A Revolution in History

The Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio

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With a foreword by Shehu Usman M. Bugaje

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Contents

Foreword
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Introduction

1 Hausaland before Usman Dan Fodio
   Philosophy of Tajdid, Philosophy of Law, the Timbuktu Tradition

2 The Education of Usman Dan Fodio
   The Shaping of a Character

3 Raising the Students
   Intellectual Training & Spiritual Training & Tasawwuf

4 Building the Community
   Moral Ideals, the Communal Spirit, the New Culture

5 Inviting to All that is Good
   Philosophy of the Call the Callers, the Methodology of the Call

6 Reviving the Sunna
   Principles of Social Mobilization, Errors in Hausa Society

7 The Intellectual War
   Mobilization of Muslims, the Subversive Parties, Membership of Muslim Community, Mobilization of Women

8 The Concerns of the Mujaddid

9 The Politics of Change
   Shehu and the Rulers, the Shehu’s Multitudes, Factors in the Revolutionary Process

10 The Ultimate Break
   The Flight, Articulating the Ideology

11 The Jihad
   Declaration of Jihad, the Start of the Jihad, the Laws of War, the Jaysh al-Futuh

12 The Vision of a Mujaddid
   The Road to Revolution, Shehu’s Vision for the Caliphate, Forestalling Disintegration
13 The Triumvirate
   Character of the Caliphate Principles of Legislation, Means of Social Integration, Muhammad Bello's Role

14 The Shehu’s Legacy
   The Shehu Passes Away, Achievements of the Mujaddid, Conclusion
Foreword

Of all beliefs, ideologies and civilizations, Islam stands out distinct and unique in its resilience. No matter the damage it suffers, no matter the opposition and obstacles, no matter the length of time, it always reasserts itself. Islam has consistently and persistently stood on the side of the weak and the oppressed, checked the excesses of the corrupt and the strong and insisted on the establishment of justice, equity and fairness in human society. It has thus offered the weak and the oppressed the only real and lasting hope and the corrupt and the unjust the only real and unflinching check.

The rise and fall of nations and civilizations, in fact the entire history of mankind, is nothing but a reflection of this reality, which the future of human society will continue to reflect. The Most High has said:

*And did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief but Allah is full of bounty to all the worlds. The Quran 2:251*

In Bilad al-Sudan, as in other parts of the world, such reality has manifested itself in the rise and fall of states and the series of revolutions the region was destined to see. In the last century in particular the region saw series of Islamic revolutions prominent among which were those led by Usman Dan Fodio in Hausaland, Ahmad Labbo in Macina, Umar al-Futi in Senegambia, Muhammad Abdallah Hassan in Somalia and Ahmad al-Mahdi in Nilotic Sudan.

Of these revolutions, that of Usman Dan Fodio was perhaps the most spectacular and far-reaching and the one with the most lasting effects. It brought the various peoples that made up Hausaland into one single polity, unprecedented in scope and complexity, and gave them the security, stability and justice they lacked under the warring Hausa states. The revolutionary wave it triggered reached as far as the shores of the Atlantic to the west and that of the Red Sea to the east, all along shaking the geopolity, causing radical socio-economic changes, and building Islamic states of varying sizes and complexity in the region of Bilad al-Sudan.

*Bilad al-Sudan* (literally the countries of the black) is the name early Muslim historians gave to the vast region of savanna grassland sandwiched by the Sahara and the dense forest stretching from the shores of the Atlantic in the west to the Nile Valley in the east. This region has from time immemorial been in constant contact with North Africa, with which it exchanged its Gold and Ivory for metal-ware, salt, horses, etc. During this period a network of roads developed, linking various locations in North Africa to trading centers in Bilad al-Sudan. Thus the trans-Saharan caravan constantly moving up and down became common in the two regions.

When in the seventh century North Africa became Islamized, the trans-Saharan caravan began to bring into Bilad al-Sudan not only the Mediterranean goods but also, and far more consequentially, the good tidings of Islam. Once the message reached the destinations of the caravans it became largely the job of the indigenous population to spread it throughout the vast region. With its universal appeal and superior culture, Islam easily found its way to the various parts of the region. Wherever it went it generated a
cultural, socio and political transformation which saw the rise of such great states as Ghana, Mali, Songhai, Kanem Borno and Danfur Funj. It also developed centers of learning and a body of students and scholars whose activities furthered Islam in the region.

The obligation on Muslims to go in search of knowledge, the need for them to travel to Makkah for Hajj, and their responsibility to teach and spread the message generated currents of intra-regional traffic and waves of migration that saw massive integration of this vast region. Thus, in a few centuries Bilad al-Sudan integrated into one entity with a common intellectual tradition, culture, economy and ideology, which was precisely what in the last century, facilitated the spread of the revolutionary wave triggered by the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in Hausaland.

Hausaland is located in the central Bilad al-Sudan, bordering Kanem Borno in the east and Songhai in the west. At certain periods prior to the jihad, it came under the political control of both Songhai and Borno. As the name implies, it is the land of the Hausas, the Hausas were neither an ethnic group nor the only inhabitants of the land. The bulk of inhabitants were believed to have migrated into the region some time before the tenth century from the central Sahara, perhaps due to desiccation or some such natural phenomenon. They settled in the central savanna and mixed with the indigenous people. The result was a multi-ethnic society sharing a common language — Hausa. This heterogeneity further facilitated the absorption of other ethnic groups that arrived subsequently. When the Fulani, for example, reached Hausaland early in the fifteenth century, those who settled in the towns lost not only their nomadism but also their native language.

Prior to the spread of Islam into Hausaland, the inhabitants toiled under a variety of pagan beliefs. Though varying in detail from one community to another, these pagan beliefs usually revolved around a high distant god (ubangiji), who was not actively connected to everyday life, and was supplemented by a chain of supernatural forces (Iskoki) directly in touch with men and controlling their everyday lives. The natural resources such as agricultural land, forests, rivers, iron ore and salt deposits were believed to be in the custody of certain of these Iskoki. Harmony with the Iskoki was taken to be essential for a good harvest and for such pursuits as hunting and fishing. Therefore, farmers, bunters and fishermen performed sacrifices and rituals, usually around stones, trees or places believed to be the habitat of the Iskoki, to maintain harmony and secure their livelihood. Such conditions naturally supported a class of priests (Bokaye), who acted as intermediaries between them and the people.

Islam spread into Hausaland as a result of the trans-regional movement of scholars and traders, popularly thought to be some time in the fourteenth century. Available historical evidence however, suggests that Islam reached Hausaland much earlier and that it was not limited to one direction or to one group. The ancestors of Usman Dan Fodio, for example, moved into Hausaland in the fifteenth century under the leadership of Musa Jokollo and settled in the Hausa State of Gobir.

Working day and night, collectively and individually, formally and informally, these assorted indigenous groups carried the message of Islam throughout the length and breadth of Hausaland. As in other parts of Bilad al-Sudan, so in Hausaland; Islam
transformed the socio-economic and political structures, boosting the economy and paving the way for the emergence of numerous independent Hausa states such as Kano, Zaria, Katsina, Gobir, Kebbi, Zamfara and Daura. With the spread of literacy and the flow of Islamic literature, the Hausaland became increasingly incorporated into the wider Islamic fraternity, the people becoming well informed about Islamic thought and ideas and about the history, geography, politics and economy of the known world. Eventually Islam emerged as a political force in the latter part of the fifteenth century, bringing changes in the political leadership of some major Hausa states.

These developments were particularly notable in Zaria, Kano and Katsina which at that time formed the core axis of Hausaland. The new leadership in these states are still remembered for the bold changes they effected in their administrations to make them conform to Islamic standards. In Kano, for example Muhammad Rumfa invited Sheikh Muhammad al-Maghili, North African Muslim jurist of international repute, to advise him on administering an Islamic Government. Al-Maghili’s visit to Kano was of great significance to the process of Islamization in Hausaland, for his books and religious rulings (fatwas) gained wide circulation. Of his books Taj al-Din fi ma yajib ala al-muluk, described as a comprehensive treatise on government, seemed to have been highly influential throughout Hausaland.

As Islam gained strength in Hausaland, its significance as a pilgrimage route and centre of learning increased. By the sixteenth century the reputations of some Hausa state capitals as Muslim metro poles, Kano and Katsina in particular, were already high enough to attract many Muslim scholars and students. The Hajj, serving as a permanent link with the rest of the Muslim world and a source of continuous flow of Islamic thought and ideas, further reinforced the intellectual development of Hausaland. In due course, an educational system with a clearly defined curriculum and methodology was fashioned along the traditions of Sankore University of Timbuktu, from whence it seemed to have received its greatest impetus.

However, the Moroccan invasion of Songhai at the end of the sixteenth century, with its attendant seizure of Timbuktu, weakened the intellectual impetus and upset the political stability in Hausaland, for the power from Songhai restrained some of the leaders of the Hausa states. With the rise of another axis of power in Hausaland, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the almost equally powerful Hausa states engaged in continuous, devastating interstate warfare without a clear winner emerging. Quite naturally the security, economy and learning in Hausaland were affected.

Though learning continued, even in difficult circumstances with movement restricted, there were many obstacles to the spread of knowledge. Entrenched in warfare and desperate for victory, rulers in Hausaland were willing to go to any extent to win battles, even if it meant violating the limits set by Islam. The leadership gradually degenerated into tyranny and corruption with injustice, oppression and misery for most of the people. The resulting materialism and permissiveness gave the receding paganism a chance to resurface and some Muslims found it expedient to mix Islamic practices with traditional pagan rituals.

The Muslim scholars, on whom Islam depends, were affected by the pervading decadence. Some gave support to the tyrannical order by joining the rulers. Others
withdrew into silence, leaving only a few courageous scholars to raise objections and to point accusing fingers at the tyranny and corruption. One of the few who dared to raise his voice, who in fact organized *jihad*, was Sheikh Jibril ibn Umar, with whom Usman Dan Fodio studied and from whom he may have acquired his revolutionary fervor. It was in this rising tide of discontent on the one hand and expectation on the other that Usman Dan Fodio emerged. How Usman responded to this challenging situation is precisely what this book is about.

Having been undertaken outside the conventional academic sphere, this work has the rare fortune of being free from the futile technicalities for which universities today are best known. The imaginative capacity, analytic insight and unique style of the author give the reader a rich and profound account of the great phenomenon that is the Sokoto *jihad*. By using the intellectual remains of the Sokoto caliphate and relying on the original Arabic works of the Sokoto *jihad* leaders and their contemporaries, the author has saved the reader from the distortions, misconceptions and fabrications that are replete in works of European scholars or their heirs.

For the greater part of this century the Muslim mind has been the victim of imperialism especially that manifested in its educational institutions. Muslim history has been distorted and all access to the true message of Islam has been denied. The Muslim personality has been under persistent attack and the Muslim mind fed entirely on Eurocentric thoughts and ideas. The Muslim, therefore, has lost self-confidence, has developed an inferiority complex, meekness and docility and has readily imitated European thought. But history, it is said, has a habit of repeating itself. Islam in its characteristic resilience is raising its supports from the very fortresses of imperialism. More Muslims are reaching out for their true history and the true message of Islam, abandoning the false goals they have been pursuing.

Coming at a time when an increasing number of Muslims are working to develop Islamic solutions to their problems, this book will provide them with an important part of their history and will help them define their own future. For indeed, a people without a history, are a people without a future. At this critical point one hopes and prays that Muslims will not betray their history - should they do so, history will certainly betray them, for the Most High has informed us:

*O ye who believe! If any from among you
Turn back from his Faith,
Soon will Allah produce
A people whom He will love
As they will love Him, —
Lowly with the Believers,
Mighty against the Rejecters,
Fighting in the Way of Allah,
And never afraid of the reproaches
Of such as find fault.*
That is the Grace of Allah,
Which He will bestow
On whom He pleaseth.
And God encompasseth all,
And He knoweth all things.

The Quran 5:57
Introduction

History moves at so slow a pace as to be almost imperceptible to the observer. Ideas that shape a nation take years to root and grow, and it requires decades to mould a generation capable of undertaking and sustaining change. The rise of a nation may be gradual; or the state of decay may be so ingrained that the awareness of decline is not visible and the process of death goes unnoticed.

What shapes history is man’s moral attitude, changes in his inner state of being. Thus alterations in human society occur basically because man changes his beliefs, and thus his conception of life, his basic attitudes, his behavior, and therefore, in the ultimate sense, his destiny.

Man is responsible for his own destiny, he shapes his own history. At any given moment in his life he faces the moral responsibility of making a choice between striving after an exalted life, or pursuing a base one. This presupposes that man is a moral being with an inherent sense of right and wrong; that he is a free personality mandated, indeed obliged, to choose his own path; that he is possessed of an inner sight that can visualize the ultimate result of his actions and an inner voice that warns against evil and urges good; and that potentially he is equipped with the ability to achieve the end he chooses for himself.

The slow pace of history offers considerable opportunity for man to make the right choices and to make amends. The unvarying characteristic of the process of nature provides ample lessons for man; he is constantly reminded that day follows night, seasons come and go, one bursting with life and luxuriance, the other dry and barren. Every day this illuminating drama is enacted before his eyes, every day is a sentence in a book of lessons, every season a paragraph, while generations and epochs are but pages and chapters thereof. An understanding of a single day is the understanding of millions of days past and millions to come. The exactness, the order, the perfect patterns that characterize the workings of the universe embraces also the life of man.

History is therefore a single chain of events, just as mankind is a chain of individuals and the world itself a chain of happenings. ‘Your creation and your resurrection is no wise but as an individual soul,’ Allah reminds us (Quran 31:28).

Decline is also ingrained in life, a stage through which all nations must pass. A critical moment arrives when a decisive step has to be taken: whether to take the path that leads to a higher level or to continue the slope to decline. The move upwards demands tremendous courage and will-power; it entails social sacrifice, but it is nevertheless the only honorable and redeeming course. To continue the moral drift means the nation has despaired and given up its destiny — a course of action which runs counter to the very notion of life and to the purpose of human existence.

A nation which has given itself up to a condition of moral decline is said to be given to fisq: a succumbing to the iniquitous, the immoral and the offensive. The inclination is towards evil, an inclination that stems from a perversion of faith, from a blunting of ethical consciousness, or from a violent disruption of the inner state of the individuals, as
well as the soul of society. People in this condition are blind spiritually, materialistic in approach. They ignore history and the ultimate destiny of man. The economic and social polarization of society and the resultant consequences are not perceived.

The reasons for a nation to suffer decline are several. It has to have abandoned its belief in, and commitment to, the Supreme Being; at best it may have taken up another god and transferred allegiance. A serious injury has thus been caused in the crucial relationship with its Sustainer, by virtue of which it affects a profound disturbance in its own soul. This social apostasy is the principal cause of decline. As a result of the apostasy it must have changed its values and norms, and by implication, its world-view and way of life. The world is now perceived as a permanent reality, and hence the restraints that should characterize its moral life will be dispensed with. The immutable principles which should uphold society and on which legal, moral and social rules should be based are now regarded as cumbersome; people are free to flout them. The spirit which allows this permissiveness will lead to the downfall of the society.

Nations in such critical moments always produce rare people who perceive - the direction in which the nation is moving. They operate on a higher level of ethical and intellectual consciousness and are therefore able to understand and redirect the course. At the top are the prophets or messengers of Allah. Next are the truly learned, or those who combine knowledge with moral excellence and are thus able to carry on the activities of the prophets.

A prophet’s duty is to transmit his experience to a nation, sharpen its intellect, and raise its level of consciousness. He presents a challenge to society to awaken its conscience. This is a continuous process which is called ‘warning’. The society has to respond to this challenge, to awaken from its deep sleep to reach the level where it can assume full responsibility for the choices it makes. The prophet extends the challenge sporadically; the society, now morally disturbed, responds every time it is challenged until the issue is decided.

The prophet’s challenge hinges on three issues: ideological commitment, way of life, and leadership. In concrete terms the final objective of the prophet, and by extension of a scholar, is to return his people to faith, to Islam. It inevitably entails the expulsion of all the illusions that have crept into the intellectual and moral fabric of society, and have become the basis of the ideology; the overthrow of the institutions that sustain the apostate life in society; the cutting off of the roots of the unyielding and unrepentant social, economic and political forces that have enslaved society. Thus, while the prophet’s challenge is essentially ethical, it nevertheless manifests itself in all spheres of life since its basic objective is to create a totally new situation or an ummah — which may be a new society, a new nation or a new epoch.

The process of raising people’s consciousness operates on three levels. On an individual level, a person is trained to see himself in relation to his Lord, in relation to the complex structure of the universe and in relation to himself. Secondly, it is necessary to comprehend the position the person holds within the social strata. Peasants who toil hard only to have the fruits of their labor usurped and squandered by the idle, should be aware of that. Laborers should be conscious of exploitation by powerful masters. The poor should know the reasons for their poverty. Women should understand oppression and
humiliation that arise from gender bias. In short, all persons should know their positions in society, why they are there and what should be done individually and collectively to correct the balance. Lastly, the intellectual perception of an ideal society, a concept of the future based on understanding of life and history, and of ways of dealing with the prevailing untenable state of affairs, is necessary. Consciousness inevitably crystallizes into a social force, so that the men and women who have been imbued with a prophet’s elevated vision become a distinct, active and vigorous social entity.

As a historical force, a prophet needs a moral authority — *hukm* — to enable him to influence the minds of people and to sway events. Moral authority is the most potent and enduring force in history; the symbolic embodiment of it in prophet-hood has commanded loyalty from the larger part of humanity since life began. Next, a prophet needs knowledge — *ilm* — which enables him to understand and interpret events accurately, which tells him the absolute values upon which a society should be established, and which provides him with insight into the operation of universal forces. And a prophet needs political power — *mulk* — to enable him to administer society properly, to uproot evil and to expand the frontiers of justice. Moral force and knowledge come to the prophet without a struggle; but political power is invariably gained only through struggle.

In any reflection on the concept of change, the imperative question to be answered is what society is so bad that it requires changing? A society in this condition is said to be in a state of *fasad*. It comprises distinct social and political divisions: a small but extremely powerful element called the *mutrafun*, and the rest of the people called the *mustadafun*, or the oppressed. The *mutrafun* enjoy a monopoly over the wealth and economy of the state. The impact of luxury on their characters invariably results in undisciplined behavior. Their control of the economic forces leads to arrogance, a characteristic manifested not only towards other people but even to Allah. They grow oppressive and constitute a tyrannical minority. The *mustadafun*, who comprise the poor, the needy, the beggars, the debtors and the slaves, are the workers who generate the resources and produce the wealth of the state.

In such a society injustice becomes a legitimate state policy and justice, a remote and strange possibility. Society, though divided, is unified in its acceptance of injustice as an absolute value. The transformation of this society is possible only when the distinct and separate entities are identified the oppressor is unambiguously known as such, and the oppressed are seen to be oppressed.

A third force is what may be called the *muslihun*, who stand between the *mutrafun* and the *mustadafun*. Theirs is the responsibility to bring society back to its human state, to act as the force to liberate the oppressed. In so doing they will certainly suffer the wrath of the tyrants. Paradoxically, how ever, the cord that links the *mutrafun* and the *mustadafun* has, in many cases, proved unbreakable. Is this because oppression has the effect of destroying the spiritual qualities in man to the extent that he loses the moral stamina to resist evil, and resigns himself to it? Or is it that man can reach a stage of moral degeneration when he loses interest in striving after justice or excellence? This paradox is responsible for some of the tragic realities of the world and the horrible contradictions of many a society. It creates the condition and justification for slavery: it has been responsible for the plight of the peasantry in all but a few periods of history. We can see a
handful of families controlling the wealth and resources of a nation, while the majority of its citizens can barely meet their basic needs. Dignified patience is required from those who are enjoined to transform society. The work is thankless and tedious, but the consolation is that it is a responsibility that one owes to Allah and is to be discharged without anticipation of any earthly reward.

It is within the philosophical framework that we shall view Hausaland of the twelfth century A.H./seventeenth century A.D., and the later emergence of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio. This framework is necessary if we are to appreciate the circumstances, both negative and positive, that created the growth of an ideological and social momentum that culminated in the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate, and the eventual transformation of the Bilad al-Sudan.

The Shehu divided the people of Hausaland into three ideological groups. The first believed sincerely in Islam, the second were idolaters who worshipped stones, trees or the like and the third comprised the syncretics — those who practiced the outward show of Islam alongside pagan rites. To the Shehu the last group constituted the main problem because it included the bulk of the leadership.

The result was that unbelief, iniquity and open defiance of Allah’s laws became the order of the day. The social system was immoral; women were oppressed and ‘neglected like animals’, in Shehu’s words. There was unrestrained mixing of men and women, Christianity had gained ground, and cheating and fraud were rife. Legally too, the Sharia was significantly altered — property laws were geared to benefiting the rulers. Hausaland was at a critical stage in its history, needing a profound challenge to stir its conscience. Shehu Usman Dan Fodio was the man to extend the challenge, to awaken the vast land to its responsibility, to provide an alternative political, moral and intellectual leadership.
Chapter One
Hausaland before Usman Dan Fodio

History does not allow a vacuum: there is a ceaseless interplay between the forces of decay and regeneration. Conditions of seemingly unremitting darkness — such as existed in Hausaland towards the end of the twelfth Islamic century — do in fact create the conditions necessary for an initiation of a process of rebirth. However, there have to be positive forces at work to provide the nourishment and the atmosphere for a sustained process of regeneration within the dark climate.

Hausaland was not lacking in these positive forces. These constituted the self-perpetuating, indestructible factors that kept the fire of Islam burning even in the overwhelming atmosphere of corruption and degeneration. They included the philosophy of tajdid which had been kept alive in Bilad al-Sudan for centuries and was never affected seriously by the triumph of syncreticism; the philosophy of law as a dynamic agent of change; and the resilient, and often thriving tradition of learning maintained throughout the centuries.

People, likewise, do not emerge in isolation but are the products of their history and environment. To gain a rounded picture of the great Shehu Usman Dan Fodio it is necessary to see what forces for change existed in Hausaland before his time, to trace the traditions that had been forged, to recognize predecessors who might have been sources of inspiration for him. We have therefore to go back to Hausaland in the ninth Islamic century.

Philosophy of Tajdid

The idea of revolution is ingrained in Islamic thought and is perpetuated as a living tradition in all Muslim societies. The ceaseless conflict between good and evil, right and wrong, justice and injustice makes revolution a continuous necessity. Indeed, the concept of prophet-hood is synonymous with the philosophy of revolution, or of tajdid. It implies that human society should not be left in darkness and corruption but be guided to righteousness. Injustice should not be allowed to frustrate the divine purpose for mankind, which is essentially the establishment of justice on earth; man has an obligation to overthrow systems of injustice. Nor indeed should the deviant, godless, misleading ideologies be allowed to predominate; man has a duty to strive until the Word of Allah becomes supreme and remain so forever. In short, the world should not be left in peace until corruption, injustice and false ideology are uprooted, and the religion of Allah obtains everywhere.

The philosophy of tajdid was given a new impetus in Bilad al-Sudan in the ninth Islamic century/fifteenth century A.D., by an unusually revolutionary and highly respected North African scholar, Abd al-Karim al-Maghili al-Tilmansani. The treatises he wrote while staying in some of the key cities and states of Bilad al-Sudan, such as Kano, Katsina and Gao, and the advice he gave to certain rulers, notably Muhammad Rumfa of
Kano and Askia Muhammad of Songhai, were largely instrumental in the enhancement of the Sharia as the legal order of those states and in the Islamic transformation of those societies in general. The fire of revolution which he kindled kept burning until the thirteenth century when it was translated into a political and social force by men such as Shehu Usman Dan Fodio.

Our sources for al-Maghili’s philosophy of tajdid are, firstly Ajwiba, his replies to the questions of Askia al-Hajj Muhammad, for which we have drawn on Dr. Hunwick’s impressive translation. Secondly, sources of reference are provided by the treatises written by al-Maghili for the Emir of Kano, Muhammad Rumfa: Taj al-Din on government, and Wasiya on the establishment of the rule of law.

In Ajwiba, al-Maghili stated that tajdid is historically imperative, and is essentially the responsibility of scholars imbued with knowledge and piety. Its ultimate purpose is to ascertain the truth, banish falsehood, overthrow a tyrannical order and establish justice. He maintained:

Thus it is related that at the beginning of every century Allah sends a scholar who regenerates their religion for them. There is no doubt that the conduct of this scholar in every century in enjoining the right and forbidding what is disapproved, and setting aright people’s affairs, establishing justice among them and supporting the truth against falsehood and the oppressed against the oppressor, will be in contrast to the conduct of the scholars of his age. For this reason he will be an odd man out among them on account of his being the only man of such pure conduct and on account of the small number of men like him.

This struggle to support truth against falsehood and oppressed against oppressor has two distinct dimensions. It inevitably involves a confrontation between scholars who distort the truth in order to gain favor with the oppressors and those who strive for the spiritual and economic well-being of the people. In al-Maghili’s view the first kind are not Muslims and are worse than the oppressors themselves.

In the second place, and indeed more importantly, the support for the oppressed must inevitably involve a struggle against tyrannical rulers until they are overthrown. Concerning an oppressive ruler, al-Maghili told Askia Muhammad in Ajwiba:

If you can bring to an end his oppression of the Muslims without harm to them so that you set up among them a just amir, then do so, even if that leads to killing and the killing of many of the oppressors and their supporters and the killing of many of your supporters, for whoever is killed from among them is the worst of slain men and whoever is killed from among your people is the best of martyrs. . . . If you cannot bring to an end his oppression of the Muslims except by causing harm to them, then here two evils are conflicting; so beware lest you change one reprehensible practice for another like it or worse than it. So make sure here and commit the lesser of the two evils, for committing the lesser of the two evils is a widely accepted rule and a firmly transmitted sunna. It is not reprehensible to kill unjust miscreants and their helpers — even if they pray and pay zakat and perform pilgrimage. So fight them, even if they kill many of your number and you kill many of their number, so long as your fighting them is for the victory of truth over falsehood and the victory of the oppressed over the oppressor.

So far as al-Maghili was concerned, one of the objectives of tajdid is to set aright the affairs of the people and establish justice among them. This implies, essentially, the transformation of the polity, the restoration, enhancement and consolidation of the
Islamic order. Hence, it involves the establishment of wide-ranging measures, policies and institutions designed to give the state a thoroughly Islamic character.

In the administration of state, recourse should be made to scholars for the formulation of policies, decision-making, and the running of affairs in general, for such scholars are like the prophets in former communities. In general, the Islamic leadership should be guided in its decision-making and policy formulation by a number of principles.

It should commit itself to the establishment of whatever Allah has commanded to be done, and eradicate what He has forbidden. Muslim leadership should, as a matter of policy, keep away from matters of dubious legal status. In concrete terms, if there is doubt as to whether a particular matter is an obligation or not, the safer course of action is to undertake it. But if there is doubt as to whether a particular matter is obligatory or forbidden, then it should be avoided altogether. Where there is a conflict between two courses of action which appear to be equally sound, then the more exacting should be preferred.

In social matters, the fundamental duty of the state is to ensure a comprehensive social justice in society, which is the theme of al-Maghili’s *Taj al-Din*. The state must be generous to the citizens. On the one hand this implies that people should retain their wealth, thus contributing to the permanence of the state. On the other hand it implies that the authorities should handle public wealth with restraint, for greed would lead to instability and collapse of the state. Social justice also entails the distribution of state wealth and resources in such a way that the general welfare of Muslims is advanced. To achieve that, the Imam should start with the areas of society with the greatest need — possibly the rural areas. Workers, including scholars, judges, muazzins and civil servants, need to be paid. The poor have to have their share too. ‘The Imam gives to the poor, first to the neediest and then to the needy, until it is spread to all of them both male and female, young and old, according to the degree and variety of their need.’ Social justice implies refraining from and prevention of injustice. Hence, authorities should not take undue advantage of their position, indulge in bribery, confiscate people’s property, or impose unjust and illegal taxes.

Basic economic life is dealt with under the heading of markets in *Ajwiba*. Al-Maghili wrote that the Commander of Muslims has a duty to prevent frauds in every aspect of economic activities, and to organize the market system in a way that would ‘safeguard people’s means of subsistence’. To that end, he should standardize all weights and measures to ensure that ‘the scales and the weights are just and that the weights are equal’. Similarly, the Commander of the Muslims must restrain people from encroaching on the rights of others in economic dealings and should be hard on those who defraud and cheat. All wealth obtained from such means, said al-Maghili, should be confiscated and restored to the state treasury.

The preservation of public morality and social integrity entails a number of measures. The most important is to safeguard the sanctity of the office of the judge. This office, al-Maghili wrote to the Emir of Kano, pertains to the Prophet of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace); and therefore only men of learning and piety should be appointed judges. The rule of law should be strictly maintained and all people should be treated equally before the law. Then the institution of public complaints should be strengthened,
especially to defend the rights of the weak — women, children and the poor. Criminals should be dealt with appropriately, but al-Maghili warned, severity should be tempered with mercy lest the course of justice be perverted.

In the specific area of public morality, especially as it related to free mixing of men and women and immodest dress, in Ajwiba al-Maghili exhorted the Imam to, ‘Appoint trustworthy men to watch over this, day and night, in secret and in the open. This is not to be considered as spying on the Muslims, it is only a way of caring for them properly and curbing evildoers.’

Such, briefly, was al-Maghili’s philosophy of tajdid. Indeed, it was a great credit to Bilad al-Sudan that whereas much of the Muslim world at that time was unprogressive, tajdid was being carried out in several places. Askia Muhammad, for example, was so keen on establishing Islam and fighting wars in its cause that many leading scholars in Bilad al-Sudan regarded him as a mujaddid. The efforts of the emirs of Kano and Katsina were no less impressive. Even though al-Maghili left North Africa in utter despondence over hostility to his zeal for restoring the authority of Sharia, his influence was extensive, profound and enduring.

Shehu Usman paid a glowing tribute to this remarkable man. Al-Maghili, Shehu wrote in Talim al-Ikhwan, was ‘the seal of inquirers, the learned and erudite Imam . . . the exemplary, the pious sunni, one of the truly intelligent which lent him an abundance of energy and insight, potent of prestige in arms, a hater of the enemies of Allah, intrepid in the affairs of daring, constant, eloquent of tongue, a lover of the Sunna.’

**Philosophy of Law**

We shall now consider another important area which contributed in creating the necessary atmosphere for the eventual transformation that took place. This is the philosophy of law, which saw jurisprudence as a vehicle of protest and dissemination of revolutionary principles in the time of decline. If al-Maghili personified the philosophy of tajdid, Imam Muhammad ibn Abdur Rahman al-Barnawi, who hailed from Borno, in the present northeast of Nigeria, personified the ideal of social morality and a dynamic, revolutionary approach to law. His Shurb al-Zulal, a short composition in verse, written in 1119/1707 summarized that approach.

**Shurb al-Zulal** was a work of protest in a social and political atmosphere that had become corrupt and oppressive. It was written purposely to erode the influence of the rulers over the people and to destroy their credibility. In addition, it may have been directed at the venal scholars who colluded with the kings and supported oppression.

It appears that the political and social climate under which al-Barnawi wrote Shurb al-Zulal was not different from the one Shehu Usman described in Kitab al-Farg. In both we are given a list of oppressive policies instituted by rulers — illegal taxations levied on common people, arbitrary confiscation of property, corruption by judges, perversion of the legal process, alteration of the sacred law to suit the interests of rulers and rich men, large-scale corruption in government quarters. Al-Barnawi added another dimension to this picture in considering what seemed to be an operative, perhaps prevalent, economy based on usury in a society that was Muslim. He also assailed what he termed usurpation,
oppression, marauding, illegal imports and unjust enrichment by those in power. Associated with the oppressive social atmosphere was the general social disorder and the growth of crime. Thus al-Barnawi declared the proceeds of gambling, singing, theft, wheedling, deception and secret perfidy to be illegal.

Al-Barnawi did not spare the scholars either, though his attack on them was rather veiled. He censured those engaged in the thriving, but pernicious trade of fortune telling. Writing in the sand, astrology, the spells of genii and incantations were illegal means of livelihood. With regard to the more respectable scholars, al-Barnawi appeared to be saying that even if association with the rulers was unavoidable, it was important to limit it to the barest necessity. Piety demanded that they avoid the oppressors altogether.

Al-Barnawi was uneasy about those who created artificial scarcity, especially of essential food items. Similarly he objected strongly to an economic system which favored only the rich and abandoned the poor. ‘He who does not help (the needy) in a year of dearth has sinned: he has neglected the command of Allah.’ Any food item in excess of a person’s requirement must, in hour of need, be sold and at a price which reflected the plight of the poor.

Al-Barnawi was concerned about the way people acquired their wealth illegally. His theme, expressed in his words ‘the origins have become corrupt’, impelled him to warn those rich men who felt that they could remain good Muslims despite their unlawful sources of income that their assumptions were clearly wrong. Their worship, as long as they persisted in unjust enrichment, was null and void. They were destined for hard times on the Day of Judgment.

To save themselves from Allah’s wrath, those who engaged in illegal acquisition and false trade must repent, repay the ill-gotten wealth, and seek Allah’s forgiveness. And, more fundamentally, al-Barnawi reminded his audience that Islam has defined the lawful sources of income, which include agriculture, trade, industry — all of these to be conducted with ‘piety and honesty in dealing’.

The state, he added, bad the same obligations as the ordinary citizen to seek its resources by lawful means. These, too, had been spelt out clearly by the Sharia. They are ‘the fifth, the tithe, and poll tax, and land tax; booty and the surplus; then that the owners of which are unknown; the inheritance of property lacking (rightful) heirs.’ The idea of spelling out the sources of state income was perhaps to show that other taxes which the state levied on individuals were unauthorized by law, and therefore illegal.

Finally, al-Barnawi reiterated several principles both for individuals and the state over the issue of legality or illegality. One of these principles, in his view, was that ‘Religion is Ease’. The immediate beneficiaries of this principle were the poor people. As long as they remained in a state of deprivation, hunger or poverty, then much of what Islam declared to be unlawful would become lawful to them. The poor man could take money that was otherwise illegal for himself and family; he incurred no sin thereby as long as he neither squandered it nor took what was in excess of his needs. Similarly a person who was overwhelmed by hunger could take food from anywhere. ‘This is not illegal food,’ al-Barnawi stated categorically, ‘no, indeed, nor even dubious food’. It was unfair to add to the misery of the common man by confining him to the rigorous letter of the law. He
needed a degree of relief from the confines of law in order to take the necessary social steps to overcome his deprivation.

He postulated the principle that anything with an unclear origin is legal. Therefore in a situation pervaded by corruption and immoral earnings, it would be futile for any person to insist on absolute purity. ‘It does not befit us today,’ he said, ‘to ask questions, for the origins have become corrupt.’ Was this an answer to some civil servants who might be uneasy about the source of their salary? Or about those who sought the ideal in a situation of general corruption?

Further, where it was impossible to distinguish between what was legal and what was not, such as commodities in markets, then one must presume the legality of what was sold in the market unless it was obviously illegal in origin. This was so, even if one suspected a vestige of illegality: ‘So long as the illegal portion is not the major part... then to eat what is legal together with what is of dubious legality is the customary usage.’ It was advisable, however, for one who could afford it, to abstain totally from things that were of a dubious nature.

The Timbuktu Tradition

Perhaps the most important factor in the resurgence of Islam after several decades of decline in Bilad al-Sudan was that the Islamic tradition of learning and scholarship continued throughout the period of decline to operate as a living and thriving tradition, producing scholars, jurists and saints all over the region. The tradition preserved the best of Islam, and kept alive its intellectual legacy, strong enough for any determined reformer to apply as an instrument of societal transformation. That tradition of Islam was best symbolized by an enigmatic and highly venerated West African city that flourished for at least five centuries from the twelfth century A.D.

Timbuktu was a city bolstered by piety, and as Dr. Hunwick tells us, ‘it was the proud boast of its people that worship has never been offered to pagan gods within its wall’. He quotes Mahmud Kati who described the city in *Tarikh al-Fattash*:

Religion flourished and the *Sunna* enlivened both religious and worldly affairs. . . In those days it had no equal in the Sudan, from Mali to the edges of the *Maghrib*, for soundness of institutions, political liberties, purity of customs, security of life and goods and respect for and assistance to, the students and men of learning.’

The city owed its prestige and its immense influence on the subsequent history of West Africa to its being a centre of learning: it was a university complex, drawing students and scholars from different parts of the Muslim world, nourishing governments with administrators, clerks and judges, feeding cities with Imams teachers and jurists, and providing for the wider society a long chain of *muftis*, saints and above all, *mujaddids*. The unusually high number of *mujaddids* which the Bilad al-Sudan has produced — perhaps higher than any other part of the Muslim world — can be attributed in part to the tradition of learning fostered by Timbuktu.

‘The tradition of learning in Timbuktu,’ Elias Saad writes in *Social History of Timbuktu,* ‘assured the city a status and prestige.’
The Muslim sciences which the various settlers brought and fostered in the city went hand-in-hand with the widespread commercial contacts of these groups to secure for the growing town a measure of non-interference from outside. For one thing, the settlers themselves commanded considerable wealth along with wide spread networks of trade and alliances in the area. Additionally, however, the security of the city was in its Islamic image; its mosques, schools and shrines began to be conceived early as its guardians. In the psychological mood which prevailed after pilgrimage of Mansa Musa of Mali (and again on the return from the Hajj of Askia Muhammad over a century and a half later), Timbuktu gradually gained an aura of ‘sanctity’ and assumed for itself a sort of inviolability.

In this tradition of learning, after the elementary stage of *Quranic* recitation and literacy, a student was introduced into the world of scholarship via the Arabic language. Versatility in Arabic, Saad suggests, was highly valued; therefore, such fields of learning associated with language, grammar, rhetoric, logic and prosody became an essential part of the process of learning. The fundamental goal of learning in this tradition was to acquire the understanding of *Quran*, *hadith* and *fiqh*, and to some extent, of *tasawwuf*. Hence the science of *tafsir*, *Quranic* exegesis, was perhaps the most important of all sciences studied. Then followed study of the *hadith*, in which, Saad states, ‘the abilities of a jurist came to be measured by his familiarity with the precedents set by the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace)’.

In the study of *fiqh*, the Timbuktu tradition insisted on achieving a level of competence as high as could be found in any other part of the Muslim world. The *fiqh* studies revolved almost wholly around the *Maliki School*, to which the entire region has subscribed until the present day. Other fields, such as *tasawwuf*, *usul* or the philosophy of law, *tawhid* or the science of unity of Allah, history, medicine, astronomy and mathematics were also given due attention. A relatively wide range of text books was available to the students.

Knowledge was sought in this tradition precisely in order to enable the students to organize their lives as Allah had ordered, and subsequently to organize society and state on those lines as well. Scholarship, therefore, was an institution in its own right, distinct from and almost totally independent of the state; it remained self-reliant, maintaining and generating its own funds through a high level of commercial activities, and preserving its own prestige and sanctity. Scholars were never subservient to the rulers; indeed, in some respects the tradition was so strong as to force the rulers to concede to the supremacy of the scholar over the ruler. For example, it was the monarch who visited the *Qadi* of Timbuktu, and not the other way around. The idea was that the *Qadi*, as the custodian of Allah’s sacred law, was pre-eminent over the temporal ruler. This tradition gave the scholars of Timbuktu an aura of sanctity and respectability that made them the symbol of the people and the conscience of society.

The Timbuktu tradition persisted in Hausaland and in the whole of Bilad al-Sudan, producing scholars who upheld the spirit of Islam and nourished Islam itself both in the periods of light and of darkness. The Moroccan invasion of 999 A.H./1591 A.D., in which almost all the leading scholars were arrested, precipitated its decline. This deterioration, however, was merely quantitative; the quality of the tradition was maintained. So, while Hausaland was sunk in moral degradation, this intellectual and moral tradition carefully
nurtured a cadre of scholars who were to bring about an Islamic revolution and create a society dedicated to Islam, a state committed entirely to its defense and enhancement.
Chapter Two
The Education of Usman Dan Fodio

Shehu Usman was born into a highly cultured family in 1168/1754. His father was Muhammad ibn Salih, known generally as Fodio. His mother was Hawwa bint Muhammad ibn Usman. Shortly after his birth the family moved to Degel, where the young Usman grew up. In the Timbuktu tradition, the parents were invariably the first teachers and Shehu Usman received most of his education from his parents and relatives.

Our main sources concerning his education are Ida al-Nusukh and Tazyin al-Waraqat of Abdullahi Dan Fodio and Asanid al-Faqir of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio. In Ida al-Nusukh, Abdullahi described his early education:

The Sheikh read the Quran with his father, learnt al-Ishriniyat and similar works with his sheikh, Uthman, known as Biddu al-Kabawi. He learnt syntax, and the science of grammar from al-Khulasa and other works, from our sheikh Abd al-Rahman ibn Hammada. He read al-Mukhtasar with our paternal and maternal uncle, Uthman, known as Bidduri. . . . This sheikh of his was learned and pious, well known for righteousness and the ordering of the right and the forbidding of the wrong, and for being occupied with what concerned him. He it is whom our Sheikh Uthman (Dan Fodio) imitated in states and in deeds. He accompanied him for nearly two years, molding himself according to his pattern in piety (taqwa) and in ordering the right, and forbidding the wrong.

Thus the Shehu’s character was initially molded by Usman Bidduri: his inclination towards the career which eventually turned out to be the sole purpose in his life, and his keenness to call people to the way of Allah, were instilled in him by this sheikh. His influence on Shehu Usman was fundamental, enduring and far-reaching. Associated with this influence was that of Muhammad Sambo, who supervised part of Shehu’s early teachings. According to Abdullahi, this scholar ‘used to attend (Shehu’s) reading of al-Mukhtasar . . . if he made a mistake, or let anything slip, this maternal uncle of ours would correct it for him.’ Though he was away in the Hijaz during most of the period of Shehu’s early activities his influence on the whole community was beyond question.

Continuing his account of the Shehu’s education, Abdullahi wrote:

Now Sheikh Uthman informed me that he had learnt Quranic exegesis (tafsir) from the son of our maternal and paternal uncle Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Amin, and that he was present at the assembly of Hashim al-Zanfari (i.e. from the Hausa state of Zamfara) and heard from him Quranic exegesis from the beginning of the Quran to the end of it. ... He learnt the science of tradition (hadith) from our maternal and paternal uncle, al-Hajj Muhammad ibn Raj . . . reading with him all of Sahih of al-Bukhari. Then he gave us license to pass on all that he had recited of that which he had learnt from his Sheikh al-Madani, the Sindi of origin, Abu Al-Hassan Ali.

Muhammad ibn Raj’s knowledge of hadith was indeed profound. He had studied each of the most important works of hadith from an uninterrupted chain of authorities such as the Imams al-Bukhari, Muslim and Malik. The other of note was Salih Muhammad al-Kanawi, through whom Shehu Usman also traced his isnads in Bukhari, Muwatta and al-Shifa.
Abdullahi told us further in *Ida al-Nusukh* that the Shehu sought knowledge from Sheikh Jibril, and he accompanied him for almost a year until they came to the town of Agades. Jibril ibn Umar’s influence was both intellectual and moral. In *hadith*, for example, the Shehu traced his *isnad* in all the essential *hadith* works, notably *Bukhari*, *Muslim*, *Abu Daud*, *Muwatta*, and *Ibn Majah*. Jibril was his most important authority in *fiqh* (or science of law) and most significantly in the various aspects of *tasawwuf* (spiritual training). His *silsila* (spiritual genealogy) in this sphere of life and especially in the *Qadiriyya* order, and his *silsila* in *Dalail al-Khairat*, are all traced, in *Asanid al-Faqir*, through Jibril. There seemed to be no aspect of learning which the Shehu undertook in which Jibril ibn Umar did not leave his indelible imprint.

The real significance of Jibril ibn Umar is that he gave the Shehu the idea of *tajdid*, the foundations of which he himself laid. He gave his student the intellectual, moral, spiritual and ideological training he needed for the gigantic work of *tajdid*. Jibril later was the first to pledge allegiance to Shehu, even before the *jihad*. Despite certain differences of opinion the Shehu acknowledged his profound indebtedness to Jibril, which Abdullahi quoted in *Ida al-Nusukh*: ‘If there be said of me that which is said of good report, then I am but a wave of the waves of Jibril.’

Influence, though of an indirect nature, was exerted on the Shehu by Sidi Mukhtar al-Kunti, who was born in 1142/1729 and died in 1226/1811, and was thus a direct contemporary of the Shehu. Sidi Mukhtar belonged to a highly venerated Kunta family which over thirty years had produced an uninterrupted chain of scholars and saints, the most influential being Sidi Mukhtar al-Kunti. Knowledgeable and charismatic, he soon became a veritable institution himself.

According to Abdal-Aziz Batran, Sidi al-Mukhtar attracted multitudes of students, people who sought his *baraka* and guidance, and scholars seeking enlightenment. He assumed the leadership not only of the Kunta family, but more significantly, of the *Qadiriyya* order, giving unity to branches that had been estranged for nearly two hundred years. Thereafter he initiated an ambitious and, indeed, successful though peaceful, moral transformation of a large part of Africa.

Sidi Mukhtar taught that the study of *tasawwuf* was essential as it was imperative for self-fortification and for achieving nearness to Allah. This nearness itself involves a progressive moral transformation of the individual under the guidance of a *sheikh*. He also taught that *zuhd* means giving as much attention to the mundane aspects of life as to the spiritual; wealth, therefore, was essential as it is the cornerstone for *jah*, social standing and dignity, as well as for *haiba*, authority and respect. He wished for a return to the basic sources of Islamic jurisprudence, and for the teachings of the Companions (Allah be pleased with them) of Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) to be reinstated. Moreover, he rejected exclusive adherence to one *madhab* and opened the door of *ijtihad* to all who were juristically qualified.

Sidi al-Mukhtar believed that he was the *mujaddid* of the thirteenth century of the *Hijra* whom Allah had called upon to renovate Islam and to restore the *umma* to its glorious past not only in West Africa but throughout the whole Muslim world. Like Ahmad Baba before him, he expressed the opinion that several *mujaddidun* appeared periodically in different territories, including West Africa.
We shall now look at some of the principal ideas of Sidi Mukhtar, namely his ideas on tajdid, the ulama and tasawwuf. Tajdid is ‘the resuscitation of what has withered away of knowledge of the Quran and the Sunna and the commandment of their observance’. So long as the umma would sink from time to time into degeneration or turmoil, so long would tajdid remain imperative.

In western Sudan, this degeneration (fasad) was precipitated by the despot, Sonni Ali, who appeared in the ninth Islamic century and therefore necessitated, by implication, the tajdid of Askia Muhammad. Further degeneration was brought about by the invasion of the Moroccan hordes who killed many of the inhabitants of western Sudan, slew the ulama, captured as many as thirty thousand people and sacked the towns.

This destruction of life and knowledge of a large part of the western Sudan precipitated a moral and intellectual decline which necessitated the initiation of a new process of tajdid throughout the region.

Tajdid, Mukhtar said, could take various forms, and thus could be led by individuals with different emphases, depending on the prevailing situation. The mujaddid could be a statesman who would preserve the principles of the law, make justice triumph among the people and protect the lives and properties of the people, so that they could carry on their temporal affairs and their religious duties without any hindrance. The mujaddid could also be a zahid who would remind the people of the world to come, call them to righteousness and renunciation of the world. Or he could be a pure scholar who would regenerate the knowledge of Sunna and establish the authenticity of the Prophetic tradition. Few individuals could undertake tajdid, for the standard of learning, coupled with moral sanctity, is extremely high. Sidi Mukhtar said of such a person:

Assuming that all religious knowledge were forgotten, all literatures were burnt and he were resorted to, he would have the capacity to resuscitate that knowledge and write similar books.

It was the Sidi’s view that the centre of gravity in the Muslim world had shifted to western Sudan by the eleventh Islamic century. In the century before, those who bad undertaken the tajdid were firstly, the mujaddid of all branches of knowledge, al-Maghili; secondly, Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti; thirdly, the zahid, Sayid Muhammad al-Sanusi; and fourthly, the statesman, al-Hajj Askia Muhammad. But in the eleventh century, the three mujaddids that appeared in the Muslim world were, according to the Sidi, from the western Sudan. These were the faqih Ahmad Baba al-Timbukti, the famous hadith scholar Muhammad Baghyu al-Takruri, and the ascetic Baba al-Mukhtar al-Timbukti. In the twelfth century, two of the three mujaddids that appeared were from western Sudan, the Sidi Mukhtar al-Kunti himself and Shehu Usman Dan Fodio.

The Sidi attributed the decline of knowledge and the triumph of bida (innovation) in the western Sudan in the twelfth and the thirteenth Islamic centuries partly to the activities of the corrupt scholars (ulama al-su), whom he grouped into as many as sixteen categories.

They included those who had knowledge but failed to put it into practice; those who presented an appearance of compliance with the outward religious duties, but had not eliminated characteristics such as vanity, hypocrisy, ambition, desire for political office and high rank; those who presumed that they had the exclusive right to guide the common people and yet entered into unholy alliance with the sultans, thus encouraging
the sultans’ oppression of the people; those who engaged in jihad but only to obtain fame and wealth; and those scholars who used false methods, such as music, to lure people into spiritual practices. The danger of those scholars, the Sidi said, could be seen from the hadith of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace): ‘I fear for my umma after me more from ulama al-su than from the Dajjal’, and when asked who these were, he replied that they were ulama al-alsina, the ulama of the tongue’.

