political power becomes the route to both the manipulation of resources and their biased allocation. In this type of situation, politicians invariably allocate resources on the basis of loyalty and support. Additionally, in this context, the politics of clientelism and patronage emerge and, here again, the politicians use this system to expropriate an unfair proportion of the national resources.

Starting from the venerated Sarduana, Ahmadu Bello, the elite Northern leaders and politicians have always faced a dilemma in their attempt to achieve a balance between the demands of modern statehood and the propagation of Islam. In fact, the Sarduana, while ostensibly opening up the Northern region to Christian influence, also found it politically expedient to champion the Islamization of the Christian areas of the North (Crampton, 1975; Paden, 1986). This dilemma is still very much in evidence amongst the present crop of Northern elites and politicians. In other words, although these elites recognize the need to promote a modern North in which liberty and freedom of belief reign, they also, and invariably, want to keep religious faith as a part of their politics. After all, the impression that one is a staunch believer in, and promoter of, Islam guarantees more votes than the impression that one is a firm believer in liberty, and an advocate of freedom of worship.

Hence, the Sharia issue has become a very powerful political tool. It may serve to assuage the feelings of the people about living under an un-Islamic state but, contrary to the admonitions of Usman dan Fodio, it is without doubt a political platform of some importance for the new crop of politicians from the North, who have so far used the Sharia to prop up their dwindling support, and to turn attention away from the glaring material poverty in most of Nigeria. In this sense, the Sharia euphoria, and the renewed legitimacy it has given politicians in the North, may have served the purpose of directing attention away from the failure of democracy in Nigeria, and from the inability of the politicians to have any radical impact on the social life of the people.

Against this background, in some quarters, the emergence of the Sharia law has been perceived as more a politically motivated action than a call to holy living. On the basis of the above view, it thus seems logical to see the Sharia

issue as the basis of the North's desire to build a coherent political bloc, with religion as the basis of mobilization. In other words, Sharia becomes the basis of social and political unity, offering the North the possibility of recapturing the political leadership of the country, which was only recently relinquished to the South, in a political office-sharing formula devised by the political class.

Therefore, apart from representing the desire of the Northern political elites to recapture power, the Sharia may also be seen as an expression of dissatisfaction with the political situation in the country. No matter how it is rationalized, Sharia law represents a very big challenge to a supposedly secular state. Sylvester Odion-Akhaine, a well known Nigerian civil rights crusader, has an interesting perspective on the Sharia issue and the mayhem it will probably bring in its wake, when he likened it to, "Stirring up a hornet's nest after all we have gone through in the last one and half decades of authoritarian continuum. I have traversed the globe looking for the gains of sharia. I am yet to see where sharia has taken anyone to the moon or made anyone perform heart surgery. In Afghanistan, it is Stone Age atavism" (Tell Magazine, 2000: 50). From this perspective, Sharia, rather than representing a religious aim, is more of a political instrument to divert attention away from the critical job of nation building.

SHARIA AT THE STREET LEVEL: ORDINARY PEOPLE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The introduction of Sharia has had a mixed impact on the lives of the ordinary people in the street, especially in its influence on socio-economic life. Thus, although many underprivileged and often homeless youths have seen it as providing an opportunity to hit back at the economically better-off migrants, other more respectable and economically engaged citizens see it as purely an article of faith. In fact, according to a recent empirical investigation, the citizens of Kano (a state in the North) saw the large-scale migration of outsiders to the North of Nigeria, and the business acumen of many of these migrants, as 'un-Islamic,' and as factors in urban violence. They also saw the government's performance of its mediating role as inadequate (Obasi & Anugwom, 2002).