Sidi insisted that tasawwuf is an indispensable aspect of Islam. But true Sufism is none other than honest and sincere adherence to the Sunna. ‘If the murid observes the commands of the Sharia and refrains from doing what is prohibited by it, truly and sincerely, Allah will open in his heart a portal whereby he can see (acquire) ulum al-haqiqa. And if he adheres to the rules of ulum al-haqiqa, Allah will cause to open a further portal within his inner self whereby he shall see the Kingdom of Heaven and realities of Allah’s might.’ The combination of law and moral purification seemed to him the best way to practice religion.

The Sidi’s views on the use of music in Sufism and on zuhd are worth noting. ‘Allah, the Almighty, is not worshipped by dancing and chanting . . . We the Qadiris do not approve of dancing, frivolous playing and merry making because they are degrading to man’s dignity and damaging to his honor.’ Zuhd does not mean squandering one’s wealth or declaring as illegal what Allah has decreed to be legal, such as taking up a profession or other economic pursuits. Zuhd is to dispense the world willingly when one possesses it and to be at rest in one’s heart when one loses it.’ The Companions of the Prophet (Allah be pleased with them), he said, possessed the world and held it like the trustworthy treasurer, kept it in the lawful manner and distributed it in the legal way. They neither clung to it nor had any inclination towards it.

Sidi Mukhtar’s influence on the Shehu and his movement itself was first and foremost spiritual, for as the undisputed head of the Qadiriyya order to which the Shehu belonged and as a dynamic intellectual personality, he was bound to exert a deep influence over the Shehu. Some of the three hundred or so books and treatises he wrote were certainly brought to the attention of the Shehu, and his students and companions also made their own particular impact. Significantly, the Sidi used his vast and profound influence in support of the Shehu and his movement, a support that advanced the course of the jihad in considerable measure.

We have mentioned some of the men who influenced the Shehu to indicate the kind of training he had, although it is impossible for us to know all of them. There are surely other personalities who contributed to the making of the Shehu in much the same way as those we have mentioned, but who are not known to us and may never be known. What cannot be denied is that the Shehu drank deeply from the great pond of knowledge which the western Sudan had to offer. It is to his credit that he sought knowledge wherever he could find it, and that even when he had grown important and more famous than most of the scholars, he still sat humbly before them, learning from them. He also learnt the primary sources — the Quran and hadith — from as many authorities as possible. At the end of the day he had acquired not only a deep and indelible knowledge of these sources but also the different interpretations that had been developed through several centuries.
The Shaping of a Character

The Shehu, from what we can understand, must have seen in al-Maghili a vigorous intellectual who had a deep knowledge in the sciences necessary for changing the intellectual precepts of people, and who had a noble character imbued with the requisite moral persuasion to sway even the most powerful of men. In al-Maghili, the Shehu saw how an individual, even though having refugee status, could effect a lasting change in the life of nations and set their history, almost single-handedly, upon a totally different course, by the sheer force of his intellect, his moral authority and his absolute reliance on Allah. He took time to study al-Maghili properly, taking from him, as faithfully as possible, the concept of *tajdid*, of society and of government, as well as the nature of the ideological divide between Muslims and those who serve the cause of evil.

In al-Barnawi, as well as in a number of scholars of his time and especially those of the intellectual centers of Borno, Katsina and Kano, the Shehu must have seen the concept of an active, purifying and transformative jurisprudence, which even though it had been relegated to the background and lost its supremacy, could still serve as a potent forum for protest and revolutionary mobilization. Indeed, the point that came out clearly in al-Barnawi was that what was wrong in respect of law was not so much the stagnation it had suffered as a result of the loss of genuine *ulama* as the neglect it had suffered in its abandonment by society. Law grows and develops through application.

In Sidi Ahmad Baba, who epitomized the spirit of the Timbuktu tradition, the Shehu must have perceived the role and place of the scholar in society. The scholar’s first responsibility is to acquaint himself with the basic knowledge of the sources, then of the law, then of different sciences that support the life of society, and then of history and so on. This will place him in a position to guide society in all essential areas and to put himself at the disposal of every segment of society. His second responsibility is to stand up boldly as the guardian of the conscience of society, preventing any assault or outrage against the values of society or against the sanctity of its beliefs and institutions. In this way he serves as the force behind the preservation of the moral and social purity of society and respect for the integrity of the nation. The scholar’s third responsibility is to stand up for the poor and the oppressed, to defend their rights, and strive for the accomplishment of their aspirations. The scholar’s fourth responsibility is to stand up for the defense of the nation and enhance its integrity as a nation faithful to Allah and submissive to His laws. As an institution in himself and an active observer of events and history, the scholar is morally bound to warn his nation with all the power and means at his disposal against possible deviations from Islam and to state as clearly as possible the moral, political and historical consequences of such deviations. Finally, it is his responsibility to raise a generation of men and women capable of taking societal responsibilities, or of steering the course of society in a positive direction when the signs of degeneration are apparent.

When considering his teachers and contemporaries, the influence of Usman Bidduri should not be underrated. He was a scholar, who combined learning and piety; who was dissatisfied with the prevailing corruption and felt the acute need for change, but who at the same time had the wisdom and patience first to sow the seeds of change. He quietly transferred his desires for change to a future generation, and died silently, leaving a legacy for the future. The Shehu, we are told, imitated him in almost all situations...
relating to his work, recognizing that restraint and patience, as well as a dept of understanding of the issues at stake, are essential ingredients for social transformation.

But it was the learned and pious Jibril ibn Umar who gave him the instruments with which to strive against the currents of the time. In Shehu’s studies of hadith, in his efforts to acquire a deep knowledge of law and jurisprudence, in his studies and practice of tasawwuf, in his endeavors to get a more intimate spiritual relationship with the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), and in his endeavors to understand his society and work for its improvement, he found in Jibril a worthy and eager mentor. He learned the importance of restraint, of open mindedness and sympathy for the inadequacies of the common people from the reverses which his teacher had suffered in his attempt to change society too quickly.

Other scholars also left their marks. The supervision of his teachings by the saintly Muhammad Sambo, the vast knowledge of hadith acquired from Al-Hajj Muhammad Raj and the important studies of the Quran and its exegesis from Muhammad al-Amin all influenced the Shehu deeply.

In Sidi Mukhtar al-Kunti he found the true embodiment of sainthood — versatile and richly endowed scholar who had the view that concern for the world and the more lofty concern for the hereafter had to be combined in single individual to create a saint. The Sidi also maintained that both temporal and spiritual matters should be brought under the single authority of Islam if the world were to be a better place in which to live. In him Shehu Usman must also have seen a dynamic and revolutionary Sufism concerned to secure for man a just society on earth and Allah’s pleasure in the hereafter. He must have seen in Mukhtar al-Kunti the extent to which an individual possessing sanctity and prestige could penetrate hearts and secure their allegiance for the task of creating a better society. It was to the credit of both the Shehu and al-Kunti that they did not view each other as rivals but rather mujaddids, each engaged in the same endeavors in the cause of Allah, each employing slightly different methods.

There were many other aspects to the shaping of the Shehu’s personality. All that he had learnt of the Arabic language, Quranic exegesis, science of hadith were a mere introduction to the wider world of learning and scholarship. From the Mukhtasar of Khalil the Shehu moved further to drink from the great pool of jurisprudence of the Maliki and the other three schools’.

Although the Maliki school was sufficient for his needs, he felt he should know the principles of other schools, for as he himself said, ‘there is no rule in Islam, other than that of mere convenience, that restricts a community to follow a particular school of law’.

Then the Shehu ventured boldly in the world of Sufism and learned and practiced the rites of several branches of the Qadiriyya, including that of Sidi Mukhtar al-Kunti. In addition, he read almost everything that reached him from the works of al-Ghazali, most especially the Ihya from which he derived much profit. His book, titled boldly as Tariq al-Jannat, was but a summary of what al-Ghazali had written on piety and moral purification. Then he examined the works of other great Sufi personalities — the sage Ibn al-Arabi, the saint Zarruq, his teacher Ibn Atta Allah, amongst others. He also studied other Sufi orders, because as far as he was concerned, Sufism, like Islamic jurisprudence, is but a tree with many branches.
The Shehu studied history, especially of the rightly-guided Caliphate and of Islam in general; he took special interest in the history of the western Sudan from which he perceived the inevitable confrontation between the forces of light and darkness in the region. The most important of Shehu’s personal efforts were in the studies of the *Quran* and *hadith*. By investigating these two sources over and over again and by teaching some of them from the beginning to the end many times over, he acquired a deep knowledge of them. In his *Asanid al-Faqir* the Shehu leaves no one in doubt as to his tremendous knowledge of the *hadith* — it seems that he had read and taught almost all the *hadiths* contained in the authentic collections.

The result of all this made Shehu Usman a forest of knowledge, a jurist, a saint, ‘He grew up penitent and devout,’ Muhammad Bello told us in *Infaq al-Maysur*, ‘possessed of pleasing qualities. And none was his equal. People trusted him, and flocked to him from the east and west.’ Bello continues:

He instructed the *ulama* and raised the banner of religion. He revived the *Sunna* and put an end to heresy. He spread knowledge and dispelled perplexity. His learning dazzled men’s minds. He showed how reality (haqiqa) was to be reconciled with the *Sharia*. For years he explained the *Quran* in the presence of learned and righteous men of importance, vying with them, through his reading and the different branches of his learning, in rhetoric, and in the knowledge of the authorities, and of what is written and what is abrogated. At the same time, he was pre-eminent in knowledge of the *hadith*, and learned in its unfamiliar parts and different branches. Revered by both great and small, he was a *Mujaddid* at the head of this generation.
Chapter Three
Raising the Students

One of the most important tasks in the process of *tajdid* is the cultivation of a crop of people through whom the revolutionary message is transmitted to the generality of society, and who will eventually shoulder the responsibility of running the new social order when it is established. The greater the number of people so trained, the greater the prospects of transformation. This cultivation is but a process through which the *mujaddid* multiplies himself on a continuous basis: he creates people in his own image, who in turn create others in the same fashion and so on. This ensures continuity in the process of change, because the movement is being continuously nourished morally and intellectually. Moreover it ensures for the movement the loyalty and dedication it requires if it is to move successfully through the lengthy process of change to the desired state of solidarity.

The Shehu was well aware that he had to mould men and women who would subscribe to his ideas and share his aspirations to bring about an *umma* dedicated to Islam in order to transform society. As he knew he could not rely on other scholars to achieve his purposes, he established his own ‘school’, trained his own students and created his own community of scholars, teachers and saints. It was through these students — the *Talaba* — that he spread his message; it was from these students that he formed the inner core of the movement; and it is they who spearheaded the prosecution of the *jihad* and carried it to a successful end.

The Shehu’s methods of raising the generation that brought about the transformation of central Sudan encompasses the three areas: the intellectual, the spiritual and the profound training in *tasawwuf*. In all this, the Shehu was at the center — he drew students to him from far and wide and nurtured them until they had attained full moral and intellectual maturity. Some became centers of learning themselves, as great as anyone could find in Bilad al-Sudan; others became statesmen, carving for themselves worthy places in Muslim history; yet others took their places in the company of saints, having acquired both knowledge and piety.

**Intellectual Training**

The nature of education offered was in the best Timbuktu tradition, little changed from that the Shehu himself received: the content of education had remained almost unchanged for several centuries. However, the quality of students raised by the Shehu differed fundamentally, a difference due to the new orientation and general intellectual outlook introduced by the Shehu. He widened his students’ intellectual horizons and introduced pertinent social issues into the scheme of education. It was his view, as expressed in *Ihya al-Sunna*, that it was the knowledge of the exact nature and implications of the aberrations existing in society — such as nepotism, moral indiscipline, and political tyranny — rather than the knowledge of Islam that was missing in Hausa scholarship. Scholars, he thought, knew the law in minute detail, but had not grasped the social and
political implications. The Shehu’s including these fundamental issues of the day made all the difference. In addition, he developed a new approach to jurisprudence: law should not be studied out of mere curiosity, but should be practiced as well. Hence, to make the sacred Sharia a living and dominant reality in society was part of the process of education. A student was obliged to seek the realization of Islam as a faith, as a body of law and as a political system.

Students had roughly ten subjects to learn, judging from information available in *Ida al-Nusukh* of Abdullahi and *Shifa al-Asqam* of Muhammad Bello. Students were not required to excel in all subjects but they bad to have a fair knowledge of them before deciding where to specialize. Arabic language was essential, for it was the language of scholarship. Therefore, Arabic grammar was a priority, as well as other subjects associated with Arabic — logic, rhetoric, etc. Poetry had a special place in language study for two reasons: possibly because so much knowledge, especially of law and the fundamentals of religion, is compressed in verse; and because poetry is a means of reaching the hearts of the people.

Naturally, students would not wait until they had mastered Arabic before beginning study of other subjects, which were studied simultaneously. *Fiqh*, the science of law, was the most popular subject; it followed a progressive pattern, starting with the elementary knowledge contained in *al-Akhdari* and ending with the towering *Mukhtasar* of Khalil. *Mukhtasar* seemed to represent the ultimate in *fiqh* in the Timbuktu tradition, though there were quite a few other basic textbooks available to the students. The science of *usul* or philosophy of law was also available for students who wanted to specialize in that field, but it was not as popular as *fiqh* because *fiqh* is concerned with the regulation of both individual and social life. In his *Ihya al-Sunna* the Shehu introduced another dimension to the study of *fiqh*: as a forum for criticism of society and a subtle call for change.

The most important aspect of knowledge was the *Quran* and *Sunna*. The *Quran* is the ultimate knowledge, the source of knowledge and the yardstick for measuring other aspects of knowledge. The most popular textbook for the study of *Quranic* exegesis, *tafsir*, at least before Abdullahi wrote his *Diya al-Tawil*, was *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*. For further studies, *Baydawi*, *Razi* and several others were available. *Quranic* legislation and rules of recitation were among other subjects studied. The Shehu himself taught *tafsir*: Abdullahi stated that he studied *tafsir* under the Shehu, ‘from the beginning of al-Fatiha to the end of the Quran, more times than I can tell.’ There were other students whose education was fundamentally centered on the memorization, study and recitation of the *Quran*. In *hadith*, attention was centered mainly on *Bukhari* and *Muslim*, and to some extent *Muwatta* of Imam Malik. But for those who wanted to go further, other *hadith* works were available — notably *Tirmidhi*, *Abu Daud*, *Ibn Majah* and *Nasai*. Others were *Mishkat al-Masabih*, al-Baghawi’s *al-Masabih* and so on. However, al-Suyuti’s two collections, *Jami al-Kabir* and *Jami al-Saghir* were of immense value in *hadith* studies, especially for students who wanted reference books. Commentaries on the major *hadith* books were also studied, especially al-Qastalam’s *Fathi al-Bari*, a commentary on *Sahih al-Bukhari*.

The study of *tawhid* centered mainly on the books of al-Sanusiyya. It was highly-prized knowledge; ‘the greatest favor done to me’, was how Abdullahi saw the imparting of the
knowledge of *tawhid* to him. *Tasawwuf* was also studied and practiced, though it was confined to the *Qadiriyya* order. History was an important subject in the Timbuktu educational tradition since it was regarded as a guide to the future. Muhammad Bello articulated this concept in *Infaq al-Maysur* when he declared that many a great man had fallen because he had neglected to learn from history. Medicine was also a highly rated subject: emphasis was laid on ‘prophetic medicine’ without limiting the scope of practical medicine. Astronomy, mathematics and related subjects were also part of the education.

Education revolved generally, around the *Quran* and *Sunna*; every other subject was derived from, or at least related to, these two sources. This approach to education was imperative for a movement dedicated to creating a society in the pattern established by the Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace). Imperative also was the ideological stance given to education by the Shehu himself if students were to spearhead the struggle for an Islamic society, then a belief in Islam as *the* way of life; in *Sharia* as *the* law, in caliphate as *the* ultimate in political system, in *jihad* as *the* ultimate struggle, in Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) as *the* leader par excellence, in the hereafter as *the* life, in Allah as *the* ultimate goal, had to be carefully nurtured and imparted to them in the process of education. At the end of the day, no student would be left with any doubts in his mind as to what way of life, what law, what society and what goal he should strive for; nor to doubt that the existing order characterized by oppression and heedlessness of Allah was illegitimate, and had to go.

The imparting of the idea of *tajdid*, or revolution, in his students and involving them in the process of *tajdid* as a necessary part of education was, perhaps, Shehu Usman’s greatest contribution to education in Hausaland. Yet he introduced another aspect that was of equal importance: the approach to law and society, the gist of which is contained in his *Hidayat al-Tullab*.

The *Hidaya* dealt with several issues relating to Islamic law and Muslim society, the first of which was the very definition of law itself. In Hausaland, as elsewhere in the Muslim world, the notion of *madhhab*, or school of law, dominated the entire concept of law, and the term was taken as being synonymous with *Sharia* itself. The practical implication was that both the divine aspects of Islamic law and their human derivations became inseparable and were given equal treatment and weight by Muslims. This, obviously, was a dangerous attitude to law, for while the divine is perfect and immutable, the human aspects are far from perfect, and should not be immutable. Shehu Usman therefore felt it necessary to distinguish between the law proper, *Sharia*, and the human understanding and application of the law embodied in the idea of *madhhab*. *Sharia*, he stated, is the body of laws revealed to Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) by Allah and is therefore the universal, unalterable law and cannot be regarded as the *madhhab* of any particular person. The *Sharia* is absolutely binding on every Muslim wherever he may be. But a *madhhab*, being essentially human in formulation, is not absolutely binding on all Muslims. Laws formulated by a *madhhab* are subject to change and modification in response to human needs and differing circumstances.

This notion of *madhhab* put forward by Shehu Usman raised the issue of relevance of *madhhab* as a whole. The Shehu answered that basically Islam places no obligation on any Muslim to follow a particular *madhhab*, nor have *Imams* themselves insisted on being followed. A Muslim is free to choose any *madhhab* of his liking, or in fact, to
refuse to subscribe to any, if he is of the status of a mujtahid himself. The Shehu went even further in trying to limit the scope of a madhhab by distinguishing between the rulings and opinions of the imam of a madhhab and the ideas of his immediate students and later scholars. The former is what constitutes the madhhab, the latter is of secondary importance only. Thus, even if Muslims feel bound by a madhhab, they should nevertheless allow themselves freedom to hear the opinions and rulings of scholars other than the imam.

Granted this, all the schools of law are in the right. Therefore no Muslim should feel constrained to follow the rulings of any one of them. Equally, a Muslim does not commit a sin by following rulings of a madhhab other than his own. Indeed, he sins by nursing aversion to following such rulings. In other words, all the schools are the common property of Muslims and should be seen as a source of strength for the umma rather than as a source of disunity and conflict. No one school is superior or inferior to another; each one is on a right path and within the bounds of Islam.

But the situation which Shehu Usman met was that fiqh was almost totally divorced from the Quran and Sunna, so much so that it seemed as though these fundamental sources were relegated to the background in the scheme of things. The re-establishment of the supremacy of the Quran and Sunna — or the Sharia — became imperative in those circumstances. Hence, the Shehu issued the statement that any rulings of a madhhab that contradicted the Quran, Sunna or ijima should be ignored. Fiqh had thus to be subordinated to the primary sources. Shehu Usman’s Ihya al-Sunna should be seen as an effort to return to the true spirit of Sharia, where primacy is given to what the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said and practiced.

Finally, the Shehu dealt in Hidaya with the issue of right and wrong in society. He sought to limit both authority and scope of madhhab, by emphasizing that it is Sharia alone that is absolutely binding on Muslims, and that a madhhab is essentially the opinions and rulings of its Imam. Secondly, he attempted to establish the supremacy of the Quran and Sunna over the entire Islamic legal order. Thus, what is right and what is wrong for society is determined only by the Quran and Sunna. Human legislation cannot prescribe in matters in which the Quran and Sunna have not been categorical. No one can be repudiated for not performing a duty, or for doing a deed which neither source has declared as unlawful.

Shehu Usman’s Hidayat al-Tullab can be seen as an attempt to instill in his students a universal approach to law, and to expand their attitudes to society. When incorporated in the scheme of education, the approach was bound to create broadminded scholars with an incentive for wider reading and research. They were to regard all schools of law as correct and equally valid for all Muslims. They were to look at the weaknesses and failures of their society with sympathy and flexibility. The common people might do many things that offend the spirit, if not the letter, of the law: but as long as the Quran and Sunna have not been dogmatic on the prohibition of those deeds, such lapses should be overlooked. The students should concentrate on the fundamentals of the common people with sympathy, with a view to drawing them into the Jamaa and correcting them by a gradual process. This approach to moral failures of the people contributed much to the expansion of the Jamaa and its impressive social and ethnic spread.
On the whole, the quality of the students produced by the Shehu rested more on the personal initiative and effort they exerted in private research than on what they were taught formally. Knowledge was the most fundamental criterion in the new scheme of things: the acquisition of knowledge was part of the effort of the individual to ensure for himself a place in the new order. But more importantly, the atmosphere of ideological and social struggle, under which the Talaba were being nurtured, was most conducive to study. The need to find solutions to new problems that confronted the Jamaa, the intellectual challenge posed by ulama al-su, the desire to reach the high standard of learning achieved by earlier scholars and the intellectual climate fostered by the Shehu himself all contributed to the general upsurge in scholarship. The Shehu devoted the larger part of his time to teaching and raising his students.

In addition, the growing intellectual character of his Jamaa attracted revolutionary scholars from all corners of Hausaland and beyond, and this influx swelled the pool from which the Talaba drew their knowledge. ‘I cannot now number all the Sheikhs,’ Abdullahi wrote in Tazyin, ‘from whom I acquired knowledge. Many a scholar and many a seeker after knowledge came to us from the East from whom I profited, so many that I cannot count them. Many a scholar and many a seeker after knowledge came to us from the West, so many that I cannot count them.’ Shehu’s advice to his students and companions in his Wathiqat al-Ikhwan to go out to seek knowledge from pious, learned scholars wherever they might be, coupled with the pressure exerted by the revolutionary process which required a body of scholars to articulate and disseminate its message, created that fertile intellectual climate that was to feed Hausaland with knowledge.

The scale of research and scholarship was astounding. There seemed to be the realization in the Jamaa that the revolutionary process depended almost entirely on the soundness and vastness of the learning its members were able to acquire. Scholars among them gave their time to developing other scholars and learning more themselves. Students strove for intellectual excellence: Muhammad Bello told us in Shifa al-Asqam that in all he read as many as twenty thousand books. Books were bought, others were borrowed from different parts of Hausaland, and many were written in response to the demands of the Jamaa. What came out of this extraordinary devotion to learning was an intellectual revolution on a scale unprecedented in Hausaland.

**Spiritual Training**

Intellectual training went hand-in-hand with the spiritual development of Shehu Usman’s students and companions. The gist of this development is contained in a concise but precious treatise, Umdat al-Ubbad, which the Shehu wrote to provide guidelines for the minimum voluntary acts of devotion: prayer, fasting, Quranic recitation, remembrance of Allah and acts of charity.

Muhammad Bello wrote an addendum to Umdat entitled Tamhid al-Umdat al-Ubbad which might perhaps be his first book. It may be stressed that supererogatory devotion presupposes the fulfillment by a Muslim of his obligatory duties; otherwise it is meaningless. It is on this premise that Umdat was written.
Salat

In the area of salat (prayer five times a day), three categories of nawafil (supererogatory devotion) were recommended in the *Umdat*, chosen because they constitute the middle course in the prophetic practice and because they are easy to perform. The first, *salat al-Duha* which is performed between daybreak and noon, is of great significance because it is performed at the very start of the day’s work or in the busiest part of it. It gives one the opportunity to return to the Lord and be intimate with Him, even at the most mundane of times. Thus the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) extolled this *salat* as the ‘prayer of the pertinent’, and indicated that it contained within it the qualities and ingredients of almost every deed which a Muslim is recommended to do for the day:

An act of charity is due from each part of the body of each one of you every day: thus, the glorification of Allah is charity; the declaration of His Unity is charity; the declaration of his absolute greatness is charity; to praise Him is charity; to command what is good is charity; to prohibit evil is charity — but the two rakats which one offers at forenoon suffices.

A further category of *nawafil* are those following each obligatory prayer, such as the *nafila* of *Zuhr*. The *zuhr* time, according to the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), ‘is the hour in which the gates of heaven are opened, and I would like any good deed of mine to ascent thereto at that time’. The implication is that the possibility of Allah looking sympathetically at one’s works is higher if these are presented to Him when one is engaged at the actual time of presentation in any act of devotion, more so, when according to the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), the *gates of heaven are opened purposely to receive such devotional acts*. The *nafila* of *Asr* were also important to the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace): ‘May Allah bestow His mercy on a person who performs four, rakats before the Asr.’ The *nafila* of the *Maghrib* follows, and then the *nafila* of the *Subh*, by far the most important of this category of *nawafil*. According to Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) was most persistent in performing this prayer, referring to it as better than the world and what it contains.

The third category of *nawafil* recommended in the *Umdat* are the night prayers, called *Tahajjud*. These are the important prayers apart from the obligatory ones. The Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) gave four attributes to them. They are, he said, *the tradition of the best of men who have gone before us*, and by implication, *one of the means through which they were exalted*. Allah said to Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) in this regard: ‘As for the night, keep vigil a part of it, as a work of supererogation for you; it may be that your Lord will raise you up to a laudable station.’ So persistent and diligent was the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) in obeying this command that often his feet swelled up, as a result of his long standing in prayer. The *tahajjud*, the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, *are a means by which one achieves nearness to Allah*. The timing itself; when the night is in its full serenity and everything is still, creates an impression in the mind of the person who stands up in prayer that he is directly in the presence of Allah. It is a time Allah Himself described as ‘heavier in tread, more upright in speech’, and one is expected to empty one’s mind and soul to Allah, and beseech Him earnestly. This is the best time for people to get close to Allah, for there are no barriers between them at this time, no matter what their station in the scale of things. And if some people do rise to great heights
spiritually, it is precisely because they have made the best use of this opportunity. The tahajjud is also, according to the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), the means of obtaining Allah’s forgiveness and other favors. He said that Allah descends, as it were, to the lowest heaven in the latter part of the night purposely to listen to the complaints of people, to respond to their needs and to forgive the sins of those who seek His forgiveness. The tahajjud is a means by which one is guarded eventually against falling into grievous sin. Thus when he was told of a man who was constant in tahajjud and yet was in the habit of stealing people’s property he said ‘he will leave stealing’ on account of the effects of tahajjud.xviii

Fasting

In the area of fasting, Umdat gave three recommendations: one could follow the one he felt he could undertake most conveniently. One was fasting three days in a month, the minimum required of anyone who wanted to undertake the nawafil of fasting. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) likened it to ‘perpetual fast’: since an act of piety is rewarded ten-fold or more, fasting three days in a month would be equivalent in reward to fasting the whole month. The second nafla the Shehu called the ‘golden means’, and entailed fasting on every Monday and Thursday. These are the days, the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, in which people’s deeds are presented to Allah, and it is better to be fasting at that time. The last fasting recommended was the ‘fasting of Daud’ — that is, fasting on alternate days, which the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) called the most excellent of fasting.

Fasting is particularly important for a group in a state of moral growth. It offers a moral and physical discipline which differs completely from the gluttony and permissiveness of the decaying society. It is the antidote to degeneration: the austere habits, social restraint, modesty and physical endurance which it cultivates in the individual are the ingredients of moral transformation. Fasting is also important because of the regard accorded to it by Allah. ‘Fasting is for me,’ he said, ‘and I personally give the reward for it.’ The requests of a person who is fasting, the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, are never rejected by his Lord.xix

Quranic Recitation

In the area of Quranic recitation the Shehu recommended that one should complete its reading within a maximum period of two months and a minimum period of three days. The optimum time, however, is between ten days and one month. The reasons are twofold: one moral and the other educational. The personal reading of the Quran is a duty one owes to Allah and He gives ample reward for it as a number of hadiths have indicated. It has the effect of familiarizing the mind with the message of Allah, to which eventually — if it becomes constant practice — the mind responds with awe and reverence, so that as the response grows in intensity the Quran becomes part and parcel of one’s being. The second purpose is to enable the individual to have personal acquaintance and understanding of the Quran. During a year a person will have gone through the whole of the Quran at a contemplative, devotional level, without outside aid
or interference, at least six times and at best twelve or more times. In the course of time, the individual will have been morally and intellectually transformed and be filled with reverence for the Book, more ready to put its precepts into practice.

**Remembrance of Allah**

The next area of spiritual training dealt with in *Umdat* was that of *dhikr* or remembrance of Allah. *Dhikr* is a continuous effort on the part of man to seek access to Allah, to remain as close to him as possible, to bear Him in mind at all times and in all conditions and to seek His assistance in every situation; it is thus rightly regarded as the best form of worship. It comprises a number of elements: giving Allah His due rights, such as constant contemplation and affirmation of His unity, His glory, His majesty and His greatness and appreciating His uncountable favors; seeking the means of approach to Him; turning to Him in repentance moment by moment and day by day, with the hope of obtaining His forgiveness and the expiation of one’s sins; seeking assistance from him in respect of the numerous, intractable problems of the world; contemplating His message, His creation and His authority; and evoking His blessing upon the best of His creatures. The forms of *dhikr* recommended in *Umdat* are intended to cover as many aspects of ordinary life as possible. Thus guides as to what one should say in one’s *salat* when going to bed and waking up in the morning, as well as how to seek Allah’s forgiveness and how to glorify Him are given. Some chapters and verses of the *Quran* have been recommended, including the chapter’s *al-Baqara* and *Ale Imran*, which, in addition to their obvious spiritual value, are the summary and quintessence of the ideology of the *Quran*. Anyone who is familiar with them will have a fair idea of Islam and the nature of its ideological differences with other ways of life.

**Charity**

Finally, in the area of *sadaqa* or charity, the Shehu did not make any specific recommendation, except that he referred to the statements of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) which explain the true nature of this kind of devotion. The compulsory equivalent of *sadaqa* is *zakat*, which is given, as the *Quran* commands, for the amelioration of the weak elements in society, and ideally, to eliminate poverty and social misery. *Sadaqa* for its part means more than charity. Essentially, it embraces any kind of honest effort, moral, material, intellectual, which one expends to improve the lot of society, especially in the areas of social indignity, poverty, ignorance or disease. In a comprehensive *hadith* in *Muslim*, the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) explained the various facets of *sadaqa*.

We may stress that *sadaqa* in the context in which it is conceived here is one of the sources for integrating and unifying a nascent community. Not only does it indicate the personal goals which the members should individually pursue — acquisition of knowledge, securing one’s livelihood, honest acquisition of wealth so that one can support one’s family — it also places such goals in the broader context of communal responsibility. Thus, the community is unified in mutual assistance and protection from
the social, economic and political hardships foisted on it by the powers that be or simply by the vicissitudes of life.

**Tasawwuf**

In addition to the general education which the Shehu imparted to his students and companions, there was also a more intensive and systematized spiritual training in *tasawwuf*. The Shehu had a group of people — men and women — whom he brought up the ways of *Sufism*. His main aim, no doubt, was to create a core of saints whose inward temperament was harmonized with their outward disposition in such a way that their utterances, behavior and characteristics mirrored what was within. This nucleus of people eventually formed the inner core of the *Jamma*: it was to them that mightier affairs were entrusted.

If the Shehu were asked whether *tasawwuf* were necessary, he would reply in the affirmative in his *Usul al-Wilaya*. He said that in the early days of Islam there was no need for *tasawwuf* because the companions of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) had among them those from whom the rest could draw inspiration and who could serve as models. The proper Islamic attitudes to life were preserved and transferred from one generation to another until the time came when the moral tone of society changed and people sank into moral perplexity. Then a systematized form of spiritual training (*tarbiyya*) was needed, to give individuals guidance toward intellectual and moral elevation in order to overcome the diseases of the soul that prevented spiritual development.

This kind of concentrated spiritual cultivation of individuals, the Shehu maintained, is traceable to the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) himself; who trained his companions in accordance with the disposition of each. He would tell one, ‘Avoid anger’, and another, ‘Let not your tongue ever rest in the mentioning of Allah’s names’.

The Shehu elaborated that the *tasawwuf* entails securing from people a pledge, which is continually reaffirmed, that they devote themselves to moral rectitude and the search for knowledge after the example of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace). In this desire to inculcate in people knowledge (*ilm*) and moral rectitude (*haqiqa*), the *Sufis* have not added anything, other than the pledge, to the general practice in Islam that demands the performance of obligatory duties and avoidance of prohibited things.

The essence of *tasawwuf* as expounded in *Usul al-Wilaya* is five-fold. One should seek to attain the superior moral consciousness (*taqwa*) in which a person behaves as if in the presence of Allah so that whether alone or with others obligatory duties are upheld and forbidden thins avoided. One should follow the *Sunna* in all its ramifications, manifested by one being of good character and a source of happiness and comfort to others. One should keep aloof from people and not harm them or cause unnecessary discomfort to them, while at the same time exercising patience and trust in Allah should they cause one harm. One should accept cheerfully Allah’s overriding will in all matters concerning one’s life, prosperity or poverty. One should perfect the attitude of ‘return’ where even in the most trying circumstances one offers thanks to Allah, appreciates the perfect nature of
His will and, in hope for His mercy and succor, flees from the imperfect state of the world to seek refuge in Him.

The means of reaching those goals are in the following steps: to exercise zeal in seeking the highest of aims in worship; to revere the sanctity of Allah by following His injunctions and avoiding His prohibitions; to strive to perform one’s professional work correctly and skillfully in accordance with the Sunna; to carry out one’s resolutions about religion regardless of opposition; and finally to acknowledge Allah’s favors by being thankful to Him so as to be graced with an increase in such favors.

Shehu listed in this order fifteen ultimate qualities that should be inculcated; basic knowledge in the fundamentals of religion, jurisprudence and tasawwuf; repentance (tauba) from all sins, both spiritual and social; zuhd; keeping aloof from people except for spiritual, educational or other positive purposes; waging war against Shaitan; striving against one’s desires and restraining the self by taqwa; reliance on Allah in matters of provision and livelihood, that is, self-reliance; committing one’s affairs in their entirety to Allah; cheerful acceptance of Allah’s judgment; patience (sabr), especially in times of trial; fear of Allah’s retribution at all times; love of Allah in all conditions and at all times; avoidance of eye contact in work; avoidance of conceit by calling to mind Allah’s unbounded favors; and constant praise and thanks to Allah.

Shehu described the nature of the training as the gradual cultivation of a person’s character through a systematic process supervised by the Sheikh until the whole being is positively changed with the good qualities being totally inculcated into the personality. This process is called riyada. Shehu offered an insight into this method by saying, for instance, that if the student (murid) were ignorant of the Sharia, the starting point in his training would therefore be his instruction in law and jurisprudence; if he were preoccupied with unlawful enrichment or was in a sinful political or social position, he should first be made to rectify that situation; even if he were sound in outward appearance, the diseases of the inside would have to be cured; if he were obsessed with personal appearance he should be assigned to such lowly chores as cooking until that obsession had been removed; if he were obsessed with food, then he should be introduced to constant fasting until that obsession had been curbed; if he were in a hurry for marriage, though unable to shoulder the responsibilities, that desire should be curbed with fasting and other exercises. Thus the training is in accordance with the intellectual and moral level of the individual.

What differentiates this system of training from the informal, personal education is that it is under the guidance of the sheikh. This raises the fundamental question of how one can distinguish the true sheikh from the fake. The Shehu offered the following guidelines in identifying a fake: if he engages under any pretext in disobedience to Allah, if he is hypocritical and pretentious in exhibiting obedience to Allah, if he is greedy for wealth and worldly status and hangs on to rich people, if he sows discord among Muslims and is disrespectful to Muslims in general, then he is not genuine. The true sheikh is known by the soundness of his knowledge derived fundamentally from the Quran and Sunna, by the nobility of his character, by his spiritual soundness, by a pleasing and easy disposition, and finally by his display of pure insight in interpreting the issues clearly.
Finally, one must ask whether one needs a *Sheikh* to attain spiritual well being? Not necessarily, the Shehu stated in *Usul al-Wilaya*. The collective spirit of an Islamic group, *Ikhwan*, as he called them, could take the place of a *Sheikh*. And in any case the ultimate purpose of *tasawwuf* is that the individual should reach a stage in his ‘experience’ of Allah in which he dispenses with guidance of other people. *Tasawwuf* is the process of training in which an individual is brought to spiritual maturity, and then freed to seek his way to his Lord.

For Shehu Usman, *tasawwuf* as an integral part of Islam is derived from two verses of the *Quran*: ‘*But unto him who shall have stood in fear of his Sustainer’s Presence, and held back his inner self from base desires, paradise will truly be the goal.*’
Chapter Four
Building the Community

Having seen the sort of intellectual and spiritual training given to those men and women who clustered around the Shehu, we shall now look at the shaping of the nucleus of the emerging new order of the Shehu’s followers — the *Jamaa*. Here we shall be concentrating on three areas as the basis of identity and solidarity: the molding of the character, the building of the communal spirit and the development of a ‘new culture’. For any movement with the goal to bring about a society superior to the one it abhors and challenges, the test of its sincerity lies in its ability to develop individuals who are the very embodiment of its message and vision. No movement can be taken seriously if the character and behavior of the core members do not set them clearly above others. That was precisely the challenge before the Shehu. His responsibility was not only to preach the truth and to attack evil, but more fundamentally, to produce men and women who believed in that truth and whose general disposition was a clear testimony to their faith in that truth.

**Moral Ideals**

Our concern now is to look at those qualities which the movement regarded as vital for its members — especially for those involved in the dissemination of its message — to acquire and practice in everyday life. There is nothing new in these qualities, for they were derived from the teachings and practices of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), his companions and the early generations of Islam. But they were new to Hausaland, where they had been abandoned: if they were still regarded as ideals at all, they were not translated into action or expressed socially.

The most important work for the understanding of the moral training of Shehu’s lieutenants and students is his *Tariq al-Janna*. But the moral ideals imparted in those men and women were best articulated by Muhammad Bello in *Taat al-Khallaq bi-Makarim al-Akhlaq*. Other sources are Abdullahi’s *Sabil al-Najat* and *Minan al-Minan* and Bello’s *Jala al-Sudur*.

**Knowledge**

The first and perhaps the most important of the qualities the movement considered vital for every person in the forefront of the struggle was knowledge (*ilm*), which meant the comprehension of those aspects necessary for the realization of the objectives of *tajdid*; the understanding of the *Quran*, *Sunna*, *usul*, *fiqh* and *tasawwuf*; the acquisition of the necessary skills in such sciences as medicine, and the full understanding of the means and method of government and administration. And since knowledge was conceived as an instrument of *tajdid*, a considerable stress was laid on its application to the general scheme of life. Knowledge which was not put to use was not considered as relevant in
those circumstances. Thus while Abdullahi in Minan stressed that knowledge was the ‘root of work so much that of no merit is the work we do in ignorance’, he added that acquired knowledge must produce its results in practical life, otherwise it is meaningless. And Bello, in Jala, after quoting the hadith of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace): ‘Woe to the one who does not learn! Woe to the learned who does not put his knowledge to use’; likened such a learned man to a lamp which, while providing light to others, burns itself out.

Cognition

Associated with knowledge was the quality which Bello in Taat called aql. Essentially it means the full cognition of the aims, purposes and significance of commands and prohibitions of Islam. ‘Aql is what leads you to the consciousness of Allah, and saves you from passion’, because the cognition of evil and its ultimate consequences is most likely to help one avoid it. Bello said that the cognizant is he whose words are few but whose works are plenty.

The importance of cognition is twofold. First of all it gives every action not only a social or spiritual meaning, but an intellectual significance as well, in that one does or avoids things in the full appreciation of what they mean to one personally, what they contribute to one’s relationship with Allah, and what their consequences might be on the Day of Judgment. There is a qualitative difference between deeds performed with intellectual awareness and those performed merely in compliance with the letter of the law. There is a world of difference between a ruler who is just in mere obedience to the law and another who is just because he is aware that it is justice that sustains a nation, or that as a leader he will appear before Allah on the Day of Judgment in chains from which he can be released only by his justice. So too is there a difference between one who performs the four rakats before zuhr because the Sunna requires him to do so, and the one who does the same with the understanding that that is the very hour in which his deeds are being presented to Allah. This quality imposes on an individual the duty to probe deeply into the meaning of the injunctions and prohibitions of Islam and to devote much of his time to pondering them.

Secondly, the importance of this quality is that it arms individuals with the necessary instruments for calling people towards religion. Questions as to why Islam has enjoined certain things and prohibited others are bound to be raised by various people, some with a sincere aim to learn and obey and others with mischievous intention. If cogent answers are given, Islam will thus be exalted, otherwise serious damage could result.

Repentance

In Sabil Abdullahi said of the importance of repentance (tauba):

Know that Allah has made tauba as a covering for the nakedness of work, a cleansing of the impurities arising from error, a means by which the sins of the past are wiped out and the deeds of the future are perfected.
We may look at *tauba* from two angles: first, from man’s recognition of his innate imperfection as a human being which impels him constantly to seek to make up those deficiencies by recourse to the act of repentance; second, from the angle of repentance being a social imperative in a period of decline.

In its wider context *tauba* means the progressive abandonment of that path that leads to social and political disintegration and ultimate collapse of a given society and recourse to the ways of regeneration and rectitude. *Tauba* thus embraces both the spiritual and socio-moral behavior of people and societies. In a yet more profound sense, *tauba* incorporates a return to the path that leads to Allah, the object being to escape from perdition on the Day of Judgment, and gain admittance into the Garden. Thus for a people striving to regenerate their society, a recourse to *tauba* as a fundamental aspect of the individual personality means a sustained disengagement from the norms and attitudes of the prevailing order for the simple reason that they are the symptoms of the diseases that have plagued the society causing its decay, and the adoption of the behavior and attitudes that are the ingredients of regeneration. *Tauba* is, therefore, a total change of an individual’s conception of, and attitude to life, as well as an absolute change of course implied in the initiation of a process of transformation by an ideological movement.

**Zuhd**

That new attitude to life is what is called *zuhd*, which was a fundamental quality in the movement. *Zuhd*, as explained by the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), has two elements: abstinence from the world and keeping one’s distance from the possessions of others. To abstain from the world means, among other things, that one should live in it and deal with it as a temporary abode, indeed, as a place of trial, a place of preparation for the home of reward and permanence. Whatever one takes from it whether it be in the form of sustenance, power, knowledge or skill and whatever other pursuits one undertakes in it, should be regarded as a means with which one is being tested by Allah who will give the ultimate account on the Day of Judgment. Nothing in this world, therefore, is an end in itself: everything is given or taken by way of trial; the world itself will cease to be and give way ultimately to the enduring life of the hereafter.

*Zuhd* also involves exerting sufficient effort to secure a livelihood so as to be self-reliant and free from having to cast one’s eyes on what belongs to other people. Bello stressed the need to preserve one’s integrity through self-reliance in *Jala*:

> The Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, ‘Take to trading, for it secures ninetenths of wealth.’ . . . It is related that [Prophet] Isa (upon him be peace) met a certain person and he asked the latter, ‘What do you do for a living?’ He said: ‘I engage in worship.’ Isa (upon him be peace) said: ‘Who, then, takes care of your needs?’ He said, ‘My brother.’ ‘Then,’ Isa (upon him be peace) said, ‘your brother is more of a worshipper than yourself.’

In essence, *zuhd* means that one should ardently seek the home of the hereafter by mobilizing and channeling the materials of this world for the accomplishment of the higher purposes of life, and living one’s life as far as possible, in accordance with the injunctions of Allah. Equally, it means that one should exert such efforts as would make oneself self-reliant and self sufficient, so that one would not have to sell honor or even religion in order to live.
In its ideological context, zuhd means the mobilization of a movement’s moral and material resources for delivering the people from the world: the moral resources provide the strength to strive against a degenerate social order; the material resources, secured through the members’ extensive and serious engagement in various professions and trades, are advantageous in the struggle for economic and technical supremacy.

Sabr

Yet to achieve that moral and economic supremacy, another quality is essential: sabr. In its restrictive sense, sabr means patience, but in its wider sense, it embraces a number of attitudes. Sabr implies endeavoring to live honestly and honorably in situations where those qualities are not tolerated by the prevailing system, and enduring the hardships and disadvantages that one suffers as a result. The purpose of this attitude is that it serves as a shining light in the midst of pervasive darkness. Sabr also means overlooking a good deal of the ill-treatment, harm and wrongs which come from others, and which are an integral part of human life. Allah has said in this regard that He has made some people a means to test others, in order to see which of them will exercise patience.

The most important form of sabr is the endurance of hardships that one suffers in striving for religion. In the encounter with a decadent system, some people might lose their social or economic privileges, some might lose their freedom, some their means of subsistence and some their very lives. In all these trials the most valuable weapon is sabr, for the journey towards religion is long, the steps are hard and the efforts tiring. Sabr means that one should not personalize whatever harm or injury one suffers in the cause of Allah, and should therefore not hold personal enmity towards those who inflict such harm, so that hostility will cease as soon as such an adversary opens his heart to the faith. It also entails overlooking temporary inconveniences, viewing such trials as a moral training, not as a punishment from Allah.

The result of sabr allows one to forgive readily, to have no personal enemy except ideological adversaries to maintain patience in overlooking and overcoming the obstacles placed in the way, until ultimately the goal is reached. Beside knowledge and piety, there is no greater weapon for an individual striving in the cause of Allah than sabr.

Diplomacy, Forgiveness and Hilm

For a movement, the relationship of its vanguards with the generality of the people is vital, not only for its image, but also, more significantly, for its survival. In this regard three other qualities, in addition to sabr, were given prominence in the Shehu’s movement. One of them was what Bello called mudara, or diplomacy. It entails showing kindness, liberality and respect even to those who nurse enmity towards religion with the hope of either winning their hearts to the faith or at least neutralizing their enmity. In short, mudara is another word for restraint and caution. Bello was quick, however, to distinguish this honest effort to safeguard religion from the pure act of opportunism or ambivalence, whereby a person heaps praises and gifts on a powerful enemy in order to gain the latter’s acceptance or favor. ‘That is squandering the religion to safeguard wealth.’ In a wider sense, mudara embraces those steps a movement takes to disarm its
potential enemies by winning their hearts through persuasion, by showing regard for their feelings and sensitivities and offering them help in the period of need.\textsuperscript{xxv}

The second quality is \textit{afw} or spirit of forgiveness. Bello quoted the verse of the \textit{Quran}: ‘Repel evil with what is better then he between whom and you there is enmity becomes as it were your friend and intimate.’\textsuperscript{xxvi} He also quoted the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace): ‘A person does not forgive a wrong done to him but Allah exalts him on account of it: therefore, take to forgiveness so that Allah may exalt you.’

The third quality is what Bello called \textit{hil\dagger}. It means that one develops and perfects a gentle disposition so that people find comfort and confidence in one; even in anger one does not stray from truth, in the same way as in joy one does not err.

\textit{Discipline}

A further extremely important quality which was highly prized by the movement is what Bello in \textit{Taat}: called \textit{adab}, which for want of an appropriate word we may term discipline. ‘The Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace),’ Bello said, ‘has inculcated discipline in his \textit{umma} by asking them to mention the name of Allah before meal and to give praise to Him after meal; and by his forbidding them to drink while standing, or from the buckets, and eating with the left hand or removing impurities with the right hand.’ That is but one of the several aspects of \textit{adab}.

In a more comprehensive sense, \textit{adab} embraces the discipline and control of what Shehu in \textit{Tariq} and Abdullahi in \textit{Sabil} called the five organs — the eye, the ear, the tongue, the heart and the belly. The eye must be controlled, Shehu said, for three main reasons: first, because Allah himself has commanded that Muslims should ‘lower their gaze and guard their modesty’; second, because the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) has warned that immodest gazing at women is ‘one of the poisoned arrows of Shaytan’, and whoever avoids it would be graced with the sweetness of worship; and third, because the eye is created, not to search for the beauty of women but ‘purposely to obtain the vision of Allah — glorious and great is He!’ Abdullahi added that controlling and restraining the eye helps towards the perfection of faith and obedience to Allah.

Similarly, it is part of \textit{adab} that one should keep one’s hearing under control; neither listening to irrelevant and obscene sounds, such as vulgar music, nor listening to the denigration of others. The tongue on its part should be prevented from utterances that are bound to involve the body in physical and moral dangers, or that cause regrets when men stand for judgment before Allah on the ultimate day. Such utterances include, for instance, slandering others which Allah likens to eating the flesh of one’s dead brother.

The control of the heart is, as far as both the Shehu and Abdullahi were concerned, the most important challenge for people. The Shehu called attention to five factors which account for this crucial importance. First, is that in all matters Allah looks into the heart, into people’s intentions, as stressed so often in the \textit{Quran}. Second, is the reinforcement of this point by the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace). Third, is the point that the heart is, as it were, the king of the body and other organs its subjects, so that if it is corrupted the whole body is tainted. Fourth, the heart is the repository of innate human qualities such as intelligence and knowledge. ‘It is most fitting,’ in Shehu’s words, ‘that
this kind of repository should be preserved against being contaminated or despoiled.’ Fifth, the heart is, as it were, the battleground between good and evil, between the angel and the devil. The control of the heart means that it should be preserved from inordinate ambition, haste, envy and pride. Conversely, it should be refined through such attitudes as modest hopes or ambition, deliberation in affairs, entertaining goodwill to people, and humility.

The control of the belly means that it should be preserved from taking what is either expressly unlawful or what is of dubious nature or taking from lawful things in excess of one’s needs. To consume excessively, even of lawful things, has the effect of hardening the heart, causing injury to the other organs of the body, weakening the intellect and the ability to pursue knowledge, reducing one’s desire for worship, increasing the possibility of falling into dubious and prohibited ways and above all, it may warrant one’s being subjected to serious scrutiny on the Day of Judgment.

Besides this comprehensive discipline, adab also embraces, in the words of Bello, acquainting oneself with the knowledge of good works and endeavoring to perform them; and acquainting oneself with the knowledge of evil deeds, and distancing oneself from them. It encompasses the control of the senses, the positive orientation of one’s total disposition, keeping within the legal limits set by Allah, the abandonment of passions and dubious conduct, striving towards good deeds, and keeping the mind engaged in the thought and remembrance of Allah.

Another quality related to adab is what Bello called inaa, or deliberation. It is important for an individual because it enables him to ponder issues before he undertakes them, thus saving himself from rushing into things which he may later regret. Deliberation is essential for a movement that regards its cause as a lifetime undertaking. In this case, inaa would involve the realization that in the task of raising people to moral excellence, there is no need for excessive urgency, since there is no short cut in such matters. ‘Haste,’ the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said in a hadith quoted by Bello ‘is from Shaitan,’ while caution and deliberation is from Allah. Bello, however, made six important exceptions where haste is not only allowed but praiseworthy: the payment of debt, offering food to one’s guest, burying the dead, prayer at the right time, marriage of a girl who has reached maturity and tauba, or repentance.

Other qualities pertaining to adab were set out by Bello as humble disposition, generosity, contentment, truthfulness in speech, strengthening the ties of relationship, honoring trusts, good neighborliness, fulfilling promises and obligations, modesty, keeping one’s appointment, and being merciful to creatures. And he quoted this noble statement of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace):

My Lord has commanded me to do these nine things, and I recommend the same for you. He has commanded me to be sincere in all matters, secret or open; to do justice in all circumstances, in pleasure or anger; to be moderate in all conditions, prosperity or poverty; to forgive those who wrong me; to give to those who deprive me; to seek ties with those who break from me; and that my silence should be for reflection, my utterance should be a reminder; and that my gaze should be to learn.

This emphasis on the qualities we have enumerated implies that the Shehu was determined to create individuals imbued with the qualities of the Prophet (Allah bless
him and grant him peace) himself and to evolve, through them, a community that embodied the qualities and characteristics of the community of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace). Every mujaddid knows that the course of his movement is determined ultimately by the quality of the people who champion it and that it is when such people are nurtured to moral and intellectual maturity through a long and painstaking process of training and education that Allah in His wisdom will entrust them with the great task of shouldering the responsibility of a new umma.

The Communal Spirit

We can now look into the nature of the social relationship that was being nurtured in the nascent community, which was one of the principal means of the development of the new order. It is natural that a special kind of relationship should exist among members of an ideological group which dictates their interpersonal conduct, establishes rights and obligations of each member and holds the community together. This relationship is an expression of a profound mutual commitment to a cause — absent in outside society — and a sense of unity, belief, purpose and destiny.

In the case of the Shehu’s community the question of rights and obligations of the members was not determined by a new code: they had already been spelt out by Islam itself. If society at large did not implement them, it was not because they were not there, but rather because the sense of oneness, the sense of commitment to Islam and the feeling of brotherhood were missing. But a group committed to the regeneration of Muslim society should not only establish these mutual rights and obligations but give them a new significance within their ideological context. They are not mere rules, but the means of maintaining the community ideologically, morally and socially, as well as being the means of self and self-expression.

The rules did not deal only with the duties of one member to another, but also with the duties of each member to his or her parents, children, and spouse. It was, in effect, the training of an individual in social responsibilities. Our main source of information is Abdullahi’s Tibyan li-huquq al-Ikhwan. The short treatise, we venture to suggest, was only a written testimony of what the movement had put into practice right from its inception.

Brotherhood

The first category of duties and responsibilities is the mutual rights of Muslims which flow from the bond of brotherhood that ties each to the other in this world and in the hereafter. The fulfillment of these mutual responsibilities has the effect of cementing that brotherhood and brings together all members into one single umma, separate and distinct from communities of other faiths. The rights cover the whole spectrum of life: a Muslim should greet a fellow Muslim whenever they meet, which according to the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), increases love among Muslims and mutual love is a condition for admittance to paradise; he should accept the invitation of his Muslim brother; a Muslim should visit and tend to his fellow Muslim when he falls sick; he should honor his brother’s words and oaths; he should give him good counsel or advice...
whenever it is sought or whenever he deems it necessary; he should protect his brother’s honor when he is absent; he should attend his funeral; and above all, he should love for his fellow Muslim what he loves for himself and hate for him what he hates for himself.

These mutual duties are increased when the Muslim brother is also a neighbor. He should be helped whenever necessary; a loan should be extended to him whenever he is in financial difficulty, if an outright grant is not possible; he should be congratulated when good comes to him and be consoled when misfortune touches him; he should share one’s meals from time to time and neither he nor his children should be made to feel the difference that might exist in economic levels. His privacy must be respected and guarded.

Mutual rights are increased both in quality and intimacy when the Muslim is a fellow traveler in a common cause. As a friend and confidante his rights are that he should be accorded almost the same status as oneself in one’s own property; at the very least he should be considered as having absolute right to what is in excess of one’s needs, and at best, he should even have preference over oneself following the example of earlier Muslims. One should go to his aid directly even before he makes his requests and his family should be supported after his death. One should refrain from exposing his weaknesses, and should discourage others from doing so; one should not expose his secrets nor encourage others to do so, and one should be silent about his dislikes, except of course when it is one’s duty to prohibit evil. One should make him happy through whatever honorable means are available, such as commending his good qualities and those of his children, ‘without’, Abdullahi added, ‘having to tell lies.’ One should overlook his bad behavior and accept his excuses, whether or not they are true. One should pray for him from time to time, and finally one should avoid putting unnecessary burdens on him, so that the bond of love is preserved and not strained.

**Parent-Child Obligations**

Rights and obligations flowing from child-parent relationships constitute a further relevant category. The child has a duty to obey his parents. Abdullahi quoted a number of traditions without, however, making any specific recommendations. But Bello might have been expressing Abdullahi’s thoughts in *Fawaid Mujmilah fi-ma jaa fil-birr wal Sillah* when he commented briefly on Allah’s injunction:

> It is narrated in the *Sahih* on the authority of Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) that a person came to the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) and asked, ‘Who is most entitled to my best treatment?’ to which the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) replied, ‘Your mother.’ The man asked, Who next?’ He replied, ‘Your mother.’ The man asked, ‘Who next?’ He replied, ‘Your mother.’ He asked further, Who next?’ And the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) replied, ‘Your father.’

The interpretation that affection for one’s mother should exceed that given to the father threefold is supported by what we see in real life, since the mother bears the burden of conception, the burden of childbirth and the burden of nursing.

> ‘Five duties,’ Bello wrote further, ‘devolve on a responsible person in respect of his parents.’
First, that he should not be arrogant towards them . . . ; two, that he should avoid rebuking them even when they confront him with what he dislikes; three, that he should address them in a pleasing, respectful manner . . . as a humble servant addresses his auspicious master; four, that he should show great affection to them — for instance, he should neither raise his voice in their presence nor walk in front of them — and he should do what they want, without of course disobeying the law, showing them love, compassion, reverence, and serving them in an excellent manners; five, that he should always pray for Allah’s mercy on them; if they are Muslims, and offer sadaqa on their behalf after they are dead.

On the rights of the child, Abdullahi emphasized that the child is a trust (amana) in the hands of his parents, endowed with a pure, innocent heart, free from stain. At the same time, a child’s heart is impressionable so that it can be bent towards either good or bad. If, therefore, the child is introduced from the beginning to goodness he will grow in that direction and will be a success in this world and in the hereafter, and everyone who has contributed to that moral success will share in the reward. But if he is introduced to evil, he will grow in that direction and the burden of misguidance will be on those who are responsible for his growth.

The child should be suckled, Abdullahi insisted, by a woman who lives on lawful food and is herself upright for ‘unlawful milk corrupts the child, as there is no blessing in it at all’. The child’s upbringing in the home in the proper manner is a duty which the father owes to the child. Abdullahi suggested that the child should be inculcated with Islamic discipline in matters like eating, dressing and sleeping. Concerning his education, he should first be introduced to the Quran and entrusted to an upright teacher. Throughout his early education the child should be guided towards developing strength of character; he should be taught not to cry loudly when beaten at school, nor to seek the intervention of anyone against his punishment by his teacher but rather to endure the punishment patiently. He should be allowed sports and play after school, to prevent depression, blunting of the intelligence and loss of interest in schooling altogether.

On behavior, Abdullahi suggested that the child should be taught to hate pride and love humility, he should not be allowed to brag about his parents’ wealth, possessions or livelihood. He should be taught to respect those who associate with him, to be soft in speech, to talk little, avoid unnecessary questions; he should be taught that gentlemanly behavior lies in giving, not in taking, and that greed is degrading behavior. He should not spit when in the midst of people, he should be attentive when his superior in age speaks and offer him a place to sit. At the same time he should avoid those who use obscene speech, curse or insult others.

The mother has a duty to teach her child to respect the father and venerate him; to give due regard to teachers and superiors. He should be taught his duties as a Muslim and be acquainted with stories of upright men and women. He should be warned against stealing, cheating and lying and be inspired to perform and love good deeds. If he makes mistakes he should be corrected; if he repeats them he should be rebuked in secret and be made to appreciate the gravity of the offence. He should be rewarded for displaying good qualities.

As the child grows older, he should be made to appreciate that the purpose of eating is to enable one to be strong enough to carry out the injunctions of Allah; that the world is ephemeral and the sensible person takes from this world only those provisions necessary
for the next. The ephemeral nature of the world, and the reality and permanence of the hereafter should be so indoctrinated that it becomes ingrained permanently in the child’s character. When maturity is reached, marriage should be arranged. Abdullahi repeated the Prophet’s (Allah bless him and grant him peace) belief that every child is born with a natural disposition: it is up to the parents to bring up the child in the natural order and not to corrupt the being.

**Family Obligations**

The husband, Abdullahi wrote in *Tibyan*, has approximately eleven obligations towards his wife. The first, which arises from the marriage bond itself, is the payment of *sadaqi* or dowry, including the celebration of the marriage provided that it is done as the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) has specified. The second obligation is that the husband should tolerate annoyance and endure injury from her, and more importantly, ‘he should be forbearing, indulgent and understanding when she gets angry following the example of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace).’ Third, he should stimulate her mind by engaging her in lawful jokes and sports. But, fourth, he should be moderate in this regard so as not to lose her esteem or lose the ability to correct her when she violates the *Sharia*. Fifth, he is obliged to correct her, but he is not entitled in the course of this to subject her integrity to suspicion or to change her attitudes or to neglect or be indifferent to her. The sixth responsibility is to maintain his wife fairly, though moderately. Seventh, he must educate her ‘in the tenets of the people of the *sunna* and in the injunctions and prohibitions of the law’, instruct her in her religious duties and instill the fear of Allah in her when she shows slackness in the practice of religion. Eighth, in case of polygamy he has a duty to maintain justice among his wives. Ninth, whenever she exceeds the limits of tolerable companionship he should discipline her as the *Quran* has shown, ‘*without violence*’. Tenth, he should take pleasure in her children — male or female. Finally, if a divorce does occur, he should continue to please her heart with gifts, guard her secrets and respect her privacy.

As for the rights of the husband, Abdullahi explained, ‘they are many: for instance, she should obey him in all matters so long as they do not amount to sin, and pursue those things that give him happiness. The Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said: “*Any woman who meets her death while her husband is happy with her will go to paradise*”.

Finally, the servant has legal rights, too. He should be fed with the same food the master takes; he should be clothed in the same decent and dignified style as the master; he should not be burdened with work that is beyond his capability. The servant should not be subjected to humiliation or blackmail by the employer.

To reiterate, there is nothing radically new in this code of social behavior, but it gains special significance when placed in an ideological context and when it becomes an integral part of the growth of a social movement. The intention behind the code was, no doubt, to create a fellowship of the people who shared a common cause, to establish good and virtuous neighborliness, to build loving and upright homes and to raise the dignity of even the lowliest of people within the community. On deeper reflection one cannot help
believeing that what Abdullahi advocated in *Tibyan* was the transformation of the community into one big family, sharing one set of values and pursuing one single cause.

**The New Culture**

In addition to fostering the spirit of fellowship and mutual obligation in the *Jamaa*, there was a simultaneous development of a new social attitude, a kind of counter-culture, in the movement. In fact, the cultivation of this social etiquette was an extension of the mutual obligations which served as a means of strengthening the solidarity of the *Jamma*. But this social etiquette was essential in giving the new movement a sense of identity, a superior spiritual and cultural attitude that distinguished the corps from the rest of the community, and helped to draw other fair-minded and cultured people towards them. This is the subject matter of Shehu Usman’s *Kitab al-Adab*.

The acquisition of knowledge was the most fundamental characteristic of Shehu Usman’s *Jamaa*; indeed the emerging ethos and values that were molding the *Jamaa* revolved entirely around knowledge and scholarship. The fact that the eight-page *Kitab al-Adab* which dealt with more than fifteen issues devoted almost half the space to matters relating to knowledge indicates the paramount importance of this subject. Education, like any other sphere of human activity, should be governed by certain values and ethics, more so in a society where knowledge is sought primarily as a means to gain wealth or social prestige. For if knowledge is vulgarized or commercialized, as indeed it was in Hausaland, it will no longer be possible for scholars to raise the moral tone of society, or influence it in any positive manner. The reiteration of the ethics of education was therefore imperative, if only to provide the new movement with a distinct sense of direction and purpose.

Hence the new generation of scholars — the revolutionary vanguards — had to display qualities and attitudes consistent with their role as teachers, guardians of societal values and as the conscience of the *umma*. So, while remaining humble, they had also to behave in a dignified manner which commanded respect from all. And while it was essential that they show respect to people in general, it was not expected of them to accord honor to oppressors if only as a mark of their disapproval of criminal, un-Islamic acts. They were to endeavor to be ‘scholars of the hereafter’ and not scholars of the world. Consequently they had to seek knowledge that was useful in the hereafter, which would facilitate and encourage obedience to Allah. They were not to be materialistic in matters of food, clothing or accommodation. They were to endeavor to acquire sound spiritual knowledge, strive to combat undesirable innovations in society, and gain insight into the causes of corruption and confusion. In addition, they were required to keep their distance from kings: this, we may add, was essential if these scholars were to serve as the focus of social mobilization and as the symbols of people’s aspirations. Indeed, the fundamental distinguishing factor between this generation of *ulama* being raised by the Shehu and the rest of the scholars, was that the former saw itself as a distinct body independent of the existing political order and committed to its overthrow. Such scholars could not fraternize with those they regarded as oppressive rulers, let alone serve them.
The scholars owed responsibility to their students to impart useful sciences to them; to urge them to pursue knowledge purely for the sake of Allah; to urge them to learn about their individual religious obligations before embarking on other subjects; to discourage them from associating with men of evil character. In addition, the scholars had to show kindness to their students, mould their characters and give them good advice at all times. They were not to belittle subjects not taught by them and were to deal with each student in accordance with his intelligence.

The students on their part had to pay due respect to their teachers, give the school the veneration due to a mosque and accord the acquisition of knowledge and the reverence due to prayer. They should not display any materialistic tendencies and should behave in a dignified fashion. They too had to keep their distance from oppressive kings and strive to preserve their dignity: ‘Do not,’ the Shehu advised, ‘place wealth above your honor.’

The ultimate objectives of each of the sciences had to be considered carefully by the students before they made their choice of which disciplines to pursue, remembering, however, that the purpose of knowledge is to improve one’s being and seek nearness to Allah.

In the area of social behavior, several matters were dealt with in Kitab al-Adab. The Shehu advised his men to display bodily composure, social restraint and common sense in their association with people in general. They should limit their disapproval of behavior but be quick to advise on right and wrong, offering advice, however, only when there was hope of acceptance. They should not plunge into other people’s discussions, nor pay attention to rumors and lies peddled in public, listen to obscene language, frequent places of ill-repute or seek anything from people of low morals. They should be thoughtful and humble; and in their search for a livelihood they should put their trust in Allah and be content with what they had lawfully acquired.

While it was essential that members of the Jamaa should develop maturity by, for example, not eating too much and not tiring themselves unduly during the day, they must at the same time improve their inner disposition, thus strengthening the cohesion of the Jamaa and raising their status with Allah. Hence, the mind should be freed from nursing any hatred or enmity towards a fellow Muslim, or being unduly anxious over worldly matters; the mind should rather be occupied with the thought of the hereafter, to counterbalance preoccupation with the world. In addition, qiyam al-layl, standing for prayer in the night, should be observed daily and given its due regard, while the mind should be trained to be conscious of Allah, to fear His punishment, and to be ashamed of its moral failures. Over and above this, constant reading of the Quran — observing the respect due to it, and making an effort to understand and contemplate it — was desirable.

When starting on a journey, members of the Jamaa, and in a wider sense Muslims in general, should free themselves from all moral and economic obligations, so that they could travel with an absolutely free conscience. According to Shehu Usman, they should first amend whatever wrong they had done, pay their debts, return whatever was entrusted to them and arrange the maintenance of those under their care. They should make adequate provisions, but using only lawful means. They should carry items of basic necessity with them. And above all, they should fulfill their spiritual obligations throughout the journey and adhere to the ethics of travel established by the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace).
The *Kitab al-Adab* also touched on the ethics of sleep. The Shehu advised his people to regard sleep not merely as a physical phenomenon but rather as a profound lesson which repeats itself daily. They should see sleep ‘as a form of death’ and their wakening ‘as a form of resurrection’. In other words, the thought of the hereafter should be paramount in their minds when going to bed. It could, in fact, be their last sleep. Therefore, they should go to bed in a state of purity — teeth brushed, and *wudu* performed; they should ask Allah’s forgiveness for all their sins and offer the supplication (*dua*) appropriate for going to bed. The bed should not be excessively soft: either because that would indicate an inclination to luxury which is hateful to Islam, or because a soft bed could diminish one’s ability to wake for *subh* prayer.

When the Shehu touched on the obligations a man owes to his wife, the wife to her husband and mutual obligations between Muslims, there was no fundamental difference between *Kitab al-Adab* and Abdullahi’s *Tibyan*. But the Shehu added several points; he advised Muslims to honor the aged and show compassion to the young; he said they should meet each other with cheerful faces, be considerate and fair in their dealings with one another and fulfill the needs of one another on a co-operative basis; he instructed them to protect each other against injustice and come to the defense of each other; and most significantly, he told them to avoid the company of the rich, associate always with the poor and take adequate care of orphans.

On matters such as the ethics of visits to a sick person, the Shehu advised that the visitor should exhibit compassion, pray for him as the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) has counseled, and ask as few questions as possible. The sick person, for his part, should be patient, keep his complaints to a minimum and put his trust for recovery in Allah, while continuing to take the necessary medication.

It may be said that, on the whole, there was nothing new either in *Tibyan* or *Kitab al-Adab*: what was new was that the social and moral rules were being put into practice by a group dedicated to establishing a better and superior social order. The *Jamaa* was nurtured on well-known principles, values and ethics; when these were actualized in an ideological setting, they assumed added significance, and they in turn made their mark on the emerging social force. As long as the *Jamaa* remained faithful to these values and ethics, there did not exist any force that could weaken them or alter their course towards Islamic revolution.
Chapter Five
Inviting to All that is Good

The most fundamental duty of a mujaddid, or indeed any upright scholar, is to call his people to the way of Allah; or to enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. For reasons of convenience we shall refer to it as amr wa nahi or simply, the call. Our discussion in this chapter centers on three issues: the philosophy of the call as seen by the Shehu himself, the preparation of the callers and the methodology of the call as articulated by Abdullahi.

Philosophy of the Call

Our main reference for the philosophy of amr wa nahi is Shehu Usman’s short treatise entitled al-Amr bil-maruf wa al-nahi an-Munkar, to which we shall refer as al-Amr. The Shehu dealt with three broad matters in this treatise: firstly, he looked at the call as a historical, social necessity, particularly at a time of social decay; secondly, he proposed basic guidelines for discharging this duty; finally, he tackled the issue of armed confrontation as it relates to a movement in the initial phase of the revolutionary process.

The duty to call arises as a moral and social response to the prevailing situation of decline, and it is fundamentally a function of the learned and the upright. The duty is necessitated by the very phenomenon of decline itself for, if we agree that there can be no vacuum in the history of a given society, then we may presume that one social order begins its growth precisely at a stage when the prevailing one that has been overwhelmed by spiritual and social diseases, is drifting into disintegration. The new social order has two qualities to its advantage: a deeper and more profound perception of human society as well as the ability to act justly, by virtue of its moral superiority. These two qualities distinguish it from the disintegrating prevailing order, which is characterized by an ominous blindness to the course of its own history and an addiction to social, moral and political excesses.

If the call is a historical imperative, it goes without saying that the initiation of the process of call is justified by the very existence of social decay there is no need for additional justification. That is to say, a scholar must call people to Islam even if their response is negative or hostile — the nature of people’s response should not be a determining factor in the discharge of this supremely important duty. A scholar should undertake this duty because it is a duty he owes to Allah, a duty for which there is no alternative in a period of social decay; and because a scholar has a responsibility to society, which is to steer it in the course of regeneration when decline has manifested itself. This presupposes a fundamental principle of historical movement: that human society can always steer itself upwards, even at a stage when all hope might have been lost. Hope, not pessimism, should be the scholar’s approach to transformation.

But even if hope, in the scholar’s estimate, is lost, he must nonetheless go on with his duty of calling people to Islam for the simple reason that Allah’s ultimate judgment on his society is sure to come. We have already noted three elements in society: the symbols
of oppression and evil; the victims, that is the mass of people; and, those who strive for justice. The last group have two goals before them: either to effect a total transformation of their society to save it from impending collapse or, alternatively, to secure their own safety from Allah’s ultimate judgment.

The call is necessary, the Shehu wrote, because Allah made it an obligatory duty on Muslims when He said, ‘Let there arise out of you a community of people who invite unto all that is good, and enjoin the doing of what is right, and forbid the doing of what is wrong.’ Equally, it is, according to the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), the only sure way by which a Muslim society can ensure its enhancement and survival as a social and ideological entity, a fact attested to by the history of Islam itself.

Calling people to Islam is, therefore, a means by which a society is ensured of its continued existence, for by subjecting itself persistently to critical self-examination in which everyone is involved in his own way, a society is most likely to bring itself back on course as soon as it strays. To that end almost every individual has a role to play. This role, the Shehu wrote, consists of reminding people of those of Allah’s laws which most people know about, or with which they are supposed to be familiar. But in essence, the greater responsibility for this duty rests squarely on those the Shehu called ahl al-Ijtihad, that is, those who represent the conscience of society and mould its opinion.

A fundamental problem, however, arises here. Any scholar is well aware of two apparently contradictory sets of injunctions in respect of amr wa nahy. The first relates to a condemnation of those who enjoin others to good deeds while they themselves do not perform those deeds. Allah says in this respect: ‘Do you bid other people to be pious, the while you forget your own selves?’ Quoting the Prophet Shuaib (Allah’s peace be upon him), He says, ‘I have no desire to do, out of opposition to you, what I am asking you not to do.’ The Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) indicated that these scholars would suffer punishment on the Day of Judgment.

On the other hand the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) also commanded, Ibn al-Hajj is quoted as saying in al-Amr, those who were present to communicate what he had said to those who were absent. The absentees might take it to heart more than those who had heard it directly; and he also said that whoever concealed his knowledge in a period of social and moral decline was like one who contended with what Allah had revealed. Ibn al-Hajj then added: ‘Allah has indeed taken a pledge from the learned men that they would teach (His message to others) and a pledge from the ignorant that they would learn.’ In other words, while there is a definite condemnation of those who preach without doing exactly what they preach, there is also a definite condemnation of those who maintain silence in the face of social degeneration when the actual need is to speak out.

How are these two contradictory positions to be reconciled? The Shehu, obviously conscious of his society, said boldly:

The duty to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil is not confined only to the pious who does not perpetrate the same acts which he forbids; the duty devolves also on one who perpetrates acts similar to what he forbids, because his refraining from sinful acts and his prohibiting of evil are two distinct obligations, so it is not proper for one who defaults in respect of the one to abandon the other.
He decided that to perpetrate acts which one asks others not to do is indeed a sin; but to be silent in the face of corruption, decay and prevalent ignorance is a greater sin. And since no one, other than a prophet, is morally perfect, one is bound to sin by abandoning one obligation or the other. It is safer therefore for one to take one moral risk in the face of necessity, which is to speak and teach in an atmosphere of prevalent corruption, than to take the greater risk of remaining silent with the untenable excuse that one is likely to succumb to the same sins against which one rails. In other words, the guiding principle in the face of that moral dilemma is: the perpetration of one evil is of lesser consequence than the perpetration of two evils.

Shehu’s intention, most likely, was to disarm the scholars of his time who maintained an embarrassing silence in a climate of political oppression, moral excesses and prevalent ignorance on the pretext that it was not safe for one to speak if one was likely to commit the same sins oneself. In addition, he called the attention of these scholars to the fundamental historical fact that what had caused the downfall of earlier generations was their persistent inclination to reprehensible and evil customs which they had inherited from their ancestors. By maintaining silence the scholars were, by implication, contributing to the systematic drift of society towards its destruction.

If a scholar is to wait until he is morally perfect before he embarks on his duty to call he may ultimately be overtaken by the forces of decay, while his hopes for perfection will elude him. It is impossible for a person living in a corrupt society not to be affected in some way, so the fact that even the most honorable elements in society exhibit certain moral failings should not be an excuse to refuse to undertake the urgent task of social transformation, but as a natural consequence of general decline. In any case, it is impossible for an individual to reach a very high level of piety on his own when the society is corrupt and depraved. Amr wa nahy in this situation will have the effect of raising both the individual and society to a higher level of social discipline and consciousness of Allah.

If amr wa nahy is an absolute necessity, what then are the rules governing its implementation? The injunction of Allah in this respect is this: ‘Make due allowance for man nature and enjoin the doing of what is right and leave alone those who choose to remain ignorant.’ xxxiii The key phrase here is ‘make due allowance for man’s nature’. It means that in the effort to transform society, elemental human weakness must not be overlooked, for such a course of action would not only defeat the very purpose of tajdid, but would also have the effect of crushing human nature itself. Since no society declines overnight, the process of regeneration is as slow as, if not slower than the process of decay itself.

We have already noted that the cure for degeneration is the moral and intellectual elevation of society. To raise a person to full moral consciousness involves recognition of his moral weakness from the start. Similarly to make an ignorant person learned, the fact of his ignorance should be accepted from the beginning. The effort to develop him morally and intellectually would then be easier and more feasible. Therefore the task should be undertaken on the premise that people are to be lifted from moral and intellectual weakness to a higher level of consciousness and, as in physical growth, the process involves considerable time and strain, in fact, it is a permanent and unending process. To be impatient with the failings of people is to miss the essence of tajdid.
altogether. To insist that people’s attitudes should conform to the highest standards laid down by Islam in a faultless fashion, is not only to demand the impossible, but to close one’s eyes to the very nature of human society.

The object of *tajdid* is not to create a perfect society where everybody does the right thing at the right time; if that were so, then much of the law revealed by Allah, in which there are prohibitions and punishments, would be irrelevant. *Tajdid* is essentially an effort to renew society’s faith in the *Sharia*, whereby it acknowledges Islam’s social morality — its judgment about right and wrong — and subjects itself wholly to the rule of *Sharia*. It rewards or punishes in accordance with the *Sharia* and strives to preserve its character as a society submissive to the sublime law. What gives rise to *amr wa nahy* is not simply that individuals commit sins, or that society makes errors of omission or commission, or of judgment from time to time. Rather the call is necessitated by a collective committal of the act of apostasy whereby a society subscribes substantially to a system of law other than the *Sharia*, to a judgment in the sphere of social morality other than that of the Most Exalted, and to a set of values other than those of Islam. Perfection is never ascribed in its absolute sense to human beings: and if no individual can be perfect, how can we expect a human society to be perfect? Man, as Allah himself has testified, has been created weak, and that inherent weakness remains with him forever; that weakness remains a fundamental characteristic of his society as well. *Tajdid* aims at increasing man’s positive qualities in such a way that the effects of his frailty are reduced to a minimum, to ingrain the desire for excellence into the psychology of his society and to raise his moral conscience to a level where he recognizes Allah alone as his Lord, his judge and his ultimate goal.

Thus, the very first rule of *amr wa nahy* is that people should not be subjected to unbearable moral pressures. It should be recognized that the success of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) in mobilizing and unifying people, was attributable partly to his dealing gently with them, ‘for’, Allah reminded him, ‘if you had been harsh and hard of heart, they would indeed have broken away from you.’

Shehu Usman pointed out that in an effort to call people to Islam, the scholar should never condemn them for doing acts which are not expressly prohibited by the *Quran* and *Sunna*, or by a consensus of the jurists. Similarly he should not fault the people for failing to do acts which are not expressly made obligatory by the *Quran* and *Sunna*, or by the consensus of jurists. He should not be quick to condemn the mass of Muslims thus injuring their beliefs; nor bring forward a *fatwa* invalidating their worship and transactions merely on the strength of the ruling of some jurists without any explicit ruling of the *Quran* or *Sunna* to that effect, or by an agreement of the jurists. This is because it is as bad, or even worse, to repudiate what legally should not be repudiated, as it is to perpetrate acts one has prohibited. In other words, many of the moral failings of the people should be overlooked and *amr wa nahy* should be limited to those matters on which there are express rulings in the *Quran* and *Sunna*, or which the jurists have agreed to be obligatory or prohibited.

A second rule concerns a very important problem in the duty of *amr wa nahy*: what should one do if, despite one’s efforts to transform people, one meets with little or no success? Shehu’s answer was that one should continue with one’s efforts: ‘The refusal of the people to do what he enjoins them to do or to abandon what he prohibits them from
doing does not constitute a justification (for the scholar) to abandon the *amr* and the *nahy*. This is because, he said further, his duty is basically to remind the people of this obligation: if they heed, the aim is achieved, if not he is nevertheless freed from blame before Allah.

Finally, we proceed to consider the nature of the call. Allah says in this regard:

> Call people unto the path of your Sustainer with wisdom and goodly exhortation. and argue with them in the most kindly manner, for, behold, your Sustainer knows best as to who strays from His path, and best knows He as to who are right-guided. Hence, if you have to respond to an attack, respond only to the extent of the attack leveled against you; but to bear yourselves with patience is indeed far better for those who are patient in adversity.

Restraint, then, is the very essence of this duty. Rushing to achieve success through armed confrontation when one is in a position of weakness is ruled out as an Islamic strategy. The call is, therefore, fundamentally a peaceful process, and this peaceful stage should be prolonged for as long as possible. For the duty of the scholar is no more than to lay the truth bare and make it available to the people: whoever wishes may accept it, and whoever wishes may reject it. It is not for him to seek to impose the truth on an unwilling people; it is not possible; it is not desirable. And as long as there exists the possibility, however little, of a peaceful dissemination of the truth, the scholar is obliged to utilize it. Even if that possibility is blocked, the next course of action is for the scholar to move to another area where he can continue his peaceful efforts.

Recourse to armed confrontation is allowed only when all the possibilities for a peaceful education of the people have been exhausted, and more appropriately, when one has mustered sufficient strength to confront the prevailing order. The point that is being stressed here is that the ultimate conflict between truth and falsehood is not a confrontation between individuals: it is rather a conflict between two orders, the revolutionary, ideological order on the one hand and the decadent, prevailing order on the other. It is necessary therefore that the challenging order should first establish roots in the hearts of the people and in the social fabric of society before it ventures into a confrontation; otherwise, it will be swept away.

The Shehu attributed hasty recourse to armed confrontation to delusions (*ghurur*); worldly intrigues (*dasa is dunyawiya*); satanic insinuations (*nuzgaht al-shaitaniya*) and ambition and love of power (*hubb al-ri asa*). The Shehu gave three examples of people ‘overwhelmed by Satanic insinuations’, one of whom was the well-known Abdul Mahalli who rose in revolt against the Moroccan establishment in about 1610 A.D. and succeeded in expelling Zaidan, one of its rulers, from Marrakush. Abdul Mahalli claimed to be a *mahdi*, and the rule he established lasted for merely two years before it was terminated. He was killed, his head hung in the open market, and his power annihilated. Zaidan returned to power. Abdul Mahalli’s exploits were seen by Muslims largely as Allah’s vengeance on Morocco, and not as a *tajdid*, his Islamic pretensions notwithstanding.

Several others met with similar fate. As far as the Shehu was concerned, the apparent piety of such people was irrelevant as long as they were not ready to follow the correct procedure in calling to the way of Allah. It is significant that he likened the popular appeal they commanded to the sway which Pharaoh held over his people, for he used the same term with which Allah described Pharaoh’s apparent popularity: ‘He made fools of
his people and they obeyed him. To incite people to armed confrontation without first establishing a concrete power-base, could be construed by the ‘revolutionaries’ as the right path: but in reality such exploits are wrong because they lead invariably to unnecessary disorder, corruption and death.

The fact remains that there is no alternative to exhortation and persuasion in calling the people to the way of Allah. His command was that people should be called with wisdom (hikma) and good exhortation. That requires a depth of understanding of the issues and a profound knowledge of Islam. The prophets had access to wisdom and knowledge because, in addition to the revelations they received and their intimate association with the angels, Allah gave them insight into the workings of the universe. The scholar has no such advantages. He has to acquire his knowledge himself which involves great effort over a considerable length of time. He also has to lead others through the same experience. He has to develop a personality which commands respect, awe and confidence. To sidetrack these essential steps and act like Pharaoh means that one is seeking something different from a genuine transformation of society. If tajdid were merely a matter of political revolutions or change of leadership, then there are quicker ways than the recourse to the Quran and Sunna. But tajdid is the transformation of the heart, of human disposition and of the destiny of man itself which clearly transcends the attainment of political power. To believe that a quick political ascendency is all that Islam is about is to cast a vulgar look at a sublime system; what Islam wants is an enduring transformation, which cannot be realized by a social hurricane which brings destruction and consumes even what it claims to rectify.

Tajdid, the Shehu seemed to imply, rests with the scholar who is patient enough to establish the roots of faith, Islam and Ihsan firmly in society and who, in addition, has a well-grounded and profound knowledge of the sciences of religion. His cause, in the final analysis, is to establish the good and rule by it, to aid the truth and the people of truth and to demolish the edifice of falsehood. Once Muslims have found such a person they are obliged to support him and fight with him to overthrow an un-Islamic and tyrannical order.

The Callers

If the call is the most important way to transform society then it is vital to raise people of the right caliber to assist in the accomplishment of that task. The process of social transformation may fail if the wrong people disseminate its message, or indeed, if the message itself is misrepresented or distorted by those who transmit it. The Shehu tackled this important issue in his Iidad al-dai ila din Allah and also to a large extent in his Umdat al-Ulama.

In Iidad the Shehu reiterated the importance of amr, and stated further that this duty devolves almost entirely on scholars. By implication, therefore, anyone who is to be involved in this task must first be trained properly. But perhaps due to the dearth of scholars, once a person had received a minimum education for calling people to Islam, he became a scholar, at least for the purpose of the Jamaa. Because he had got ‘a share of knowledge’ as the Shehu stated, it was incumbent on him not to keep silent in these times. He was then sent out to teach, preach and call to Islam.
What was the minimum education needed for a person to qualify as a caller or dai? We can only answer by inference, relying on the contents of *Umdat al-Ulama* and *Idad*. The former was written to provide the callers with the relevant verses of the *Quran* and *hadiths* on subjects they were to teach people. In broad terms, these subjects were: firstly, *Usul al-din*, which embraces the unity of Allah, His attributes, the belief in the messengers and their attributes, belief in angels, books, *qadr* and the Day of Judgment, and several matters pertaining to it; secondly, *Fiqh*, which embraces the other four pillars of Islam, *salat*, *zakat*, *saum* and *hajj* and then fundamental matters of life, such as marriage, business transactions and related issues; thirdly, *Ihsan*, which embraces all matters relating to the development of character and the spiritual purification of oneself.

By providing the relevant texts of the *Quran* and *hadith*, the Shehu might have had three aims in mind: to establish the supremacy of the *Quran* and *Sunna* in all these matters, such that, especially in *tasawwuf*, one could develop spiritually without belonging to an order, and in *fiqh*, one could practice all that is required without necessarily belonging to a particular school; secondly, to unify the methods and themes of preaching in his movement. A third aim might have been to provide those who were not yet fully grounded in knowledge with a handy reference for their work.

The callers were told in *Idad* that in *Usul al-din* they should teach the people about Allah, about the messengers, the angels, and the Day of Judgment. In *Fiqh*, they had to teach the people about purification, *wudu*, *tayammum*, *salat*, and so on, as well as the laws pertaining to marriage and business dealings in general. In each of these the Islamic rules should be categorized for them as to whether they were obligatory, forbidden or recommended. In *Ihsan* or *tasawwuf* the people should be taught first what aspects of human behavior are offensive to Islam, and therefore destructive to a person, such as self-glorification or self-justification, envy, unjustifiable anger, miserliness or nursing suspicion or rancor against a fellow Muslim. Then they were to be taught what forms of behavior Islam had prescribed for Muslims, such as *zuhd* or abstinence, repentance, trust in Allah, entrusting affairs to Him, sincerity in worship.

Apart from these, the people should be made to appreciate the gravity of Allah’s punishment, as well as the degree of His mercy. For example, verses in the *Quran* which state that man has not been created in vain and that he will eventually be brought to judgment were to be quoted and explained. Similarly, verses which highlight Allah’s overflowing mercy, such as those which urge people not to despair of His mercy because ‘Allah forgives all sins’ (except associating partners with Him) and those which state that He has made mercy incumbent on Himself, could be explained to the people.

The Shehu then touched briefly in *Idad* on the ethics of public education, which is an important element in calling people to Islam. He urged his men to be lenient to people when they call them to Islam. Leniency here possibly means exercising patience with the people because of their roughness, or their low moral standards, or their ignorance. This, the Shehu indicated, was the practice of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), which made it possible for him to hold people of divergent backgrounds and different moral levels together. Had he been harsh to them, they would have abandoned him completely. Further, people should not be addressed in person and criticisms should be in general terms and not directed at specific individuals or groups. While the callers had to be earnest and grave in their approach and countenance, they were not to create an
atmosphere of despair and apprehension in the minds of their audience: a fine blend of ‘fear and hope’ was necessary to elicit a positive response. Lecture sessions must not be too long for the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) had advised that people were not to be overburdened or bored with too much preaching.

It may be asked why there was nothing ‘political’ in the matters which were addressed to the people. One can deduce several reasons for this. The Shehu might have felt that there was no need to antagonize the rulers at a stage when the Jamaa had not grown strong, in which case the whole exercise could be brought to a premature end. Or he might have believed that the essence of calling people was to effect their spiritual and moral transformation, and once this was achieved, their attitude to life, which incorporates politics, would change automatically, so there was no need to jump to a stage which would be reached if the process of mass education was sustained. Alternatively, the Shehu might have felt that political education fell within the sphere of mudara and was best dealt with more subtly. He might have felt that to generate an uncontrollable, emotive political agitation would not ultimately be in the interests of Islam: it could be hijacked by forces of opportunism; it could be deliberately misrepresented and crushed before it could take root.

Or quite simply, the Shehu might have felt that his fundamental role was to improve the moral and spiritual quality of the people, and raise their intellectual standard. If this effort led to political awareness, that was well and good, if not, his duty to call people to believe in Allah, obey His laws and be conscious of the Day of Judgment was nevertheless fulfilled. Or he might have felt that he needed profound characters, not mere agitators, in his Jamaa, consequently people should attach themselves first to Allah before fighting for His cause.

**The Methodology of the Call**

Shehu Usman’s *Idad* provided a faint hint to the methodology of calling people to Islam. Most probably, at the time it was written the Jamaa had already been well established and the duty of *amr wa nahi* had advanced significantly. Similarly, his *al-Amr*, which we discussed at the beginning of this chapter might have been written at the time when the Jamaa felt that it was strong enough to enter into armed confrontation with the powers-that-be in Hausaland, and the Shehu, who held a different opinion, felt the need to articulate the philosophy of the call, in order to impress on the minds of his people that the journey had in fact just begun. He ruled out armed confrontation and urged the intensification of the ideological, legal and moral education of the people.

Mass education was indeed the corner-stone of Shehu’s method of mass mobilization. His activities at this stage in the revolutionary process were aimed first at changing people’s attitude towards Allah, through the intensification of the ideological orientation in which Allah is conceived as the fundamental, ultimate theme in life, whose worship should be the sole object of one’s life. All avenues not leading to Allah, all roads towards false worship and false principles of life were systematically closed. The activities also aimed at turning people back to the *Sharia*; to its prescription for worship, for social life and economic endeavor in general; and at directing people’s social and moral behavior
which would effect their own, and hence society’s, spiritual regeneration. For once society is reformed, it stirs into action, ready to transform itself socially and politically.

In this task the demand for more scholars rose constantly. The Shehu and his men could not cope with the surging membership of the Jamaa, nor with the necessity to have in every mosque and in every village a scholar to call the people to Islam, as the Shehu himself had demanded. But many scholars were reluctant to join the Jamaa — though quite a few of them shared its aspirations for social transformation. To bring those scholars into the mainstream of the revolutionary process became at a certain stage a fundamental necessity. Tajdid is first and foremost an intellectual and moral process, and scholars are the repository as well as the symbols of intellect and morality — the twin prerequisites of genuine revolution.

It was here that the Shehu’s illustrious brother, Abdullahi stepped in. He wrote his well-known Risalat al-Nasaih which he addressed to the scholars urging them specifically to ‘rise up and call to Religion’ and join the revolutionary process. In particular, Abdullahi bad in mind people like his teacher, Mustafa al-Hajj. From what Abdullahi says of him in Tazyin, he was indeed a formidable scholar: ‘the mirror of the tribe, the refuge of the poor . . . the wise, the protector, pillar of knowledge, reviver of the religion among them, of great patience . . . magnanimous, the mansion of the guests, gentle, friend alike to the humble and the great.’ To succeed in bringing scholars like this into the Jamaa would indeed be a turning point in the struggle for Islam in Hausaland.

The Risalat al-Nasaih is important to us in more than one respect. It is clear evidence that others beside the Shehu had a role in the mobilization of the people to the cause of Islam. It opens for us a window into the broad issues to which the Shehu, and his men addressed themselves in their social mobilization. It also enables us to understand the growing confidence in the movement itself as to its ultimate victory. Finally, it presents us with a clear insight into the methodology of mass mobilization, or dawa or amr wa nahy, depending on how one chooses to call it. This last point is our concern here for the Risala is a document of great merit and significance.

Abdullahi gave the reason for writing the Risala in these words:

Now when I saw most of the country, the common people and the nobles coming to Shaikh Uthman, profiting by his admonitions and becoming influenced by his good manners, and entering into his community in throngs but did not see that in the majority of our tribe though they were most fitted to it, I composed a qasida . . . which I called Risalat al-Nasaih, and I sent it to them in order that they might ponder upon what was in it, and hasten to help the Religion of God Most High.

It is clear therefore that Abdullahi wrote the Risala at a period when the movement had gained considerable influence and some strength. More significantly, its content reveals a practical experience acquired from long years of preaching and mass mobilization. A number of the points raised in it are indications of the practical problems that faced the movement in its tedious efforts to reach the people, the obstacles it faced, the bones of contention between it as an emerging social order and the entrenched system in Hausaland. The methodology adopted by the movement and its faith in the rightness of its cause are also revealed.
The Islamic call, or *dawa*, Abdullahi made clear, was the duty of every conscious member of society, man or woman, and it was to be directed towards society as a whole: both the ‘common people’ and ‘the great lords’ were to be invited to the reform of the faith, to *Islam*, to *Ihsan*. But he recognized too that opposition from vested interests was inevitable: there was bound to be opposition from the *ulama al-su*, the political leaders and even the common people. Abdullahi therefore asked the learned men and women of his tribe who constituted, intellectually speaking, the cream of society, to adopt the correct attitude of the true worker in the cause of Allah. They should not fear he said, ‘the words of one who hates, whom fools imitate . . . nor the mockery of the ignorant man who has gone astray; . . . nor the backbiting of a slanderer; nor the rancor of one who bears a grudge who is helped by one who relies on (evil) customs.’ They should not be discouraged if they were accused of lying or rejected by the king. For as long as they were working for the cause of Allah they should be sure of ultimate victory, because:

None can destroy what the band of Allah has built,

None can overthrow the order of Allah if it comes.

Next Abdullahi acquainted them with the fundamental social issues on which to concentrate in the work of *amr wa nahy*. The first, of course, was the principal source of the decline in Hausaland: clinging to customs that had degenerated into instruments of oppression and social tyranny, and were a justification for moral excesses. Often we come across the fundamental principle that in the course of transformation, a society has to be persuaded to approach its customs and traditions with a critical and selective mind; to discard those aspects of its culture that constitute an impediment to moral consciousness or social growth and to return to justice and fairness. Islam has been emphatic that any aspect of culture that is inconsistent with the Sacred Law has no legitimacy and should not be considered binding on society, for it is bound to offend against justice and fundamental moral values. In addition, a given society is responsible for itself alone, and not to or for any other society. It is absurd therefore for it to seek to justify its behavior by that of its predecessor, or to sanctify unjust and retrogressive customs merely because they are old or inherited. The test of the legitimacy of a custom is whether or not it is just and fair; in other words, whether it is consistent with the *Sharia* or not.

Indeed Islam does not accept that people should have customs or traditions other than religious ones; for if Allah’s way is a comprehensive way of life, what room is there for custom and tradition? In fact what is called custom is either a vestige from the days of ignorance, or an aspect of religion itself which over the years has become distorted as a result of the weakening of social responsibility in society. The relics of an ignorant past must be abandoned and forgotten, and all aspects of Islam which have been corrupted must be rectified and restored to pristine purity. This is what the call is all about. This was the task which Abdullahi had in mind when he told the scholars to explain to the people that ‘the customs are vain’. The society, he said, should return to the *sunna*, which is the natural human disposition.

The scholars, Abdullahi said, should also address themselves to the youth, and let them know that ‘the market for the sports of the youth has become unprofitable’ and that ‘it is praises everywhere for the market of righteousness’. If we are seeking evidence that the
Shehu’s movement did concern itself with the crucial issue of youth mobilization and training, this is one. We do not need to labor ourselves to find out whether the youth at that time were largely immoral, for the character of the youth is mirrored in society. Considerable progress had been achieved in raising the youth in knowledge and Islamic practices. The talaba might have grown in number considerably.

Then, said Abdullahi, attention should be paid to what he called ahl al-dunya and those who were the symbols of worldly power — the pillars of secularism and materialism. This was clearly a reference to the leaders and other powerful men of influence, notably the local merchants who might not have inclined themselves to the cause. Here we are brought face to face with an emerging pattern in the movement: the steady division of people into two ideological camps — the emerging order dedicated to the establishment of the Islamic order as opposed to the decadent, crumbling old order which held on to corrupt customs and traditions. The reference to ahl al-dunya in contradistinction to the men of religion, and also to the Munkir, the denier of the religion, as opposed to the Nasir, the helper of the religion, all point to that pattern, which Abdullahi could be referring to when he says:

And the worldly people, the shadow of their influence has shrunk this day,
And lofty trees cast their shade over our Sunna.
The measure of one who denies the religion has become light,
And one who makes it manifest, his measure preponderates this day.
And one who helps it has become high among the people,
And one who denies it has become humble to the nobles and the common people.

The perennial but crucial problem of women’s education was also a central issue in the Risala. In line with the uncompromising stand of the movement that women must be educated and lifted from ignorance to the light of Islam, Abdullahi asked the scholars to give women good education and a sound moral and social consciousness. Women, he said, should be taught how to dress when going out: ‘Clothing should be seen,’ in his own words, ‘except on the face and hands.’ They also should be educated in ihsan as well as on how they should maintain their homes. They also had to be told what customs and attitudes were bad and how they should rid themselves of ‘bad traits’, and ‘how to render themselves pleasing, purely, in a praiseworthy fashion’. All this, however, should be seen within the general framework of the movement’s methodology of public education. As far as it was concerned, there was no difference between the minimum education which Islam stipulates for both men and women, except that, in fact, women require additional education by virtue of their special responsibility in the raising of the family: the content of education in faith, law and business transactions remains fundamentally the same for both men and women.

As for public education itself, Abdullahi obviously reflected the activities of the movement:

Make them understand what belief makes incumbent on man
In the way of religion; of those things which the senses make easy —
Washing and ablution and prayer; alms
And fasting; buying and selling; then how one should marry;
And what (in law) is incumbent; what exemplary; what approved;
And what is forbidden; and all is in the books, plain to see.

Abdullahi then turned his attention to two important questions: what should be the personal conduct of the scholar engaged in this task? And what should be his reaction if he got an unfavorable response from the people? On the first question, Abdullahi presented what one may consider as a code of revolutionary conduct. His theme, characteristically, was: ‘Begin with yourself.’ To be convincing, the preacher must himself be an embodiment of what he preaches. Indeed, much of the success of the Shehu in his work of *dawa* had to do with his personal qualities which made people trust and have faith in him; his noble and fine presence commanded respect. We have said that the man of change wishes to recreate likeminded people so that eventually there will be enough people to bring about the desired change in society.