The above findings are, to a certain extent, supported by my own personal interviews (April to July 2005) with migrants and indigenes in Kano and Kaduna (two states in the North of Nigeria). Although they saw the role of Sharia as likely to engender conflict, since it underlines religious differences, the majority of the interviewees believed that the migration of people from different ethnic and socio-religious backgrounds into urban areas populated by people of different primordial/religious affinity created a setting for conflict. They supported this claim by giving instances of recent ethno-social conflicts across the country: for example, the frequent clashes between the Hausa/Fulani Muslims and Igbo/Yoruba in Kano, the Kaduna Sharia crises between the Muslims and the Igbo Christians, and the Lagos and Shagamu crises between the militant Odua Peoples Congress (OPC) and pockets of Hausa/Fulani Youths and traders. They took the view that these conflicts would have been less intense,

or might even not have occurred at all, in the absence of ethnic and religious differences. In spite of the above, however, the fact is that there is no statistical relationship between economic prosperity and urban violence, although the economic factor is still a strong intermediate variable, even in Sharia-induced ethno-religious conflict in Northern Nigeria. Even so, Obasi and Anugwom (2002) isolated religious and ethnic factors as the most important causes of urban violence in Kano.

One of my respondents, a lecturer at the Federal College of Education, Kano, was of the opinion that, in as much as one can see the work of politics in most of the contemporary violence in the North, the instigators of such violence deploy religion to mobilize unemployed and vagrant youths (*yandabas*), and induce them to perpetrate acts of violence. This stratagem has worked consistently because, according to my respondent, religion is the most potent tool in inducing a Muslim to fight. That is why the Sharia issue has led to conflict in some parts of the North.

However, and in addition to the above, further probing of the respondents revealed an even more interesting relationship between Sharia (religion) and conflict. While migrants (non-Northerners) feel that it is their non-Islamic religious beliefs (Christianity) that attract the antagonism of their hosts, the indigenes claim that they are mostly repelled by the business mentality of the migrants and, to some extent, by the culture (as expressed in social habits and dress codes) of these migrants. The palpable tension that has characterized the relationship between the two groups over time has been exacerbated by the introduction of Sharia, which, while it refocuses Islamic religion, excludes non-adherents, and prescribes some behaviors, while proscribing any behavior considered anti-Sharia.

For the migrants, the above features are exacerbated by regular attacks on the businesses of migrants that occur in any religious uprising in the North. According to some migrants who spoke with me, the relation of conflict to indigene discomfort with the business progress of migrants is not a direct one, but rather selective in nature. They pointed out that, even when they destroy the businesses of migrants, the indigenes are, more often than not, selective. Mostly they damage hotels, liquor stores and places of worship. The Muslim population in the North of Nigeria considers all these anti-Sharia, or an affront to Sharia.

Yet, in spite of the above, a good number of indigenes see the problem as lying in the politicization of Sharia, and in the role of both the federal and state governments in abetting urban violence, not only in the North but also in other parts of the country. Hence, both sets of respondents complained about the government's slow-to-act attitude to ethno-religious conflicts between indigenes and migrants in the North, and they argued that this predated the formal introduction of Sharia. This suggests that the powers that be usually gain some political mileage from divisive conflict of all kinds, including those that are Sharia-inspired.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SHARIA RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

Immediately after the civil war, in 1970, the political economy of religious conflict showed its true colors when the defeat of the secessionist Eastern region was seen as an achievement of Allah's will, and of the political and economic dominance of the Northerners.[11] In fact, this thinking, which is based on a belief that the righteous are justified in taking over the economic resources of the infidels, has more or less underlined contemporary Sharia conflicts.

However, the economic basis of religious riots in the North of Nigeria generally preceded the introduction of Sharia, but the Sharia, given the nature of its tenets, reinforced this attitude. In fact, in all the religious riots in the North, churches and businesses have usually been targeted, which shows the the source of the displeasure of the indigenous groups. For instance, on February 27, 1984, Islamic religious fanatics struck in Jimeta, Adamawa state (then Gongola state), causing massive destruction to property and great loss of life. It is instructive that, while 30,000 people were rendered homeless, more than 170,000 were displaced from their businesses, and the multi-million Naira modern market in Yola was completely burnt down (Odey, 2000).[12]