What the scholar should do, Abdullahi suggested, is to begin his struggle from within: the external enemies — the great lords, the ignorant and the denier of religion — are not as potent as the enemy within, and to the extent that the heart harbors that enemy, the heart must be transformed first. In other words, the essence of transformation is the change in the moral attitude, in the inner being of man, once this change has been achieved, the change in general behavior is but a matter of time. It is the same for society: once its inner soul inclines to noble virtues the outward manifestation of superior attitudes will follow naturally. Abdullahi expressed the point pertinently:

  Begin with yourself, turning away; from the abyss of lust.
  It is in the pastures of lust that you tend flocks; and verily you set a bad example!
  The most harmful of enemies is one who dwells in your house
  Obedient to Satan, and loathing Religion.

But how should the enemy within be fought? There are three means to do it. The first is to move closer to Allah, to seek refuge in Him, through the *nawafil* which we have already discussed. The second is what Abdullahi called ‘scanty food’, that is the training of the body to adapt to austere measures. Allah entrusts civilization to ‘empty-bellied people’ — people whose personal discipline gives them a will and a determination that are decidedly superior to the indiscipline and delinquency of the prevailing order. Men of change, certainly, cannot afford to live the same life-style as those whom they oppose. ‘Scanty food,’ said Abdullahi, ‘is the medicine which scatters diseases of the soul.’

The third means involves the acquisition of moral and social discipline. In Abdullahi’s words:

  Guard the two small things and the two hollow things,
  And watch over the spies always, that the limbs may obey you.

In other words the scholar must bring his vital, socially inclined organs under his control, so that he can influence society, so that he can be safe from society, and so that society, in turn, can be safe from him. The scholar should control his tongue from idle speech, from blasphemous utterances, from condemning people’s beliefs and actions without definite authority, from slander and abuse. He should also control his heart from
preoccupation with false hopes, base desires, greed, incitement to sin, rebellion, rancor and countless other evil intentions. The tongue and the heart constitute the ‘two small things’ mentioned by Abdullahi.

Similarly, the ‘two hollow things’ — the mouth and the private part — should be firmly controlled: the mouth from taking unlawful foods gained by embezzlement, perfidy, bribery, swindling, theft, and all other forms of unjust enrichment; and the private part from excesses, from violating the honor and sanctity of women, and from unjust violation of others’ chastity. The ‘spies’ of course are the eyes and ears: the eyes should not violate the cherished privacy of others, or watch things disapproved by the sacred law, or be unduly inquisitive; the ears should not hear what does not concern their owner, nor eavesdrop the conversation and intimacy of others. What Abdullahi was calling for was a profoundly disciplined personality with dignity, respect and sanctity.

Above all, the scholar must, in his private and public life, in mobilizing the public, follow the laws laid down in the Quran and Sunna, take the practical examples laid down by the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) himself, as well as the example of his Companions (Allah be pleased with them), and those who followed them. This, Abdullahi said, ‘is the antidote of the righteous man’.

As to the question of what the scholar who finds no favorable response from the people should do, Abdullahi’s answer was that firstly the scholar is under an Islamic obligation to enjoin the good and prohibit evil; secondly, he is also under an obligation to undertake the task of conveying the Islamic message. The obligation, as such, stands in its own and is not subject, therefore, to the reactions of the people to it, be it favorable or otherwise. Significantly, Abdullahi pointed out that people’s acceptance of it depends entirely on the will of Allah: if it is His desire that they should accept, accept they must; if not, never. In the words of Abdullahi:

The fertile parts of the earth put forth herbage wondrously
By the permission of its Lord, if abundant rain pours down.
But even if there pours down continuous rain, it will never grow,
Not even the meanest weed in barren ground (without His permission).
The lack of their acceptance will not prevent religious instruction.
The one who makes them enter is the Lord; you are the one who opens.
And verily, if you have informed them, their excuse is useless.
The Lord gives them to drink, you only mix the draught.

Abdullahi suggested that the draught comprise a number of books mainly on fiqh, tawhid and tasawwuf, in line with the movement’s idea of calling the people to Iman, Islam and Ihsan.

And books which pay heed to the sunna like Madkhal
And those derived from it, in these there is sound advice.

And Kiniya and Ihya al-sunna
Lubab tariq al salihin (those are) advantageous;
Those by al-Ghazali and also those by al-Zarruq;
Those of Ibn al-Ata; by these evil things are cured.
Those from Bijai; or those that are similar to them:
One who is enamored of the world, leading a wicked life
Will have nothing to do with them.

Abdullahi also warned the ulama that they had an obligation to support the Shehu’s call; if not they would be the losers while the Shehu would succeed and benefit other people. ‘The misfortunes of a people are the advantage of other people.’ In any case the Shehu’s cause was bound to prevail, regardless of his tribe’s rejection; so the choice was not for the Shehu but for them.

And if relationship alone were of profit in religion
Then Abu Talib, the uncle of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), would not have perished nor grieved.
It does not harm the sun that blind men deny its light.
It does not harm the pool, that the camels which refuse to drink, decline it.
Whosoever gives thanks, that shall profit him
And whosoever is ungrateful for blessings and follows lusts
In this world, to say nothing of the next, he shall perish!

The Risala, according to Abdullahi, was received with great enthusiasm by his people. We should not assume that the letter was sent to ignorant men: the Shehu’s tribe contained a substantial number of the most cultured men in Hausaland, and whose joining of the mainstream of the movement constituted a landmark in its growth. In the words of Abdullahi:

When this poem reached the ulama of our tribe they received it well and began to make religion manifest among our tribe, such as al-Mustafa b. al Hajj and Muhammad Saad and Abu Bakr b. Abdullah . . . and others. And the strongest of them in setting up religion and in toiling for it was al-Mustafa because he was the first to receive this message, and he read it to the community, and ordered them to obedience. Then he tucked up his sleeves, and composed quintains on the message, mixing them like water with wine, emphasizing victory for what was in (the message) and acceptance of it. Then our brother Zayd al-Athari explained it; Allah have mercy upon them all.
Chapter Six
Reviving the Sunna

The goal of *tajdid*, as we have stressed, is to effect an all-embracing transformation of society. The means includes calling people to religion, commanding the good and prohibiting evil, and working relentlessly to demolish the edifice of innovation: it also includes establishing, once again, the supremacy of the *sunna*. The *mujaddid*'s ultimate ambition is to establish a society that approximates as closely as possible to the prophetic society.

That precisely was Shehu’s ambition and his declared goal. His purpose, he reiterated continually, was to revive the *sunna* and annihilate satanic innovations that had either crept into the social fabric of society or had been an exotic imposition on its culture and traditions. We have so far examined his concept of *amr wa nahi*; we have had a taste of the content of some of his public lectures and realized the great efforts he expended in educating society in the principles of Islam. What remains for us is to see how he set about reviving the *sunna*, demolishing innovations, thereby reshaping the beliefs, thinking, practices and the very character of society.

In doing that we have to take a very close look at Shehu’s monumental work — indeed his magnum opus if we agree with Ismail Balogun — which we may consider not only as the basic reference on this matter but also as the summary of what Shehu taught and preached. This is the *Ihya al-Sunna wa Ikhmad al-Bida*. The book is unique in two respects. It is a book of practical, social and moral education which focuses its attention entirely on Hausa society with the sole object of rectifying its wrong deeds and guiding it aright. There is no theory in it: everything it deals with was practiced by society. Secondly, it is a book of protest, albeit of a legal nature, albeit restrained. In a way it takes the line of al-Barnawi’s *Shurb al-Zulal*, except that the *Ihya* was written by a *mujaddid* and is a textbook of *tajdid*.

Its thirty-three chapters deal with the three fundamental issues of Shehu’s message: *Iman*, *Islam* and *Ihsan*, with *Islam* — the regulation of life in general — taking twenty-seven chapters. Both *Iman* and *Ihsan* have one chapter each, and one chapter is devoted to the *sunna* in its broader sense and one to innovations. It is our intention to consider ten of the chapters with a view to understanding the state of *Islam* in Shehu’s society and the methodology of tackling its problems through a peaceful, though vigorously educational mobilization.

**Principles of Social Mobilization**

The principles he laid down in the introduction to the *Ihya* are so important that we prefer to call them principles of social mobilization, for if we want to know why the Shehu succeeded where others had failed in their efforts to bring about an abiding social transformation, it is because the Shehu throughout his active struggle adhered to certain tenets which facilitated his work and encouraged people to flock to him.
The first of these principles is that the revival of the *sunna* and removal of innovations, that is the reorientation of society on Islamic lines rests, fundamentally, on counseling and sincere advice (*nasiha*) to Muslims. It precludes, as a matter of necessity, bringing shame upon them or finding fault with them.

Whoever has as his intention the unveiling of the secrets of the people and preoccupation with their faults, Allah, certainly, will bring him to account and take him to task, because whoever pursues the weakness of his brother, Allah will pursue his weakness until He exposes him, even if he is in the recess of his house.

Faultfinding and putting people to shame, even under the pretext of seeking a social transformation, constitutes ‘a grave risk and a tremendous sin’ and it is hypocritical. And he referred to the *hadith* of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace): ‘Do not look at the wrong actions of people as if you were lords. Look at your wrong actions as if you were slaves.’

Secondly, the purpose of striving for the establishment of the *sunna* is, by implication, to attract people to the fold of Islam, to reassure them in their faith and actions, and not to reject them. Rejection of the people is as great a risk and sin as searching for their weaknesses. In any case, the Shehu stated, to find a valid legal justification to repudiate a person for his action is not only difficult but almost impossible, since one must have a unanimous opinion of the great jurists that such an act is absolutely illegal. People should not be reproached except for a violation of the most fundamental principles of religion concerning which the *umma* is unanimous as to their binding nature or their being prohibited. But this, of course, would not prevent the caller from guiding people by advice (*nasiha*) and excellent exhortation.

The Shehu’s third principle is that healthy intellectual growth, even though tension-ridden, is essential for an all-round transformation.

Therefore, the view of other scholars on derivative aspects of the law (*furu*) must not only be accommodated but encouraged, even if they conflict with the opinions of the established scholars, as long as they do not conflict with the *Quran* and *Sunna*. Although consensus is to be preferred, a person is perfectly within his rights to choose an opinion he likes in the school of his choice. The reason for accommodating and encouraging divergent views and opinions is to make religion easy and within the reach of every person. Common people however should not be subjected to unnecessary burdens in practicing religion: though the must be educated as far as possible in their faith, worship and social life they should essentially be left with their basic religious duties and occupations, and no more.

The opinions of the jurists, he maintained, are all paths leading to paradise and roads leading to felicity, therefore whoever follows any of the roads, it will certainly lead him to where the jurists have reached, and whoever deviates from the path, it is said to him, Away with you!’

The fourth principle is that it is not permitted for a person calling to the way of Allah — or for anybody for that matter — to hate the sinners among the people of *La illaha illa Allah* any more than he should hate the righteous among them. This principle is of extreme importance for us, because it strikes at the very root of the philosophy of *tajdid*. If a movement intent on improving the intellectual perception and moral quality of people
insists on having only those whom it considers good and upright and on rejecting those it considers immoral, does it not render its work fruitless For the very meaning of tajdid is the raising of people from the abyss of moral decadence and this meaning is lost as soon as they are rejected as sinners. Indeed, if everybody were righteous and excellent, there would be no need at all for such movements. A social movement is judged not by the number of good people it is able to attract to itself, but by the extent to which it is able to lift sinners from the abyss of darkness to light; and the extent to which it is able to transform society from moral decadence to honor and justice.

The sinner, the Shehu explained, may be ‘hated’ for his sins but he must at the same time be loved for being a Muslim. In addition, a Muslim is under an obligation to give due respect to a fellow Muslim, though he be a sinner. By his faith, a believer manifests his relationship with Allah, be he pious or not, be he truthful or not; this expression of relationship has the effect of conferring dignity and sanctity on him and makes it obligatory on other Muslims to honor him and respect his person as much as possible and to refrain from either looking down upon him or disgracing him.

The last principle is that the caller must strive for the unity of all Muslims. The people of La illaha illa Allah, the Shehu explained, have a common bond with Allah, and they are, as such, all close to Him and are members of His family. So close, indeed, that if they were to fall into error and commit as much sins as would almost fill the whole earth, Allah would meet them with similar amount of forgiveness, so long as they do not worship gods other than Him’. It is a grave error, therefore, to nurse only hatred towards such people, for that is prohibited, and Allah has made known the punishment of such warring against His auliya in this world and in the next. Hostility is allowed only against an enemy of Allah — who is anyone who worships a god instead of Allah.

These principles were clearly enunciated in response to a situation which the Shehu considered as unhelpful to the cause of Islam. It was a situation in which preaching was merely a barrage of insults and denunciation, which proved to be valueless and counter-productive to the extent that it alienated the scholars from the whole body of Muslims whose attention was ostensibly being sought. The approach to the issues of faith and law was narrow and rigid which stultified thought and reduced the practice of the law to the letter, losing the spirit. It was a situation in which the mass of the people were regarded with contempt as being sinful and ignorant by those who claimed to be guiding them. Consequently they were not educated, their lot was not improved, they were not raised morally and they were divided on frivolous, sectarian lines.

That the Shehu departed from a method such as dawa (calling to the way of Allah) was indeed one of his major achievements. To him what the Muslims needed and what they would always need was nasiha, a sincere and sympathetic guidance to right conduct, and education in the principles of worship and transactions. Indeed, the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) himself said that religion is nasiha. Muslims, to the Shehu, had no need for uncouth or depraved language from the ulama nor does Islam allow that as a means of educating and guiding people. Similarly, as far as the Shehu was concerned, the generality of Muslims, though ignorant of religion and slack in its observance did not need to be repudiated or condemned and alienated as sinners. They needed reassurance, understanding and patience from those who sought to guide them, more so when their
ignorance and laxity could be traced to the excesses of the leaders whom the majority of the ulama supported.

The correct way to approach the people, as the Shehu quoting Imam Al-Yusi in al-Amr noted, is ala sabil al-lutf, through kindness and friendliness, as one would naturally expect from members of the family of Allah. In the same vein, Muslims do not need to be divided and subdivided into countless fragments in the name of dawa. Such a method is counter productive and malicious. The factors which instigate one scholar to plunge Muslims prematurely into a war of self-annihilation are the same as those which cause another to create discord and tension among Muslims, keeping them perpetually at war with each other, so that the enemy gains the upper hand. Differences in opinion are vital, according to the Shehu, for the health of society since ‘difference of opinion is mercy’. To quarrel over what is essentially a source of mercy for Muslims is to insist on inflicting a wound on the family of Allah.

**Errors in Hausa Society**

Islamic Society is that which is governed by the Quran, Sunna and ijma, and which safeguards itself continuously against the inroads of bida or innovations. What the Ihya sought to do was to re-establish the supremacy of the Quran, Sunna and ijma in those areas where bida had infiltrated. In Professor Balogun’s rendering:

If you have become certain of the obligation to adhere to the Book, the Sunna and ijma from what we have said then let the weight of your deeds conform with them. For every religious duty you intend to perform, ask those who know whether it is sunna, so that you may carry it out, or bida so that you may shun it.

But what is bida? Bida the Shehu said, is what is extraneous to the Quran, Sunna and ijma; a new aspect introduced into religion but which is not part of it, though it has a semblance of being part of it either in essence or similitude. For a thing to be regarded as bida, however, it is not enough that it is new but it must also constitute a negation of the essence of the three sources. But if novelty is consistent with the spirit of the law and advances the cause of Islam it is not considered extraneous. Thus the hadith of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), ‘Whoever introduces in this affair of ours (i.e. Islam) something that does not belong to it shall be rejected,’ should be applied to that which vitiates or nullifies religion.

On the strength of this postulate, the Shehu gave us three broad categories of bida. The first — the good bida — consists of those matters which the Sharia considers as either obligatory or recommended, though they have not been practiced by the prophetic generation. To this category belong the compilation of the Quran, the tarawih prayer, the establishment of schools and defense systems. The second category — the repugnant bida — is that which the Sharia considers either to be prohibited or to be disapproved of, in addition to the fact that it was unknown in earlier generations. To this group belong such state policies as illegal and unjust taxation, giving preference to ignorant men over learned men in appointments to public offices or appointing leaders on the basis of lineage and going beyond what is expressly stipulated in worship. The third category — the permissible bida — is that which the Sharia permits, though it was not practiced by earlier generations. Technical innovations which ease life, taking delicious food and
drink and living in beautiful houses are part of this category. This distinction between the various categories of bida is essential, the Shehu maintained, so that one knows that not every bida is reprehensible or extraneous to the law, and that a deed is judged according to the category of the bida to which it belongs.

**Innovation in Faith**

We are now in a position to look into some of the specific aspects with which the *Ihya* dealt in the area of *Iman, Islam* and *Ihsan*, to see not only the Shehu’s notion of society, but also his method of protest and of re-shaping it. We start with faith. What it took to belong to the umma, the Shehu said, was a person’s affirmation of the faith, and whoever did that was considered a Muslim and was governed and protected by Islamic law: he could marry from the Muslim community, he could lead the prayer, his food was lawful, he could inherit and bequeath and be buried in a Muslim graveyard. People are judged in this world according to what is apparent, and therefore, no one’s heart should be pierced to uncover its secrets. ‘It is not for us to suspect the faith of any Muslim, be he an ordinary person or otherwise, since the heart is not the place for probing into someone else’s faith.’ And the heart is beyond reach of any other than Allah.

It is sufficient for the common man to believe in the essentials of the faith; he is not expected to strain his mind in deducing reasons for them; his faith is in no way impaired simply because he cannot prove it intellectually. But for people of intellect, *ahl al-basair*, it is essential that they reflect on the essence of religion since ‘religion is built on clear insight’ more so when they engage in *dawa*. The various forms of bida introduced in faith included going to extremes in matters of religion, involving the common people in fruitless arguments on religion, invalidating their faith, or plunging into intricate, and often irrelevant philosophical speculations. Philosophical thoughts on faith, *ilm al-kalam*, might be justified as a means of protecting the faith from the unbelieving or heretical philosophers, and might be useful for the thoughtful; but they are of no use to the faith of the majority of Muslims.

**Innovations in the Practice of the Law**

The Shehu thought it necessary to stress certain aspects of marriage. A person should marry with the sole purpose of ‘establishing the sunna’, in other words, for purely Islamic purposes. One should marry as soon as one can afford it, because the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said: ‘O young men! Those of you who can support a wife should marry, for it restrains the eyes and preserves morality.’ A person should look for a spouse with a religious disposition. No one should seek in marriage a woman whom a fellow Muslim is already intending to marry. The guardians of a woman should not prevent her from marrying a person of her choice who fulfils the Islamic requirements of marriage. And finally, *walima* — the marriage feast — should be celebrated.

The Shehu was particularly bitter about the custom in which the guardians of a woman took the dowry instead of giving it to her; and the custom in which men and women gathered indiscriminately for the *walima* and behaved in an unbecoming manner. He also described the practice of ‘beds due’: the pervasive custom in Hausaland which stipulated
that a husband pay money to the woman for his first conjugal association with her. To the Shehu this had a semblance of adultery. Why should people not do what the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) asked: perform salat and pray for Allah’s blessing in the marriage?

On trade, the Shehu stressed that according to the Sunna, buying, selling and giving credit should all be conducted with gentleness and kindness, and he quoted the hadith of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), ‘May Allah show mercy to a man who is kindly when he sells, when he buys and when he makes a claim!’ The debtor should be allowed more time to repay if he is in difficult circumstances; if possible his debt should be remitted altogether. There should never be deceit or fraud in business transactions.

There were different forms of bida introduced in trade in Hausaland. One was allowing ignorant men to engage in business for themselves in markets or serve as agents for others. This was wrong because such a person would not know the laws governing business transactions: to let him do business was gross negligence not allowed in matters of religion. The next bida was the custom of sending women to trade while the men stayed at home, which he likened to habits of Europeans. Women are not expected, by law, to mix unnecessarily with men, and the market place in particular is not a healthy forum for the meeting of men and women. A further bida was that the woman, who by necessity transacted business herself, did not acquire the knowledge of the law. A woman has to be taught the rules of trade and business because this knowledge is as obligatory as the knowledge of prayer and fasting. Once she has learnt the law, she can carry on business if she has no one to undertake it on her behalf.

In the administration of law, the Shehu first stressed that the Sharia should be implemented as an act of respect and veneration for Allah. He also emphasized that in the dispensation of justice, high and low should be treated equally. He made reference to the hadith of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) who said when some people wanted to intercede on behalf of a highly-placed woman who had committed theft:

*What destroyed your predecessors was just that when a person of rank among them committed a theft they let him alone, but when a weak one of their number committed a theft they inflicted the prescribed punishment on them. I swear by Allah that if Fatima, daughter of Muhammad were to steal I would have her hand cut off.*

Judgment, the Shehu continued, should be based on the evidence before the judge, and a judge should maintain perfect neutrality towards both sides in a dispute and should not give judgment when in the heat of anger.

The innovations which had been introduced included the substitution of fines, ‘out of greed for money’, instead of prescribed punishments. And ignorant people were appointed judges in preference to learned people; or incompetent people were given the office because their parents had been judges. Further innovations included giving judgment on tribal lines to promote selfish interests.

On clothing the Shehu stressed, among other things, the need for a person to wear what was within his means, to have a preference for white clothes, to avoid clothes made of silk, and not to be arrogant in matters of dress. On the question of bida, the Shehu disapproved of clothes with long and wide sleeves, the kind worn in almost every part of West Africa, ‘since it is not permitted for a man to add to his clothes what is not needed
or necessary’, though this was permitted to a woman. Significantly, he noted that despite this disapproval, the wearing of flowing robes did have a purpose: it enhanced the prestige of judges and men in authority, thus indirectly advancing the prestige of Islam.

The wearing of dignified robes therefore is allowed when circumstances make it necessary, because ‘the conditions of Imams and men in authority change in line with the changes in cities, times, generations and situations; so they need to adopt new forms of adornment and new policies which were not needed in the past, and these might even be obligatory in certain circumstances’. Thus what is by law disapproved of becomes imperative politically, diplomatically and socially. This principle became a serious matter of contention in the later period of the movement. A good number of bida which were disapproved of or even prohibited should be raised to the status of the permissible, recommended, or even obligatory bida when circumstances change. It is for this reason that scholars have been told often that they should not be dogmatic or extremist.

A bida on which, according to the Shehu, there was a consensus of opinion was that it was forbidden for a woman to show a dirty and unkempt appearance at home but to appear clean and smart when going out.

On the subject of food, the Shehu stressed that meals should be taken with humility that the servant who prepared the meal should be made to share in it and that proper hygiene should be observed. The Shehu was concerned about two kinds of bida. One was earmarking specific dishes for certain individuals, usually the heads of family, which was prohibited if arrogance or pride was intended; otherwise it was merely disapproved of. It was essential that people eat in groups, the Shehu emphasized, so that they could mutually benefit from each other’s blessings and take care of the poor amongst them.

The Shehu was also concerned about the practice — most common among the wealthy — of giving women ‘the causes to grow fat’. This is prohibited if it interferes in the practice of religion, or causes injury to her health; if not, it is merely disapproved of. But he noted that obesity, which is generally the result of excessive eating, is a violation of the sacred law; it is a waste of money; it could lead to a woman having to uncover part of her body; or worse, it could result in her inability to perform her obligatory duties, such as standing for prayer.

There is disapproval the Shehu said, of a person eating without placing water at his side because by so doing he could ‘cause his own destruction’. Similarly, he should not drink water in large draughts, nor rush to his meal while it is too hot. A person should not engage in excessive joking while eating for fear that he might choke or cause another person to choke; nor should he be too talkative or totally silent.

On the matter of entering another person’s house, the Shehu maintained that permission should be sought three times; if none was given, one should leave. One should also seek permission before disturbing another person’s privacy and announce his name if required. On greeting, one is required to greet whomever one meets, whether or not one knows that person. The young should first greet the old, the one riding should salute the one walking, the one walking should salute the one sitting and the small company should greet the larger one. Shaking hands is recommended.
The *bida* of bending to greet another person — the practice of the poor in the community — is prohibited by consensus if one has to bend very low, and disapproved if it is not as low as the *ruku*. Of course, bowing the head very low to the ground is much more serious since it has the semblance of prostration, and even the ordinary bowing of the head is prohibited. One should not remove one’s hat or cap as a sign of respect during greetings for it amounts to imitating non-Muslims. In this category also, falls the waving of the fingers or hands in greeting: the former is the custom of Jews, the latter of Christians.

**Innovations in Ihsan**

We now come to the important question of *Ihsan*, which the Shehu stated is to adhere to the way the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) lived. And this consists of several things. One of them is that one should endeavor to conquer distraction and absent mindedness in worship, and seek to perfect worship by keeping in mind always that one is, in reality, in the presence of Allah.

*Ihsan* demands that a person should seek nearness to Allah by diligently performing the obligatory duties as well as the *nawafil*. The Shehu here quoted the *hadith* in which Allah said, ‘No one draws near to Me with anything dearer to Me than what I have made obligatory for him’. A person should seek nearness to Allah by abandoning what Allah has prohibited and what is disapproved of. Efforts to avoid what is prohibited should be as great, if not greater, than efforts to perform one’s obligations, for the prevention of corruption takes precedence over the pursuit of good.

*Ihsan* demands that one should never regard oneself as superior to any other person in the eyes of Allah, for no one is sure of what his ultimate end will be. In addition, one should endeavor to develop the qualities of faith within oneself, for there are as many as sixty.

Punishing oneself, by beating one’s body with sticks, iron bars or branding it with hot substances is a forbidden *bida* by consensus. Similarly it is forbidden to seek spiritual perfection by having recourse to ways and methods that are prohibited by law; in any case, good can never be reached through evil. Amusements such as beating drums to heighten spiritual ecstasy are forbidden innovations. It is also forbidden to perform a deed on the basis of what one has seen in a dream, since that would conflict with the *Sharia*. It is, finally, a prohibited *bida* that one should regard oneself as having reached a station with Allah in which one is absolved of the responsibilities and duties that are enjoined on every other Muslim.

**Advice for the Ulama**

We conclude with an examination of further principles of social movement outlined in the *Ihya*. We considered five of them at the beginning of the discussion, the rest come now at the end as they do in the *Ihya*.

Preaching, or more appropriately the effort to transform society, is essentially a peaceful process which should not be discordant or create deliberate tension or disorder,
for there is no way in which people can ever be changed by force. If there is to be any use of force at all, it should not be initiated, encouraged, or invited by a person whose work requires peace and reasoning.

The scholar has two responsibilities in his search for knowledge and its dispensation. He should seek those aspects of knowledge which are relevant to the needs of his society, for the possessor of such knowledge is ‘a precious gem’. He should disseminate his knowledge with absolute humility, bearing in mind that, like any other human being, he is subject to ‘error, misinterpretation and digression’ and that he alone cannot comprehend everything.

The duty to educate the people, wherever they are, is absolutely binding on scholars; the responsibility for change and transformation is theirs, failing which they incur Allah’s displeasure.

Know that it is obligatory on every learned person not to keep quiet because innovations have appeared and spread in these times. The hadith says: ‘When tribulations appear and the learned one keeps quiet on him then is the curse of Allah.’ Most of the people are ignorant of the Sharia, and it is obligatory that there should be in every mosque and quarter in the town, a faqih teaching the people their religion.

The man who intends to strive against corruption and for a better society must start with himself. This is a principle which one comes across at all stages in the thought of the movement.

It is incumbent on every scholar to begin with himself and to get used to practicing the obligatory duties and avoiding forbidden practices, he should then teach that to his family and relations. He should then proceed to his neighbors, then to the people of his quarter, the inhabitants of his town, the surrounding suburbs of his city and so on to the farthest part of the world . . . This is the foremost concern of anyone to whom the matter of his religion is important.

Finally, there must be a belief in the mind of the scholar who undertakes the task of social change that the salvation of the umma lies solely in the revival of the sunna. In the past it was the sunna that saved this umma from disintegration, and nothing would save it from the same fate except the sunna.

The Shehu ended his book with the following quotation from Abu al-Abbas al-Abyani, one of the Andalusians: ‘There are three things which would find enough space were they to be written on a fingernail, and in them is contained the good of the world and the hereafter’:

Adhere, do not innovate:

Be humble, do not be arrogant;

Be cautious, do not be too accommodating.
Chapter Seven
The Intellectual War

The most serious obstacle encountered by the Shehu in his efforts to transform Hausaland came from the ulama al-su, the corrupt scholars. While the challenge posed by the kings was basically political, the ulama al-su challenged the Shehu intellectually. If he had failed to face up to them, his movement would have lost the moral and intellectual battle — a prerequisite for winning the social and political battles that lay ahead. Conflict with the ulama al-su raged from the time the Shehu became prominent to the end of his life.

The issues of contention were many — the Shehu listed almost ninety points of disagreement with them in his Hisn al-Afham. We shall limit our discussion to four broad issues of contention: the necessity for the mobilization of Muslims, the ideological division of the Muslim community, the mobilization of women and the membership of Muslim community.

Mobilization of Muslims

While the debate covered a range of issues, we shall focus on the objections raised about the propriety of mass mobilization and the social and moral dimensions of the debate.

The scholars tried to discredit the entire career of the Shehu; for his part the Shehu refuted their objections and arguments. The scholars criticized the Shehu’s call to the people on several grounds. They argued that the duty to call stands only when people respond favorably to it; the Shehu argued that a person must call to Islam irrespective of whether the call is accepted. The scholars remonstrated further that, even if the call were right, silence would be a preferred alternative. The Shehu countered by saying that although silence is a praiseworthy habit, silence in the face of corruption and social evil is harmful. He referred to the hadith of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), ‘Hold your tongue except in matters of benefit (to people).’

The scholars stated that customs that had become pervasive and prevalent in society should, as a result of that prevalence, be regarded as sunna, and by implication, it would be wrong to attack them, let alone seek to displace them. This was a rather clumsy way of justifying the immoral and oppressive customs of Hausaland and legitimizing a corrupt social order. This claim was also used as an excuse by the ulama for their embarrassing silence over tyranny and social injustice. The Shehu countered:

One of the brethren recalled that he heard one of these ulama saying that the prohibition of evil in the land of evil is the real evil, and that it was on account of this that they did not prohibit any of the evils in society.

The ulama maintained that even if in the circumstances of Hausaland the duty to call for social change was obligatory, it had nevertheless to depend on an imam, or at least one who was perfect in behavior since ordinary people had no share in this function. The Shehu asserted that this duty devolves on every Muslim in the peaceful stage: an imam is
essential only when the stage of armed struggle has been reached. He decided that there is no need for an individual to attain moral perfection before undertaking this task: social transformation is imperative in its own right. A scholar who acknowledges his moral deficiency can still raise his voice against social injustice and moral evils in society, since his deficiency would not legally bind him to silence. The common people, moreover, have their own share in this function since Islamic prohibitions and commandments are a matter of common knowledge. The Shehu might have been saying, in effect, that a person did not have to be a scholar to know that there was injustice in society, that embezzlement of state resources was wrong, or that forced conscription into the army or oppressive taxation imposed by Hausa rulers was wrong. Nor did a person have to be a scholar to know that Islam commanded justice, moral rectitude or prayer, fasting and zakat, and prohibited theft, adultery, confiscation of property or aggression. But where a matter transcended common knowledge, then it should be left to the experts, the Shehu said.

The scholars further objected to the Shehu’s call on the grounds that his attacks on social evils amounted to severity in matters of religion, especially when such evils were common practice. The Shehu replied that spiritual ease, which the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) recommended, applies to the non-fundamentals of religion and could not therefore be construed as allowing people license to flout the laws of Allah or renge on their fundamental Islamic duties. Here the Shehu seemed to make a distinction between the need to transform people through a gradual process of moral education where the caller has to accept their moral failures at times, hoping for progressive moral growth, and outright compromise with society on evils perpetrated. For if evils in society, especially those threatening the Islamic order directly, were to be condoned and accepted as necessary evils, then society would never be transformed. The ulama were inclined to the maintenance of the status quo, precisely because their livelihood derived from it and they owed their prestige and unearned privilege to it.

Finally, the ulama contended that it is wrong to teach the tafsir, the Quranic exegesis, to the masses, since this would provoke misfortunes such as drought or social tension; and even if tafsir were necessary, then it should be taught in the villages and not in the cities, to the old men and not to the youth; and that it was wrong for a preacher to quote verses of the Quran to support his teaching. In his reply, the Shehu stated that those who believed that the teaching of the meaning of the Quran to the people would bring misfortune on society were unbelievers, and outside the bounds of Islam. As for those who claimed that the Quran should be taught only in the villages, the Shehu asserted that they were wrong: the Quran has been sent to all people. He rebuffed the ulama’s objection to quotations from the Quran being used by one who invites people to Islam, reminding them that Allah has commanded that the Quran be utilized in inviting mankind to Islam. The ulama’s contention, he insisted, meant that the Quran was applicable and relevant virtually to the generation of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) alone, while in reality it is intended for the whole of mankind and for all generations to come.

Now, other contentions by the ulama offer some insight into the differing characteristics of the Shehu and his men on the one hand, and the ulama al-su on the other. They also give us a glimpse into the respective attitudes of the two groups on a
number of issues, especially dawa, intellectual endeavors, and moral growth. This category of criticisms was probably directed at the Jamaa as a whole and not at the Shehu alone.

The ulama branded the Shehu’s call to Islam as a censuring of the people, and by implication, un-Islamic. The Shehu countered their criticism by affirming that what he and his people were doing was aimed at benefiting the people, and was based on tenderness, compassion and sympathy towards them and their moral transformation. It was nashiha, counseling and advice, not censuring which is aimed at disgracing, castigating and insulting people. The members of the Jamaa were also branded as power-seekers because of their incessant call to the people. The call, the Shehu replied, was motivated by the love to revere and exalt Allah, the love to obey Him and their zeal for Islam. It appears that the Shehu’s men dressed in a dignified fashion, but the ulama were quick to accuse them of being worldly. But a person who wishes to exalt Allah and elevate His religion, has first to dignify and exalt himself for by appearing shabby and unkempt, he disgraces Islam. This dignified conduct was labeled by the ulama as pride (kibr).

Humility was an essential part of the training of the men who disseminated the message of the revolution. The ulama could have interpreted this show of humility as self-debasement. The Shehu stated that humility emanates from man’s knowledge of Allah, his realization of his own limitations, his finiteness, and how few good deeds he has performed: this would create in him a sense of utter dejection before Allah, as well as compassion for his fellow men. On the other hand, real debasement consists in squandering one’s honor to obtain the fleeting pleasures of this world and humbling oneself before the men of the world — Hausa rulers to be precise. The Shehu could have been pointing an accusing finger at the scholars.

Patience was also an essential ingredient in effecting transformation. The pseudo-scholars interpreted this as insensitivity and hardness of the heart. The Shehu opposed this with the observation that the essence of patience is to restrain oneself from unnecessary anxiety, and to make the heart patiently accept Allah’s decree and remain within the framework of the Sharia.

The donations that kept pouring in for the sustenance of the Jamaa were called bribery by the pseudo-scholars. ‘No,’ said the Shehu, ‘they are gifts freely given.’ They were intended to strengthen the love and solidarity within the Jamaa. Bribery has never been a means of strengthening love and brotherhood but has been a tool to defeat the truth and pervert the course of justice — an apparent reference to the acceptance of bribery in Hausa society by judges, and the ulama’s acceptance of gifts from rulers.

And how could a large number of people — the scholars around the Shehu in particular — be indifferent to wealth and political patronage? The pseudo-scholars had a ready answer: lack of sophistication or even dull-wittedness. The Shehu asserted that it was the moral superiority of these people, their minds being at peace, free from greed and covetousness, their consciences easy and uninjured by evil machinations that accounted for their indifference to an easy and cheap life. Their concern was the hereafter, which they were striving for in this world.
Finally, the pseudo-scholars argued that since the books written by earlier scholars were sufficient for society, the books written by the Shehu and his companions were unnecessary. ‘This is pure jealousy,’ the Shehu declared. Contemporary scholars, he argued, are more learned in the fundamental issues facing their own society than the earlier scholars; therefore their perception of those issues is more relevant to their society than that of earlier scholars.

The Subversive Parties

There was also the debate with the ‘satanic parties’, those sectarian parties or groups which the Shehu considered as undermining the very foundations of society. The debate was fundamentally ideological, for it touched on whether the Hausa society, which the Shehu had been trying to transform, was already Islamic; whether the sinners could be considered Muslims; and whether the customs and traditions of Hausaland should be criticized or attacked with a view to replacing them with the true Islamic traditions and values. These were the subjects dealt with by the Shehu in his Nasaih al-Umma al-Muhammediyya.

There was a group of scholars who believed that Islam had been so firmly established in Hausaland that no one could be considered non-Muslim ab initio, and by implication the society was Muslim. If this were so, the efforts to bring unbelievers into the fold of Islam or to transform society into an Islamic society would have been meaningless. The Shehu refuted this assertion vehemently. There were in Hausaland people who denied the very essence of Islamic faith such as the resurrection; others derided Islam; others worshipped idols openly and yet others assaulted Allah and denied the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace). Even if such people professed the Islamic faith, they did so because that was the norm, not out of conviction, for they remained firmly polytheistic.

At the extreme end stood another party which condemned the faith of the majority of people and considered them as unbelievers on the basis that they could not intellectually prove their faith. The Shehu condemned this group for violating the Islamic tradition which considers anyone who declares himself Muslim and performs the rites of Islam to be Muslim. Neither the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) nor his companions used such standards to judge the faith of people.

A third party believed that those who committed major sins were unbelievers; this assertion, in effect, would make the masses outright unbelievers and negate efforts at their moral transformation. The Shehu regarded this declaration as entirely spurious and baseless: it was the stand of the Khawarij and the Mutazili. Muslim scholars, he said, are agreed that a Muslim cannot be regarded as having become an unbeliever on account of his sins. The Islamic stand rests on the hadith of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) which says, ‘Leave alone the People of La illaha illa Allah: do not negate their belief because of their sin, for whoever negates their faith is himself closer to unbelief than they are.’ Even when groups of Muslims have apparently deviated from the Islamic norms and practices, like the Khawarij, they should not be termed as unbelievers as long as they do not exhibit the signs of shirk.
Here the Shehu came into direct disagreement with his revered teacher, Sheikh Jibril ibn Umar who branded people as unbelievers because of such sins as; marrying more than four wives, improper dressing by women, unrestrained mixing of men and women and the oppression of orphans. These do not constitute unbelief, the Shehu said; they are sins and no more. He noted that his teacher contradicted himself on this matter; and on the whole his views were wrong, for, short of *shirk* or outright legitimization of what Allah has forbidden or prohibition of what He has legalized, no sin, however great it may appear, could make a believer an unbeliever. *Ahl al-sunna* are agreed, he said, that neither *fisq*, immoral attitude, nor *bida*, innovations, could vitiate the faith of a Muslim. As for his teacher, the Shehu stated that he went to extremes because of his desire to guide the people aright and scare them from unbelief, for he had an ‘exceeding compassion for this *umma’*. He deserved absolute respect from the *Jamaa* because were it not for him, the *Jamaa* itself might never have come into being.

The last group accepted the status quo, the customs and traditions as they were and felt no need for change. Some people had virtually substituted *wudu* with *tayammum*; to this the group raised no objection. The privacy of homes and sanctity due to women had been violated. The Islamic social and moral norms were flouted. In social functions people boasted of how much money they had lavished senselessly, thus disrupting the balance in society. Women worked and traded while their men sat idly at home. The Islamic law of inheritance was not observed, thus putting children and women at a disadvantage — the Shehu noted in particular that women were denied any share in inheritance. The common people had to bow their heads low to the ground to greet the nobles. The *ulama* told the people sweet things about Allah's mercy, and failed to warn them about His punishment, thus indirectly encouraging them in vice. The establishment party did not raise its voice against these evils. The Shehu wrote:

> Do these misled foolish ignoramuses not know that it is the blind following of their leaders and men of influence that cause the downfall of the unbelievers, such that they regretted when regret could no longer be of any avail? The Most High says, concerning what they would say on the Day of Judgment, ‘*Our Lord, we obeyed our rulers and our men of influence and they led us astray.*’

By believing that everything was right in Hausaland, this ‘satanic party’ was negating the very notion of *amr bil maruf*, and denying the necessity for change in the social order. Did they not know, the Shehu asked, that but for efforts to bring about a social change the Islamic order would have crumbled completely?

**Membership of Muslim Community**

The debate on *Iman* (faith) was the most heated and charged. It raged from the beginning of the Shehu’s career to his death, but he never flagged in guiding his own followers, persuading others to the opinions of the great jurists and demolishing the ‘delusions’ created by the *ulama* about the faith of the common people. Bello said in *Infaq al-Maysur* that the Shehu wrote as many as fifty books on this question alone. Of these, we shall concentrate on two: *Tanbih al Talaba ala anna Allah Taala Maruf bil-fitra* and *Irshad ahl al Tafrit wa al-Ifrat*.
We shall first of all give the gist of the arguments presented in *Irshad ahl al-Tafrit*, where the Shehu was concerned to guide the extremists to the right understanding of the fundamentals of religion.

All Islamic authorities are agreed on the principle that anyone who is not firm in his belief in Allah, His messengers, books, angels and Day of Judgment, and wavers therein is not a Muslim and is bound for eternal punishment in the hereafter. One’s prayer, fasting or *hajj* are of no consequence if one’s faith is not absolute and unshakable. Nor would being among Muslims and mere uttering of the noble testimony (*shahada*) be to any avail, if one did not know the implication of what one uttered. Thus, for instance, anyone is an unbeliever who doubts the unity of Allah, the ephemeral nature of the world, the reality and permanence of the hereafter, the truth of prophecy; or believes that Arabs have a share in the prophet-hood of Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) or that any of his companions is associated with the prophecy; or works on the basis of what he sees in a dream when it is contrary to the *Sharia*; or claims that he has received a revelation from Allah or that he has ascended to the heavens and entered paradise; or expressly states that the affairs of the hereafter are mere symbols and have no concrete existence, or denies that faith, prayer, fasting, *zakat* and *hajj* are obligatory or that the taking of wine, murder, magic and so on are prohibited.

As long as a person is firm in his belief in the fundamentals of faith, he cannot be regarded as an unbeliever even if he holds wrong views regarding some of the attributes of Allah, provided, of course, that not all scholars consider such views as tantamount to unbelief. For example, the belief that Allah is corporeal, or speaks with a voice as humans, though absolutely wrong, does not amount to unbelief since scholars are not unanimous on such matters. It is in such scholastic and intellectual details of faith that the common people are deficient, not in the fundamentals.

Therefore they need education and not repudiation. Four things, however, should be kept in mind. First, that it is necessary for every Muslim to know the true meaning of the declaration, ‘There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah,’ so that his faith can be preserved from corruption. Second, that this is even more urgent when one considers that mere utterance of this testimony does not make one a believer if one’s faith in it is not absolute. Third, that the education must, as a matter of necessity, be extended to women and other such underprivileged members of society as servants, slaves and children of the poor. Women especially should be educated, even if that entails their having to attend the same gathering as men: for ignorance of faith is most likely to lead eventually to hell, while knowledge saves. Fourth, that public education does not require the consent of the people concerned as ‘some devils who indulge themselves with memorizing the *Quran* without improving their own convictions’ have claimed. The duty is obligatory as for the *Quran, Sunna* and *ijma*. Public education should be conducted in the language people understand since the objective is to provide people with an intelligent understanding of the faith.

Those who condemn the faith of the common people do so for evil purposes. They, in fact, want to preclude their learning and understanding the faith. Whoever does so ‘is a devil, an obstacle in the way of Allah, who wants to leave the ignorant person perpetually impaired in his faith’
It is a grave danger on the part of a Muslim to regard another Muslim as an unbeliever or to subject his faith to suspicion, because the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said: ‘When a person calls his brother an unbeliever, it returns (at least) to one of them.’ Many pseudo-scholars hastily declare those who disagree with their convictions to be unbelievers, while in fact, it is they who fall into unbelief ‘because whoever believes that a Muslim is an unbeliever does, in actual fact, believe that his religion, Islam, is unbelief, and this vitiates his belief and the laws governing an unbeliever take effect on him.’ This underscores the true danger inherent in branding people as unbelievers.

The discrediting of common people as unbelievers by some students is due to their deficient and improper understanding of the books of *ilm al-Kalam* which they read ‘without the guidance of scholars’. Their conclusions are invariably based on their failure to grasp the import of what they have read. Some of the views they have read are those of Ibn al-Qasim, Abu Zakaria, al-Waghlisi, Muhammad Ibn Umar, al-Awjali, Muhammad al-Tahir who maintained, for instance, that unbelievers can be categorized into the simple, the complex, the doubter, the suspicious and the deluded. They did not appreciate the fact that such a classification is basically theoretical, since the actuality of any one being a complex or simple unbeliever pertains to the heart, and is therefore unascertainable.

They also asserted that anyone who does not know the names and attributes of Allah is an unbeliever because of one scholar who asked: ‘How can you worship whom you are ignorant of?’ But they fail to understand that a person is never required in Islam to know the details of the attributes of Allah before he worships Him. If this were so, then a person embracing Islam should neither pray nor fast nor perform any of the duties of Islam until he has learnt every detail about faith. These details are mere intellectual exercises. Even so, the scholars maintained that a person should strive to acquire the knowledge of *tauhid* in order to improve his faith. Yet the fact remains that faith is to be derived from the *Quran* and *Sunna* not from the books of *ilm al-kalam*. Faith is essentially a matter ‘between a servant and his Lord’, and therefore, whoever affirms his belief in Allah is adjudged in this world as a Muslim and is bound by all the obligations and rights of a Muslim unless, of course, he openly expresses his disbelief or does an action which amounts to unbelief, for this world is not for uncovering the hearts or the secrets of the people.

Thus the *Sharia* operates on what is apparent, not what lies hidden in the hearts. ‘Whoever openly practices Islam,’ the Shehu stated, ‘cannot be termed as an unbeliever, nor should he be subjected to suspicion, be he a common man or otherwise.’ As for the *ijma*, the *ahl al-Sunna* are agreed that whoever affirms the two testimonies, he is covered by the laws of Islam. This is so, because Allah has not given to man access to the secrets that lie in the hearts nor has He ordered anyone to investigate into them. The order in this world is that people should be judged in accordance with what they state explicitly or do openly.

It is wrong also to investigate the faith of common people by subjecting them to questions and examinations. The ‘ignorant students’ do so, and in the process attribute to Muslims what no Muslim would ever say. All that the common people require is *nasiha*. The Shehu observed:
If you want to benefit the people, then affirm their convictions for them to the extent of what they can take; and tell them what they can understand, as is stated in the noble hadith; and avoid these examinations, hair-splittings and allegories which have not been the practice of the men of Allah since time immemorial.

If even the learned find it difficult to articulate the details of faith, how can the common man be expected to do so? What he should know are the fundamentals: that Allah does exist, is eternal, infinite, absolutely independent, absolutely one in essence and there is nothing like unto Him; that He brought creation into being, that He has a will; He is hearing, seeing, speaking and knowing; that the prophets are truthful, trustworthy and have the attributes of human excellence, that they are men subject to human needs such as food, marriage and ‘buying and selling’, that the angels are sinless, neither men nor women, they neither eat nor drink, that the heavenly books are true, that death is true; that the rising is true, that judgment is true; that paradise and hell are true, that the vision of Allah by the believers is true, and that all the messages brought by the prophets are true.

Invariably, the faith of common people is sound, according to a consensus of scholars. This is based on the hadith of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), that ‘the majority of the people of paradise are the simple-minded’. They therefore are believers, they understand Allah and are destined for paradise. ‘Corruption (in society) will not overwhelm their faith until the Day of Judgment.’ Their faith, regardless of the prevailing corruption, remains sound. The fact that certain individuals exhibit signs of unbelief is not sufficient justification to condemn all people.

In any case, philosophical understanding of faith is fard al-kifaya, which, if it is possessed by some individuals, the rest of society is absolved from understanding. The philosophy and terminology of ilm al-kalam should not concern the majority of Muslims. It was intended to confront heretics and unbelieving philosophers on their own ground, not for common people to grapple with.

The Tanbih al-Talaba, for its part, is the quintessence of Shehu’s theme on the subject of Iman, which is that Allah is known to man inherently. ‘Know o my brothers,’ he says, ‘that Allah, Most High, has made it clear in many verses in His noble Book that He is known to man by nature. He says in one of the verses: “Then set up not rivals unto Allah when you know that He is one.”’

Allah is known instinctively to all human beings because their very beings are molded on the realization of the unity of the Creator, His eternity as well as the creation of all that exists. In addition, Allah himself has said, ‘And if any one believes in Allah, Allah guides his heart aright’, meaning that Allah guides him to the understanding of His holy self. Therefore no person can be said to be ignorant of his Lord, though the nature of the understanding is as diverse as the creatures themselves. Similarly, Allah created the spirit (ruh) complete, mature, and fully cognizant of His unity and firmly believing in His rububiyya (His being the creator and nourisher of all creatures). Such is the nature (fitra) upon which every child is molded. Allah is known therefore without the aid of knowledge; knowledge is required for the understanding of existence, and ultimately for higher intellectual and moral consciousness.
Mobilization of Women

The open debate on women was sparked off in Daura in 1201/1786-7 by a scholar named Mustafa Goni. It was he who, according to Abdullahi in *Tazyin*, first openly challenged the Shehu on his allowing women to attend his public lectures. In a message to the Shehu, Mustafa Goni said:

O son of Fudi, rise to warn the ignorant
That perchance they may understand religion, and the things of this world.
Forbid women to visit your preaching,
For the mixing of men and women is sufficient a disgrace.
Do not do what contributes towards disgrace
For Allah has not ordered vice which could cause us harm.

Shehu’s immediate reaction was to ask Abdullahi to write Mustafa Goni a reply on his behalf.

O you who have come to guide us aright
We have heard what you have said.
Listen to what we say.
You gave advice to the best of your ability,
But would that you had freed us from blame…
We found the people of this country drowning in ignorance
Shall we prevent them from understanding religion?
It has been said, ‘Judgment shall be carried out
On a people according to the evil they create.’
Take this as a measure!

The central point in Abdullahi’s reply is that even if women’s attendance of the Shehu’s lectures were a disgrace, their being abandoned to ignorance was a greater disgrace. In the words of Abdullahi:

The evil of leaving women in ignorance, not knowing what is incumbent upon them, nay, not knowing Islam at all, is greater than the evil of their mixing with men, for the first evil relates back to religion, which is faith, Islam and good works (*Ihsan*), and the second evil relates back to genealogy.

The debate, however, did not stop there. The Shehu had to reply several times to the objections and legal issues raised by his contemporaries among the *ulama*. The debate moved from the narrow confines of women’s attendance of lectures to the wider issues of their education in general, their involvement in trade and professions and their going out of the house for their needs.

In taking a closer look at the Shehu’s replies and examining his views, we shall use three of his works: *Nur al-Albab* and *Tanbih al-Ikhwan* and *Irshad al Ikhwan ila Ahkam Khuruj al-Niswan*. 
In *Tanbih* the Shehu defended his allowing women to attend his lectures, saying it was justifiable and, indeed, sanctioned by law.

I used to teach the men their individual obligations, and the women used to attend, staying behind the *hijab*, and I used to prevent them from mixing (indiscriminately) with men. I kept on emphasizing in the assemblies my statement that such mixing of male and female is unlawful, so much that it necessarily became a matter of common knowledge. Then later I assigned a specific day for the men, and a specific day for the women since this is better and safer. It is related in *Sahih al-Bukhari* . . . that the women said to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon Him, 'Men have gained the upper hand over us in respect of access to you; therefore fix for us a day.' So he fixed for them a day in which they used to meet him, and he would exhort and instruct them.

Women’s attendance of open-air lectures, he seemed to say in the *Tanbih*, was not his own innovation. Other great scholars, who faced similar circumstances of prevailing ignorance, had either allowed it or expressly recommended it. Among them, he said, were the *Sheikh*, the *Imam*, the learned Sidi Ahmad ibn Sulaiman who was ‘a great saint’ and regarded as a *Junaid* of his generation. And no less an authority than al-Ghazali recommended the same. Even those — like Ibn Arafa — who were of the opinion that women should not go to lectures if it involved mixing with men, were referring to lectures dealing with knowledge that is not obligatory. In any case, by ‘mixing’ they meant actual bodily contact between men and women, and not occasions when they sit separately or when women sit in a separate apartment.

It is obligatory on a woman, he said in *Tanbih* and *Irshad*, to acquire a full knowledge of her religious obligations such as prayer, fasting, *zakat*, *hajj*, as well as the more mundane matters such as trade and transactions. If the husband is not able to supply this knowledge, she is under an Islamic obligation to go out in search of it. ‘If he refuses her the permission,’ the Shehu stated categorically in *Irshad*, ‘she should go out without his permission, and no blame is attached to her nor does she incur any sin thereby. The ruler should compel the husband to get his wife educated as he should compel him to give her adequate maintenance; nay, knowledge is superior (to maintenance).’

But in spite of this sound Islamic position, ‘the devils among men’ still believed that women should remain at home in ignorance, knowing very well that ignorance could lead women to hell. In addition, such devilish scholars had remained silent in situations of moral and social decadence in which women freely engaged with men in drumming and dancing and in which they displayed their beauty on festive days. If a woman could go as far as to *hajj*, why should she not go out to learn about her faith, which indeed, is a greater obligation than *hajj*, the Shehu asked.

The scholars who opposed women’s education, the Shehu postulated in *Nur al-Albab*, were merely hypocrites. They abandoned their wives, daughters and servants to ignorance, while they gave knowledge to other people. ‘How they could leave their wives, daughters and servants in the darkness of ignorance and error while they teach their students day and night! This is nothing but the pursuit of their selfish ends, because they teach their students only for show and out of pride. This is a great error.’ The education of wives, children and dependents, he said, is an obligation while the teaching of students is voluntary; it becomes an obligation only when there is no one else to do it,
and even then it is an obligation that is preceded by the obligation to educate one’s family and dependents.

Then the Shehu carried his argument straight to the women themselves.

‘O Muslim women!’ he exclaimed in *Nur al-Albab*,

Do not listen to those who are themselves misguided and who misguide others; who seek to deceive you by asking you to obey your husbands without asking you (first) to obey Allah and His Messenger (Allah bless him and grant him peace). They say that a woman’s felicity lies in her obedience to her husband: they say so only to fulfill their selfish ends and fulfill their wishes through you. They compel you to do things which neither Allah nor His Messenger (Allah bless him and grant him peace) has originally imposed on you, like cooking, washing of clothes and similar things, which are among their numerous wishes while they do not in the least demand of you to perform the real duties imposed on you by Allah and His Messenger (Allah bless him and grant him peace). Yea! A woman is obliged by the consensus of the jurists, to heed her husband, in open and in secret, even if he is of very low social status, or even a slave, and she is prohibited by consensus to disobey him outrightly except if he orders her to do an act which amounts to disobedience of Allah in which case she must refrain from obeying him, as of necessity, because there should be no obedience to a creature in disobedience to the Creator. In addition, a woman is rewarded two-fold for heeding her husband, yet, that is conditional upon her obedience to Allah and His Messenger (Allah bless him and grant him peace).

He lamented in *Irshad* the failure of women to demand their rights to education in the same way that they would demand their right to maintenance and other basic needs. Women, like men, have been created for the sole purpose of serving Allah, which is not properly attainable without true education. The right to education, he seemed to be saying, has absolute preference over other rights. ‘Had the woman demanded her right from her husband in the affairs of her religion and taken her case to the ruler, and demanded that either he educates her in the affairs of her religion or extends his permission to her to go out to learn, it would have been obligatory (by law) on the ruler to compel the husband to do so as he would compel him to give his wife her worldly rights, since religious rights are superior and preferred.’

The Shehu’s uncompromising stand on women’s education, as opposed to the stand of some of his contemporaries whom he criticized in *Irshad* for their lack of foresight (*basira*), stemmed from his role as a *mujaddid*. The Shehu’s moral and social transformation of society relied heavily on education. To neglect the education of women would have defeated the cause in two ways. Women formed not only an integral part of society, but also constituted its larger, more basic and more solid part. As the custodians of the home, which is the foundation of society, they are the most important factors in the stabilization of society. Secondly, women’s role in bringing up children imbued with the spirit and orientation of the emerging order, which would need at least one generation to take root, could not be over-emphasized. The youth are the pillar of any revolution in so far as it is their energy and zeal that give it the requisite strength and vitality to challenge the prevailing order to the end. And the youth are principally formed by women.

We may also view the Shehu’s insistence on women’s education from another angle: as a restatement of the principle that education in Islam is not only a right, but also a duty. Every human being has been commanded by Allah to get education. Knowledge is the
key to the understanding of Allah and the forging of the proper relationship with Him; it is the key to the understanding of Islam in its true perspective and in the understanding of the nature of life, of human relations and of existence as a whole. It is the key to the development of an individual as a complete personality. In this regard, there is no difference between man and woman. If a woman’s spiritual and moral development is in danger of being frustrated by her husband’s unjustifiable demands — which obviously stem from selfishness and high-handedness — Islam requires that she assert her rights and take whatever steps she deems necessary to safeguard her moral and spiritual well-being. If that puts her marriage at risk, so be it. For her success in the hereafter, which is greater and more enduring than the material things she could ever get from the world, should at all times be her priority.

There is yet another way of looking at this matter. The Shehu was aware that the cause he was advocating could well lead to future hardships for both men and women: indeed, the hardships could lead to exile and loss of life for those who accepted his leadership. Yet, it was a cause that rested squarely on conviction, since nobody is deemed to have suffered or died in the cause of Allah who has no absolute faith in Allah and in the hereafter. It is only fair then that all those who would have to suffer in the cause of Allah should first be inculcated with the right faith and convictions and with the proper Islamic attitudes in order to enable them to have full benefit of their sufferings and hardships. This was perhaps one reason why the Shehu was absolutely insistent in his demand that both men and women should be properly educated about their beliefs and obligations.

He posed a question in *Irshad* which runs thus: according to the law, women have to go out in search of knowledge which husbands cannot provide; should the scholar who cannot secure separate seating arrangements go into public to teach Islam, knowing very well that those women are bound to attend his lectures? Or should he do so if he is well aware of the possibility of objectionable things being perpetrated as a result of women’s attendance? The Shehu answered in the affirmative because those issues do not constitute a valid excuse to leave people in ignorance.

Nay, he should go out, but he should prevent intermixing of the men and women, if such happens in his presence, and he should put men on one side and women on another side, and he should let them all know that inter-mixing of men and women is prohibited according to consensus. . . . Indeed, the majority of the people are ignorant of the law, and if he goes out in order to change what he can of the social evils, his witnessing of other evils which he cannot change would not harm him.

The logic seems to be that if people are not made conscious of the social evils which they are required to abandon, by not being given the opportunity to commit some of them in the presence of the teacher, how can they ever learn to abandon them? They need education precisely because they do not know that such things are evil; or if they know, they lack the necessary moral and social consciousness to appreciate the magnitude of the danger such evils pose to the fabric of society.

Though education was the main theme of Shehu’s writings on women, he dealt with other matters too in his prolonged debate. For instance, should women engage in trade and the like? Ideally, he said, a woman’s needs should be provided for either by her husband or by other relations, so there would be no need to go out to the markets or sit in shops or similar places. But if there was no one to undertake ‘buying and selling’ on her
behalf she would be permitted by law to undertake it herself, but ‘she should do so without ornamentation (that is, she should observe moral and social restraint when she deals with men), for that is better for her in the eyes of her Lord and is more rewarding.’

We can look at this rule from two angles. First, women, like men, are entitled to a decent and dignified life, free from the humiliation of begging and dependence. Indeed, a woman is in greater need of economic protection since economic insecurity could lead her to the kind of life which undermines not only her own integrity but the very foundations of society. If such a possibility exists, then it becomes obligatory on her to seek the economic means she needs to preserve her integrity. Indeed, the insistence of Islam that women should have knowledge of some trade is meant to prepare them against such an eventuality.

Secondly, the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) stated that Allah permits women to go out for their needs. What constitutes these needs are not, however, specified, so it is left to those who represent the conscience of society to determine them, from time to time, as occasion demands. But of course, some needs, such as education, health and honorable livelihood, are basic and cannot be nullified by anyone.

Another important matter addressed by the Shehu was that of women going out in general. In fact, the Shehu stated in his introduction in *Irshad* that he wrote the book in order to bring the two extreme groups — those who say that women are free to go out at all times like men, and those who say they should not go out at all — to the correct and middle course, and acquaint them with the rules formulated by upright scholars. This middle course, he said, implies that it is lawful for women to go out for their needs when it is legally necessary. At times this necessity will be of a worldly nature such as seeking a livelihood; and at other times the necessity will be of a religious nature such as going out in search of knowledge of their fundamental duties.

There are a host of issues dealt with in the *Irshad*, such as women going out to attend the daily prayers, the Friday prayer and for *hajj*, funerals, visits and so on. And to each of these the Shehu gave a qualified approval in line with his balanced view. We would like to concentrate on his debate about women’s attendance at the mosque for daily prayers, for it demonstrates the way he handled the conflicting opinions of Muslim jurists.

Al-Ghazali says in *al-Ihya*: ‘It is necessary to prevent women from attending the mosques for the prayer if it is feared that men would be tempted by them.’ In fact Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, did prevent them, and it was said to her that (her husband) the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) had not prevented them from attending the congregation. She said, ‘Had the Messenger of Allah known what the women would do after him he would have prevented them.’

Some (jurists) conclude from this statement, as al-Qastalani has said in *al-Irshad*, that women should be prevented outrightly. But (others) have replied that Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, was not in fact explicitly categorical on their being prevented even if her statement indicates her preference for prevention. (It is argued) also that Allah knows absolutely well what women would do, yet He did not send any revelation to His Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) to prevent them (from going to the mosque). If their behavior necessitated their being prevented from the mosques, it would also have necessitated their being prevented from going to other places, such as the markets as well. In addition, the offending behavior is found among some of them only, not in all of them. If prevention is
necessary it should be confined to those who perpetrate offensive actions. Nonetheless, a woman’s prayer at home carries greater merit than her prayer in the mosque.

The Shehu barely came to a conclusion; he left his readers to make up their own minds. We should however remember his opinion that whenever jurists have made divergent rulings on an issue, then a person is free to take which ever of the rulings is agreeable to him, since religion should be easy.

We may at this stage consider some of the issues raised in this debate on women. The question of education raised by the Shehu relates mainly to women who did not receive education in their childhood. It is they who are asked to demand their rights, to education and to gain it by all possible means. The debate is applicable to young girls, for in a proper Islamic order, their education, like that of boys, is absolutely obligatory. Indeed, it is unthinkable that a Muslim society should allow a girl to grow to maturity without having been educated. Universal education for girls, as well as for boys, is the clear rule of Islam, and should be known to those with even the most elementary acquaintance with Islam.

The qualified permission for a woman to go out is based on three considerations. In the first place, she is basically responsible for the home and the upbringing of children. Whatever else she does outside is subordinate to this fundamental role. And indeed she herself derives greater happiness and fulfillment from a stable and successful home than from anything else. Therefore anything that might distract her from giving her full attention to the family is discouraged, except where it becomes absolutely necessary. In the second place, her own safety has been considered by Islam, since Islam regards the physical, moral and psychological security of women as the responsibility of society as a whole, of which her husband and her immediate relations take a significant share. In the third place, the qualified permission is made with due considerations to public morality. Since women evoke strong emotions in men, the interaction between the two must always be regulated. For example, the intimacy that exists between a husband and a wife necessitates a considerable display of social, moral and emotional restraint when they deal with other people. If they did not show restraint, discord and malice would result in society. And to the extent that man is almost always the aggressor, the woman carries a responsibility to minimize the possibility of that aggression. Yet, the same public morality which necessitates greater restraint from a woman may also require her to go out to assist in society. Who is better than a woman in teaching another woman, or in treating her ailment, or in solving her emotional and psychological problems?
The content of the Shehu’s teachings, his method and response to those who opposed him reveal his vision of the kind of society needed and of the type of individual required to build that society. We shall take another look at his *Nur al-Albab* and *Ihya al-Sunna* and, for the first time look at his *Wathiqat al-Ikhwan,* which can well be regarded as his social manifesto. The *Wathiqa* contains his views on some of the fundamental issues of the day and how he wanted his students, companions and followers to respond to them.

The theme of his teachings is that both the individual and society should adhere to the *Sharia* — the *Quran, Sunna* and *ijma* — and forsake the *bida*. He deemed Islam to be the one and only means of regenerating those millions of people with whom he lived and to whose education and transformation he dedicated his life. What he felt it imperative to do as a *mujaddid* was to follow the *Sunna* in calling the people to religion, to associate himself completely with their plight and their interests, to serve as a ‘wing of mercy’ for them to shelter beneath, and to lay down the foundations for a nobler and greater society.

The Shehu’s ardent desire to follow the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), his companions and the great jurists step-by-step runs like an unbroken thread through his career. There is hardly any action he took or any major opinion put forward for which he did not find a justification in the *Sharia*. To him this was most proper, since the best of companions — such as Abu Bakar, Umar, Uthman and Ali (Allah be pleased with them) — and the best of jurists — such as Malik, Abu Hanifa, Ibn Hanbal and Shafii — did exactly the same. In both *Wathiqa* and *Ihya al-Sunna* he noted that Abu Bakar (Allah be pleased with him) said that he would never abandon any practice of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) for fear of swerving from the right path; that Umar (Allah be pleased with him) justified his actions by referring to the practice of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace); that when Uthman (Allah be pleased with him) was allowed to perform the *tawaf* by the Meccan chiefs while the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) was waiting for him at Hudaibiyah he declined, saying, ‘I will never do so until the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) has performed it’; and that Ali (Allah ennoble his countenance) stated categorically that he would never disregard the *Sunna* of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) on the strength of anyone else’s opinion.

Similarly, the Shehu noted the statement of Imam Malik that the best aspects of religion are built upon the *Sunna*, and the worst are based on *bida*; the statement of Shafii that all that the *Sunna* required was its implementation; that of Abu Hanifa urging people to adhere to the established legacy and the virtuous path; and the personal account of Ahmad ibn Hanbal stressing the importance of keeping within the bounds of the *Sharia*. The case for following the companions rests on the premise that they had the advantage of being with the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) himself and of witnessing the revelation of the *Quran* and its application by the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace); and that they showed their commitment to Islam, first by
preserving both the *Quran* and *Sunna* for future generations and then by fighting in the cause of Allah to uproot and humiliate unbelief, establish the rule of Islam and liberate countries and regions for Islam. Those that followed them exerted themselves in preserving the *Sunna*; they would travel months in search of a single *hadith* until they were able to master the *Sharia* completely and acquire the knowledge of the rules of *Quranic* exegesis and other essential knowledge directly from the noble companions. Those who followed them preserved that vast body of knowledge and developed jurisprudence and other sciences to facilitate the practice of Islam for subsequent generations so thoroughly that what they did was almost sufficient as a guide for future generations.

The immediate concern of the Shehu was the moral transformation of the individual. He taught that the way to do it was to increase the knowledge of the person in the fundamentals of Islam, in social behavior as well as in business, so that the individual could become a true and better worshipper of Allah and a better and worthier citizen. Thus, the fundamentals of religion and the basic social and economic responsibilities of an individual should be common knowledge in society. For, once the individual is sound in faith, in worship, in dealings with people and capable of enhancing his own economic and social interests — within, of course, the context of the overall well-being of society — the foundations for an all-embracing transformation would have been laid.

The means to achieve that end lie in a vigorous, sustained and systematic public education or *waz*, which should be undertaken in all places, be it through the medium of mosque, public lectures, debates or private discussion. But, of course, there are certain conditions that have to be fulfilled.

First, in the process of *waz*, on no account should the faith of the common people, or of any other person for that matter, be subjected to repudiation, contempt or suspicion because, as long as people do not worship idols, or show openly attitudes of unbelief, their faith is to be considered sound and healthy. To condemn their faith constitutes an unwarranted act of arrogance, and a hindrance to social transformation. It is a way, as the Shehu would say, to aid the devil and serve his accursed purpose. A person undertaking this task should start with the positive, indeed, the correct presumption that the faith of every Muslim is sound until proven otherwise. This has been the stand of Islam throughout its history, and always the stand of scholar’s intent on genuine transformation. It is thus a false way of preaching to start with the negative presumption that the faith of a person is either weak or unsound, because the reality of a person’s faith is known only to Allah.

The second condition to be fulfilled is that the preacher has a basic responsibility to make matters easy for the people, to confirm them in their beliefs and to give them good tidings. Therefore, the preacher is not expected to be harsh towards them; but three things are expected of him. He should in the first instance try to bring their attention back to the fundamentals of religion and not involve them in frivolous disputations, specious arguments or philosophical speculation. In the second place the preacher is expected to identify himself absolutely with the plight of the common people and to prepare them for the eventual overthrow of the system that oppresses and humiliates them. He should have nothing but respect and sympathy for them and should dedicate his life to their moral and social advancement. In the third place the preacher is expected to impose on them only
those responsibilities which Allah and His Messenger (Allah bless him and grant him peace) have imposed on people, and no more. He should not admonish them for doing things over which there is not agreement by the great Muslim jurists as to whether they constitute major sins, even though such deeds are reprehensible; nor should he insist that they do things over which there is no unanimity among jurists as to their being obligatory. Islam requires from the common people only the fulfillment of the fundamental duties, not because they are inferior but precisely because the nature of their tedious and taxing occupations does not leave them with time and energy for further duties. Certainly, their work in farms, factories and markets represents a greater form of worship than many voluntary duties performed by other people.

The Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) has left personal examples which we should take as the stand of Islam. According to Abu Hurayra (Allah be pleased with him), a bedouin came to the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) and said, ‘Guide me to a deed by doing of which I shall enter paradise.’ The Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) replied ‘Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, observe the prescribed prayer, pay the zakat, and fast during Ramadan.’ He replied, ‘By Him in whose hand my soul is, I shall neither add anything to this, nor fall short of it.’ Then when he turned away, the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, ‘If anyone wishes to look at a man who will be among the people of paradise, let him look at this man.’ This hadith has been transmitted by both Bukhari and Muslim, as has the following one. A poor, ragged-looking man came to the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) inquiring about Islam. The Prophet said, ‘Five times of prayer each day and night.’ The man asked, ‘Must I observe any more than that?’ The Prophet answered, ‘No, unless you do it voluntarily.’ ‘Then,’ said the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), ‘fasting during the month of Ramadan.’ He asked ‘Must I observe anything else?’ ‘No’ came the reply, ‘unless you do it voluntarily.’ Then the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) mentioned zakat, and the man asked, ‘Must I pay anything else?’ to which he replied, ‘No, unless you do it voluntarily.’ The man then swore that he would do no more or less than these. When he went away the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, ‘The man will prosper if he is speaking the truth.’

Such is the measure which the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) established, and exceeding this measure is futile and does Islam no good. Nobody is helped in his religion if he is overworked and overtaxed, for he will eventually break down and even lose interest in religion itself. It is precisely for this reason that the Umar (Allah be pleased with him) warned his colleagues, ‘Do not make Allah hateful to the people.’

The third condition that the preacher has to fulfill is to turn people’s attention away from the world to the hereafter, from sin to acts of piety. Therefore he is expected, as the Shehu shows in *Ihya al-Sunna*, to use relevant verses in the *Quran* to instill fear of the hereafter, or traditions of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) that would serve the same purpose. He is also expected to relate stories of how the Prophets (Allah bless them all and grant them peace) suffered at the hands of their enemies, to show that even though people are Muslims and devoted to the cause of Allah, does not mean that they will not be subjected to persecution and hardship, for Allah is absolutely independent of His creatures. He should also impress on people the strong possibility of
divine punishment in this world if society fails to change its attitudes. Finally, he is
expected to let them appreciate the grave consequences of the perpetration of the major
sins in Islam. He thus has a wide area to cover, and he should have no time for gossip,
insults, false tales and frivolous, irrelevant discourses.

That the preacher himself must be a man of learning is the fourth condition. This is
necessary because waz or public education relies for the most part on knowledge. Thus he
must be thoroughly learned in the Quran and its exegesis; he must be versed in both the
Sunna and fiqh. In addition, he should be fully conversant with history, for much of
public education needed in the process of social mobilization has to do with history.
People should be told of their past in order to reflect on their present and their future;
they should be told about the history of other people so that they can see parallels to their
own history; they should be taught the process of history — the ‘days of Allah’ as the
Quran calls it — so that they themselves can have the feeling of being in the mainstream
of history, and of being part and parcel of the human process. There is, therefore, no
room for ignorant people in this job, and society should not allow them to operate.

Thus the ulama are the men and women responsible for public education, for social
mobilization and for tajdid. They have a historical responsibility to save society from
ignorance, social atrophy, moral degeneration, injustice and oppression, in short, from
disintegration. They are, as the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, the
heirs of the Prophets, and are charged with the responsibilities with which the Prophets
(Allah bless them all and grant them peace) are charged: to warn, to give glad tidings, to
guide, and ‘to struggle against the people until they testify that there is no god but Allah
and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’ There is, when considered from this
perspective, an organic relationship between the ulama and the people. The ulama are the
symbols and hope of the people in the face of political tyranny and general uncertainty;
they are the light that guides the people and the pillars that uphold the edifice of society.
The people on the other hand are the ulama’s source of strength, the noble instruments of
change and revolution.

That organic relationship makes the ulama a tremendous force in society, capable of
maneuvering society in the direction it chooses. This force can also be misused, when for
instance, the ulama are in alliance with an oppressive political power or have a vested
interest which is different from that of the people. Such ulama the Shehu called the
symbols of distraction and lieutenants of the devil. The Shehu charged the venal scholars
of his time, in his Wathiqa, with ruining the laws of Allah, worship, and the fundamental
duties of Islam for the reward of money and position, and assuming an obstinate stance
against Allah, ‘as if they have not heard the words of the Most High, “Those who desire
the life of the Present and its glitter, We shall pay them for their deeds therein, and this
they shall have no diminution. These are the ones for whom there is nothing in the
Hereafter but the Fire: vain are the designs they devise therein and false are the deeds
they do!” ’ The underlying direction of the Muslim umma, he said further in Wathiqa, is
tied to the character of the ulama, if they are good the umma will thrive and prosper, if
they are evil, the umma will suffer as a result. ‘O my brothers!’ the Shehu cried out in
Wathiqa, ‘A certain man of God once shed tears in lamentation, saying, “Truly ulama al-
su sit on the road leading to the Hereafter and cut the people off from Allah.” ‘The
people, he says, have a binding obligation to shun them and refuse to heed them.
Muslims should seek the upright scholars, the helpers of Allah, the blessings of the world, wherever they might be, so that they can be safe from all kinds of unbelief and bida. People should form an alliance with these scholars to fulfill the mutual obligations that exist between themselves and the ulama. The ulama have a duty to teach, warn and preach and the people have a duty to listen and obey. He has a word or two for the upright scholars — the ulama al-din: they have to accommodate each other’s views, as well as the conflicting opinions of the jurists, and should in no way fall into dispute; they should distance themselves from taqlid, or the blind following of opinions and rulings of jurists. The scholars who call people to Islam have a duty to look anew at the fundamental issues of the day, reflect on them, and conclude what is best for their people. That boldness is extremely vital for the success of their undertaking, for social mobility follows the pace of intellectual mobility. When the intellect is torpid, society will remain stagnant; regardless of the empty and thoughtless rattlings of imitators.

In the process of transformation, attention of the society should be concentrated on only the basic moral, social, political and economic issues of the day. And because no one social climate is exactly like another, the priorities and major issues of one society may not be the same as those of another. Of the issues which Shehu saw as most fundamental to his society, four may be mentioned here.

The first, of course, was the condition of women, which he considered as unsatisfactory and legally indefensible. He urged for change in their status and treatment. The starting point for improvement was education, which he said was obligatory. Indeed, the Shehu envisaged a time when women would be great scholars, teaching and lecturing not only other women, but also men, in accordance with ‘the righteous past’, (the salaf). A woman, he maintained, should never sacrifice her right to education for anything else, because her relationship with Allah, which is what matters to an individual, is determined by knowledge alone. In addition, she has rights to maintenance, to seek her own source of livelihood if she is not satisfied with her economic condition, and the right to the benefits Islam accords to every human being. On no account should she be treated as a ‘beast of the forest’ or ‘a piece of utensil’ which is discarded when worn out. She is entitled to dignity, respect and sanctity, and her interests, honor, integrity and personality have to be preserved at all costs. Society should come to her aid when she is oppressed; the ruler should be at her side when she is denied education and maintenance; and Islamic law is with her at all times.

The application of the Sharia was another major issue addressed by the Shehu. He noted that unqualified and often corrupt people were appointed as judges, and that appointments to sensitive posts were being made not on the basis of merit but of blood relationship and questionable patronage. The law of Allah, he lamented, was being substituted with the whims of corrupt and oppressive rulers. What was needed was a return to the proper implementation of the law, in which judges would be appointed on the basis of merit, and ignorant, corrupt and other undesirable elements excluded.

The condition of markets — and the general economic situation — was also one of the Shehu’s focal points. Ignorant people, he said, should not be allowed to sell in markets nor to serve as agents for others. The market is as sacred as the mosque, and it should be maintained by learned men, as is the case with the mosque. Three principles, among others, should underlie the operation of markets. The first and foremost is the principle of
‘La Khilaba’, which means no fraud. The second is that there should be no mutual under cutting among the business community. And finally, there is the principle of intizar, that is, making allowance for a person in adverse economic circumstances until his position has improved, or better still writing off his debt completely. These principles underlie the perspective of economic life as a cohesive and integrating force which reinforces other aspects of life, and also as a pillar of social and spiritual well-being like any other great pillar of Islam. If the market is left to disintegrate in the hands of ignorant or fraudulent elements, the edifice of society will eventually disintegrate with it. Thus to preserve honesty and fair dealings, scales and balances should be standardized, and anyone who willfully violates the rules of fairness and equity should be expelled from the market or punished severely.

Finally the Shehu saw institutionalized magic as an important social problem. Ulama al-su used it as a means of personal enrichment and had even gone to the extent of incorporating it into Islam to deceive the people. Magic had permeated the entire fabric of society, in the forms of personal quests for luck or for seeking a woman’s love, to the treatment of diseases, in which recourse was made to incantations, idolatrous concoctions and even witchcraft. People, he said, should look for correct medical treatment and abandon such evil practices.

We are now in a position to evaluate some of the essential features of this remarkable teaching, by asking, what purposes did the Shehu intend to achieve?

The first purpose — the cornerstone of his teaching — was to spread knowledge as far as possible: to reach as many people as he could to stimulate intellectual activity and to give the pursuit of knowledge, the use of intellect and recourse to profound thinking the importance and respect which they truly deserved. Indeed, as a mujaddid, no other course was available to him, for he was aware that the Prophet (Allah bless them all and grant them peace) himself started his mission by appealing to human intellect. True, it takes much time and effort for the intellect to be aroused and stimulated into action, but as the key to human efforts and social mobilization, no transformation without intellectual involvement is possible.

We can thus see the reason why the Shehu stipulated the minimum educational levels for every man and woman to encompass knowledge of the Creator, of the fundamental religious obligations, of social obligations and of the laws governing trade and transactions. Knowledge is the basis of every aspect of life in society. A person who wants to barter in the markets — man or woman — should have the knowledge of what is entailed; a person to be appointed as a judge or a ruler must have a thorough knowledge of his job; and a person who wants to preach must be sound in knowledge and be imbued with piety.

The Shehu’s second purpose was to raise the sense of dignity of the common man. He sought through a painstaking process of education to impress upon them the importance of cleanliness, modesty and a noble sensibility, so that these could become an integral part of their personalities and consequently an important characteristic of society as well.

His third purpose was to preserve the integrity of society. His insistence that no person should bow his head before another as a mark of respect stemmed from a deep-felt conviction that no one should be dignified through the humiliation of another. His strong
opposition to indecent mingling of men and women, his insistence that women should obey the Islamic rules of modesty in dress both at home and abroad, was meant to protect the moral integrity of society. He asserted the rights of every individual to have legal protection against intrusion and unwarranted violation of his integrity and privacy.

His fourth purpose was to promote social cohesion among Muslims, which was particularly important because the trend at that time was towards social disintegration. Social cohesion, to him, starts from the cultivation of spiritual unity. He accordingly stressed the importance of an internal and external display of this cohesion during prayers. He called attention in *Ihya al-Sunna* to the Prophet’s (Allah bless them all and grant them peace) statement, ‘You must keep your rows straight or Allah will most certainly set your hearts in opposite directions.’ The closing of ranks, the straightening of rows and the attendant serenity and humbleness displayed in communal prayer are all meant to unite the hearts of Muslims and cement their relationships.

The mosque is the most important symbol of that cohesion as a place that brings Muslims together several times a day and, weekly, on a larger scale. The proliferation of mosques, unfortunately, breaks up Muslims spiritually. To avoid that disaster, mosques should not be built too close to each other, nor should there be so many that the very objective of social cohesion is defeated. If it is clear that a mosque has been built purposely to cause division in Muslim society, it should be pulled down. Allah had said,

> And [there are hypocrites] who have established a [separate] house of worship in order to create mischief, and to promote apostasy and disunity among the believers... Never set foot in such a place! Only a house of worship founded, from the very first day, upon God-consciousness is worthy of your setting foot therein.

The Shehu’s stress on honesty in trade and consideration in economic dealings in general was aimed at strengthening the social integration of the people.

Finally, the Shehu also intended to raise the moral consciousness of the individual in society. In *Wathiqa* he stressed the overriding importance of *jihad al-nafs* or the struggle against one’s own moral weaknesses, and in *Ihya al-Sunna*, he emphasized the necessity for every person to pursue *Ihsan*, or moral excellence. The concept of *Ihsan* is rooted in the belief that every individual has a personal, indeed extremely intimate, relationship with Allah, and that he is obliged to utilize this honor to raise himself before his Lord. The essence of *Ihsan* is for one to feel the presence of Allah in his worship: ‘to worship Him’, in the words of the Prophet (Allah bless them all and grant them peace), ‘as if you see him, for even though you do not see Him, He sees you.’ In addition, one should feel humble and modest before others, and not regard oneself as superior to any other person, for as the Shehu rightly pointed out; no one really knows what his end will be. Yet, humility entails a display of a high sense of dignity, which gives an individual a noble presence before mankind, irrespective of his economic or social status. Do we need to add again that moral consciousness, along with an intellectual elevation, constitutes the key to overall positive transformation?
Degel, where the Shehu grew up, had become by the beginning of the third decade of his mission an emerging intellectual and moral centre in Hausaland. There the Shehu was stationed, and to it flocked scholars, students, and ‘waves upon waves’ of people for the purpose of learning, seeking guidance, or soliciting blessing and approval. Degel had come also to symbolize the new revolutionary spirit: it was not only a university in itself, a community of scholars and saints; it was, more fundamentally, the new centre of direction for the various groups and communities that had been hoping for a positive and profound change in western Sudan.

It was here that the Shehu raised the young and revolutionary teachers of society — hundreds of whom had already become established as scholars in their own villages and cities. They constituted the seeds of the future, upon whom the responsibility for running the new order would eventually fall. By the time he was forty years of age, he had virtually ceased, or limited to the minimum, his preaching journeys so that he could concentrate on raising more scholars and strengthening those who were already established.

His community had grown prodigiously. It was to all intents and purposes a new community, an umma, headed by scholars who were loyal to a definite leader and who had a direction and purpose distinct from the rest of the people. The Jamaa cut across social, ethnic and political lines, and was scattered over all the countries of Hausaland. Their rallying spirit was the Shehu, and their capital was no longer Daura, Katsina, Kano, Birnin Kebbi or Alkalawa, but was Degel.

Shehu and the Rulers

The Shehu had become the real symbol of an emerging nation, the symbol of the nascent spirit of revolution, and the voice of the people. He was the embodiment of their conscience. What he had sought to do all along, which had now been realized, was to create an intellectual and moral leadership that would eventually displace the present rulers, a new community of scholars who would embody the spirit of an invigorated Islam, and an alternative society with definite goals and aspirations of its own. The roots of this society had already been established in the major parts of Hausaland, principally Zamfara, Kebbi and Gobir, as well as in such distant places as Kano, Zazzau and Bauchi.

We now intend to examine briefly the course of events leading to the creation of this alternative community — complete with its symbol, leadership, ideology and intellectual and moral centre. The Shehu, Abdullahi told us in Tazyin, started his work by extensive travels ‘to the east and to the west’, calling people to Islam, instructing them in the fundamentals of religion and discouraging them from following customs repugnant to Islam. He avoided the political authorities at the initial stages.
The Sheikh was not in the habit of traveling to the Kings, nor of having anything to do with them, but when the community grew larger about him, and his affair became well-known to the kings, and to others, he saw that he must go to them, and he traveled to the Amir of Gobir, Bawa, and explained to him the true Islam, and ordered him (to observe it), and to establish justice in his lands.

That encounter with the ruler of Gobir was the first major political activity of the Shehu and it took place probably eight years after he began his activities. Between this first encounter and the second major one, eight years later, the Shehu had made considerable progress in establishing himself as the moral and social focus in Hausaland and in endearing himself to a cross-section of Hausa communities.

When the second encounter took place about 1202-3/1788-9 with the Sultan, Bawa, the Shehu spoke as the leader of a community and as a respectable voice of the people. Abdullahi reported that the Sultan of Gobir called together the ulama during Id al-Adha at Magami, and offered the Shehu and the ulama ‘wealth in alms’.

The Sheikh Uthman stood up before him and said to him: ‘Indeed I and my community have no need of your wealth, but I ask you this and this,’ and he enumerated to him all matters concerning the establishment of religion. The Sultan replied to him: ‘I give you what you ask, and I consent to all that you wish to do in this our country.’

Some of the Shehu’s requests for the establishment of Islam were noted by Wazir Gidado in Rawd al-Jina: that he should be allowed a free hand to call people to Allah; that no hindrance should be placed before anyone who wished to respond to his call; that members of his Jamaa — now identifiable by caps or turbans for men and head-covers for women — should be treated with respect; that all prisoners should be freed and that the people should not be burdened with unjust or heavy taxes. That his requests were granted was indicative of the Sultan’s recognition of the Shehu as a political force to be reckoned with.

In the next five to six years, the Jamaa continued to grow and more scholars were raised. In 1210/1794, the Shehu had a vision in which he was presented with the ‘sword of truth’, to be used to defend the religion; he was left in no doubt as to the ultimate confrontation with the established order. About this time three other events occurred, each of which was extremely crucial to the Jamaa. The first was Abdullahi’s Risala to the Fulani ulama, asking them to join the revolutionary process, to which they responded affirmatively. This new input of ulama support marked the turning point in the entire process. ‘When these ulama rose up to help religion in our country,’ Abdullahi wrote in Tazyin, ‘it increased in fame, and its followers became many, and the people came in crowds to Sheikh Uthman.’ This development gave new confidence to the Shehu and his companions, widened the revolutionary appeal, and added new strength to the movement.

The next important event was the visit of Sidi Mukhtar al-Kunti’s disciple, Sharif Salih, the only known contact recorded between the Shehu and the Sidi, who was so revered that the three leaders — the Shehu, Abdullahi and Muhammad Bello — each sent a separate message to him. The Sidi had a special place in the history of Islam in West Africa: he was the head of Qadiri tariqa; he was considered the epitome of piety — the seal of the sufi personalities who combine haqiqah and Sharia; and in several instances his voice was crucial in the timing of jihad in the Sudan. According to Abdullahi, the Sidi ‘roused the people’ to the support of the Shehu. Truly he merited Abdullahi’s description
of him as ‘the sun of all eastern places and the western places; axis of the time; the adornment of good men’.

Yet another crucial event was the Jamaa’s desire to ‘break away from the unbelievers’ and commence the jihad. Though the Shehu did not lend his support to this course of action, for he thought it premature, he nevertheless started to have serious thoughts of jihad. ‘He began,’ according to Abdullahi, to incite them to arms, saying to them, ‘verily to make ready weapons is Sunna,’ and he began to pray to Allah that He should show him the sovereignty of Islam in this country of the Sudan. Yet he still needed another seven more years before the armed confrontation actually started.

Of course there had been essential changes in the political climate in Hausaland. Gobir was at war with Katsina, and according to Abdul Qadir ibn al-Mustafa (Dan Tafa) in Rawdat al-Afkar, the son of Bawa, the ruler of Gobir, had been wounded in battle and died shortly after that, while Gobir itself was defeated by Katsina. ‘Bawa,’ Abdul Qadir ibn al-Mustafa wrote, ‘in grief for his son and chagrin at his defeat also died.’ That was about the year 1206/1790. The next ruler of Gobir was Yakubu who ruled for just over six years and was killed in a battle against Kiawa. He was succeeded by Nafata.

If the Jamaa constituted a threat to Bawa, he did not show it openly nor did he renege on his undertaking to allow the Shehu a free hand in his activities. Though Yakubu did not oppose the Shehu forcefully, his successor Nafata sought to destroy him and his Jamaa. The Shehu’s threat had become too obvious to be ignored. The Shehu had already cut himself and the Jamaa off from the mainstream of the degenerate order: his movement now had a separate leadership and distinct moral ideals and social identity.

Two factors caused the rulers great alarm. The first was the growing level of social disaffection due to the scale of social consciousness fostered by the Jamaa. This disaffection permeated the entire society and governmental institutions, including the army. As ahl al-dunya (men of the world, as Muhammad Bello called them in Infaq), the rulers were for the first time brought face to face with a situation in which ‘their measure had become light and their market unprofitable’ while the Shehu’s followers and influence continued to grow. But more fearful, of course, was the possibility of Islam rising to supremacy in a land where it had been suppressed and where cynical and oppressive rulers had established their power on foundations and principles that were repugnant to Islam. The Hausa rulers were well aware of the all-embracing consequences of the new order if it were to emerge. Their rule would be swept away, their power broken, their syncretism and opportunism terminated and their whimsical and oppressive laws put to rest.

The second factor that caused alarm was the collection of weapons and the apparent preparation for war on the part of the Jamaa. Abdullahi wrote in Tuzvin,

Now when the kings and their helpers saw the Sheikh’s community making ready their weapons, they feared that. Moreover, before that the numerosness of the community, and its cutting itself off from their jurisdiction had enraged them. They made their enmity known with their tongues, threatening the community with razzias and extermination, and what their breasts hid was worse than that.
**The Shehu’s Multitudes**

It is pertinent to look briefly into the composition of the *Jamaa*. We have already noted that the Shehu had tremendous moral appeal and that multitudes attended his lectures. The same pattern repeated itself in every country he visited in Hausaland.

Muhammad El-Hajj has suggested further components which account for his popular following and puts forwards a possible reason why the Fulanin Gida (the settled Fulani) supported him.

Although these ‘settled’ Fulani had lived among the Hausa populations for generations, and were in large measure socially integrated, they did not enjoy the same privileges as the Hausa. They did not achieve political power or status, and in some cases, they were even forbidden to carry arms or own slaves. At the same time they were conscious of their long-standing history of Islamization and their superiority in the art of writing and knowledge of the outside world. Thus, fear and distrust on the part of the Hausa overlords, and superiority and frustration on the part of the ‘settled’ Fulani, created unstable conditions of society which contributed in a large measure to the growth of the Shehu’s movement.

The Bararoji (Fulani pastoralists), according to El-Hajj, were attracted to the Shehu principally because of ‘racial and linguistic affinity’ and because they had suffered from arbitrary cattle-tax (*jangali*) and raids on their cattle by Hausa rulers.

The Hausa peasantry joined the Shehu mainly for economic reasons. They had been the objects of oppression, exploitation and injustice. Eighteenth century Hausaland was feudal: the land belonged to the ruling aristocracy, with an arbitrary system of land tenure open to abuse and exploitation. The peasants were made to pay excessive taxes, and their farms were often expropriated. With the conquest of Zamfara by Gobir, land was expropriated and its distribution as fief among the ruling aristocracy of Gobir resulted in considerable displacement of the peasant population. They, therefore, joined the Shehu’s movement in large numbers, not so much on religious grounds, since many of them had not ‘smelt the scent of Islam’, but rather because the Shehu’s attacks on arbitrary land tenure and un-canonical taxes coincided with their own economic grievances.

The slaves also joined the *Jamaa* because of their plight and being subject to oppression and injustice. El-Hajj concludes:

Shehu’s community comprised, apart from the genuine religious reformers, a number of discontented elements who had specific grievances against the Hausa governments. The Fulanin Gida, the Bararoji, the Hausa peasantry and the slaves were all potential supporters for a movement which promised an ideal society in which justice and equity would prevail. From its inception, therefore, the community was a politico-religious body which constituted a potential danger to the State. That it was allowed to grow unhindered for almost twenty years is a great credit to the Shehu’s diplomacy and remarkable leadership.

The vastness of Shehu’s followers alarmed the rulers of Hausaland, because it was comprised mainly of those who had suffered most from the un-Islamic rule. The *Jamaa* was put under considerable pressure, and was left in no doubt that it faced an increasing possibility of annihilation. Finally, and in keeping with the tradition of un-Islamic rulers and tyrants, Nafata issued his famous decree, formally proscribing the *Jamaa*. The decree stipulated, among other things, that: none except the Shehu himself should henceforth preach to the people; no one should become a Muslim except he who had inherited Islam
from his father, and all those who had embraced Islam should return to the religion of their forefathers, i.e. paganism; and that no man should henceforth wear the turban, nor woman the head-cover. This decree was announced in all public places.

This happened to be the last significant act of Nafata. ‘Allah protected us from his design and strategy,’ wrote Bello in *Infaq*, ‘and Allah caused his death shortly after that.’ It is significant that Nafata could issue such a courageous decree and yet not hold his kingdom together. His seven-year rule only furthered the weakness of Gobir. It is the nature of rulers who have failed to save their nations from social decay to try to ruin all constructive efforts to regenerate such nations and to seek the annihilation of the seeds of regeneration. For it is well-known that both Yakubu and Nafata were aware, more than anyone else, of Shehu’s truth and sincerity; they had sought his blessings and knew what his intentions were. Their opposition to him illustrates their hatred for Islam, their love of corruption and degeneracy, and their attachment to hypocrisy and syncreticism.

The year 1217/1803 was an eventful one for the Shehu and the *Jamaa*. Nafata died and was succeeded by Yunfa, who was energetic and ambitious. His immediate concern was to implement the decree of Nafata to the letter, and if possible, to eliminate the Shehu. Consequently, he made an attempt on the Shehu’s life. According to Abdullahi, at the invitation of Yunfa the Shehu went to the palace with Abdullahi and Umaru Alkamu, his trusted companion.

He fired his naphta (gun) in order to burn us with its fire, but the fire turned back on him, and nearly burnt him while we were watching him; and not one of us moved, but he retreated hastily. Then he turned back to us after a while, and sat near to us. We approached him; and spoke to him. He said to us: ‘Know that I have no enemy on earth like you,’ and he made clear to us his enmity, and we made clear to him that we did not fear him, for Allah had not given him power over us … Allah kept him back from us, and we went away from him to our house, and none knew anything about that (affair) other than we ourselves.

That indeed was the last personal contact between the Shehu and the ruler of Gobir. It was clear that there were now two rulers in Gobir: Yunfa represented the un-Islamic rule, and Shehu Usman Dan Fodio represented the nascent Islamic power. It was evident, too, that there were now two communities: the community loyal to the pseudo-Muslim government, and the *Jamaa*, loyal to the Shehu and yearning for a caliphate. There were now also two orders: the decadent order which had brought weakness, corruption and tyranny to Hausaland; and the new order, almost ready to explode into a revolution.

**Factors in the Revolutionary Process**

The first factor is the Shehu’s relationship with the rulers and how he was able to respond to each situation to the advantage of his cause. In the first encounter with the ruler, the Shehu merely advised him to uphold Islam and to be just: he showed neither enmity nor harshness to him, nor did he seek to antagonize him. To have been hostile from the start would have been prejudicial to his cause; notwithstanding that it was a just cause. Islam always starts in a state of weakness, safeguarding its survival at the initial stage by diplomacy, courtesy and caution. In his second encounter, by which time his followers had grown strong and numerous, Shehu spoke as a public figure worthy of recognition. The nature of his demands showed the nature of his cause. He demanded to
be recognized as a leader of a particular cause and that his followers be respected. Although this demand was specific to himself and his followers, his cause was of a universal nature and embraced all elements in society that were in need of justice. Hence, he demanded the release of prisoners and the abolition of all unjust taxes. Some of those released were not Muslims; and most certainly a considerable number of victims of unjust taxes and arbitrary rule were not Muslims either. It is the mujaddid’s duty to champion the cause of all those who are oppressed, Muslims or non-Muslims, in the same way that he is duty-bound to seek the enhancement of Islam and its supremacy. Islam’s enemy is the oppressor, not the victim. In the final encounter when the king tried to kill him, the Shehu did not seek to make a sensation out of it, to capitalize on it. He kept the matter secret, and concentrated on safeguarding the Jamaa’s well-being and survival. He had grown strong, but he was aware that strength was not all that was required for success. He would not and indeed must not, begin hostilities. He had to go on with his work of teaching, until the enemy attacked first. He did not exhibit open hostility towards the rulers in a way that would provoke them into early attempts to destroy his cause. In fact, he was almost friendly with Bawa and avoided confrontation with him throughout his rule. But he stressed that he was struggling for justice in society.

The second factor is the nature of the Shehu’s appeal. We have seen that different segments of society were attracted to him for different reasons which are all acceptable. Islam is an umbrella for the oppressed since its purpose is not only to improve the moral standard of the people, but also to enhance their social and economic well-being and to establish justice for them. The universal nature of the Shehu’s appeal made it possible for a large number of non-Muslims to accept Islam, for nominal Muslims to become committed to Islam, and for society in general to transfer its allegiance from a tyrannical order to Islam.

Islam strives for justice for everyone in this world, and it welcomes who ever wishes to fight its cause, because it feels responsible for establishing a just and equitable system for mankind. It leaves the judgment as to who is sincere in his faith in Allah and the judgment as to who is qualified for either Paradise or Hell in the hereafter to Allah alone. Its real enemy therefore is not the common people, but those who oppress, cheat and manipulate them. It strives to liberate the common people, and to remove all political and social obstacles which stand in their road towards Islam: it is left to them, when the road is cleared to accept Islam or to reject it. But whatever course they adopt, their entitlement to justice is absolute and unconditional.

The third factor of relevance to the revolutionary process is that of organization. At a certain stage in his career the Shehu recognized the need to settle down in one place and concentrate on organizing his Jamaa. Essentially, this process involved three levels. The first level was the raising of teachers and scholars to disseminate his message. The second level was intellectual: he made sure that he himself or Abdullahi and others wrote on practically every matter that was of importance to the Jamaa in particular and to society as a whole. The third level was political: delegations that came to him would give him their allegiance, and would henceforth place their loyalty to the Shehu above that given to the degenerate governments of the day.