Thus, pre-Sharia religious riots in the North always targeted the businesses and the economic activities of outsiders. However, Sharia legitimizes such acts, as Sharia doctrine sees involvement in businesses like hotels and the sale of alcoholic beverages as anti-Islamic and, thus, unacceptable in a Sharia enclave. In other words, as Odey (2000: 12) argues, "People turn religion into a cloak under which cover they hope to achieve the selfish aims which they cannot achieve through fair and healthy competition." Therefore, a good way to understand the economic basis or objectives of religious conflicts is to examine the nature of the destruction that occurs in such mayhem. A crucial element in the philosophy of the Maitatsine religious movement,[13] which was active in Nigeria in the 1980s and 1990s, and led to the killing of some Northerners, was the claim that rich Muslims were unbelievers (Udoidem, 1997), and that rich outsiders were only profiting from their infidelity, as it were. Given this standpoint, the first Maitatsine riot in Kano, in 1980, apart from being one of the bloodiest ever, also involved massive destruction and looting of the businesses of non-indigenes, and even of those of Muslims of other sects, who were seen as the purveyors of infidelity. Following the 1980 riots, the short-lived 1982 riots, again in Kano, targeted churches in particular. In these riots, many churches in Kano were set on fire by irate Muslim youth. This riot was the first open and violent religious conflict between Christians and Muslims, and it was probably fuelled by the laying of a foundation for a Christian church near a mosque in Kano (Udoidem, 1997). By the time the riot was over, eight churches in the non-indigene area of the town, Zabon-Gari, had been burnt down (Committee Report, 1982).[14]

Any rebuttal of the economic basis of Sharia would amount to a confession of ignorance of its nature and of the history in Nigeria. The movement towards

economic Sharia started with the initiation of Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), on January 8, 1986, during the reign of Ibrahim Babangida. There is no denying that Islam involves a way of life in which economic pursuits are dictated by religious beliefs. Hence, Nigeria's membership of the OIC, which is basically a religious body, was soon followed by Nigeria's subscription to a shareholding in the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), under the same Babangida. According to Odey (2000), membership of the IDB is restricted to countries that are members of the OIC, and that are willing to implement Islamic economic and financial principles. As he also noted, "Among other things, the aims of the IDB are to promote the sharia law in member states and to foster the aims of the OIC" (Odey, 2000: 32). Thus, the Sharia, contrary to popular belief, is not economically neutral.

THE NIGERIAN STATE AND THE NOTION OF SECULARITY

The secularity of Nigeria must really be understood against the nature of pre-independent Nigeria, and the fears of domination that threatened the merger of the different ethnic groups into a united nation-state.

In the pre-independence era, Nigeria's multi-ethnic nature was the source of bickering and primordial politicking. The political equation at that time pitted the three major ethnic groups - Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo - against each other, almost to the exclusion of the minority groups. Eventually, the obvious marginalization of the ethnic minorities led to the establishment of the popular Willinck's Commission, the aim of which was to look into the fears of the minorities. The Commission rejected the secession of the minorities, but recommended measures for integrating them into the mainstream of Nigerian politics. The whole notion of secularity was therefore a large wedge intended to prevent the domination of any group by another or others. Even the major ethnic groups enjoyed very little harmony. The distrust and suspicion underlying inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria later deteriorated into 30 months of civil war.

Thus the secular state concept, which recognizes no state religion or belief system, and thus guarantees freedom of belief, was seen as appropriate in the effort to cement the cracks in Nigeria's weak federation. The guiding policy of Nigeria's unity, as clearly seen by the founding fathers, and even by the colonialists, was to be the recognition of basic differences, but the consolidation of similarities.

All the same, many politicians, especially from the core North, are averse to any reference to Nigeria as a secular state. This is because they believe the use of the term 'secular' may be understood to mean irreligiosity. Hence, in the debates on the Sharia issue, before the promulgation of the 1979 constitution, many politicians proposed that Nigeria should be called a 'multi-religious state'. However, in a Nigerian nation pockmarked by primordial or ethnic loyalties and mutually distrustful inter-group relationships, others (especially those outside the North) viewed this suggestion as a ploy that would eventually make Nigeria an

Islamic state. Apparently, this sentiment was a direct response to the view, in some quarters in the North, that the use of the description 'secular state' might eventually permit an anti-Islamic leader to impose restrictions on Islam.

In his assessment of the debates and seminars organized in the North on the Sharia question in 1977, prior to the promulgation of the 1979 constitution, Kukah (1993: 120) took the view that, "Perhaps the developments and other behind-the-scene moves by the various interest groups led Alhaji Balarabe Musa, the former governor of Kaduna State, to come to the conclusion that the northern ruling class purposely set out to use the Sharia debate to gain political advantage in the politics of the second republic." Eventually, the voting in the presidential election of 1979 was substantially influenced by the perception, sponsored by radical Northern elites, that one of the candidates from the North was a scion of the Jihadist dan Fodio, and would thus protect the religious and other interests of the North. In a sense, the North has consistently used the Sharia issue as a political trump card. This has always manifested itself whenever the North's political ascendancy in the country has been threatened.

This sort of threat was prominent in the 1979 and 1983 elections, in which the imposing popularity of Obafemi Awolowo was considered a major threat to the likely emergence of Shehu Shagari as the victor, and in which the grand alliance between Awolowo's Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and Azikiwe's Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP) (which, incidentally, did not materialize) presented a formidable threat to Shagari's second term in office. In the current dispensation, the emergence of Olusegun Obasanjo, from the South, as the President of Nigeria, has more than threatened Northern political superiority in Nigeria. Hence, the Sharia may have been deployed as a political weapon to destabilize the government and, more importantly, to mobilize the North towards a common political agenda anchored in a subconscious religious aversion to un-Islamic governments. However, beyond the apparent political altruism, there was the desire of the Northern political class to use the Sharia in garnering support, and thus acceptance, as champions of the faith, and defenders of the people against domination by others. This plot has worked very well so far.

In an ironic sense, the successful political foray of the late M. K. O. Abiola into the Northern heartland, which eventually gave him victory over the Northern candidate, Bashir Tofa, in the annulled June 12, 1993 elections, can be traced to his promotion of the Sharia cause. Abiola was at the forefront of the abortive moves to extend Sharia law to the South after 1979. It stands to reason that Abiola was perceived by the Northerners as a religious kindred spirit who, while serving the purpose of the overdue shift of power to the South, would surely protect the interests of the North.

Reviewing the heated Sharia controversy in the Second Republic in Nigeria, Usman (1987) argued that the Sharia debate in the 1977/78 Constituent Assembly marked the introduction of religion into the politics of the country. This may be correct, to the extent that it was the first time that the Sharia question was clearly seen as a probable hindrance to the emergence of a national democracy, but even so it sounds ahistorical. In the first place, the history of

Europe, and of the world generally, shows an interwoven relationship between religion and politics. Even today, religion is a potent force in the politics of England, Ireland and in some countries of the Middle East and Asia. In Nigeria, the acceptance of the British into the caliphate, even after the defeat of the Hausa-Fulani, took place on the understanding that colonialism would not pose any form of hindrance to Islam. Even though this unwritten agreement was not entirely kept by the British, neither was it totally disregarded. As a result, religion has always been a very important factor in politics in Northern Nigeria. Thus, what occurred before the 1979 constitution was enacted was merely an attempt to take this practice beyond its conventional boundaries.

However, the significant impact of religion on national life in any given state can be influenced by the nature of the state, and by its response to matters of religion. In Nigeria, the overwhelming influence of religion in national life can be traced, in part, to the inability of successive Nigerian governments to live up to the ideals of a real and modern secular sate. Therefore it has been argued that;

> Despite the claim that Nigeria is a secular state, the government is still involved in matters either over which religious bodies also make claims or those in which the government's involvement is unsatisfactory to the religious bodies. Examples of such areas are education, health, legal Year Ceremonies, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), and Pilgrims Welfare Board, building places of worship and the teaching of religion in schools, to mention a few. (Williams, 1997: 190)

The involvement of a secular state in guiding religious affairs is not entirely inappropriate if that involvement is based squarely on fairness, equity and clear national interest. While the involvement of the government in some religious affairs may exhibit some of the above qualities, many interventions are, in fact, products of political expediency, as defined by the interests of the leadership. Therefore, political expediency, in this case, should be seen as the need to woo the electorate, and to achieve victory on the platform of religion. This is, as the Sharia warns, "A recipe for disaster and a prelude to the secession of the North since two parallel legal systems cannot conveniently operate within the same sovereign state at the same time. It is a time bomb that will explode when it will and then tear the geographical entity called Nigeria into shreds" (Odey, 2000: 98).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Sharia in the North of Nigeria appealed greatly to the mass of indigenous urban youth who were desperate for socio-economic relief. In this sense, Sharia provided a form of relief from socio-economic hardship by nullifying existing economic niches, and creating some sort of economic level playing field. Thus,