Finally, the Shehu’s tremendous patience was an important factor. By the year 1217/1803, he had interacted with four regimes over more than twenty years, and while
the last three had sought to provoke him into direct armed confrontation, he exercised restraint and refused to take premature steps. It is significant that even when his followers thought they were strong enough to start a jihad, he refused to permit such a course of action; he waited for more than seven years after that to start armed conflict, but even then he did not instigate it.

The Shehu believed, as he stated in *Amr bil Maruf wan Nahy anl Munkar*, that once an armed confrontation is started it must be carried to its logical conclusion, and if a movement is not capable of a sustained armed struggle, then it should not rush into it, unless it merely wants weak and oppressed Muslims to be annihilated. He was not interested in rendering his cause into a mere nuisance; he had sought respect and dignity for it, and he wanted it to maintain that character until Allah made a decision.

His dealings with the respective regimes suggest that he felt that time was on the side of Islam. If anybody needed to fear that time would run out, it was the oppressor, not him. Thus the Shehu had no cause to panic nor to rush into frantic efforts to effect a revolution in Hausaland. All that he sought was the right to educate the people. As long as he could preach and take his appeal to the masses, he was satisfied. History would eventually take its course.
By the year 1217/1803 the Jamaa had become a nation, an umma in its own right. It had its distinct leader, an ideology, a system of law and an explicit identity of its own. The tension was growing between the Jamaa and the political establishment, the Sultan Yunfa was determined to crush the Jamaa, and the ultimate break between the Shehu and the political and social system symbolized by Yunfa was at hand. The development of events for the Shehu indicated that a formal and physical break with the un-Islamic authority and ultimate military confrontation with the Hausa powers was now inevitable.

Hence his Masail Muhimma\textsuperscript{lvii} written in 1217/1803, dealt with the fundamental issues that ought to have been understood by the ‘people of Sudan and those among the brothers whose land is like [the formers] land in all regions and cities’. The Shehu addressed fourteen basic matters and his tone changed sharply from the earlier, mild one which indicated that Hausaland had reached the end of an era: a new situation had emerged which required its own approach, method and messages. We shall consider some of the issues in Masail in their ideological context.\textsuperscript{lvii}

The Shehu addressed the precept that religion is built on insight and reflection and, therefore, reflection is one of the roots of religion. Thus tabassur, reflection, or thoughtful consideration of matters ‘is obligatory on every Muslim’ be he a mujtahid, a learned man, or an ordinary person. While he may not be required to deduce reasons for his beliefs, the ordinary man is required, nevertheless, to contemplate his actions and to ‘stand on what he is no doubt thereof’; otherwise his religious attitude would amount to no more than mockery and play. Thus, in Shehu’s view, the days of blind adherence to Islam were over: henceforth everyone was obliged to use reason and intelligence in the practice of Islam. This did not grant freedom to break loose into an intellectual wilderness, for the measure of every opinion and every decision remained the Sharia. The intellectual movement fostered by the Shehu had, in his own opinion come of age, and religion could now be approached on a sensible, thoughtful and intellectual basis, devoid of blind and spiritless obedience either to the rulers or scholars. The Shehu was thus asking for an enlightened, conscious rejection of Hausa rule in favor of an Islamic leadership.

The second issue dealt with in Masail was that the need had arisen for Muslims to have one recognized imam, a moral, intellectual and political authority. The question of leadership, in the sense of an imam to whom Muslims should offer their oath of allegiance (baya), had not arisen until this time. No doubt the Shehu was accepted as the leader, but he saw his role principally as that of a scholar, a teacher and one who calls to the way of Allah, but he had not put himself forward as the imam to whom allegiance should be offered. Indeed he had consistently asked people to look for teachers and scholars and to remain with them — indicating that he was not the only leader or scholar in society.
The new developments, however, had necessitated a formal leadership, a recognized imam, and a baya: in short, a formal declaration of independence from the unbelieving powers and a distinctive and separate status for the Jamaa and Muslims as a whole. This stage was finally reached thirty years after the initiation of the process leading to the establishment of the Jamaa itself.

_Hijra_ had now become necessary, an Islamic obligation if the _Jamaa_ was to survive as an ideological entity. In the Shehu’s conception, by virtue of its suppression of Islam, much of Bilad al-Sudan had fallen into the category of _bilad al-Kufr_ — the domain of unbelief. The Shehu wrote in _Masail_:

I say — and success is from Allah — that hijra from the land of unbelief or innovation or rebellion against Allah is obligatory by ijma. And there is no need for further explanation after the exposition given by Allah Himself. Says Allah, Most High: ‘Behold, those whom the angels gather in death while they are still wronging themselves, (the angels) will ask, “What was wrong with you?” They will answer “We were too weak on earth.” The angels will say, “Was, then, Allah’s earth not wide enough for you to forsake the domain of evil?” For such then, the goal is hell — and how evil a journey’s end! But excepted shall be the truly helpless — be they men or women or children.’

In the circumstances in which the _Jamaa_ found itself, to rise against the rulers would have been unwise. As a scattered group, and as yet leaderless in military and political terms, they could not muster a coordinated strength to throw off the tyrants. _Hijra_, then, was the wisest option: it had thus become an ideological and strategic imperative.

Hence, the Shehu insisted it is obligatory on every Muslim who lives in the midst of polytheists to ‘flee from them’; it is obligatory for a Muslim also to make a _hijra_ from a land where he is subjected to terror ‘to the land of Allah’. So flight (_hurub_) is obligatory from a country in which a Muslim fears for his life, his religion and his property to a place of safety and security. Similarly, a Muslim who loses the right to proper Islamic education in a particular country should abandon it for a country where he can study Islam and its law.

In its ideological context, _hijra_ is a flight from _dar al-Kufr_ to _dar al-Islam_, from _dar al-bida_ to _dar al-sunna_; an escape from the land where _haram_ has prevailed, and flight from potential injury to one’s body, family and property. It is thus a search for an ideological state, a search for justice, honor, safety and the rule of law. The search is a standing obligation on Muslims: as long as there is unbelief on earth, the necessity to flee from it remains. The flight from the land of unbelief to the land of Allah, where justice predominates, is but a temporary situation, for a Muslim is expected to prepare himself during the period of respite for the ultimate confrontation with _dar al-Kufr_, with the sole aim of establishing a _dar al-Islam_ of his own.

It was necessary therefore for the _Jamaa_, while contemplating the _hijra_, to review its relationship with the unbelieving power for the purpose of eventual confrontation. In other words, it was essential for the _Jamaa_ to view itself as an ideological entity, indeed, as a state in its own right and to establish its relationship with others within the framework of Muslim- _Kafir_ relationship.

There were therefore, in the opinion of the Shehu, three categories of relationships to be considered. One of them is to have a relationship with unbelievers, befriend them and
love them on account of their lack of belief and their outright enmity towards Islam and
the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace). This is a relationship in which a
supposedly Muslim entity is at one with unbelievers, and in alliance with an unbelieving
entity against Islam. This, in itself, is unbelief. Allah disowns such Muslims: ‘Let not the
believers take those who deny the truth for their allies in preference to the believers —
since he who does this cuts himself off from Allah in everything.’ The second category
of relationship is to enter into an alliance with unbelievers, the outcome of which may be
detrimental to Islam, for the purpose of economic gains. Though this does not constitute
unbelief, it nevertheless amounts to disobedience to Allah. Allah says in this regard, ‘O
you who believe! Turn not (for friendship) to people on whom is the wrath of Allah.’
The third category of relationship is to ‘befriend’ unbelievers out of fear for the safety of
Muslim life and property and for the survival of Islam. This ‘friendship’ is ‘with the
tongue only, not with the heart’. This is permissible where Islam is in a weak condition,
but this precautionary friendship ceases to be valid as soon as Islam becomes strong, or
presumably, as soon as Muslims are able to make the hijra from the oppressive state.

Now as long as the relationship with the unbeliever does not harm the ideological
position of Muslims, that is, as long as it is an ordinary interaction as distinct from true
solidarity which would be against the overall interests of Islam or to the detriment of the
struggle for justice, then it is permissible. Even so, it should never compromise the
stature of Islam as the superior religion, nor of Muslims as the best of people. A state of
humiliation or lowliness, the Shehu insisted, is inconsistent with Islam; thus Muslims
should no longer humble themselves before unbelievers. But like the relationship with
unbelievers, there are three categories of showing humility. The first is humility towards
Allah, His Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), and to a Muslim ruler, a
scholar and parents; this is obligatory. The second is being humble before ah al-zulm, the
oppressive class, and before unbelievers; this is unlawful, because such humility is a
degradation that has no honor attached to it, and self-abasement from which one cannot
emerge again with dignity and self respect. The third is showing humility to ‘the servants
of Allah’, that is the generality of Muslims, and this is recommended. Muslims should be
submissive to Allah, humble towards each other, especially to just rulers, scholars,
parents and all those who deserve respect and honor. But to oppressors and unbelievers,
toughness and defiance is the answer.

War with the unbelieving powers was in Shehu’s view inevitable and a matter of time
only. Indeed, as in all tajdid movements, jihad follows naturally after hijra, and it was
natural that the Shehu should contemplate it, or rather state it openly in Masail. Two
broad eventualities were contemplated in the book. First, the war against the unbelievers,
fard al-kifaya, which included unbelievers by origin, inheritance, and apostates. Second,
the war against armed gangs intent on disrupting the Islamic order and against those
Muslims who chose to support unbelievers and consciously reside with them and fight on
their side. This war is obligatory, and it is a jihad. There was the possibility that the
enemy might one day surprise Muslims in their cities and overwhelm them. In that case,
recourse to arms in defense of lives, honor and religion would become obligatory on
every able-bodied Muslim including women, and flight would be prohibited under those
circumstances. It would also be obligatory that neighboring Muslim communities should
come to their aid.
Yet another fundamental issue dealt with in *Masail* was the relationship between Muslims and the oppressors which operated on socio-economic and political levels. On the socio-economic level, the Shehu cast doubt on the legality of the wealth of the oppressors. This wealth, he emphasized, was invariably gained from usurpation, theft or dubious transaction in which case it was not lawful for ordinary business if it were money; nor was it lawful to eat if it were food, or to wear if it were a piece of clothing and so on. Since the source of income of an oppressor is largely illegal, business dealing with him is, *ipso facto*, not permissible in law. On the political level, the Shehu said the *Sharia* did not declare it lawful to associate with the ‘men of the world’, *abna al-dunya*, who constitute the core of the oppressive class, even though the professed aim is to secure some benefit or protection for Muslims. The Shehu was already too familiar with the class of scholars that frequented the palaces ostensibly to defend the interest of Muslims; people, however high they may be, are supposed to be at the doors of the scholar and not the other way round. Moreover there is the possibility that the scholar would be bought over — assuming he is honest in his intentions — by the kings, in which case he would fall prey to the strategy of the devil. But more fundamentally, association with oppressors leads to ‘real perdition’ because it brings humiliation and abasement on the ‘custodians of Sharia’ (scholars) who are the symbols of Islam in every region.’ Therefore association with kings constitutes ‘one of the greatest sins and hypocrisy’, and amounts to ‘warring against Allah and His Messenger.’ Here again, the Shehu advocated a political and moral boycott of the oppressors.

It is safe to suggest that *Masail* was meant to prepare the minds of Muslims for all the possibilities that awaited them, and to close the door between the *Jamaa* and the anti-Islamic establishment. Every Muslim should now be thinking how to appoint the *imam*, to whom *baya* should be given, the possibility of *hijra* and the *jihad* that would follow, and the possibility of martyrdom.

**The Flight**

After the threat on the Shehu’s life by Yunfa, events followed in rapid succession. Some of the Shehu’s followers, including scholars and reciters of the *Quran*, who had fled to Gimbana under Abdus Salam, were murdered by Yunfa’s soldiers. Women and children were captured and sold as slaves, books were destroyed and property pillaged. Yunfa’s men were so elated with their success that they openly declared before the overawed Muslims: ‘Bring down upon us the divine punishment you had promised if, indeed, you are truthful!’ That was in the month of Ramadan.

Yunfa sent a message to the Shehu ordering him to move out of Degel with his family and disperse his community; otherwise they too would be destroyed. The Shehu replied: ‘I will not forsake my community, but I will leave your country, for Allah’s earth is wide!’ Thus the *hijra* started, and the destination was Gudu, just outside the territory of Gobir. Abdullahi wrote:

So we fled from their land in the year 1218 A.H. on the 10th of Dhul Qada [Tuesday February 21, 1804] to a place outside Gobir territory. The Muslims all fled, following us. Many of them joined us with their people; some came with no following at all.\[^{61}\]
The scale of the mass emigration towards Gudu alarmed the ruler of Gobir. For several months people left to join the Shehu. Efforts to stop this mass movement towards the Shehu through intimidation, plunder and slaughter proved unsuccessful. Yunfa then wrote a letter to the Shehu asking him to return to Degel. According to Bello, in *Infqaq*, the Shehu sent a reply stating the conditions under which he would call off the *hijra*: the Sultan should repent and purify his religion; he should abandon syncretism and become a true Muslim; he should establish fairness and justice; he should restore all property he had looted from Muslims and release the prisoners he had taken.

The ulama at the court distorted the content of the Shehu’s message and urged Yunfa to reject it. The messenger who delivered the letter was badly treated and left to return to the Shehu through hostile territory. Whatever chances existed for reaching an amicable settlement of issues were shattered by Yunfa’s message to Shehu — the message simply stated that he would be sending an army to crush the Shehu. ‘Then,’ Abdullahi wrote in *Tazyin*, the Sultan ‘ordered the governors of his towns to take captive all who traveled to the Sheikh, and they began to persecute the Muslims, killing them and confiscating their property.’

Then the affair came to the point where they were sending armies against us, and we gathered together when that became serious, and appointed the Sheikh, who had previously been our Imam and our amir, as our commander, in order that he might put our affairs in order.

The Shehu, now as *Amir al-Mumineen*, hoisted his flag, the flag of Islam, which rose for the first time ever in that region. Now there were two rulers, two governments, two armies and two opposing orders in Hausaland. Islam had emerged. A government had been set up. A formal army had pledged its allegiance. All that remained was the *jihad*.

**Articulating the Ideology**

The immediate effect of the *hijra* was to bring the Muslim community to the threshold of *jihad*. In *Masail al-Muhimma* the Shehu envisaged, or rather, encouraged the *hijra*. He thought it was necessary to have an *imam* at the head of the community to give sound political military expression to this nascent spiritual entity. He also envisaged the *jihad* which would follow almost immediately after the *hijra*. Now ‘the supreme Imam’ had been appointed in the person of the Shehu himself, and a *hijra* from the land of unbelief to the land of Allah had taken place. *Jihad* had indeed started.

*Hijra*, *imam* and *jihad* became the dominant themes of the thought and writings of the leaders of the *Jamaa* at this time. The Shehu wrote his *Bayan Wujub al-Hijra ala l-Ibad* some three years after the start of the *jihad*, expounding those themes. In discussing these themes, we shall use the *Bayan* of the Shehu and the *Tazyin al-Waraqat* of Abdullahi as our main sources.

**The Hijra**

The Shehu said in *Bayan* that the *Quran* has made *hijra* obligatory for Muslims when they are no longer able to practice their religion freely. If *hijra* is an ideological imperative arising from the conflict between faith and unbelief, between justice and
tyranny and between Islam and kufr, then the situation in Hausaland had made it an overwhelming ideological and moral necessity.

What was at stake was not merely the conflict of interests but the very survival of Islam. Therefore all other human exigencies — ‘the preservation of the soul, the intellect, lineage, wealth and honor’ — had to give way to the supreme importance of preserving Islam in Hausaland. All other imperatives would eventually perish if religion were not preserved.

Muslims had therefore to undertake the hijra from all parts of Hausaland in particular and Bilad al Sudan in general, to the refuge in Gudu or wherever the Shehu might be. Hausaland and Bilad al-Sudan, according to the Shehu, should be divided into three categories for the purpose of hijra. The first, territories in which ‘unbelief predominates and Islam is rarely found’, included such city-states as Mossi, Busa, Borgu and Yorubaland. The second, territories in which ‘Islam predominates and unbelief is rare’ but where the practice of and adherence to Islam is confined to the masses with the ruling classes disloyal to Islam, included Borno, Kano, Katsina, Songhay and Mali. The third category, purely Islamic territories, which do ‘not belong to the lands of unbelief either as regards the rulers or as regards the masses but belong wholly to the lands of Islam’, were ‘unknown to us’. No one, therefore, should have an excuse to refuse to undertake the hijra from the land of unbelief to an Islamic environment. Failure to emigrate is a sin, because hijra is not merely a political or social command but a spiritual and ideological one as well. So long as unbelief exists in the world, hijra from it remains obligatory.

What then would happen to those who remained with unbelievers when the ideological line has been drawn? Those who remain ‘under the sovereignty’ of unbelievers and live ‘in a manner of polytheists’, out of their own volition and not from obvious necessity nor with the purpose of serving the cause of Islam, would be considered disobedient to Allah and His Messenger (Allah bless him and grant him peace). Those in the service of rulers who stay as a result of privileges accruing from their employment or from their sympathies with the un-Islamic system should consider their services illegal. But those who remain in order to promote the cause of Islam from within have a valid reason to stay.

Hijra arises from two ideological obligations. The first is to shun unbelievers who mock Islam: ‘whoever does this is most unworthy of being befriended and should be taken as an enemy.’ Enmity towards unbelievers is called for to augment the dignity and supremacy of Islam and to forestall the rise, consolidation and perpetuation of kufr. If Muslims enter into alliance with unbelievers they would be strengthening the power of kufr and weakening the power of Islam, with the inevitable spread of injustice and corruption. Friendship with unbelievers should be limited to the demands of taqiyya (dissimulation), which should be terminated as soon as the opportunity for hijra has come. The second obligation is on believers to befriend believers. The Quran has emphasized that ‘the believers, men and women, are friends, one of the other’, and that ‘the believers are indeed brothers, so set things right between your brothers.’ The ijma has taken the same line: friendship entails sincere affection, good counseling, desiring for a brother Muslim what one desires himself, to ‘meet with them and show them love’, and to avoid what might create tension, hatred or aversion among fellow Muslims.
The Shehu reminded his followers that *hijra* has enduring benefits in store for those who undertake it in the name of Allah, and encouraged them with verses of the *Quran*:

> As for those who forsake the domain of evil, and are driven from their homelands, and suffer hurt in My cause, and fight for it, and are slain — I shall most certainly efface their bad deeds, and shall most certainly bring them into the Gardens through which running waters flow as a reward from Allah: for with Allah is the most beauteous of rewards. lxvi

The Shehu urged his followers not to be deterred by the prospect of loss of property or even loss of life, for this would be nothing compared to the ultimate loss of Allah’s pleasure if they failed to emigrate. The early Muslims suffered a similar fate. Some were surprised by the unbelievers en route to Madina, ‘some of them escaped and some were killed’. Yet, this did not deter the rest from joining their brethren in Madina. The determination to forsake the domain of evil for the domain of Allah spurred them on.

**The Imamate**

Muslims, the Shehu said, are bound by law to elect an *imam* to direct their affairs, and as soon as this duty arises, it takes virtual precedence over all other duties. The responsibility for this appointment rests on ‘the whole community’, though it may be exercised by its pillars on behalf of the *umma*. The point to note is that the *imam* is elected not imposed. The *imam* symbolizes the imamate, that is, the caliphate, ‘which is an overall leadership embracing all religions and temporal affairs — undertaken on behalf of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) ’. The Shehu emphasized the supreme importance of the *imam* in *Bayan*:

> The obligation of appointing an imam over the Community is based on divine law, according to the Sunnis, for a number of reasons, the chief of which is the ijma of the Companions who so emphasized it that they considered it the most important of duties and were distracted by it from burying the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace). A similar [situation has occurred] following the death of every imam up to the present day. However, their disagreement on who is suitable for the office of Caliph does not detract from their agreement on the obligation of appointing one. Thus none of them said that there was no need for an imam.

At the time the *Bayan* was written the *imam* — in the person of the Shehu — had been appointed by the *Jamaa*, so the *Jamaa* had discharged that supreme obligation. However there were further obligations to be discharged by the community, especially as Islam was now faced with the formidable task of defending itself to ensure its very survival. The first of these obligations was obedience to the *imam*, and his lieutenants. This duty flows from the command of Allah, ‘*Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those from among you who have been entrusted with authority* lxvii and the statement of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), ‘*He who obeys my amir is obedient to me and he who disobeys my amir is disobedient to me.*’ This obedience meant, in a practical sense, that their orders should be carried out, the community should avoid open conflict or disagreement with them ‘*even though they be perverse sinners*’, their shortcomings or weaknesses should be overlooked and the community should show kindly disposition towards them, ‘*even if they harm you*’. What was being stressed was not so much
obedience but the overriding necessity to preserve the unity of the *umma* in the face of an open and real danger from the enemy.

The obligation to obey the *imam* naturally rules out any attempt to revolt against him, since that would amount to the disintegration of the communal and social order of Islam. Revolt per se is not prohibited: rather, if Muslims are faced with the choice of either tolerating a bad *imam* who nevertheless holds the *umma* together, or of facing the prospect of a total and irreversible disintegration resulting from political and social disorder, they have to take the first choice. ‘To maintain order is essential,’ the Shehu quoted Ahmad al-Zarruq, ‘and to safeguard public interests is an indispensable necessity; for this reason there was unanimous agreement that it is forbidden to revolt against an *imam* by word or deed. This went to the extent that their *ijma* sanctioned the performance of prayers behind any governor or other (*imam*), be he righteous or sinful.’ The Shehu was faced with a practical problem: he was waging a war of survival, and while he was sure that he would be just, equitable and conscientious in handling the affairs of the *umma*, he could not be sure that his lieutenants in distant places might not be harsh or inconsiderate or indeed corrupt. Yet their leadership was vital to the successful execution of the *jihad*, and to revolt against them on any minor excuse would definitely jeopardize the success of the *jihad*.

The obligation to remain loyal to the *imam* extends also to not deposing him for committing sins. The sins of a leader would never be as great or harmful as the communal sin of disunity and the subversion of the cohesion of the *umma*. The *imamate* is the symbol of the *umma*, it is the repository of its power. ‘It is as a result of this (*imamate*),’ the Shehu said, ‘that the power of Islam is maintained, laws are upheld, and enemies suppressed.’ To destroy that symbol because of some minor weakness in the *imam* is to destroy the power of Islam, and the supremacy of the *Sharia*. Of course if the *imam* reverts to *shirk*, that is, reneges on his belief in Allah, His laws and the necessity for Islam, it is obligatory on the *umma* to terminate his rule for he thus loses the moral and ideological legitimacy to preside over the affairs of Muslims.

The *umma* is, however, obliged to appoint a qualified person to the *imamate*. Beside the obvious fact that he must be a Muslim, he must also be of ‘sound mind, one qualified to give independent judgments’; and because he has to defend the integrity of Islam, he should be ‘courageous, not afraid of facing the enemy and enforcing the prescribed penalties’ and as the Shehu said in *Masail al-Muhimma*, ‘not liable to shake under the blows of fate’. Moreover, he should be sound in the realm of politics and diplomacy, and astute in his administration — ‘capable of being strict when necessary, and lenient when leniency is required’ — as well as firm in his decisions and policies. Once this is the case, whoever seeks to subvert his authority and divide Muslims should be physically eliminated ‘whoever he may be’. More than one *imam*, however, would be required if the authority of one *imam* does not embrace other territories. Thus several caliphates under different *imams* could exist simultaneously in the Muslim world.

The *imamate* should rest on five principles. The most important is that the *imamate* should not be given to any one ‘who aspires to it’, but should be elected ‘by the best Muslims from among their scholars and virtuous men, a man they are pleased to have as the Commander of the Faithful by virtue of his being the best of them and the most suitable for the office, just as, after the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace),
the Companions chose Abu Bakr, and after him Umar and likewise the other four (rightly-guided) Caliphs’ (Allah be pleased with them). The second principle is consultation (shura), and the third is the avoidance of harsh and oppressive measures. The fourth principle is justice, which means in its political and administrative context that the imam ‘should draw the scholars near to him since they are the custodians of knowledge (and) . . . its guardians and propagators who know it thoroughly and show the way to Allah’. Moreover, it is the scholars ‘who uphold Allah’s command, maintain the prescribed penalties of Allah and advise His servants’. The imam should not undertake any policy except on their advice. The Shehu left many options open to the imam; in addition to adhering to the measures advocated by Islam, he was also free to follow practices of non-Muslim nations ‘by which they managed their worldly affairs’, if these could be of advantage to the caliphate. The fifth principle is Ihsan which is ‘the source of nobility of character’. In political terms it entails administering to the moral, psychological and spiritual needs of people; and in the material aspects of their life, adding to their livelihood what is above their basic necessities. He said: ‘Since Allah knows that not everybody prospers through justice alone, but stands in need of charity which is superior to justice, Allah has enjoined them both.’ Ihsan in this sense means taking particular care of the ‘old, young and mid-way between the two’ — that is practically everybody in society. ‘The Sultan must treat the old one as a father, the middle one as a brother, and the young as a son. Let him, then, be dutiful to his father, generous to his brother and affectionate to his son.’

The imam, the Shehu alleged, is supported by four pillars. The first pillar is ‘an upright wazir . . . who wakens him if he sleeps, gives him sight if he cannot see and reminds him if he forgets’. The wazir should possess benevolent and kindly qualities of his own. The second pillar is the qadi, the supreme judge, ‘who is not restrained by anyone’s censure from upholding Allah’s law’. Apart from his ordinary functions of settling disputes it is his duty to ‘prevent oppressors from taking things by force, or from violating the law’, and to ‘support the oppressed and help everyone to get his due . . . and to command the good and forbid the evil by word and deed’. The third pillar is the chief of police who should ensure that ‘the weak obtain justice from the powerful’. The fourth and final pillar is the commissioner of revenues who collects taxes ‘but does not oppress the subjects’. If any of these pillars is weak, the imam will suffer accordingly.

There are other offices attached to these pillars, each of which is vital for the maintenance of a just and equitable society. Together with the four pillars, they constitute the basis of Islamic polity. One is the office of radd al-mazalim, or the ombudsman, which deals with cases of oppression and usurpation that are beyond the powers of the qadi. Another is the office of himma which, among other things, reserves grazing fields for animals given as zakat, and the animals of the poor. There is also the office of hurub al-masalih, a special force established to combat apostasy, highway robbery and rebellion — in other words, to maintain unity, social cohesion and peace within the umma. A further office of the imam is public prayer, which ‘is both an office in its own right and a part of the office of the amir’. The office of hisba is charged with maintaining and overseeing Islamic public policy and social morality. The office of land-grants superintends Islamic land policy and administration. Then there are the offices of jihad, records, taxes, sadaqa, niqaba and pilgrimage.
Finally, the *imam* should appoint governors for the various states under his administration, and administrators for specific functions. They should be ‘men of resolution, capability, sincerity and honesty’, and their appointment should be made ‘in pious fear of Allah, not arbitrarily’. On their part, the governors and administrators should look after the well-being of their people and should avoid enriching themselves unlawfully. If they are found with wealth and possessions not owned previously, the *imam* should confiscate it, even if it has been apparently lawfully obtained.

That is due to the fact that even though what a governor acquires without being bribed is lawful, nevertheless, he is not justified in taking it, because he is in a powerful position, by virtue of being a governor, and can gain lawfully what others cannot. So his surplus wealth has to be deposited in the State Treasury.

**The Jihad**

*Jihad* is an actual armed struggle, but in its wider sense it embraces the spiritual struggle of a person against the promptings and insinuations of the devil; a person’s protest against corruption, injustice and evil in society; a leader’s war against evil, or corruption or disorder in society aimed at reform and justice; and even the hatred which a person nurses in his heart towards unbelief or corruption, when he is too weak to raise an armed revolt.

*Jihad* is an ideological war between a believer and an unbeliever, or between a Muslim nation and an unbelieving power, with the sole purpose, from the Muslim’s perspective, of either preserving the order of Islam or establishing it. *Jihad*, as the Shehu saw it, is ‘the fighting of a Muslim against an unbeliever who has no covenant (with the Muslims), in order to make Allah’s law supreme . . . This shows that whoever fights for the sake of booty or to show bravery or the like cannot be considered a *Mujahid*.’ Of course this definition of *jihad* is derived from the *hadith* of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) in which he said that the only lawful struggle is the struggle to make the Word of Allah — that is, His religion or His law or His order — supreme in the land.

Like *hijra*, *jihad* is a perpetual obligation on Muslims: as long as there are domains of evil from which a Muslim is obliged to make *hijra*, *jihad* will remain obligatory. The key principle is the verse of the *Quran*: ‘And fight against them until there is no more oppression and all worship is devoted to Allah alone’. 

Polytheism, which must be completely uprooted, is here equated with oppression since, being a vehement opponent of Islam; it is most likely to subject Muslims to persecution. This struggle should, however, not merely seek to sweep the polytheists from power but should establish the rule of Islam. Thus Muslims should carry on with their struggle ‘until there is no war with the polytheists because their power has gone’ and until ‘nobody except Muslims or those in covenant with Muslims are left’ in the land. The ideal here is a situation in which ‘all religions will have perished except Islam’. In addition, Muslims are obliged to continue putting pressure on unbelievers until their false life is weakened beyond recovery, and to defend Islam against the inroads of corruption and disorder.

The duty to undertake the *jihad* devolves on the person of the Commander of the Faithful, but if there is none, then on the community as a whole. *Jihad* is either a
collective or an individual duty. It is a collective duty if Muslims are within secure borders and have their own state or territory. But if Muslims are in danger of being overwhelmed by the enemy, then it becomes an individual duty.

Jihad is the extreme in the tension that exists naturally between Islam and Kufr: to lay down one’s life in that struggle is itself the ultimate sacrifice which in turn attracts the maximum divine grace.

Such of the believers as remain passive — other than the disabled — cannot be deemed equal to those who strive hard in Allah’s cause with their possessions and their lives. . . . Although Allah has promised the ultimate good unto all (believers), yet has Allah exalted those who strive hard above those who remain passive by [promising them] a mighty reward.\textsuperscript{1xx}

Of the several traditions of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), the most important one is where a person asked him of any deed that is superior to participation in jihad, to which he replied, ‘I find none.’ The Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) also emphasized the merits of making weapons, of equipping fighters and looking after the well-being of the families of those in the battlefield.
Chapter Eleven

The Jihad

The Declaration of Jihad

The hoisting of the flag of Islam at Gudu signaled the beginning of the jihad. The jihad itself was but a logical conclusion of the process that the Shehu had begun three decades earlier in 1188/1774. Teachers, scholars, sages, soldiers joined by peasants, slaves and the oppressed men and women who had pledged their lives for the defense of Islam now clustered around him at Gudu; the seeds that he had sown and nurtured for the better part of his life were bearing fruit.

The Shehu made a formal declaration of the jihad in a twenty-seven point manifesto, known as Wathiqat ahl al-Sudan. It was addressed to ‘all the people of Sudan’ and in particular to ‘those, whom Allah wills, of the brethren in these countries’ of Hausaland. The tone of the Wathiqa is terse and the issues are stated ‘in their absolute terms.

Stages of the Struggle

In the Wathiqa the stages of the struggle for the supremacy of Islam meant the process of the tajdid, and the following were obligatory by consensus:

1. The enjoining of what is right
2. The prohibiting of what is wrong
3. Hijra from the domain of kufr [unbelief]
4. The befriending of believers [a solidarity for a common cause]
5. The appointment of Amir al-Muminin [Commander of the Believers]
6. Obedience to him and to all his deputies
7. Jihad
8. The appointment of amirs [emirs] in states
9. The appointment of judges
10. Their application of the Sharia laws

Thus, the process of Islamization starts with the commanding of what is right and the prohibiting of what is evil, which is a process in its own right, aimed at educating the people with the ultimate objective of changing their worldview and transforming their character and, eventually, their political behavior and allegiance. This is indeed the most crucial phase in the entire tajdid process; the rest of the phases depend on whether this initial phase has been carried out successfully. Throughout this period of spiritual, social and intellectual transformation, the Shehu did not mention jihad, or even hijra, in his lessons to his students or in his lectures to the public. Perhaps this deliberate caution was to prolong the stage until he was able to raise as many scholars as possible. His themes at
that time were Iman, Islam (or Sharia) and Ihsan. The People had to know Islam and be committed to living as Muslims before they could be called upon to fight its cause.

If in the process of public education and transformation obstacles are encountered, the next course of action is to undertake the hijra, the objectives of which are at least fourfold: to protect the symbols and flower of the emerging order from being annihilated; to give the cause periodic times of rest in which to take stock and chart new courses for the next phase; to bring together the children of the new order in one place, to form a concrete force for defense and liberation; and finally, to effect a symbolic break from the opposing order, a step which is absolutely vital ideologically.

Once the muhajirin and the ansar have been brought together in one place in the wake of a hijra, solidarity would gain a social and political dimension and the election of the Amir al-Muminin to head the new community would be necessary. Thus is a caliphate born, and every Muslim, male and female, is then duty-bound to give the pledge to hear and obey, to fight for the cause of Islam and to obey the Sharia.

The appointment of an Amir al-Muminin is in itself a declaration of jihad, for as soon as Muslims have become a social and political entity, jihad becomes obligatory on them. At Gudu the Jamaa, after the appointment of the leader, became a state within a state, a tiny caliphate in a sea of kufr. The prospect of jihad and the sheer necessity of preserving its integrity and ensuring its survival, places on the community the obligation to obey the imam ‘in pleasure and in sorrow’ as long as he holds the banner of Islam aloft, and as long as the need for survival, for self-preservation and defense of Islam persists. The same obligation obtains in respect of the imam’s deputies, governors and army commanders.

Jihad invariably leads to victory, and the expansion of the frontiers of the domain of Islam. Therefore as soon as new territories are liberated, an amir is appointed to take charge of their affairs, and a qadi is appointed, to administer the Sharia. The nature and pace of the jihad is dictated by the strength of the enemy force and the circumstances that obtain in a given situation.

The Overthrow of the Decadent Order

The ultimate objective of tajdid was the overthrow of the prevailing order and the establishment of the order of Islam. The struggle was between Islam and kufr: kufr had had its days, decades and centuries, now it was the turn of Islam, the turn of faith, truth, liberty and justice. After reiterating his yard stick for determining the legal status of a country — if the ruler is a Muslim then the country is Muslim, if he is an unbeliever, then the country is one of unbelief — the Shehu set forth in the Wathiqa the categories of leaders against whom the struggle was being launched.

Thus the people of Bilad al-Sudan, he said, should know that the following are obligatory by consensus:

1. To fight against an unbelieving king who has never in his life declared ‘There is no deity but Allah’, and to take the reins of government from him.
2. To fight against an unbelieving king who declares ‘There is no deity but Allah’ for the mere purpose of satisfying the established custom of the country but who in reality does not profess Islam, and to take the reins of government from him.

3. To fight against an apostate king who abandons Islam and reverts to unbelief, and to take the reins of government from him.

4. To fight against an apostate king who outwardly remains within the fold of Islam but who, nevertheless, syncretizes the practices of Islam with the practices of unbelief (like most of the Hausa kings), and to take the reins of government from him.

The Shehu saw his cause as a struggle against these four types of government. The first was government established from the start on unbelief; such governments in Hausaland were pagans in the real sense of the word and the Shehu thought they must suffer being swept from power by a militant revolution. The second was government whose rulers were unbelievers in their hearts who through political expedience had to manifest Islam and associate with Muslims. They might pray, fast and go to the ‘Id with unusual show of pomp and pageantry, while at the same time oppressing Muslims, frustrating all genuine tendencies towards true Islam and giving un-Islamic practices and policies supremacy over Islam. The jihad must sweep them away, for common sense dictates that if the majority of the people belong to one particular ideological persuasion, the leader must belong to that persuasion as well. It is absurd to have a pagan at the head of a country that is largely Muslim. The third was government whose leaders had committed treason by coming to power in the name of Islam and then abandoning Islam when fully established. In most cases rulers reverted to unbelief in order to escape the uncompromising stand of Islam for justice, moral discipline and accountability; paganism does not offer any serious check on the excesses of kings, but aids them by conferring on them a false divinity and infallibility. The fourth was government of syncretic rulers who ruled in the name of Islam but whose policies were based on secular objectives, principles and institutions. This category of rulers presented the greatest difficulties, for they appeared to the people in the garb of Islam but the governments they administered were fundamentally un-Islamic. Secular laws substituted for the Sharia; pagan customs and behavior replaced Islamic social morality; oppressive taxation, usurpation and the confiscation of property replaced the Islamic system of taxation and fiscal policies; and Islamic inheritance laws were abandoned in favor of pagan whims. The pagan character of government also allowed rulers to amass wealth on a colossal scale and to spread corruption and to live their lives without a sense of moral responsibility.

The unmistakable objective of the Shehu’s jihad, therefore, was to overthrow all those systems of government counter to the beliefs, values and systems of their people. The legitimate and logical basis for a government is that it should remain loyal to the ideals of the people and uphold those ideals faithfully, and that it should symbolize their aspirations, beliefs, traditions and values.

Jihad requires the solidarity of Muslims and their identification with the struggle, so that they are ready to enter into a state of war when the time comes. Muslims who then identify themselves with the enemy should be considered as enemies. The best course of action is for every Muslim to pledge his loyalty to the Amir al-Muminin.

According to the Shehu, a Muslim community that keeps itself apart from the main body of Muslims under an Amir al-Muminin should be invited to pledge their bay’a to him.
and join the main body of Muslims. If they refuse, ‘to fight against them until they pledge their allegiance is obligatory by consensus’, for if force is required to unite the umma against a real and potent threat, then it must be used. The Shehu went on to state that the following were unlawful by consensus:

To declare Muslims as unbelievers because of sins.
To remain in the domain of war.
To remain without paying an allegiance to the Amir al-Muminin and his deputies.
To fight against Muslims who live in the domain of Islam.
To devour their wealth unjustly.
To enslave the free men among Muslims whether they reside in the domain of Islam or in the domain of war.

There should be no excuse whatsoever, short of active identification with the enemy, for attacking Muslims, seizing their property or depriving them of their freedom. These principles seem to be aimed at those who joined the Shehu to acquire wealth and slaves, who would bend the laws of Islam in order to enslave free men and legalize their property as booty. The Shehu’s objective was to secure the solidarity of all Muslims and safeguard their freedom, well-being and honor.

The Internal Enemy

The Shehu devoted the last part of his Wathiqa to the threats that might remain after the completion of the jihad.

The threat of apostasy had happened at the time of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) and immediately after his death when many communities reverted to unbelief. The only course of action, when apostasy arises, is to crush them by force if they do not peacefully renounce their treachery. Those who might subvert the new Islamic social order — such as armed brigands, bandits, robbers or subversive armed brigades of any kind — represent a further threat. It is essential to fight until they are brought to submission and peace and security to life, property and honor prevail within the domain of Islam. Finally, a threat might arise from rebels, who have been part of the jihad process but not for the purpose of establishing the supremacy of the Sharia. They might have been there for the acquisition of territory, or to obtain political power or to acquire wealth; and because they will almost certainly be disappointed in the appointment of leaders and distribution of state wealth, rebellion from such groups must be expected.

That, briefly, was the Shehu’s declaration of jihad. It had been his practice throughout his career to follow the Sunna in every step he took: be it in his public lectures, in the training of his students, in his hijra or in his eventual resistance to the forces of injustice and unbelief. By addressing his Wathiqa to the people of the Sudan as a whole he may have envisaged a revolution that embraced states and territories far beyond Hausaland — a legitimate aspiration.
The Start of the Jihad

The *jihad* started with several skirmishes between Muslims and the forces of Gobir. The *mujahidin* achieved initial success, notably the liberation of Matankari and Kwonni. These skirmishes were to be followed by what Muslims themselves regarded as their own *Badr* — the most important battle they ever fought, the greatest in the entire course of the *jihad*.

According to Muhammad Bello, the Sultan of Gobir had sent messages to fellow sultans in Hausaland, notably those of Katsina, Kano and Zazzau, asking for their support and assistance in his war against the followers of the Shehu. They gave their blessing and support. ‘Then the Sultan of Gobir, Yunfa, came against us,’ Abdullahi wrote in *Tazyin*, ‘having collected armies of Nubians and Touareg, and the Fulani who followed him such as none knows except Allah.’ The Gobir forces were efficiently organized and well equipped. The Shehu prepared an ‘army’ to meet the forces of Yunfa, with his brother Abdullahi as its commander. It was poor, ill-equipped and inexperienced, comprised mainly of people driven from their homes for their beliefs, people inspired by love for Allah and His religion. The *mujahidin* had one main worry apart from their weakness in numbers and equipment — lack of food and scarcity of water. But they received a boost when some of the Gobir army defected to their side, and when Sheikh Agale, and the son of Sheikh Jibril ibn Umar, the Shehu’s teacher joined them.

The two armies met at Gurdam on a lake known as Tabkin Kwatto, on Thursday, 12 *Rabi al-Awwal* 1219 (June 21, 1804), described as follows by Bello:

> Then as we approached the enemy we marched in lines. The enemy, too, prepared and took up positions. In truth they had put on chain and quilted armor about one hundred in number. They drew up in line with round shields, and square shields, and made their preparations. We formed our line of battle against them. We gazed at each other, and each man’s eye looked into the enemy’s. Then we shouted three times ‘Allahu Akbar’ and charged them. They beat their drums and charged to meet us.

> The lines met. Their right wing over-bore our left wing and was mingled with our men and pressed them back into the centre. Their left wing also over-bore our right wing and pressed our men back to the centre. Our centre stood firm. They shot their arrows, and we shot ours. Our horsemen did not exceed twenty but the Gobirawa had war horses not to be numbered except by Allah. When our centre held firm our right wing that had been driven back when it reached the centre also stood firm. The fight continued and the opposing lines were intermingled. Allah broke the army of the unbelievers. They fell back. They retreated, they ran and scattered.

> The Muslims pursued at their heels and killed them and took their property. Of those that were killed of them, Allah alone knows their number. Their King fled . . . Our commander, Waziri Abdullahi returned to the lake of Kwatto and halted there and we drank. Then we returned to the camp and halted there and said the afternoon prayer. Then we went on to our houses and passed the night there. \(^{lxxi}\) ‘So the last remnant of the people who did evil was cut off. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.’ \(^{lxxii}\)

Abdullahi’s conception of this battle, depicted in his two poems, could be considered as representing the viewpoint of the *Jamaa* as a whole. He saw it as a war of ideology. \(^{lxxiv}\) Yunfa had collected a vast army ‘to uproot Islam and the Muslims from their country’ and his initial successes increased his unbelief and pride. Muslims on the other hand were
defending their religion ‘and we are proud of nothing but that’. Though the two armies were unequal in arms and men, there could be no doubt that eventually Muslims would prevail. Yunfa was but the ‘he of the she-camel’ who instigated the killing of Prophet Salih’s (Allah grant him peace) she-camel as a result of which Allah destroyed the people altogether. The combined forces of Hausaland were like the people of Ad who were driven into perdition by their arrogance and obstinacy. Yunfa would never again rise to greatness after this battle, for ‘he has turned back from greatness, hating religion’.

Abdullahi gave a vivid picture of the difference in the spiritual and ideological outlook of the two forces. The Gobir army was a typical establishment force, enmeshed in luxury and depravity, trusting only in its brute power and superior armor:

And they had spitted meats around the fire,
And gathered ready in tents,
Fine vestments in a chest,
And all kinds of carpets, with cushions.
And do not ask about wheaten cake
Mixed with ghee and honey among the provisions!

Thus, in spite of their superior power in weaponry and numbers, ‘their fire became like ashes’ and their arrows were as if they had no heads to them. Their swords were as if they were ‘in the hands of inanimate things’ and the lances as if in the ‘hands of the blind’. Flight from the battlefield was inevitable.

Abdullahi saw the Muslim victory at Tabkin Kwatto as reminiscent of the Prophet’s (Allah bless him and grant him peace) victory to Badr. It therefore heralded the ultimate victory of Islam which would culminate in the liberation of Hausaland and the establishment of the caliphate. This explains his confidence in calling the ill-equipped, uncertain and hungry army ‘an army victorious in Islam’ in the first year of a war that was to rage for several more years. For if the Muslim army at Badr could grow in strength to overcome the whole of Arabia, what could possibly prevent the Muslim army at Tabkin Kwatto from overcoming Hausaland? Yet in Abdullahi’s view, the victory was not the victory of Muslim soldiers per se, but of Islam. Shortly after the Tabkin Kwatto encounter, the Shehu moved from Gudu to Magabci. There, according to Bello, he wrote letters to the rulers of Bilad al-Sudan in which, among other things, he reiterated the purpose of his jihad: to secure the victory of truth over falsehood, to revive the Sunna and suppress bida. He then asked them to be sincere in their religion, rid themselves of those traits against which the struggle was being waged, and associate themselves wholly with the cause. He warned them that Allah would punish them if they continued to help the enemy because Allah has promised to give victory to Muslims and humiliate unbelievers.

The Shehu then moved to Sokoto after a two-month stay in Magabci, with the intention of sending a force against Dan Gaima. It was here that an attempt was made to conclude a peace agreement with the Sultan of Gobir. The Sultan of Gummi had sent a message to the Shehu seeking to make peace between the Shehu and Yunfa. The Shehu accepted the proposal. Shortly after that Yunfa’s wazir, Galadima — who had been once dismissed from his position because of his sympathies for the Shehu but reinstated, possibly to negotiate the peace treaty — arrived in Sokoto for talks. The Shehu’s council met and
decided that Yunfa himself should come to Sokoto for the negotiations. The Shehu, meanwhile, offered to keep peace for a specified time with the Gobir forces, with the exception of the march against Dan Gaida. The Gobir ruler would have come to the Shehu in person, but his council advised otherwise, and the peace efforts crumbled.

**The Laws of War**

We will pause here to take a look at some laws and principles that governed the conduct of the *jihad* as articulated by the Shehu. In Islam, all aspects of life must be governed by law, even in such emotive and violent acts as war. Our source is *Bayan Wujub al-Hijra ala l-Ibad*, which Fathi al-Masri claims to be the Shehu’s magnum opus and one of the most outstanding works on the subject of *jihad* in Islamic literature.

The Shehu considered the principles of warfare to be universal, and therefore of relevance to all people. These, obviously, would not touch upon particular military tactics or strategies, for as he himself noted, ‘each nation has its own particular type of maneuver, tactic and stratagem and its own method of engaging, advancing and retreating’.

Adequate, or maximum, preparation must be made against the enemy in terms of weaponry, training and strategies. The command of Allah, ‘Make ready for them all you can of armed forces’ implies, according to the Shehu, the mobilization of ‘all human potentials’ for war. Associated with this preparation is the predominant value of strategy. The Shehu elaborated on the Prophet’s (Allah bless him and grant him peace) statement ‘war is but stratagem’: ‘It is prudent on the part of the King not to underestimate his enemy, though he be lowly; nor to be heedless of him however insignificant he might be’; adding ‘the enemy is like a fire. If you get to it when it is starting, it is easy to put it out; but if you ignore it till the blaze has got a firm hold, it is difficult to extinguish.’ It is important to gather information about the enemy, principally through spies, and attempt to break the enemy by infiltrating their ranks.

Another principle, perhaps the most important, is uprightness: ‘Indeed, you only fight with your deeds.’ Ultimate victory lies with the side that possesses superior moral qualities. It will be futile, however, to expect every soldier to have high moral standards. What is expected is that the core of the army should possess such qualities as would give the entire army that moral superiority. The commander then should symbolize those qualities, and in addition should be a man of experience and capability — ‘a man who has fought in the middle of battles . . . who has combated his equal and surpassed the heroes’. The commander should have maximum security and should not be exposed to the enemy. He should conceal any mark by which he might be known and remove all traces that might betray his strategies to the enemy. ‘He must not keep to his tent day and night,’ the Shehu stated, ‘and must change his garment and his tent and let his position be undetected lest his enemy should take him unawares.’ Moreover he should remain alert at all times.

Finally, there is the principle of victory: or rather the observance of rules necessary for victory. The first of these is unity, ‘for dispersal is the beginning of defeat’. And unity is achieved through obedience to the commanders and observance of the rules of war. Then
comes calmness. Then comes patience. ‘When battle takes place,’ the Shehu stated, ‘fate shows its face. Often a plot is more effective than bravery and a word has often defeated an army. Patience is the cause of victory.’ Then comes justice, both in the process of war and afterwards, for ‘there is no victory with injustice.’ Moreover, one must fight purely for the sake of Allah, and not for worldly interests.

To participate in actual combat in a jihad one should be first and foremost a Muslim — though under certain conditions a non-Muslim may be allowed to take part — since jihad is essentially an ideological war. In addition, one should be mature, sane and sound physically and financially. Also one should be a male, though if Muslims are surprised within their cities or invaded, the duty to defend the integrity of Islam physically devolves on a female Muslims also.

While undertaking the jihad, the mujahid is under six obligations: to fight for no purpose other than the exaltation of Islam, to obey the imam, to remain honest and sincere in respect of booty, to respect the agreements concluded by the imam in respect of security given to the enemy, to remain steadfast in the battlefront and to avoid corruption.

Jihad is valid only against ‘unbelievers either by birth or apostasy, rebels and brigands’. Yet jihad is not all killing. The law exempts certain people from being killed: women, children, old men, the chronically ill, the blind, the imbecile and the monk secluded in the monastery, as long as they do not take part in actual combat, or in spying and intrigues. Indeed, maximum care should be taken to protect the lives of children and women in particular. Thus in situations where the enemy shield themselves with children or encamp with their women and children, efforts have to be made, when attacking, to spare them. They should not be attacked altogether, unless, by taking such extreme care ‘Muslims would be defeated, evil would spread, and there would be fear that the basis of Islam would be annihilated as well as its people and those among them whose example is followed.’