Odey (2000: 107) argued that, "Yerima is telling his hungry, poor illiterate and jobless people that they must seek first the Sharia law and every good thing on earth would be theirs."[15] Thus, in popular imagery, the economic promises of sharia often translated literally into the expulsion of outsiders and non-Muslims from their economic niches.

Therefore, as I have argued thus far, the ethno-religious conflicts in the North of Nigeria have been exacerbated by the new Sharia law regime in that region. However, even beyond the issue of belief, is the fact that the religious rhetoric of Sharia has been used to undermine the economic positions of the outsiders who are the victims of these conflicts in the major urban centers in the North. Sharia has also offered an irresistible political weapon to those politicians who exploit the belief system of the people for political benefits.[16]

However, the political nature of the Nigerian state itself is crucial to understanding the role of economic migration in ethno-religious conflicts. In a society where primordial loyalty, clientelism, patronage and divide-and-rule tactics are seen as roads to a political Eldorado, the political class can easily exploit major differences between groups for political benefit. Even though ethnicity and its associated strife also increase during periods of military rule, as the recent past history of Nigeria shows (Anugwom, 2001; Elaigwu, 1993; Udoidem, 1997), democracy readily allows articulation of needs on the basis of ethnicity. This has been shown manifestly in the second Republic in Nigeria (1979-1983), in which the Sharia question, and the religious antecedents or roots of the presidential candidates, were crucial electoral issues.

In relation to the above situation, the role of the state is very important, both in terms of the equitable and meaningful delivery of services, and in the impartial mediation of conflicts between various groups in a multi-ethnic society. Hence, a state that fails in its expected role in such a society establishes the foundation for unending strife between groups. In Nigeria, this scenario is made worse by the existence of a political class that sees the socio-cultural differences between groups as a useful political weapon.

The above also implies that a state that renders itself irrelevant to the minimum aspirations of its citizens invariably leaves them little choice than to revert to primordial links in seeking alternatives to the failed state. It is little wonder that the late 1980s and 1990s, which saw a proliferation of failed states in Africa, also bred a groundswell of ethnic conflicts and wars of attrition in various parts of the continent.

In recognition of the fact that the state has a major role to play in mediating inter-group conflicts, the Nigerian state has adopted a number of strategies to deal with the hydra-headed nature of the problem. The most popular of these strategies is the quota system, or the federal character principle, which allocates political and bureaucratic offices among the constituent units/states of the federation on the basis of a pre-determined sharing formula, and the new rotation policy worked out by the politicians of the nascent fourth Republic. However, it seems that the political will of the state to push this through is more important in dealing with this problem than impressive-sounding strategies

that are regularly abused by state office holders. In this sense, there is a need to re-emphasize, through concerted government action, the secularity of the Nigerian state, especially at those points where this secularity is weak. Even the making of allowances for the unfettered growth of Islam (if this is what Sharia means) should be conducted against a backrop of recognition for the multi-ethnic nature of the federation and the freedom of worship of all citizens, as well as the rights of citizens to establish their domicile in any part of the federation without hindrance or molestation. It is only when these conditions are met that a purely religious Sharia system, with no hidden political or economic agenda, will be able to emerge as a guiding principle for the faithful in Northern Nigeria.

NOTES

(1)   In fact, the above logic has been used to support the higher population of Nigerians recorded as living in the North rather than the South in different population censuses. Even in the most recently released population figures (2006), the higher population of the North has been justified on the basis of Islamic religion, which does not allow family planning, and on the high level of migration from the South to the North (Tell Magazine, January 29, 2007: 15-19).

(2)   In a recent empirical study on migration, ethnicity and urban violence in Northern Nigeria, it was discovered that over 70% of the respondents in a survey saw the business mentality of migrants as creating antagonism in the indigenes (Obasi & Anugwom, 2002). The study also revealed the indigenes' revulsion at the business ethics of migrants, although not necessarily at their economic progress.

(3)   The chief proponent of Sharia in Nigeria's current democratic republic, Alhaji Ahmad Sani Yerima, having completed the constitutionally allowed two terms as governor, was one of the presidential aspirants in the 2007 presidential elections.

(4)   Society for the removal of innovations from practice of Islam.

(5)   Formal prayers in the mosque.

(6)   In fact, Paul Lubeck (1986), in an interesting analysis, sees the emergence of the Maitatsine movement as a product of the failure of Kano state to erect a semi-industrial capitalist base. This failure, and the collapse of the moral base upon which the traditional Islamic society existed, created the conditions for the emergence of Maitatsine elements.

(7)   In appraising the Sharia in the Northern Nigeria state of Zamfara, one sympathizer suggested that, "The government has taken great advantage of the new religious direction not only to cultivate spiritual purity but to mobilize the people of the state for social, political and economic development" (Emeje, 2001).

(8)   Alhaji Ahmad Sani Yerima.

(9)   Major ethnic groups in this area include the Yoruba, Igbo, Ijaw and Efik.

(10) Kaduna is a historical city and state. It was the headquarters of the Northern Region in the pre-colonial and immediate post-colonial first republic. Kaduna is also seen as the political capital of the North, and is renowned for the heavy presence of military institutions, and what is regarded as the Nigerian army's largest armory.

(11) Actually, it has been argued that, "They saw the defeat of the east as the achievement of Allah's will and therefore the oil fields in the east as the war booty which they had a

divine mandate to appropriate" (Udoidem, 1997: 159).

(12) Other religious disturbances, such as the April 20, 1991, riot in Bauchi state, the October 14, 1991, Kano riot, which claimed over 1,000 lives, the June 17, 1996, Kaduna riots, to mention a few, showed this pattern of selective destruction, which targets the businesses of non-indigenes, and especially business concerns seen as unIslamic.

(13) The Maitatsine movement was the precursor of the current Islamic Sharia doctrine. The Maitatsine sect consisted of fundamentalists who were against all tools of modernity, such as TV, radio, cars, and even reading any book other than the Koran. Its rejection of Islamic innovations, and its quest for purity of Islam, laid the groundwork for the Sharia agitation in Nigeria's fourth republic democracy.

(14) Other riots include the Bulukutu October 26, 1982, Maitatsine riot, the Jimeta Yola February 27, 1984, Maitatsine riot, and the April 29, 1985, Gombe Maitatsine riot, which was the last riot directly traceable to the Maitatsine sect. However, the riot in Jimeta town in 1984 clearly illustrates the utilization of religious conflict as tool of expression by the subaltern component of society, and also the strategic planning involved in such conflicts. In this riot, the sect was led by a mechanic from Gombe, the assault was commanded by one Bagobiri, a barber from Sokoto state, while a cobbler was in charge of the ambush group (Udoidem, 1997: 170). Other post-Maitatsine religious conflicts in contemporary Nigeria include the Illorin Disturbances (March 1986), the Usman Dan Fodio University Religious Crisis (May 3, 1986), the University of Ibadan Religious Crisis (May 5, 1986), the Kaduna religious crisis (March 6, 1987), the Zuru religious crisis (May 1988), the Ahmadu Bello University religious crisis (June 1988), the Bauchi riot (April 20-22, 1991), the Kano riot (October 11, 1991), the Katsina riot (October 1991) the Zangon-Kataf Uprising (May 1992), etc.

(15) Odey (2000: 107) vividly illustrated the promise of economic salvation offered by Sharia, as follows: "It is lucrative engagement for the decrepit army of hungry street urchins known as the almajiris; it is education for the illiterate; it is work for the jobless; it is wealth for the poor."

(16) In this regard, it has been argued that, "As far as the implementation of the Sharia law by the Northern states contrary to the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and in defiance of the ruling of the National Council of States following the Kaduna religious inferno are concerned, the Federal Government has become a toothless bulldog" (Odey, 2000: 11).

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