The aim of jihad is not to annihilate lives but to ensure the supremacy of Sharia and the establishment of justice. Therefore minimization of loss of life on both sides is a cherished goal to which the mujahid should commit himself.

On the Muslim side, though retreat is a grave sin, it is permitted if the survival of the fighters themselves is at risk or if the extent of loss of lives is unbearable. ‘If the Muslims realize that they are certainly going to be killed,’ the Shehu told us, ‘then it is better for them to quit; if furthermore, they realize that they will be of no effect in demoralizing the enemy, flight is obligatory. . . . There is no dispute about that.’ A Muslim may not flee simply because he fears defeat, but for the ultimate survival of Islam.

If it is the Muslims who are on the offensive, then they should explore alternative means towards achieving peace. They should first invite the people to Islam. ‘Go forth at your leisure,’ the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) instructed Ali (Allah ennable his countenance) in a hadith the Shehu quoted, ‘until you reach their saha: then invite them to Islam and tell them what their duty is towards Allah; for by Allah, that He should guide, through you, a single man, is better for you than possessing the choicest camels of a herd.’ If the enemy accepts Islam, then they should be accepted into the brotherhood of Islam. If they refuse, they should be offered another opportunity for peace: to come under the protection of Islam. If this is rejected, then force has to settle
Fighting is to be avoided if the enemy, on their own accord, professes Islam, even if it appears to Muslims that their profession has been motivated by expediency.

The spoils of war encompass the following categories: the unbelieving men and women, their children, property, land and food and drink. The imam has the discretion to put the combatants to death, or set them free either by grace or ransom, or to make them pay jizya, or keep them in captivity. He should exercise his discretion, bearing in mind the overall interest of Muslims. The property, land and other possessions are to be used for the benefit of Muslims as determined by law. In particular the rules regarding the distribution of the booty must be strictly observed.

Yet jihad is not inhumane: despite the necessary violence and bloodshed, its ultimate desire is peace, which is protected and enhanced by the sacred law. Thus individuals who are engaged in fighting can be given protection, aman, within the domain of Islam despite the state of war. This protection can be given by any citizen, and is to be respected by all the individuals and by the state itself. The Shehu insisted that:

Such aman, when given, binds the imam and others to fulfilling it, provided it incurs no harm, no matter whether it produces any benefit or not, whether it is given verbally or written in any language or by some indirect declaration of the intent or by some indicative sign; even if the unbeliever has assumed that the Muslim intended aman while the latter actually did not, the unbeliever must not be killed.

The aman should also be respected if it is extended to the family and property of the unbeliever.

A man engaged in trading or on an embassy does not need an aman because that mission automatically gives him protection. . . . If a belligerent comes to us under aman and leaves some property behind with us, it belongs to him and to his heirs after him. And if a non-Muslim is caught on some road and he invents some tale to save his skin, the truth or falseness of which cannot be ascertained, he should be returned to a place where he feels safe if his story is not accepted.

Similarly, the imam can conclude a treaty of peace with non-Muslims on behalf of Muslims, provided that it is to the benefit of Islam, and that it is absolutely necessary to do so. He can also conclude a treaty with non-Muslims who are either brought into submission as a result of jihad, or surrender before the engagement. In either case, they will pay the jizya and are to be treated as free people. ‘We must let them settle in our land,’ the Shehu stated, ‘we should leave them in peace and safeguard them with a guarantee of protection for themselves and their property, we should not interfere with their churches, nor with their wine or pigs unless they make them public.’ They on their part must respect Muslims, and must not commit an act of treason, such as spying for the enemy, against the Islamic state.

**The Jaysh al-Futuh**

The victory at Tabkin Kwatto greatly boosted the morale of the Muslim forces and enhanced the prestige and influence of the Shehu. But several years of war and enormous hardships still lay ahead. Besides Gobir, the other powers in Hausaland, such as Kano, Katsina and Zazzau, posed a threat to the very existence of the Jamaa and the ultimate
success of the cause itself. The prospect of persistent hunger and starvation on the part of Muslims as the war raged on was a further obstacle.

But there were some significant gains. The Sultan of Kebbi was already an ally: and in addition, the sultans of Mafara, Burmi and Danko had come over to the Shehu — though for motives more related to their opposition to Gobir than their commitment to Islam — thus assuring for the Jamaa an important source of food.

The Battle of Tsuntsuwa

The next important battle after the collapse of the peace effort was the mujahidin’s unsuccessful attempt to liberate Gobir’s capital, Alkalawa. But their most significant encounter — their Uhud, at least from the ideological standpoint — was the setback at Tsuntsuwa. Abdullahi was still nursing a wound he sustained at Alkalawa and Bello was sick. Bello advised that instead of going out to meet the enemy, the mujahidin should remain on the defensive and stay close to the camp, but his advice was rejected. The two armies met. The result was devastating for the Muslims. In all, more than two thousand men were killed, including about two hundred people who knew the Quran by heart. The Jamaa’s chief justice who was also the imam for the prayers, Muhammad Sambo, the standard-bearer Saad, the hadith scholar Abubakar Binga, and the venerated saint Sadiq and numerous other men of learning and piety were also among the martyrs. The Jamaa was evidently shaken, and the Shehu was overcome. ‘That day,’ wrote Waziri Junaidu about his reaction to the defeat, ‘he was angrier than they ever saw him before or after. “Take me to Alkalawa!” he cried. But his friend Umar Alkammu spoke gently to him, and brought him back to where the martyrs lay and they buried them.

This battle took place in the month of Ramadan in the first year of the Shehu’s hijra.

In addition, Sheikh Agali, one of the pillars of Islam, and Shehu’s brother Ali also died within the period. This large-scale loss of the best of their men, and physical and financial difficulties intensified the sorrow of the Jamaa. Bello said that their distress was exacerbated by lack of food and funds, as well as illness. However, the struggle went on. The Shehu, after the ‘Id, moved to Sabon Gari in the state of Zamfara. The immediate problem he was faced with was one of succession, which he settled by choosing Abarshi, who had been released from prison by the Sultan of Gobir as a result of the Shehu’s five famous requests. But more fundamentally, the Jamaa decided to launch an attack on Birnin Kebbi, and thereby bring the Hausa state of Kebbi under the rule of Islam. The first encounter was with the Sultan of Gummi who was defeated — ‘we left no fortress of his’, Abdullahi wrote in Tazyin, ‘which we did not conquer’. Then the Muslims marched on Birnin Kebbi, and Allah gave them victory.

While at Sabon Gari the Shehu wrote to the rulers in Hausaland exhorting them to become true Muslims and support the cause of Islam. Waziri Junaidu recounted the consequences:

When the letter reached the Sultan of Katsina and he saw it, pride took hold of him and he tore it up. So Allah rent his kingdom apart also. When it reached the Sultan of Kano he was on the verge of accepting it, but then refused, and followed the way taken by his brother. When the letter reached the Sultan of Zakzak he agreed to repent. But his people rejected it
and he fought them until he died. After his death they rose against the Muslims, apostatizing.\textsuperscript{lxxviii}

The Shehu’s letters infuriated them and increased their determination to crush Muslims everywhere. The Sultan of Gobir had already warned them that if they did not put out the ‘fire’ of Islam, it would eventually engulf their kingdoms as his had been engulfed. Both states of Katsina and Daura were liberated during the Shehu’s stay at Sabon Gari and Kano was embroiled in a turmoil which eventually led to its total liberation two years later. These were far-reaching victories for they set an irreversible trend of liberation all over Hausaland.\textsuperscript{lxix}

**The Battle of Alwasa**

After a seven month stay in Sabon Gari the Shehu moved to Gwandu and set up a permanent base there. That was in the second year of the \textit{hijra}. Soon after the arrival of Muslims in Gwandu, the Sultan of Gobir, in league with the Touregs and several of his fellow rulers, prepared a great force against them. The Muslims were divided as to whether to go out to meet the enemy or to take defensive measures. Both Abdullahi and Bello thought it more strategic to be on the defensive. The Commander-in-Chief, Ali Jedo, over ruled them, as did a council held the following day. Disunity was thus apparent on the Muslim side.

One section of the Muslim army comprised a band of undisciplined and irresponsible people who had attacked people obviously sympathetic to the cause or who were at peace with Muslims and had plundered their property. Abdullahi’s efforts to prevent them failed and Bello was nearly killed when he tried to stop them. Abdullahi was greatly disturbed and wished to discontinue the march, being certain that the Muslims with such undisciplined and greedy bands in their midst would face defeat. Again those who wanted to continue with the march prevailed. In the ensuing battle at Alwassa, the Muslims were defeated and suffered a staggering loss of about one thousand men.

Commenting on this moment of supreme crisis for the Shehu and his army, Johnston has pointed out that this defeat put the fate of the \textit{Jamaa} and the whole future of Hausaland in the balance, for the situation was desperate. However, Shehu Usman’s decisive moral intervention helped to save the situation and secure the future for Islam, as it were.

At this moment of supreme crisis it was not the redoubtable Bello nor the gifted Abdullahi nor the belligerent Aliyu Jaidu who rallied the demoralized reformers but the frail, devout and unworldly Shehu. It is characteristic of him that even now, with his army defeated, his captains at odds with one another, and his whole cause in jeopardy, he continued to exert his authority by purely spiritual means. Instead of taking personal command, as in the circumstances almost any other leader would have done, he sought to restore the morale of his followers through prayer and exhortation. We have Bello’s testimony . . . : ‘Shehu came out from the mosque and preached to the people. With loving kindness he exhorted them to forsake evil-doing and turn into the paths of righteousness. He prayed for victory and his words made them eager to fight again.’\textsuperscript{lxxx}

The end result of this intervention was the recovery of the battered Muslim army, even to the extent that they were able to, in the words of Johnston, "unleash a fierce counter
attack’ on the enemy who were forced to retreat to Gwandu. This retreat proved, ultimately, to be the decisive turning point in the struggle, since Muslims were never to face any serious defeat again at the hands of the enemy. As Johnston put it, ‘If Alwasa brought Shehu’s cause to the very verge of ruin, Gwandu certainly sealed Gobir’s fate.’

Abdullahi reflected in *Tazyin* on the indiscipline in the army. As far as he was concerned it was fundamentally attributable to the loss by the mujahidin of many of their best and most valuable men in the previous battles. ‘I have been left among a remnant who neglect their prayers and obey, in procuring pleasures, their own souls: and the majority of them have traded their faith for the world.’ Certainly such people, lacking in discipline and Islamic commitment, could not be expected to fight a *jihad*. Dishonest and ideologically barren warriors can win a war but not a *jihad*. There was no doubt, therefore, that deep in his mind, Abdullahi, and indeed several others, knew they were going to war with very many wrong people in their midst. ‘On the night of ill fortune I slept at Koldi, confused and defiled by mixing with the rabble of young hooligans; . . . I said — and the daughter of misfortune was amongst us because of their wickedness — to the morning “This morning is dark with adversities”.’ On seeing the enemy, these rough men who had been brave in plundering defenseless villages did not have the courage to fight in a battle. So they fled. Abdullahi’s cry, ‘O return!’ fell on deaf ears, and only the courage of the true majahidun prevented a total disaster.

In spite of the set back, however, the cause would eventually prevail because, in Abdullahi’s estimation, although uncouth and undisciplined rabble found their way into the army, those who were committed to the *jihad* were firmly in charge and thousands of others were ever ready to lay down their lives in the cause of Allah. Abdullahi believed the Shehu’s cause was not in danger, but Alwassa did deal a serious blow to the Muslims and their hardships increased. The people of Kebbi, according to Bello, seized the opportunity to turn against the Muslims, and the Gobir and other hostile forces went on the offensive once again, perhaps with greater confidence. In addition, famine exacerbated the now overwhelming and devastating injury.

**The Meeting at Birnin Gada**

The defeat at Alwassa in the long run was a victory for the Muslims, for it turned the tide in their favor. Several successful expeditions were undertaken, but the most important event following immediately after Alwassa was the meeting at Birnin Gada. The Shehu summoned the leaders of the eastern countries — Katsina, Daura, Zamfara and Kano — to Birnin Gada. Unable to attend himself, the Shehu was represented by his son, Muhammad Bello, who read his father’s letter to the assembled leaders. He asked them, Last writes in *Sokoto Caliphate* to ‘take an oath that they would not be corrupted or changed by power, as were the Israelites in the desert, but they would avoid worldly aspirations, envy, mercilessness, feuds, the pursuit of wealth; that they would avoid falling into the strife that “makes a man a Muslim in the morning and a pagan by evening” . . . They took the oaths and dispersed.’ The supremacy of Sokoto now began with the caliphate being recognized by the emigrants and those fighting in the Sokoto *jihad*, and also the Muslims in Zamfara, Katsina, Daura and Kano.'
Abdullahi’s Departure from Gwandu

Meanwhile the lack of discipline in the army so worried Abdullahi that he left the jihad altogether in the fourth year of the hijra (that is, 1808), and moved towards the east to perform the Pilgrimage.

There came to me from Allah the sudden thought to shun the homelands, and my brothers, and turn towards the best of Allah’s creation, in order to seek approval, because of what I have seen of the changing times and (my) brothers, and their inclination towards the world, and their squabbling over its possession, and its wealth, and its regard, together with their abandoning the upkeep of the mosques and the schools, and other things besides that . . . I considered flight incumbent upon me, and I left the army and occupied myself with my own affairs and faced towards the East and towards the Chosen One — may Allah bless him and give him peace.

On arrival in Kano, however, he found that although the unbelievers had been driven away, the affairs of the Muslims had become confused because of their preoccupation with the world. ‘I saw among them that from which I had fled in my own country.’ The people of Kano prevailed on him to discontinue the journey and to write a book on Islamic government for them. He compiled Diya al-Hukkam and read the commentary on the Quran to them. They were contrite and organized their affairs. Significantly, his arrival in Kano actually saved the revolution there.

The Shehu was well aware of the army’s growing ‘worldly inclination’, but thought that it was a natural process arising from the different capability each man had to resist evil impulses. Those like Abdullahi, Bello and many others could control themselves, resist temptations of the world and remain totally uncorrupted, but others could not. It might not be wise to reject those who were fighting for a cause simply because of some moral failure. It would be wiser to exhort them to desist from evil and encourage them to improve their moral commitments, leaving judgment to Allah. Thus, while he would not accept those who fought purely to acquire worldly possessions, he was sympathetic to human failure. In the Bayan he said:

I say that the basis of this definition (of Jihad) is what is related in Bukhari’s Sahih, according to Abu Musa al-Ashari who said, ‘A man came to the Prophet and said: One person (may) fight for booty, (another may) fight to gain fame, (a third may) fight to show off his bravery; which of these is in Allah’s path?’ The Prophet replied: ‘He who fights to make Allah’s law supreme is the one who is in Allah’s path.’ It is related in Madkhal: ‘If a man intends to fight for the sake of making Allah’s law supreme, he will not be harmed afterwards by what he is possessed by during his fighting, whether that was anger, zeal or something similar; because all these are whispering and inspirations of Satan and whims of minds that are not under control. Allah has excused us for that’.

As Abdullahi did eventually discover, it is futile to expect everyone to be totally upright. Indeed, he might have been even more disappointed had he reached Madina, for he would have found that the ideal he was looking for in people did not exist there either. It was enough that people who had not seen the flag of Islam ever raised before were now giving their lives to make Islam supreme. It was sufficient that the Commander of the Believers was honest, upright and sincere and committed to the supreme cause; and that the core of the leadership — Ali Jedo, the Commander-in-Chief, Abdullahi himself, and
the energetic Muhammad Bello and others was entirely committed and beyond corruption. In spite of the great losses, in spite of the vast forces allied together to destroy them, and in spite of the effects of hunger and disease, the army still maintained, fundamentally, its Islamic character, fighting to establish an Islamic order.

Abdullahi’s stay in Kano proved beneficial to Muslims, for *Diya al-Hukkam* eventually became the manual of government throughout the caliphate. He returned to Gwandu to join his fellow *mujahidun* who had continued with their struggle. There had been a second unsuccessful attempt to take Alkalawa. Many successful expeditions had also taken place in the interim. Yan Doto, Yauri, had been liberated and the Toureg at Farfara had been subdued. In addition, some of the rebellious groups had been systematically crushed.

*The Liberation of Alkalawa*

In the fifth year of the *hijra* the Shehu decided on a combined assault on Alkalawa, aimed at liberating it totally and irrevocably. He sent messages to all liberated countries of Hausaland to join in the march against the final stronghold of Gobir power. Bello, his son, was in command. ‘After four and a half years of fighting,’ Johnston states, ‘the strength had gone out of Gobir and the end came quickly. Bello, as terse in triumph as in disaster, described the final victory without vainglory. “Allah then opened Alkalawa to us. In the twinkling of an eye, the Muslims hurled themselves on the enemy, killing them and making them captive. Yunfa was slain and his followers by his side. Thanks be to Allah.”’ The fall of Alkalawa marked the end of Hausa power and the beginning of an epoch: the Caliphate. The backbone of unbelief had been broken, the worldly power was at last humbled and subdued, and Islam became supreme.
Chapter Twelve
The Vision of a Mujaddid

We shall now take our leave from the volatile arena of *jihad* for a quieter, more serene, but equally vital arena of Shehu Usman’s thoughts on the new, noble state that had just come into being. How, for example, would he visualize the unfolding of history in the course of the life of this young state? What was his vision of an Islamic state: in which way, for example, would it differ from the Hausa kingdoms it had replaced? And if decline is inevitable for all peoples and all states, what would be his recipe for avoiding disintegration? Our main sources in this endeavor are the Shehu’s *Bayan Wujub al-Hijra*, his *Kitab al-Farq* and his *Usul al-Adl*.

The Road to Revolution

The Shehu saw his role in leading to the establishment of the caliphate as similar in many respects to that of the Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) who came to call his people ‘to profess belief in the unity of Allah, and demonstrated to them shining miracles in the face of which no man of sound judgment would doubt that he was the Messenger of Allah’. However, the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) was at first rejected and severely persecuted. His followers were killed and forced into exile. But he endured and persisted in his mission.

The Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) had an ardent desire to see his people spared the prospect of destruction, even though their treatment of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) was contemptuous and unjust. ‘When their persecution intensified,’ the Shehu recalled, ‘Gabriel came to him and said, “O Muhammad, Allah has ordered heaven, earth and the mountains to obey you.” He replied, “I (wish to) grant a respite to my community for it may be that Allah will forgive them.” ‘ The question of rushing to establish a ‘state’ on the ruin of his community was never contemplated by the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace). All along he had hoped for one of three things: that his people be guided to the right path, by which they would be saved from the wrath of Allah, and made to live a successful life here, and a still worthier and more successful life in the hereafter; that in the case of their rejecting his message, Allah might, in His unbounded mercy, grant them His pardon, and that, alternatively, He would at least, raise out of them a generation that would accept the message and be guided rightly.

The Prophet’s (Allah bless him and grant him peace) conviction that perseverance was a key to ultimate success restrained any tendency in him to seek an armed confrontation prematurely. ‘In spite of the offer his Lord gave him,’ the Shehu insisted, ‘he was not the first to resort to force against them; on the contrary, he used to present himself to the tribes and during festive seasons saying, “Who will believe in me? Who will help me so that I can convey the message of my Lord and thus secure for himself (a place in)
paradise? ” In the end Allah opened for him the door of hijra and through it, the ultimate door to the perfection of religion and the termination of the days of ignorance.’

The system established by the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) after his victory over the systems of ignorance thrived principally on his ‘sublime attributes’, including his personal discipline and his austere and abstemious life in the midst of numerous opportunities for an easy and comfortable life which his position as the head of state necessarily opened to him. The leader’s self-restraint, his indifference to material privileges and his selflessness constitute the essence of being an imam as opposed to being a king. It is in this way that a leader symbolizes the spirit that gives birth to a new system, and carries it further and reinforces it by personal example and commitment.

The Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) also had an absolute sense of humility, both in his personal conduct and his exercise of power. The Shehu noted that when the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) was given the option of being either a prophet and a king or a prophet and a slave, he replied, ‘Rather a slave!’ He noted further that the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) prevented his people from standing up for him as a mark of respect, saying, ‘I am only a slave; I eat as a slave eats, and sit as a slave does.’ His humility in private life was also revered by the Shehu:

In his own house he used to pursue the occupation of his family, i.e. serve them; he deloused his clothing, patched it, repaired his sandals, served himself, gave fodder to his camel used for water-carrying, swept the house, ate with the servant and kneaded dough with him and carried his own goods from the market, (a job) which he allowed nobody else to do for him. ... He himself served when entertaining a guest. . . . He used to accept the excuse which one made, be the first to shake hands with his friends, and he never interrupted anyone who was speaking, nor made any displeasing remark to anybody. He never avenged himself save when the holy things of Allah were abused, then he would punish for the sake of Allah.

Another attribute of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) was that he fixed his gaze in the course of his entire life on the hereafter, disdaining to take advantages of his life lest he should be occupied with it to the detriment of his relationship with Allah. Even as the booties from the battlefields kept pouring into his treasury, even as territories came under his control at a rate beyond his imagination, even as people came to him in complete submission, the Prophet’s (Allah bless him and grant him peace) mind was always occupied with the thought of Allah, and his ultimate abode. ‘Nothing is dearer to me,’ the Shehu quoted the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), ‘than to join my brothers and my intimate friends (i.e. his fellow Prophets).’ One month later, the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) died, without ever desiring to enjoy material benefit from his lifetime struggle in the guidance of mankind — he died seeking purely the reward that is with Allah.

The Shehu’s objective in telling about the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) and the four rightly guided Caliphs (Allah be pleased with them) perhaps killed two birds with one stone: he showed the attributes of the best of Muslim leaders, the nature of the Islamic state and the fundamental goals of Islamic polity; and secondly, he showed the likely trend in the history of his own state — from a merciful and compassionate Caliphate, to monarchy and then to universal corruption and tyranny. And all could happen within a period of only fifty years.
Shehu’s Vision for the Caliphate

The *mujaddid’s* vision of his own caliphate was essentially characterized by two fundamental attributes: a commitment to moral values and to an unconditional, universal justice. The *mujaddid* was determined to create a state far superior to and totally different from the Hausa states he had just overthrown. The new spirit can be summarized in two words: justice and piety.

The Moral Foundation of the State

Of the ten ‘qualities commendable both for princes and others’, mentioned in *Bayan*, we shall content ourselves with five. These qualities are an expression of the Shehu’s concept of the nature of the new social order.

The first quality is wisdom — that moral and intellectual discipline which enables a person to join the company of angels while retaining essential human characteristics; it is the ability to strike a balance between the material and the spiritual in life. Proceeding from the two premises laid down in the *hadith*, namely that ‘the best men are the wisest’ and that wisdom takes one nearer to Allah, the Shehu stated that to be wise means that one should be a master of one’s desires. Wisdom is therefore acquired not as much from books as from a life supported by honest and lawful income. The overriding importance of wisdom to the new order was articulated by the Shehu. ‘A wise man,’ he said, ‘is guided aright by his wisdom and fortified by his sound judgment, so that what he says is sound and what he does is commendable, while an ignorant man is caused to go astray as a result of his ignorance; so what he says is unsound and what he does is objectionable.’ Further: ‘the merit of wisdom is that one can judge what one has not witnessed according to what one has witnessed. So he who can judge what he has not witnessed by what he has witnessed is called wise.’ Wisdom entails the ability to make sound moral judgments and the possession of a keen and penetrating sense of history. The Shehu was, however, quick to add a proviso: wisdom is essential, but its value can be undermined if it is not freed from its mortal enemies — caprice, envy, arrogance, greed and other desires.

A second quality that should characterize the spirit of the new state is knowledge. The need for the ruler of the Islamic state to be a man of knowledge is vital, for in as much as the ruler is the symbol of the state, his actions, behavior and character are bound to influence society as a whole. ‘All people,’ the Shehu explained, ‘derive fine qualities from the ruler and are indebted to him for laws, the checking of quarrels and settling of disputes. So, more than any other of Allah’s creation he is in need of being acquainted with learning and gathering (knowledge) of the law’. The very fact of his being a leader places on him the obligation to be learned. To be successful in government the ruler should not have to rely on aides who might tell him what they think he wants to hear rather than what he ought to be told. ‘For a ruler,’ as the Shehu says, ‘sets himself up to deal with people’s natures, to settle their disputes, and to undertake their government. All that requires outstanding learning, keen insight and extensive study. How would he get on if he had not made the necessary preparations and made himself ready for these matters?’ An ignorant ruler is most likely to be held hostage by his own advisers who inflate his ego in order to use him for their own purposes. A state will be on a sure path when the love of knowledge, its acquisition and its propagation becomes a characteristic.
The role of scholars as administrators, judges, custodians of moral values and ideological guides of the caliphate was crucial: in fact, the success of the state depended ultimately on the extent to which it was able to draw inspiration and support from the scholars.

A further essential quality to the state is that of generosity, which operates on two levels. The first level consists of the material support that a state can give to individuals, which individuals can give to each other, with the aim of strengthening mutual brotherhood. The second level of generosity is the higher, which entails being ‘so generous with your soul that you wear it out for the sake of Allah, in worshipping Him and in willingly undertaking jihad in His path, seeking nothing but His good pleasure’. The caliphate had two tasks before it: the advancement of the well being of the people through a voluntary mutual support scheme initiated by the people themselves but boosted by the state, and the development of the caliphate through a continuous effort to defend the state and expand its frontiers.

The quality of patience is also necessary, in the post-revolutionary phase acquiring a new significance. It means an unswerving determination to carry out the fundamental objectives of the state and to establish the required institutions regardless of the material and moral costs. Patience would mean a determined resistance to the forces of evil which might have adopted new tactics to frustrate the realization of the objectives of the state.

The last of the five essential qualities is gratitude. How else could Muslims express their appreciation for Allah’s support? When they were weak, He strengthened them. When they were scattered, He brought them together. When they were oppressed, He gave them victory and made them rulers.

Allah has said: ‘Few are those who are thankful among My servants.’ Gratitude is of three degrees. Gratitude from the heart, from the tongue, and from the bodily members. The first is to recognize that blessing comes from Allah alone. On this subject there is Allah’s word: ‘Whatever blessing you have, it comes from Allah.’ The second, which is gratitude from the tongue, is to talk about that, as in Allah’s word: ‘And as for your Lord’s blessing, declare it.’ The essence of it is to praise the Beneficent for His beneficence. The third, which is gratitude from the bodily members, is to pay Allah’s due with each member and to worship Him with all of them. On this subject there is Allah’s word: ‘Labor, O House of David, in thankfulness.’

The Social Edifice of the State

We shall now look at the Shehu’s conception of justice that should characterize the state. Proceeding from the principle established in the Quran that Allah is not heedless of the atrocities being committed by oppressors — He is only giving them rope with which to hang themselves — the Shehu postulated two assumptions in his Bayan. First, oppression is the main source of the collapse of a people: ‘oppression is the thing most conducive to the withholding of divine favor and the occurrence of catastrophes.’ Second, the oppressed are the ones most likely to triumph. Allah’s statement that He would ultimately destroy the oppressor and oppressive systems is, in the Shehu’s words, ‘a sufficient warning to the oppressor, and a sufficient consolation to the oppressed’.

Justice, then, was Shehu Usman’s recipe for national stability and progress: it is the key to a nation’s endurance on the stage of history. The principles of justice put forward by
the Shehu and the social and political policies he recommended for the state are the subjects of his *Usul al-Adl* and *Kitab al-Farq*. In *Usul al-Adl*, the Shehu laid down ten principles of justice, mainly addressed to the overall ruler himself, as the symbol of the state. The first of these principles is that the Sultan should bear in mind the implications of his office. It is on the one hand a source of blessing for one who exercises it properly; and on the other, for one who misuses it; it is a source of unmitigated torment and misery. The just Sultan will have the enviable benefit of being the ‘dearest of people to Allah’, and the unjust Sultan will have to pay the consequences of being the most hateful of people to Allah.

The essence of justice is that the laws of Allah should be applied meticulously, without fear or favor. Since Allah established His law in a perfect order and for the purpose of realizing a comprehensive justice, it is foolish for a Sultan to tamper with it, even with good intentions. The ruler should recognize one fundamental principle: Allah knows best how society should be organized and managed, and how an abiding and comprehensive justice can be achieved, as set out in the *Sharia*.

An additional principle is that the ruler should endeavor to have upright and courageous scholars as his advisers and should himself listen to their advice. The scholars, on their part, must advise the ruler in accordance with what is best for both the ruler and the ruled, and must therefore not hide anything from the ruler for fear of displeasing him. Here the Shehu was stressing the crucial role of the intellectual community in the state. As the conscience of society, they are under a binding obligation to give direction to government. Similarly, as the symbol of the oppressed, they have a duty to raise their voices against injustice and against all tendencies that could lead to permissiveness and luxury. Their exalted status in society demands that they dissociate themselves from all oppressive policies, and that they rush to the aid of the oppressed against the oppressor. They must share the people’s aspirations, yearnings and, as much as possible, their sufferings. And because the scholar’s association with the rulers is to establish justice, such an association should cease when justice is abandoned by the state. Thus, in reality, the scholar’s tent should ever be pitched with the people, not with the ruling class, and the intellectual community should not constitute a community separate from the mass of the people.

The Shehu went on, in the third principle of justice, to state that it is not sufficient for the ruler himself to be fair and just: he must ensure that all the departments of state of government functionaries obey the rules of justice, until, we presume, the whole state is permeated by justice. The ruler must never tolerate any act of injustice committed by any of his officials — be it his personal servant, an army officer, a civil servant or a governor, for Allah will hold him personally responsible for an unjust act committed by those who serve in his government.

As the fourth principle states, the ruler should put himself in the position of his subjects whenever he introduces policies: if he feels that as a subject of the state the policy would be advantageous to him, he should proceed with it; but if he feels he might be injured by the policy, he should abandon it; otherwise his actions would amount to a misuse of authority, and even treason against the people.
In addition, as the fifth principle states, the ruler must open his doors to complaints of aggrieved and oppressed citizens, and must beware of the danger of turning a blind eye. If he ignores the injustices committed by his officials and strong citizens against the common people, he cannot be helped by his personal piety. His most important task as a ruler is to establish justice and prevent injustice, and not to be engaged day and night in personal piety, for ‘redressing the grievances of the Muslims is more meritorious than voluntary acts of devotion’. The shutting of the door against the poor and the oppressed is characteristic of unbelieving rulers, and not of a Muslim ruler, we are told in Kitab al-Farq.

In three more principles, the Shehu warned against forms of behavior that could undermine the government itself. The ruler must not allow himself to be dominated by arrogance, for pride might kindle in him the fire of anger. Anger on its part blots out intelligence. The ruler who is likely to be roused into anger, should remember the Prophet’s (Allah bless him and grant him peace) words, ‘Woe to him who gets angry and forgets Allah’s anger against him.’ The ruler should treat his people with forgiveness, forbearance and magnanimity. He should avoid treating his people harshly or unkindly by imposing unjust taxes on them, or misusing or squandering their wealth and resources. The states resources should be utilized in such a way that everyone has his basic needs satisfied, and economic and social justice reaches every corner of the state. The ruler should not allow his passions and appetites to get the better of him. The Shehu recounted the story of Umar ibn al-Khattab (Allah be pleased with him) in which he asked a certain ascetic, ‘Whether he had heard any objectionable thing about him’. The ascetic replied, ‘I heard that you have been putting two loaves on the tray for your meals, and that you possess two shirts, one for night-time and one for day time.’ Umar (Allah be pleased with him) asked if there was anything else, to which the man answered in the negative. ‘By Allah,’ replied Umar (Allah be pleased with him), ‘both these two things shall also cease.’ That a Muslim ruler should live sumptuously is offensive.

In the ninth principle, the Shehu turned the ruler’s attention to the crux of the matter — the Day of Judgment. He noted that in the hereafter there are two homes, paradise for those who are righteous, hell for those who have squandered their lives. Real life is that of hereafter, and if one is seeking power, glory, prestige and enduring happiness, the hereafter has the best prospects. It is futile to risk that higher existence for the fleeting and delusive pleasures of this life. But more important is the fact that on the Day of Judgment, every human being will give his account before Allah. The ruler will in addition account for his stewardship: how he tackled poverty and spread happiness, battled against injustice and initiated or facilitated the flow of justice; by how far he had curbed the excesses of the rich and powerful, and protected the poor and the weak; how he had taken care of the citizens, particularly the children, the old, the sick, and the most important of all, women. In addition, he will have to account for the three most important issues of government and of human society: the blood of the citizens, their property and their honor. In essence, the Shehu was saying but one thing: that the ultimate source of restraint for a ruler in the face of enormous power at his disposal is his inner self, his conscience, his consciousness of Allah.

Finally, in the tenth principle of justice the Shehu reiterated that Allah has sent prophets to show mankind the best way to organize their lives, so that none can ever have an
excuse for following a wrong cause. He sent the Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) as the last of the prophets to give glad tidings and to warn people. ‘He perfected his Prophet-hood,’ the Shehu said, ‘in such a way as to leave neither room nor warrant for any addition whatsoever — thus He made him the seal of the Prophets.’ That perfected model, therefore is the one the leader should follow. The tenth principle is, in fact, the sum total of all the principles the Shehu enumerated. He was effectively telling his own men: if you want to rule with justice, if you want a perfect model for your government, if you want your rule to succeed, your state to live long, your society to be happy, then follow the footsteps of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) — read the Sira, retain the essence of it. The Shehu thus returned to his theme, namely, that he wanted the Sokoto Caliphate to be the nearest approximation to the state established by the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) himself.

As for the policies, the Shehu grouped them, in his Kitab al-Farq, into two categories: those geared towards elimination of corruption ‘in both spiritual and mundane matters’, and those intended for the well-being of the people. The former include the defense of the state against unbelievers, brigands and rebels, the blocking of all sources of corruption and the prevention of crimes and other social evils. The pursuit of the well-being of the people includes such measures as improvements to the Mosque, which symbolizes Muslim piety and unity; the ‘commanding of the people to strive earnestly to study the Quran’; disseminating knowledge in all its ramifications; the improvement of the market system; the relieving of the burden of poverty from the people; and ‘commanding everything that is good’. These constitute the essence of the social and economic policy of a state. Briefly, the Shehu was telling the young state: defend yourself against all possible enemies, wage war against corruption, crime and oppression, re-establish the purity and sanctity of religion, give education the utmost priority with the Quran as its root, establish justice as the basis of the economy, fight against poverty, enrich the people and make them happy, and do whatever Allah has ordered to be done.

**Forestalling Disintegration**

Is there a way in which a state can forestall its decline, or at least lengthen its life? We draw from the Shehu’s thoughts on this subject in the Bayan.

The state, in the post-revolutionary phase, should endeavor to end disputes, conflicts and divisions by a sustained policy of forgiveness and leniency towards those who might not have full sympathy with its cause, but who are, nevertheless its citizens. ‘The wise men,’ the Shehu emphasized, ‘have said, Authority cannot go with revenge, nor leadership with self-esteem and self-admiration. Be it known that it is better that you should pardon wrongly in one thousand cases than to punish wrongly in a single case.’ Hence transgressors should be ‘killed by goodness not by evil’. Perhaps in this way, the process of reconciliation in the wake of turmoil and upheaval associated with revolutions could be facilitated. But if punishment is unavoidable, then it should not exceed the limit set by law. Yet, ‘if vengeance against . . . a wrongdoer may stir up civil strife or incite a man known to be docile to commit an offence, and the wrongdoer comes to seek forgiveness, then in this case pardon is better.’ This does not imply giving a free-hand to
corrupt elements; for ‘if the wrongdoer shows forth wickedness openly and is uncouth to
people and does harm to the young and the old, then it is better to take revenge on him.’

The state should not allow revolutionary fervor to get the better of its citizens. Those
who have lost their power through the revolution should not be subjected to ill-treatment,
nor to confiscation and seizure of property or land. For the Prophet (Allah bless him and
grant him peace) has warned that ‘for him who seizes a Muslim’s property with his right
hand, Allah has made hell binding upon him’ even if such property does not amount to
more than a twig of a tree. Assaults on people’s honor must be discouraged and
prevented. Once the objective of establishing a new order is achieved, the State must not
allow the uncovering of old wounds, nor the unnecessary slandering of people.

The new state must guard its secrets and not expose itself to enemies. Proceeding from
the hadith of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), ‘Seek the help of secrecy
in achieving your aims,’ the Shehu counseled: ‘Know that keeping secrets is a commendable practice for all mankind and a necessary quality for kings, and an essential
duty for wazirs, courtiers and the royal retinue.’ Ali ibn Abi Talib (Allah ennoble his
countenance) said, ‘Your secret is your captive so long as you do not tell it, but when you
do, you become its captive.’ Hence, ‘He who keeps back his secret attains his end and
keeps free of attack. Your secret is part of your blood, so do not let it circulate in veins
other than your own; and if you tell it, then you have shed your blood.’

The state has to be conscious of the fact the complexities of human nature and society
are not swept away merely because a revolution has taken place. As long as ‘every
human being has in himself some aspects of animal behavior’, as the Shehu said, those
complexities will remain. The state, and especially the ruler, must learn to deal with
complexities in such a way that the prosperity of the state and of the people can be
guaranteed and sustained without necessarily harming any section of society. The state
must anticipate having leopards, monkeys, donkeys, dogs, polecats, dung-beetles, hawks,
wolves, ostriches or jerboa among men. Caution, therefore, is the key policy in these
matters. For instance, in dealing with the dung-beetle among men — those who ‘delight
in eating human excrement and are accustomed to the smell of filthy things,’ by trading
in worldly tales, lies and superstitions — the ruler should throw flowers on them, for
‘they die when musk or flowers are cast on them.’ The ostrich, ‘which buries all its eggs
in the sand and sits on only one egg,’ thereby creating false impressions, should never be
believed; ‘the man of experience. . . is not deceived by that first egg (but) goes on digging
until he achieves his end.’ Such is the treatment of liars. As for the jerboa which creates
two openings to its hole and enters through one hole and comes out through another, thus
symbolizing hypocrisy, the best course of action is that he should be avoided completely.
As for the lion, ‘no peace can exist in the face of a lion’s roar,’ so the answer is a full-
scale defense of state interests.

There has to be recognition that the state can only be preserved by a rigorous and
austere political culture, a deep sense of justice, and humility on the part of rulers.
Conversely, the state can be toppled by the forces of luxury, nepotism, and oppression.
On luxury the Shehu warned that ‘when Allah desires to destroy a state, He hands its
affairs over to extravagant sons of rulers whose ambition is to magnify the status of
kingship, to obtain their desires and indulge in sins. And Allah takes glory away from
them as a result of that.’ Nepotism has the effect of bringing a government to an end, while injustice terminates the life of a kingdom.

Finally, if despite these precautions and measures the state finds itself in a state of disharmony, it should question its policies of social justice and equity. If they are not the cause of the insecurity or the trend towards disintegration, then the ruler must return quickly to the roots: ‘by summoning the scholars and enjoining truth and acting in accordance with it, by upholding the Sunna, by making justice prevail and by sitting down on skin (rugs) to review torts’. In addition, he should quickly restore honor to whom it is due, abolish unlawful and oppressive taxes, and forced labor, and give due respect to scholars and men of piety. ‘He should not deprive a chief of his chieftaincy; rather he should make sure that every mighty man retains his position, and cause everyone to occupy the place he is entitled to. Only then can he be chief of chiefs.’

A king gains victory over his enemies according to his justice over his subjects and is defeated in his wars according to his injustice. Seeing to the welfare of subjects is more effective than a large number of soldiers. It has been said that the crown of a king is his integrity, his stronghold is his impartiality and his wealth is his subjects. There can be no triumph with transgression, no rule without learning of the law and no chieftaincy with vengeance.
Chapter Thirteen
The Triumvirate

The establishment of the caliphate naturally gave rise to a totally different situation from that of the days of ignorance. Hence, a new role emerged for the Shehu and his companions: in addition to calling people to Islam and striving in the cause of Allah, they now had to administer a state according to the Quran and Sunna and look after the umma in the manner of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. The position of the Shehu himself had become acutely crucial: not only did the mantle of leadership fall on him, but he also must, and did, serve as the symbol of the umma, the guardian of the revolution and the unifying force for the various communities, groups and interests that converged to constitute the caliphate.

Three figures emerged as the principal pillars of the new order when the caliphate finally became an absolute reality, most of the prominent companions of the Shehu having been martyred in the struggle or having died, many from the rigors and strains of a lengthy and gruesome revolution. These pillars were, first, the mujaddid himself, Shehu Usman Dan Fodio, the initiator and symbol of the revolution. Second, Abdullahi Dan Fodio, the finest and most accomplished scholar the revolution produced and also its philosopher and conscience. Third, Muhammad Bello, Shehu’s son, the energetic, trustworthy leader, destined to serve as the real architect of the new political process, the consolidator of the revolution. These three constituted the great triumvirate, the three men who transformed central Sudan, and changed the course of history in Bilad al-Sudan. The Shehu divided the responsibilities for the caliphate between his companions and prominent Muslims. The most important of these responsibilities naturally fell on his two wazirs: Abdullahi was given the administration of the western parts of the caliphate and Muhammad Bello, the eastern parts. The Shehu, now at Sifawa where he moved after the liberation of Alkalawa, remained the Amir al-Muminin, though he did not take direct part in the administration; he devoted most of his time to teaching and writing, counseling and guiding the umma.

The caliphate was indeed a complex social entity, bringing together diverse groups, and often conflicting interests, under one Islamic government. The Jamaa, which affected the revolution, was now, as a social force, a microcosm in the caliphate. Many communities, scholars and others who had not been part of the revolutionary process were now part of the caliphate: herein lay the real problems for the new leaders. The egalitarianism, solidarity, brotherhood and high moral standards which had characterized the Jamaa were now in danger of being weakened, if not overwhelmed, by the larger community. Bello was keenly conscious of this problem. His analysis of the larger community, reproduced by Murray Last, suggests the magnitude of the social problems confronting the leadership.

In it, Bello classified the Jamaa into ten categories. The first nine include those who had joined the Jamaa for purely political reasons, because it offered a refuge for the oppressed; those who, being Fulani, had joined it on tribal considerations and had cause
to ‘despise the non-Fulani, even if they are learned, pious or mujahidun’; those whose reason for their membership was no more than ‘fashion’; scholars whose fortunes had been drained by the revolutionary momentum unleashed by the Jamaa, and who had no alternative but to join in order to survive; and those who were in the Jamaa because it offered material benefits. There were still others who rode on the prestigious crest of the Jamaa, even though they had since been ‘attracted by the world and the devil,’ and had abandoned its goals; those who were born within the Jamaa and remained in it, not by absolute conviction, but by accident of birth, who were not keen to learn the values and objectives which the movement stood for. And then there were others swept by currents into the body of the Jamaa: they did not know why they were there, nor did they belong there, either by orientation or conviction; hence, depression became their lot. The genuine members of the Jamaa, who comprised one out of the ten categories, were those ‘guided not by the world but by Allah, giving up property, power and family for the life to come’. Last concluded his analysis:

This description of the hangers-on in the Community is probably particularly true of Sokoto — where Bello was living and which had become the centre of activity. The emphasis within the community had shifted away from scholarship: those who had not been attracted by its practice of Islam were now attracted by its success, and under the conditions of jihad army leaders were as important as scholars. While the Shaikh was alive, respect for his authority held any serious division in abeyance.

In a state as complex and diverse as the caliphate, where the highly cultured, the ascetic and the intensely revolutionary had to live side by side with the thoroughly worldly, or where the scholar had to live under one roof with the common man, or where those brought up in a revolutionary atmosphere had to share responsibilities of state with outsiders or even opportunists, the problems of maintaining the tempo of the revolution, preserving the ideals of Islam and implementing the Sharia in its pure form was particularly acute. Yet the leaders had no option other than to face this problem squarely. This called for a new intellectual, philosophical and legal process aimed at establishing the intellectual basis of state and politics, the formulation of a legal framework inside the Sharia to deal with the complexities of the state, and the articulation of a philosophy of revolution to serve as a guide for subsequent years. This process was spearheaded by the Shehu and his brother, Abdullahi, and continued even after the Shehu’s death. Our sources for this discussion are the Shehu’s Misbah ahl al-Zaman\textsuperscript{xc}, Siraj al-Ikhwan\textsuperscript{xci}, Najm al-Ikhwan\textsuperscript{xcii} and Diya ulil amr wal Mujahidin\textsuperscript{xciii} and Diya al-Sultan\textsuperscript{xciv} and Bello’s Kaff al-Ikhwan\textsuperscript{xcvi}.

\section*{Character of the Caliphate}

The most important of these issues was the character of the new state itself — the office of the supreme imam, the mode of selection, the political institutions and the way authority was manifested in the light of the specific situations of Hausaland.

In Misbah the Shehu wrote that the appointment of a ‘just imam’ to look after the affairs of Muslims is compulsory by law irrespective of time or situation. Such was the importance of electing a caliph, that the first thing the Companions (Allah be pleased with them) did after the death of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) was
to appoint a caliph, even before they had buried the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace). And when appointed, the imam takes charge of all the affairs of state, both spiritual and temporal.

Abdullahi added in *Diya ull amr* that once appointed, the imam has two fundamental tasks. First, he has to try to govern solely for the pleasure of Allah, and endeavor to improve both the spiritual and economic conditions of the people in accordance with the *Sunna*, ‘so that he may become, in earnest, the successor of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) among the Muslims’. He should not govern by ‘force, seizure of power or by inheritance’ for the purpose of amassing wealth or other material benefits; or run the affairs of state arbitrarily; or pursue ‘delicate tastes in food, clothing and housing’, thus becoming a king rather than a caliph. Second, the imam should arrange state institutions in accordance with the *Sunna*, and organize the affairs of the people in ways that would enhance their interests. Therefore he should organize the religious institutions, *zakat*, mosques, roads and water systems properly; encourage justice and piety among his officials; prevent oppression; send his armies for *jihad* as often as possible; order his governors to apply the *Sharia* in their territories and above all make appointments for the good of his people and not for self-interest; he should appoint to positions of authority only ‘men of conscience, knowledge, stature and piety’.

Abdullahi suggested some of the important institutions that support the office of the imam. These are, for example, the office of the prime minister, the state governors, the judiciary, the army, office of the Muhtasib and the bureaucracy. The prime minister shares in the planning and organization of the state, assists the imam in the management of the state, and serves as ‘a refuge in the event of a blow of fate’. The governors have to care for the spiritual and material needs of the people in their territories in the same way that the imam does for the whole of the country. The judges, who must be learned men, or even scholars who might have applied for the office, are responsible for the upholding of the law and securing the rights of the weak. The Commander-in-Chief of the army is basically responsible for the conduct of war, defense of Muslim territories, protection of *dhimis*, and so on. He should deal compassionately with his men and consult them in all matters. He should treat Muslims honorably, and ‘not insult any of them, humiliate the weak, nor give preference to the strong’, but ‘follow the truth and avoid base desires.’ The muhtasib encourages right conduct and prohibits evil. Finally the civil servants execute governmental policies and run the state on a day to day basis.

The crucial question here, however, was the mode of appointing the imam, and by implication, the other pillars of state. Abdullahi was unequivocal in his insistence that if the state was to be run on the basis of *Sunna* and in the pattern of a rightly-guided caliphate, then it had to avoid a monarchical institution with inherited leadership, or have leadership confined exclusively to certain families. Abdullahi noted that Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him), the first caliph, recommended Umar (Allah be pleased with him) as his successor, and thus ‘lifted the caliphate out of the monarchical tradition in which a son inherits leadership from his father, to the calipal tradition which rests on careful consideration and election of people to look after the interests and well-being of Muslims.’ Umar (Allah be pleased with him), likewise, removed authority from his sons and left the matter of choosing a caliph to an electoral college which then unanimously elected Uthman (Allah be pleased with him). Umar (Allah be pleased with him) did so
because the caliphate ‘is not monarchy’. Ali (Allah enoble his countenance) was the natural choice when Uthman (Allah be pleased with him) was martyred because, ‘there remained none like him’ and so ‘those who preferred truth to self-interest, the Hereafter to the world, swore allegiance to him.’ It was Muawiyya, however, who turned the caliphate into a monarchy, and was thus ‘the first to corrupt the affairs of the umma’. Abdullahi stated further that the difference between a caliphate and a monarchy was not only in the mode of appointment but also in the method of government. A caliph takes the wealth of people lawfully and spends it appropriately while a king usurps people’s possessions and shares out state wealth indiscriminately. In short, caliphate is justice, monarchy is corruption and tyranny.

The Shehu agreed fundamentally with Abdullahi, stating specifically in Najm al-Ikhwan that hereditary kingship was not permitted in the Sharia. That prohibition, however, should not restrain an imam from appointing or recommending the appointment of his son to succeed him if he possessed the requisite qualifications for leadership. In so far as the imam is the ‘trustee of the umma’ his judgment should be trusted. The Shehu emphasized that jurists were divided on this matter. The crucial question for the triumvirate was that of the manifestation of authority. Would it be appropriate for the new order to make use of some of the titles of the old system? The revolutionary stand had insisted on a clean break with the old system in all fundamental aspects of government and policies. Abdullahi maintained that the revolution must abide by its original stand. He stated in Diya al-Sultan that the use of such titles as king connotes ‘worldly kingship’; the ‘Islamic titles’ such as amir, khalipha and so on, should be used instead. The Shehu, on the other hand, thought otherwise. It was true, he maintained in Najm al-Ikhwan that the Islamic system of government was a caliphate, not a kingdom; but the distinction related to the nature and conduct of their respective governments and not to the titles of those in office. Moreover, such titles as malik, amir, sultan and khalipha had been used in Islam in varying ways, sometimes depicting a praiseworthy political authority and sometimes quite otherwise. As long as the essential character and conduct of government and its functionaries were Islamic, the titles they adopted would not matter, especially among a people who were all too familiar with such titles.

But the more important issues concerned the introduction of certain aspects of the court system of Hausa kings, such as chamberlains, drummers, praise-singers and the like; the magnificent appearances put up by the new rulers; and some measure of worldly inclination on their part. The importance of these issues lay in the very nature of the new order which came into being precisely because its vanguards and symbols were austere and simple in their habits, and were distinguished from the rest of the people by their higher moral attitudes.

The Shehu had argued in Misbah that it was essential for the rulers and principal functionaries of state to present a dignified appearance, since people were more likely to respect authority by its manifestation than by its objectives and pursuits. So, while the caliphate had to pursue its objectives and goals as vigorously as possible, it should also raise its own estimation in the eyes of those who were likely to be more impressed by such a show of power and prestige. The Shehu noted, however, that in the time of the Companions of the Prophet (Allah be pleased with them), people were respected solely
for their higher moral disposition and not their appearance or other worldly manifestations. Later the Islamic order suffered deterioration as a result of which people; leaders in particular, were respected for reasons other than their conduct and piety. The need arose, therefore, for leaders to appear in a resplendent manner and introduce certain aspects of court order for the purposes of the umma to be achieved. Thus, even though such a practice contrasts with the pure Islamic standard, as exemplified by the Companions (Allah be pleased with them), it was, nevertheless, an appropriate innovation.

The Shehu advised his men, in Misbah, to be ‘content with the basic necessities in your food, drink and dresses’ and to make a habit of putting on white attire, without however any prejudice to other colors, since the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) himself used to put on dresses of all colors. Further, they should dress grandly when receiving foreign diplomats and when sitting as judges in courts ‘for the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) used to order prominent sahaba to wear fine clothes when meeting with foreign emissaries and he constantly urged them on this.’ The Shehu seemed to be trying to strike a balance between the austere demands of the revolutionary spirit and the practical necessities of statecraft and diplomacy.

Abdullahi agreed that the pressure of changing circumstances could force an Islamic political authority to adopt alien customs and manners in order to safeguard the interests of Muslims, but the adoption, unless there was an acute necessity, could not be regarded as consistent with the Sharia. Abdullahi’s assessment of the revolution was that it was largely a success: it had established the basic foundation and had the necessary men and women to enable it to mould itself completely in the pattern of the Rightly-Guided Caliphate without having to introduce ‘kingly customs’ to support their rule.

The Shehu restated his arguments in Najm, and then proceeded to put forth an important principle of law. The thrust of his argument seems to imply that respect for authority was essential for maintaining the order of Islam and that, in spite of their own efforts, the revolution had not established the state of Madina in its entirety. Moreover the wearing of expensive clothes is not prohibited in Islam, even though frowned upon; but when the purpose is to achieve a fundamental objective of Islam, then it is imperative to use them. To support his argument the Shehu related another incident in which Umar (Allah be pleased with him), in one of his visits to states within the caliphate, saw some Companions dressed in silk and wearing embroidered materials. Umar (Allah be pleased with him) was so enraged that he threw stones at them, but on being told that such materials protected the body in war, he said, ‘Then, it is excellent!’ In other words, the rulers, judges and administrators in Sokoto were putting up such an awe inspiring appearance in order to protect the order of Islam by preserving its prestige and intimidating its potential enemies.

The Shehu agreed with Ibn Rushd that there is no universal dress for Muslims: Allah has created different peoples and dispersed them over the earth; therefore, their mode of dress must necessarily differ. ‘There is no necessity on anybody,’ he said, ‘to abandon his own mode of dress for another.’ Muslims are not prohibited from wearing the costumes of other people. The Prophet, (Allah bless him and grant him peace) he said, used to wear clothes known to be of Roman origin, and the sahaba in other regions used to wear clothes of those regions. The costume of Hausaland was their own by virtue of their
belonging to that region of the world, and there was no need for them to adopt the
costumes of other regions.

More fundamentally, the Shehu argued that not all non-Muslim behavior is prohibited
in Islam. Muslims are free to follow suit if it serves the purpose of Islam. ‘After all,’ he
said, ‘the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) built a trench around Madina (in
the battle of Handaq) imitating the (non-Muslims) foreigners.’ Perhaps the Shehu was
urging his brother to take a broader view of the world, to adopt a more pragmatic
approach to the evolution of a polity that would be distinctively Sudanic while remaining
essentially Islamic. If, therefore, certain aspects of Hausa traditions could serve the
purpose of Islam they should be regarded as assets to Islam and adopted as part of its
heritage.

It should be kept in mind, however, that the Shehu’s insistence that the rulers should
introduce new policies and paraphernalia of government as they deemed necessary did
not mean that he himself indulged in expensive living. Indeed, the Shehu remained
completely above such things. The learned author of Rawd al-Jinan tells us that
throughout his life the Shehu lived an austere and simple life, most often keeping to the
bare minimum of subsistence. Even after his appointment as Amir al-Muminin, the Shehu
retained his former lifestyle. ‘The stores of the Kings of Sudan were captured, but he did
not accept anything given to him from them.’ His only ambition was to establish
sound policies of state, which would ensure the survival of the caliphate. Indeed, he
himself urged his men to follow the means of wara, that is, care and caution, or what we
may call pragmatism.

The Shehu advised the citizens of the new caliphate that they were obliged to obey the
rulers, and not to seek unnecessary occasions to humiliate them or to rise against them.
Rulers are ‘Allah’s door to the fulfillment of the needs of the people on earth’, and were,
therefore, a great source of benefit to men irrespective of their other faults. And, as
symbols of the community, they constitute a source of unity and cohesion.

The gist of this argument was carried further by the Shehu in Najm. Authority (Sultan),
he said, symbolized the unity of Allah in itself ‘just as there can be no two authorities for
one city, so there can be no two divine powers for the universe.’ Authority, or
government, is vital to the preservation of order in the world, since a people without a
ruler are like fish in the sea — the big swallows the small, the strong devours the weak.
Without a political authority people’s affairs would not be properly organized, nor their
livelihood sustained, nor would they enjoy the good life. ‘For this reason,’ the Shehu
emphasized, ‘one of the forbears said that if authority were withdrawn from the earth,
Allah would have nothing to do with the earth again.’ A just government spreads
benefits, protects human life, honor and property and augments the economy. The decline
of authority provides a profitable market for evil and corrupt men, warmongers,
hypocrites and thieves. Only an ignoramus or a profligate would desire the fall of an
upright government. Both the world and the hereafter are secured through the agency of a
just government: hence, it is essential that government should have a high standing with
Allah, and be esteemed by the people.

Leaders should therefore be accorded their due respect, for if Allah could command his
Prophet, Musa (upon him be peace), to speak leniently to Pharaoh even though he was an
unbelieving tyrant, ‘how much more of one to whom Allah has given power, guided to the true faith, and made him disposed to justice and excellence?’ Respect for rulers is even more imperative when they uphold the *Sharia*, make Islam manifest, prevent oppression and fight corruption. The new leadership must be respected and criticism limited to what was necessary and useful because if the new order failed, the Muslim community would go down with it. ‘Islam,’ he said, ‘is like a foundation and government is like a guard: whatever has no foundation will eventually collapse, and whatever has no guard will eventually be lost.’ If the leaders fulfill their obligations of maintaining the order of Islam, spreading justice, and combating evil, all other faults of theirs should be overlooked. As long as they protected the property, honor and well-being of their people, Allah was most likely to overlook their moral failures.

**Principles of Legislation**

An issue which engaged the attention of the Shehu and his brother, Abdullahi, was that relating to the principles of legislation. Their views on new policies, particularly those introduced by the Shehu, some of which apparently contradicted the letters of the *Sharia*, constituted debates involving a process of legislation, as well as the evolution of Islamic polity and legality. The Shehu’s views stated here are contained in *Najm al-Ikhwan*.

The most important of these principles is one which rests on the premise that ‘religion is ease’; therefore, the purpose of legislation is to lighten the burden of the people, improve their lot, and allow them, albeit within the framework of Islam, sufficient scope in their social, economic and political behavior. Thus enacting laws which may prove too taxing on the people, or which tend to restrict them to the narrow confines of law, or which imprison them in one particular school of law would not, the Shehu thought, prove conducive to the running of the affairs of the *umma*.

It is imperative that differences should exist among jurists, or those with legislative responsibilities, so as to provide options within the framework of the *Sharia*. These differences are an integral part of the divine purpose: ‘so that if one scholar is severe, the other is lenient — for Allah’s religion is ease’. Even so, each scholar is advised to take a lenient approach, for ‘a person of sound knowledge and depth of understanding . . . is lenient to the people’.

Restrictive laws should be curtailed as far as possible so as not to over stretch people’s power to comply with the law or strain their endurance. The laws should not stray far from the fundamentals. The Shehu noted that the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) used to be apprehensive that laws might become too many for his *umma*, which implies that he would rather have fewer legislations as a matter of principle. By way of warning, the Shehu noted the statement of Sayyid Ali al-Khawass that any scholar who imposes on people duties which are not stated clearly in the *Sharia* should have himself to blame on the Day of Judgment.

The principle of ease does not mean that Islamic injunctions and prohibitions should be abandoned just to please the people. The province of severity, the Shehu said, is well known: there are duties established in the *Quran* and *Sunna* and these are binding on
Muslims; there are prohibitions and these must be observed by the Islamic state. On these there is no disagreement among scholars.

The principle that ‘differences of opinion is mercy’ indicates that diversity should be deliberately cultivated. Those who are aware of this principle, the Shehu said, should not repudiate any person who holds the opinions of his own school; nor should he repudiate any person with views from a different school; he should not be strict on matters over which scholars are in disagreement. In other words, the existence of differences in opinion necessitates freedom of choice for Muslims, and this freedom must be respected by every Muslim.

The Shehu raised matters of fundamental importance with the principle that ‘all the schools of law lead to Allah’. Even though Muslims generally accept only the four schools of law and confine themselves to them, other schools exist which are equally valid. Thus Imams like Sufyan al-Thauri, Hassan al-Basri, Abdullah ibn Mubarak, Daud al-Zahiri, Laith ibn Said, Ibn Musayyab, al-Auzai and others are all ‘mujtahids’ in Allah’s religion, and their schools are roads leading to Allah’. Indeed the Shehu went as far as to say that there could be over three hundred schools, and each within Islam.

There is no obligation on any Muslim to bind himself to one particular school or another; nor is there any blame attached to a Muslim adopting the views of different schools on certain issues, provided that he does not seek to cheapen or vulgarize the practice of Islam.

A Muslim must adopt a universalistic approach to the schools, and take all of them as his own. Quoting al-Qarafi, the Shehu said, ‘Jurists are agreed that a Muslim is obliged to follow an opinion of a scholar of his choice without any hindrance whatsoever; and the Sahaba (Allah be pleased with them) are agreed that whoever sought the opinion of Abu Bakr or Umar and followed them must necessarily seek the opinions of Abu Hurayra or Mu’adh ibn Jabl and others, without any restriction whatsoever. Whoever, then, claims that these two ijmas are no longer binding, the onus of proof is on him.’ In short, whoever follows one school must necessarily follow the others.

All actions flowing from the opinions and rulings of schools of law must be accepted as valid by all Muslims. This is necessary for at least two reasons: first, to avoid invalidating the ‘worship, transactions, marriages’ of Muslims in a manner not sanctioned by the Sharia, in keeping with the injunction of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) that Muslims should be handled gently; and second, to subjecting Muslims to suspicion, and treating them as if they were outside the fold of Islam.

In the Shehu’s debate with Abdullahi the principle was formulated that the state should be lenient to the people in its efforts to rid society of evil. The Shehu laid down two conditions. The state should be severe only on those things all jurists agreed should be prohibited or on behavior capable of ‘causing the collapse of the world and religion’, such as the perversion of justice, political repression, usurpation of people’s property, armed robbery and so on. The state should also be lenient on behavior over whose prohibition scholars have not agreed, or which generally does not disturb the order of Islam, such as drumming, music, the mixing of men and women.
The Shehu argued in *Misbah* that scholars had not agreed that certain forms of drumming, music and singing were prohibited, and therefore they could not be banned outright. Ibn Arabi justified drumming in battles on the grounds that ‘it raises the morale (of Muslim fighters) and overawes the enemy’. Drumming and singing on days of festivity are allowed in law since elegance, sports, display of happiness ‘commemorate the happiness of the people of Paradise’, and because they cheer the mind. Music during marriage ceremonies is recommended by the *Sunna*.

There are, of course, objections to these things. Some forms of music are objectionable because they distract a person from Allah, and lead to passion and frivolity. These are absolutely prohibited. But, we are told in *Misbah*, ‘music that is free from these, a little amount of it is allowed in periods of happiness — such as marriage ceremonies and the ‘Id — and when undertaking difficult tasks, as happened in the digging of the trench (in the time of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace)).’

The Shehu noted that there is no single revelation in the *Quran* or any order of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) which directly prohibits these things. In fact, the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) seems to have sanctioned some form of merriment, and condoned others. The Shehu observed, for example, that when the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) passed a group of girls singing, they sang his name, ‘Allah knows, ‘ the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said to them, ‘that I love you!’ Moreover, on festival days, drums used to be beaten in his presence; and on one occasion two girls went right into his house to sing. Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him) wanted to stop them, but the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) prevented him saying, ‘that it was an Id day.’

Abdullahi raised objections in *Diya al-Sultan*. He queried the legitimacy of the *hadith* quoted by the Shehu about drums being used on *Id* days, declaring it unsound, abrogated or subject to different interpretations; for if it were sound, then the majority of scholars would not have held a contrary opinion. It was the view of the majority of scholars that drumming and music are not permissible, which implies that they should be banned altogether.

The Shehu returned to this question in *Najm al-Ikhwan*. If the essence of the prohibition on music is that it distracts people from their occupation on which their social and spiritual well-being depend, but if the instruments themselves are their means of livelihood ‘then the matter is easy’. The fact that the majority of scholars prohibit it should not constitute a sufficient reason to ban it in Sokoto; it was sufficient that some section of scholars had no objections to music provided it was not vulgar.

But what happens, for example, if a scholar proffers an opinion prohibiting singing and drumming? Such a scholar would be right in his opinion, the Shehu said — provided he did not condemn those who held the opposite view — ‘since the majority of scholars in all the four schools prohibit it, as stated by Abdur Rahman al-Suyuti’. Nevertheless, the Shehu insisted, scholars were divided on the matter: some had forbidden music outright; some legalized it and some laid down conditions.

Music falls into the category of issues which do not constitute a danger to the order of Islam and which should therefore be handled with leniency. The Shehu said of it in *Najm al-Ikhwan*, that it has no significance in religion: therefore one cannot be repudiated for
engaging in it, nor should such matters absorb the unnecessary attention of the state. Part of the reason for this lengthy debate on music was its implication for the sufis orders. The sufis, naturally, had legalized it and believed that there were benefits to be derived from pious music and singing. The Shehu respected their opinion.

The last of the principles we shall examine is the one relating to the choice of the lesser when faced with two necessary evils. The operative effect of this principle is that if a state is confronted with a situation in which its application of a particular piece of legislation might bring harm greater than the benefit for which it is intended, then that particular legislation should be shelved for the time being in favor of a more practicable, if not as lawful, policy.

The new caliphate was faced with two conflicting situations: on the one hand, it had to protect the property and honor of its citizens; and on the other, it had to close all the doors to corruption and social tensions in order to have sufficient time to lay the necessary foundation for the post-revolutionary era.

A case in point was the question of the property of Muslims who had fled their homes in the wake of the hijra. After the jihad they naturally wanted to claim their property back. The Shehu ruled that the fall of Alkalawa should be the cut-off date for claims arising from losses during the hijra-jihad period. Abdullahi, in Diya al-Sultan, objected to this ruling on the grounds that there was nothing special in the fall of Alkalawa as far as the application of Sharia was concerned. He was particularly dismayed by the fact that in several instances the operative effect of this ruling was that some Muslim men, and particularly Muslim women, were left in the hands of non-Muslims or corrupt elements.

But the Shehu carried a greater burden; the fate of the caliphate as a whole rested on him. He was no less sensitive to the suffering of a section of the Muslims or to a possible violation of the honor of some of the Muslim women. Yet, his duty was not to secure the rights of a few citizens at the expense of the caliphate itself. Thus he agreed, in Najm, with Abdullahi that the choice of Alkalawa was arbitrary. But, he said, the policy was necessary to prevent greater harm, ‘since investigation of people’s property leads to corruption’. Moreover the complaints were so numerous — bearing in mind the oppression in Hausaland — that if everything were to be investigated there would be no time for the matters of moment, or matters of crucial importance to the very future of the caliphate. The Shehu noted that in pursuing this policy, he was following the injunction of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) to adopt the lesser of two evils.

Means of Social Integration

We now move on to examine the means the Shehu adopted to maintain the unity of the umma and strengthen the cohesion of the new state. Here again there are several principles of fundamental importance which were the outcome of the debate with Abdullahi, and possibly other scholars as well.

The Shehu consistently curbed all tendencies towards extremism in matters of law and policy, and established the golden mean as the basis of governing, legislation and policies. He said in Misbah that the purpose of writing the book was to ‘caution people against tilting towards permissiveness, that is, being too indulgent in respect of sins and
innovations and to caution others against tilting towards extreme strictness, that is, repudiating as unlawful those things over which scholars are in disagreement’. Allah described His servants as those ‘who are neither extravagant nor niggardly — but who maintain the middle ground between the two extremes’. People should not be driven to despair of the mercy of Allah nor be made to feel secure against His punishment.

The Shehu had a word or two for the men in charge of affairs of the caliphate whom he usually addressed as ‘my brothers’. First of all, they should cultivate in themselves the consciousness of Allah and adhere strictly to the Sunna; this entailed maintaining ‘goodwill towards every servant of Allah’. They should never undertake any task except for the sake of Allah and in compliance with His order. He added, ‘let your desires be in agreement with the dictates of the Sharia, in compliance with the word of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), “None of you is a true believer unless his wishes are in complete agreement with the message I have brought.”’ Finally, they should never seek to uncover the secrets and weaknesses of others, instead they should leave people with their Lord and accept their excuses and sympathize with their weaknesses — for, ‘a believer accepts excuses, while a hypocrite follows after human failures’. They should bear in mind that no one is free from imperfections and failures: it is safer, therefore, for a person to occupy himself with his own failures than to busy himself searching for the faults of others.

Continuing his recipe for integration of the new order in Misbah, the Shehu urged his men to ‘Know . . . that the Companions, their immediate successors and the immediate generation following the latter, exerted themselves beyond measure in adhering to the Sunna and shunning bida: therefore, follow in their footsteps, so that you can reap the good of the two abodes.’ In short, the Shehu desired to unify the people on common ideological grounds and shared values. Yet problems could arise where differences of opinion led to tensions and damaging squabbles. Hence his refrain in Misbah, repeated more than eight times: ‘Beware, and again, beware, O brethren, of holding Muslims in suspicion and repudiating as unlawful, those things over which jurists are in disagreement.’ Unity could be achieved if Muslims tolerated matters over which they differed.

In Najm al-Ikhwan, the Shehu was clearly trying to tackle two basic problems which had developed in the caliphate, the involvement of ignorant people in debates which were clearly beyond their competence, and dissatisfaction about the revolution among some of the leading men. He thus wrote the book with the aim of preserving the cohesion of the umma, forestalling confusion and ending disputes.

The Shehu admitted that the involvement of ignorant people in arguments and debates between scholars was injurious and could lead to the validity of some of the schools of law being questioned. Only scholars ‘acquainted with all the schools’ should enter the debates. The ignorant should not regard the debates as the creation of conflicting groups within the umma: they should see them as mercies which they were meant to be.

As for those who belittled the pace of revolutionary transformation — notably Abdullahi — the Shehu’s words for them, in Najm, can be analyzed as follows: Firstly, it was imperative for them to give thanks to Allah ‘for what He has conferred on us in the spheres of the world and religion’, because ‘giving thanks is obligatory’ since it entitles
one to more favors from Allah. Secondly, they should remember that they were living ‘in
the end of times’ and that the world had been deteriorating. As such, they should compare
the former state of affairs characterized by all sorts of evil, such as the worship of idols,
perpetration of sins, oppression and usurpation, to the caliphate. Moreover they should
not forget that this universal, continuous deterioration had affected religion, intellectual
life, livelihoods and leadership, and that the world had changed beyond all recognition.
The Shehu then depicted the problems they had to contend with by quoting Abdul Wahab
Sharani:

Men themselves have undergone so many changes in their character — some are wolves
today, dogs tomorrow. . . devils today, unbelievers tomorrow, hypocrites today and believers
tomorrow, and righteous some other time and so on. I have witnessed these changes in myself
before I even saw it in other people: and it is sufficient for you that you are like those people,
in word and deed, but you will have nothing to worry about if your heart is safe for the heart
is the centre of all activities.

To turn the tide in favor of truth was not, therefore, an easy task, for the world had
continued to grow in complexity.

The fourth point recognized that every age has its own unique conditions, fortunes and
men: it is therefore futile to try to judge one’s own age with the yardstick of another age.
It is worse still to judge a people living in the twelfth Islamic century by the standard of the
Sahaba (Allah be pleased with them). And what is more, if the Sahaba (Allah be
pleased with them) were to live in our age ‘they would fall in the same state as we have
fallen, in confirmation of what the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) has
said’ — that the world would continue to deteriorate morally.

The best course of action for the men in charge of the caliphate was to confront the
situation that existed, was the Shehu’s fifth point. Since affairs had changed beyond all
recognition, the only course was to move with the times, and not to remain ossified in the
past. People should be dealt with as their behavior demanded: ‘If they appear to you as
wolves, then be a wolf yourself. . . if they appear as foxes then be a fox yourself, if they
stand up against you, then do stand up against them until you obtain your rights.’ The
Shehu was quick to add that this did not mean one should go outside the framework of
the law; it only implied that one should repel evil.

The Shehu was telling his somewhat dissatisfied people that the way to judge the
revolution was to weigh its achievements against the system it had displaced, and
perhaps, against the prevailing systems all around it. People would then realize that in
spite of enormous moral, material and social difficulties they faced and in spite of their
distance from the age of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) and the
Sahaba (Allah be pleased with them), the men and women in Hausaland had created what
truly approximated the pattern of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) and
the Rightly-Guided Caliphate, and have achieved many of the objectives of Islam.

A negative approach to the revolution, the Shehu cautioned, would not bring benefits. It
would merely waste the energy of the best elements in society. Nothing would result
from such efforts except the tiring of one’s mind and tongue. It was imperative to give
thanks to Allah and adopt a positive attitude to the revolution for that was more akin to
decorum, and more likely to bring about peace of mind, freedom from anxiety,
confidence in the people, and hence, a greater desire to stand by them and strive for their interests and aspirations.

Islam would continue to be a living reality, truth would continue to be made manifest and there would always be men and women to rise to defend Islam until the Day of Judgment. The Shehu assured them that even at that stage Islam had changed the reality of Hausaland, perhaps forever. ‘Our era is the era of light and of banishing darkness from the world.’ Further, it was ‘the era of victory, the era of defeat for the unbelievers in their entirety’, and the era of glory and happiness for all Muslims. If we give thanks, he said, we will achieve more.⁵

**Muhammad Belle’s Role**

For his part, Muhammad Bello seized the opportunity in his *Kaff al-Ikhwan* to raise issues he considered fundamental to the process of establishing and consolidating the Islamic order; and at the same time, to defend Abdullahi from charges of extremism, and dissociate him from the actions and utterances of ignorant students and pseudo-scholars who took the opportunity of the disagreement between the Shehu and Abdullahi to raise tension in society.

In his introduction, Bello quoted extensively from two of Abdullahi’s works in order to prove wrong those who considered him harsh and extreme, and to show that he had always followed a course advantageous to the *umma*. He quoted Abdullahi as saying that commending the good and forbidding evil should be conducted with due respect for the feelings and sensitivities of people and on the basis of counseling and not by means of rough treatment, exposure or bringing shame upon them.

On the issues themselves, Bello reiterated the Shehu’s warning that unnecessary arguments and fanaticism are damaging to Islam and should therefore be avoided. He noted that people have varying abilities and interests in the practice of Islam: some are inclined, as Imam Malik is said to have observed, more to prayer than fasting, some have certain qualities and lack others. Those who find it easier to engage in supererogatory prayers have no rights to claim superiority over others who find fasting easier. People should direct their attention towards more fundamental things: the *jihad* at hand and spiritual and moral development.

Bello also raised the issues of true and venal scholars. The corrupt scholars, he said, fall into two categories: those who have knowledge of Islam but act contrary to what they know, and the ignorant who, despite their ignorance, still give legal opinions. The latter mislead the people for they themselves are misled. The true scholars, on the other hand, are those who fear none but Allah in the dissemination of the truth, and whose knowledge increases them in the fear of Allah and makes them shun the world. Moreover, they maintain an intelligent and reflective attitude towards their own moral failures. Their knowledge is useful because it has a direct impact on their behavior as opposed to the superficial, ineffectual knowledge gathered by the venal scholars.

Bello warned his comrades against self-justification or nursing a sense of purity in themselves, while looking down upon others. Allah, he implied, has condemned such attitudes in the strongest terms, especially in those verses:
Are you not aware of those who consider themselves pure? Nay, but it is Allah alone who causes whomever He wills to grow in purity; and none shall be wronged by as much as a hair’s breath. Behold how they attribute their own lying inventions to Allah — than which there is no sin more obvious."

This attitude, Bello noted, is bound to lead to denigration, insulting or cursing a fellow Muslim and seeking to uncover his faults, whereas Allah has prohibited such kinds of behavior. No matter what his faults, a Muslim, Bello insisted, has an absolute right to respect and dignity.

Bello returned to the familiar theme of a particular deed not being wrong unless it is categorically prohibited. Repudiation comes from perpetrating a prohibited act. Even so, the purpose of ‘repudiation’ should be the moral uplifting of a person, and this necessarily requires leniency and consideration. If Allah would ask His Prophet, Musa (upon him be peace) pleased, to speak in a mild manner to His enemy, Pharaoh, how then would a Muslim speak to a fellow Muslim? Bello referred to an incident involving a youth who came to the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) demanding permission to commit adultery. The people were indignant but the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) drew him near and said gently, ‘Would you like your mother to be involved in adultery?’ He replied in the negative. After one or two similar questions the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) told him, ‘that other people have similar feelings towards their mothers, daughters, sisters and so on, and placing his hand on the youth’s chest, the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) prayed, ‘Allah, purify his heart, forgive his sins and preserve his chastity.’

In reality what Muslims need, Bello continued, is advice, for the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) has said that religion consists of counseling. The leaders need advice on how to carry the burden of the umma conscientiously and efficiently. The advice for the masses consists in showing compassion to them, taking care of the old, and being merciful to the young, helping them to solve their problems, and inviting them to what is beneficial to them as a whole. Insults and faultfinding are not part of nasiha. It should be a lesson to anyone concerned with the moral failures of people that Allah knows the evil and corruption of mankind, yet forgives their sins and provides them with sustenance.

Muhammad Bello urged for the closing of rank in the new leadership so that the Islamic order could be preserved. True, the umma, as it stood in Hausaland and elsewhere, had its faults and failures, but it also had great prospects. As a single corporate entity, it was preserved from error, for the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) had said that ‘his community would never be united on an error.’ Its prospects lay in the fact that a party of the umma would always stand up for truth and regeneration whenever its social body was undergoing decline. Its future, in other words, was perpetually assured. The common people in particular had a great many faults, Bello agreed, but at the same time, they also had great merits. The common man lives by the sweat of his labor and is generous towards others with the fruits of his work; he has a pure and lawful income which many others could not claim to have. He sees himself as the most despicable of people in the eyes of Allah — a sense of humility treasured by Allah. He is least bothered either by thoughts of wealth or by intellectual doubts in his worship, and he is therefore presumably a better worshipper than one of a higher class.
The best course of action was to handle the affairs of the people with patience, and the leaders should hold on to what was already ‘in your hands of the religion and the world, even if it be little’. The struggle for Islam, Bello assured his comrades, is an on-going process which will never cease despite people’s failures and weaknesses.

Finally, Bello urged his fellow Muslims to maintain goodwill towards Allah and towards all Muslims, and to have faith in the integrity of Muslims. One situation should not be forced into another; one generation should not be judged with the standards of another. ‘Let the hard, ignoramuses know,’ he said quoting al-Yusi, ‘that this umma is purified and exalted. It is like a rainfall — one does not know whether its beginning or its end is the most beneficial.’ People would continue to fight for the cause of Islam in the future, as they had in the past.

It is interesting that these thoughts, arguments and concepts about the rights and obligations of people, the need to treat them compassionately, give them due respect, or even veneration, to cater for their good and to avoid inflicting hardships on them were all coming from the rulers themselves! This indeed is perhaps the real strength of the jihad leaders, and of Sokoto Caliphate as a whole, where those who ruled also defined their own limits and confined themselves entirely within the rule of law. The instincts to oppress the weak, overstep the limits set by the Sharia, or in any way take undue advantage over the people did not exist in these rulers. As far as they were concerned, every citizen was a sacred individual, more sacred than the Kaaba; therefore his life, his property and his honor were sacred and inviolable to the ruler, the state and fellow citizens.

The Shehu regarded this process as absolutely vital for the caliphate: there had to be differences of opinion if the Islamic law was ever to be developed in the caliphate. So he advised his people in Najm al-Ikhwan to read the books of the three pillars of the revolution — Abdullahi’s, Muhammad Bello’s and his own, because their works were mutually complementary, and because the differences that they read in them were part of Allah’s mercy to the community.

Taken together, what is available of the works of the triumvirate are complementary, each one to the other in the different roles the three men played in the service of the call of Shaykh Uthman for the establishment of true Islam. They are a good and a true record of the emergence and process of the Jamaa, the jihad and the establishment and expansion of the Caliphate. . . One cannot help thinking how opportune it was that these men were there together and with all those abilities and zeal to serve — despite the differences in character and of opinion sometimes — their common cause.
Chapter Fourteen
The Shehu’s Legacy

By the year 1227/1812, when the Shehu gave the responsibility for running the caliphate to Abdullahi and Muhammad Bello, he was already in the twilight of his illustrious life. Several years had passed since Allah ‘completed the victory for Muslims’ and gave them a nation, a social order and a political power of their own. From the start of the jihad to the establishment of the caliphate and to the handing over of responsibilities to trusted scholars and administrators, the Shehu himself had undergone a transformation. His tone had changed considerably: he was no longer the protestor, the challenger or the aggressive revolutionary, but rather the father, the guide, the teacher, the symbol, fully conscious that the parting with companions, students and the millions who adored him was drawing near.

There is no doubt that at this time the Shehu’s sense of commitment to the umma, his love for it, and his desire to guide it aright and leave for it an abiding legacy had grown stronger and deeper. In examining precisely what the Shehu left as a legacy for posterity, we will use three of his works. Nasihat ahl al-Zaman, written as advice for the people of the Sudan, is the basic reference. The others are Misbah ahl al-Zaman and Najm al-Ikhwan.

The Legacy
On Policy Making

The first aspect of this legacy was the Shehu’s advice to the umma to heed Islam’s call for the fulfillment of the tripartite duty: to cultivate the consciousness of Allah, taqwa; to adhere to the Sunna; and to follow the course of diligence, wara, especially on the part of rulers and scholars, in the handling of the affairs of the umma. These duties were interrelated and mutually indispensable. Taqwa is the gateway to Islam; Sunna is Islam in history and in practice, its moral order and social values; while wara constitutes the political and social policies necessary to preserve the order and supremacy of Islam.

When translated into concrete political and social terms, wara embraces far-reaching legal and governmental policies characterized by tolerance, accommodation and broadmindedness on the part of Islamic government, jurists and law-makers. For example, for a jurist, wara implies being strict on oneself by having stringent moral duties while remaining lenient and tolerant to the common people. And when we go back to Misbah ahl al-Zaman, we see further implications of wara. There is a duty on scholars and leaders to be tolerant to one another’s views and actions, and to be fair in their criticism of each other. They should temper their zeal to eradicate evil in society with the corresponding necessity to protect the well-being of the people: so that if the eradication of a particular social evil is likely to lead to the defeat of the objective of the Sharia — which is the enhancement of the welfare of people — then the eradication of
such evil should wait for the time being. Further more, scholars and jurists should keep in mind that according to Imam Shafii, *Sunna* embraces whatever is consistent with *Sharia* or whatever is neither rejected nor confirmed by *Sunna*, even though Malik is less accommodating. By implication, the Shehu advises Muslims to amplify the definition of *Sunna* to embrace deeds and policies which enhance the purpose and objectives of the Muslim *umma* even if they have no precedence in the practice of the early generation — *salaf* — and even if the *Sunna* is silent on them. In political terms *wara* implies that rulers should be compassionate in dealing with the affairs of the *umma*, for the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) beseeched Allah ‘to be compassionate to a ruler who handles the affairs of Muslims with care and to be hard on a ruler who is hard on them.’ For the society at large, *wara* imposes on them the responsibility to remain united and to foster brotherhood and solidarity among themselves — to be hard on unbelievers and compassionate to one another.

**On Legislation and Administration of Law**

In the sphere of legal order the Shehu’s advice to the *umma* was to accept the principle that differences of opinion among scholars is merciful, as an article of faith. In practical legal terms it implies that whatever the *ulama* have not agreed as being unlawful or illegal should be accepted as permissible to the community; and whatever they are not agreed upon as being obligatory should not be imposed on the people as a duty. The operative effect of this policy would be the absolute minimization of restrictive laws and the giving of comfort and considerable scope to the ordinary people.

To the legislator, judges and those in charge of public morality, the Shehu advised that they should not force people to accept their own view of right and wrong. Any wrong which was not unanimously regarded as such by the *umma* should not be regarded as wrong in the policy of state, in law courts or as a basis for legislation. Similarly no one should be censured for not doing a duty or fulfilling an obligation over which there is no unanimity among scholars. Thus the law enforcement agencies, the legislators and judges should confine themselves to matters over which the *Quran* and *Sunna* are categorical or over which there is an *ijma*. To go beyond this, the Shehu warned, would be tantamount to a deliberate effort to create confusion in society and to open the door to disputes.

It is best for those in authority to realize that since Muslims have accepted the schools of law as valid and correct and the *mujtahids* as upright in their decisions, whoever follows any school or opinions of any of the *mujtahids* cannot be considered as doing wrong. The best that can be done in these circumstances is to advise a person to do what is better, but repudiation or rejection is out of question. The way of life of the *umma* must be respected and treated as generally acceptable to Islam because it rests on the *Quran* and *Sunna* and is ‘built on the ways and moral behavior of Prophets and saints’. Hence none of their behavior should be repudiated outright unless it is in direct conflict with the *Quran, Sunna* or the universally acceptable practice of Muslims. The advice was expanded in *Misbah*, where the Shehu urged leaders to endeavor to ‘discern the real objectives of the *Sharia*’ when they made laws or decisions. The Shehu specifically warned the jurists and law makers not to go beyond their competence or jurisdiction in their zeal to ‘Islamize’ society.
‘Beware,’ he warned, ‘of casting a bad look on matters permitted by the legislator.’ Many a scholar has gone beyond his jurisdiction: he gets exasperated with the people for doing what he considers as reprehensible even though such things are not categorically forbidden, and as result, ‘Allah deliberately causes [such a scholar] to stray.’ It is wrong therefore for a scholar or jurist to attempt to anticipate Allah in matters of law, saying that if such a thing had happened in the time of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) he would have forbidden it. ‘We know,’ the Shehu said concurring with al-Sharani, ‘that the ultimate legislator is Allah, Most High, whose knowledge is absolute and all-embracing: if He had permitted such a thing for one particular people only to the exclusion of others, He would have communicated it to us through His Messenger (Allah bless him and grant him peace).’ So long as that has not happened, whatever is permitted to one generation is permitted to all others. Human interference in a province that is the exclusive preserve of Allah, is the real source of corruption, for Allah’s purpose in His law is to enhance the overall well-being of the people.

On the Islamic Revolution

On the weighty issue of the revolution the Shehu indicated in Nasiha that he was leaving it as an abiding example to posterity. His satisfaction with the ten ‘great favors’ that constituted the essence of his achievement shows that he regarded them as all that is required of Muslims to endeavor to achieve, at ‘the end of time’. And more importantly, the Shehu, perhaps unconsciously, indicated the stages through which a revolution must go if it is to succeed.

Know, then, O my brethren that the ordering of what is good is obligatory by consensus and this is what has happened in this time; that the forbidding of evil is obligatory by consensus and this is what has happened in this time; that hijra from the domain of unbelievers is obligatory by consensus and this is what has happened in this time; that the appointment of amir al-muminin is obligatory by consensus and this is what has happened in this time; that the acquisition of weapons is obligatory by consensus and this is what has happened in this time; that defending one’s life, family and wealth is obligatory by consensus and this is what has happened in this time; that appointing provincial governors and administrators is obligatory by consensus and this is what has happened in this time; that appointing judges is obligatory by consensus and this is what has happened in this time; and that the application of the Sharia by judges is obligatory by consensus and this is what has happened in this time. These are ten matters over which the people of this time must be grateful to Allah for in addition to faith, they are among the ten greatest favors of Allah — all of which have occurred in this time.

We are thus introduced to the four stages of revolution: the stage of preparation, aimed at molding public opinion and drawing people away from oppressors and an oppressive system to allegiance to Allah and confidence in His religion; then the stage of hijra, which is the withdrawal from the domain of tyranny in search of the domain of justice; then the stage of preparation for confrontation, defense and armed struggle aimed at overthrowing tyranny; and finally the stage of the establishment of Dar al-Islam with its institutions and objectives.

The establishment of dar al-Islam is but the end of only one phase in the struggle against evil. Therefore the tendency for the Islamic state to rest on its laurels is not the
correct approach to revolution: the revolutionary spirit must be maintained and the *dar al-Islam* must extend its frontiers, continue to defend the interests of Islam, reduce the power of evil and break the backbone of oppressors wherever they may be. Hence the Shehu repeated in *Nasihah* the points he made earlier in his declaration of *jihad*, which included, among other things, that it is obligatory on Muslims to fight against unbelieving, syncretic kings and take the reins of government from them; and that it is obligatory on all Muslims to identify themselves with the Islamic State and flee from the domain of evil for *dar al-Islam*.

Though there is cause for satisfaction and thanksgiving on the part of Muslims, they do not, however, have any cause to be unduly exultant over their achievements. The Shehu advised the men in charge of the new order to remember the past: they would find to their dismay that they had committed certain things that pertained to *jahiliya*. For a reminder, the Shehu enumerated a number of evils which were considered by jurists as unlawful, all of which had been perpetrated in the cause of the struggle. Some people had aligned themselves at one time or another with the oppressors and refused for a time to pay allegiance to *amir al-muminin* and his deputies; some had fought against their fellow Muslims; some had usurped the property of Muslims or enslaved their fellow Muslims, anathematized others and declared them unbelievers simply because they had committed sins; others had fought unbelievers who were citizens of the Islamic state by virtue of which they were protected by law, usurped their property or enslaved them. These were some of the unlawful things that had occurred.

‘I do caution you’, the Shehu advised, ‘against treachery, for Allah has forbidden it to us by saying, “O you who believe! Betray not the trust of Allah and His Apostle, nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you.”’ Further, I do caution you, O my brethren, against going after the secrets and privacies of people, and being preoccupied with their failures because whoever goes after the nakedness of people, Allah will go after his nakedness even if he locks himself in his own bedroom. A believer accepts excuses, while a hypocrite searches for faults. In Muwatta, (the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) says), “Do not engage in searching for faults of people as if you are lords; but rather, look at your own personal faults as servants of Allah”.

In addition, they should cultivate brotherhood among themselves and avoid sowing seeds of enmity. Individual faults should be overlooked, jealousy and scandals repressed. Love should be fostered for it is the very essence of Muslim solidarity, and Muslims should know that love for fellow Muslims is the ticket to paradise.

**On Education and Scholarship**

The Shehu’s advice on intellectual endeavors is that every age is duty-bound to look at Islam afresh and try to solve its problems by itself without having to rely on earlier generations. While noting in *Najm al-Ikhwan* that all generations are mutually dependent on each other and that a given generation is ‘a mercy’ to its succeeding generation, he advised, nonetheless, against relying on past generations to solve contemporary problems. Contemporary scholars, he said, ‘are more learned in the fundamental issues of [their] time’ than their predecessors; as such, their works are of greater relevance to their
community than the works of the earlier scholars, who could not have anticipated future problems.

Scholars therefore have a duty to write their own books in the light of their particular situation, despite the fact that books of earlier scholars might have provided all that they required. They have to make their own additions and improvements to the intellectual heritage of Islam. The people on their part should read the works of contemporary scholars instead of being preoccupied with past thoughts. The Shehu and his men wrote books on practically every aspect of Islam in response to the needs of their people, even though there were books of earlier scholars on those matters.

On the Need for Piety

Finally the Shehu handed over to posterity four matters on account of which ‘Allah will illuminate your hearts with the light of faith’. These were: the cultivation of consciousness of Allah; sustained study of the Quran; the study of the Sunna and Sira of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) and the study of the accounts of the men of the past — the Rightly-Guided Caliphs (Allah be pleased with them), the Sahaba (Allah be pleased with them), the Imams (Allah be pleased with them), saints and others who have made their imprint on the history of Muslims.

The Shehu Passes Away

The Shehu moved from Sifawa to Sokoto in 1230 (1814-15). In the words of Waziri Junaidu:

He settled there and arranged the town. It became the centre of Islam in this country and will remain so, if Allah wills, until the Day of Judgment. After his arrival in Sokoto he asked his daughter Fatima how old she was and she told him twenty-eight. Then she had a presentiment that the time of her death had been revealed to him. But he denied it saying instead that when she had completed thirty years an important thing would happen. When she reached thirty the Shaykh himself died, may Allah have mercy on him. That was in the year 1232, three days having passed in Jumada l-Aakhir (April 20th, 1817). He held the Caliphate for thirteen years and died at the age of sixty-three.

Thus ended an active, lofty and truly remarkable life: a life whose absolute devotion to Allah and unrelenting struggle for His cause finally brought into being the noblest facet of the history of Hausaland, and clearly one of the finest periods in the history of Islam. The Shehu saw himself as endowed with ‘the sword of truth’; he fought relentlessly to make Allah’s word supreme and to abase unbelief and tyranny. He fought falsehood and conquered it. He fought tyranny and conquered it. He fought ignorance and conquered it.

Achievements of the Mujaddid

Perhaps if Shehu Usman were asked to comment on his achievements, he would point to his struggle against ignorance, and the intellectual revolution that he had brought into being as his greatest accomplishment. This intellectual revolution — ‘the extraordinary outpouring of Arabic writing’, as Abdullahi Smith refers to it — was one of the greatest
events ever to take place in Hausaland: and its impact, not surprisingly, was stupendous. Nor indeed would the caliphate itself have come into being without this intellectual awakening, for it is the copious flow of thought and ideas that constantly fed and enhanced the spirit of the revolution, and brought together a vast body of scholars who made the struggle for Islam their ultimate goal.

Here was a political revolution on a remarkable scale, but the movement represented much more than an attempt of a few under-privileged and determined men to seize political power for their own benefit. In origin it was also an important intellectual movement involving in the minds of the leaders a conception of the ideal society and a philosophy of revolution . . .

In their search for the ideal society and the just ruler, they looked back to a previous golden age in the history of dar al-Islam, and their aim was to re-create in the Western Sudan the society of the Rightly-Guided Caliphate.

The end result of that intellectual renaissance was a caliphate run entirely by scholars: there was not a single aspect of state organization or institution, be it political, economic or military, which was not placed under the charge of a scholar. Gone was the old order in which rulers wallowed in ignorance and the state was run at the whim of tyrants. Now the Sharia reigned supreme; and who else but scholars knew the Sharia or how it should be applied?

But more fundamentally, that intellectual revolution gave birth to a new concept of life, and along with it, fresh values, attitudes and world views. For the first time the world was evaluated in purely Islamic terms: its transitory nature, its deluded hopes, its deceptive pleasures were emphasized in total contrast to the abiding nature of the hereafter, its infinite hopes and its stability and reliability.

It is better for man to seek a more stable home, an abiding comfort, and a lofty, enduring life than to succumb to the temptations of a world that deceives, a home that is but an illusion. To achieve that abiding home of the hereafter, man must, in the conception of the leaders of the revolution, set himself on a new course — with its own goals, priorities and purposes. The goal is not anything that is earth-bound or world-oriented: it is Allah Himself. As the Shehu is wont to say, man fulfils the ultimate purpose of life only when he is able to gain the acceptance and pleasure of Allah.

Once the goal is Allah Himself, then man’s perception of life and his priorities in it are completely transformed. The priorities, like the goal itself, become heaven-bound and not only lofty in themselves but elevating also. In a three-page treatise, Qawaid talab al-usul ila Allah, the Shehu indicated priorities that would be bound to change not only people’s characters, but society itself.

The first of these priorities is the attainment of knowledge, defined in Qawaid as the essential knowledge. It embraces the knowledge of Allah and of His law, the means of self-purification, and discipline. In other words, man’s first priority in life is to understand his Lord, creator and ultimate goal; then the proper way to live and deal with fellow human beings, then the means towards obtaining the ultimate acceptance and pleasure of Allah.

Associated with this first priority is the second: the twin-objective of personal intellectual development and social restraint. The Shehu stated that a person who wants to gain nearness to Allah must strive ‘not to be dull-witted, because the dull-witted cannot
grasp the real implications of issues’. Nor should he be obsessed with the love for leadership or political office because whoever is so inclined is bound to be ‘absolutely inclined to the world’. In short, to be able to gain the pleasure of Allah, one must use one’s intellectual ability fully, and not temper one’s desire to reach the ultimate goal with petty squabbles for fame and glory.

Then the third priority is moral exercise (riyada). Its purpose is to equip the body and mind with the power to withstand the moral pressures of a corrupt society; to endure the physical hardships and strains of a jihad, and resist the temptations of power and wealth when the mujahid eventually becomes a ruler. Here we may recall Abdullahi’s prescription of ‘scanty food’ as the medicine that ‘scatters’ the diseases of the mind. Riyada is thus a process of spiritual fortification, a preparation to face a corrupt world, and the securing of the provisions needed to carry the responsibilities of an improved world whenever the opportunity arises.

The fourth priority is meditation — an opportunity which khalwa does provide from time to time. The Shehu said that a person should occasionally withdraw to a place where he is not likely to be seen by anyone, and he himself sees no one; where he hears no sound of, nor speaks to, anyone. Then, presumably, one could turn completely to Allah, meditate on creation, reflect on the prevailing conditions in society, and try to conceptualize the framework and the means for change or improvement. Khalwa may in fact be seen as a form of hijra: in a way it is a protest against society that is bent on proceeding on a ruinous path; it is a symbolic withdrawal from the existing order; it is a flight from a world dominated by evil. It is thus a process of moral refreshment and intellectual rejuvenation.

The fifth priority is to give the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace), one of his dues. The Shehu has stated that invoking blessing on Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) is one of the surest ways of gaining Allah’s pleasure. We may here recall one of the numerous hadiths in Mishkat al-Masabih, ‘Ubay ibn Kaib said he told Allah’s messenger (Allah bless him and grant him peace) that he frequently invoked blessings on him and asked how much of his prayer he should devote to him. He (Allah bless him and grant him peace) replied, ‘that he might devote as much as he wished’, and when Ubbay suggested a quarter he (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, ‘Whatever you wish, but if you increase it that will be better for you.’ He suggested a half and the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) replied, ‘Whatever you wish, but if you increase it that will be better.’ He suggested two-thirds and he (Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, ‘Whatever you wish, but if you increase it that will be better for you.’ Ubbay then suggested devoting all his prayer to him and he (Allah bless him and grant him peace) replied, ‘Then you will be freed from care and your sins will be expiated.’

It is a priority to seek nearness to Allah through the ‘medium’ of His Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace), by praying, for example, for Allah’s approval invoking the esteem of Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) with Him. Finally, one should cultivate the proper relationship with one’s sheikh by giving him his due respect, and at the same time evaluating all that one learns and experiences with one’s mentor from the Quran and Sunna. Here the entire relationship is based on the student’s quest for
knowledge and moral elevation. The priorities start and end with knowledge, and such is the primacy of knowledge in the scale of Shehu’s all embracing transformation.

**The Advance of Women**

These priorities, which were all geared to serving the ultimate goal transformed a whole people. The old order characterized by ignorance and depravity caved in under the sustained pressure of the ‘extraordinary outpouring’ of knowledge and the elevated standards of morality. Women were beneficiaries of this transformation. The Shehu insisted on their education and moral progress and withstood all pressures to reverse his unyielding stance. He reserved the harshest words for those scholars who encouraged the abandonment of women to ignorance and ignoble life. At the start of his career he lamented the appalling state of ignorance to which women were condemned; at the end of it, he was satisfied that, as far as possible, he had mobilized women through education, brought them into the mainstream of life, and above all, produced women of a sufficient caliber to take pride of place in Islamic history.

The most prominent of these women was the Shehu’s daughter, Asma. This noble lady grew up to become a scholar in her own right, a teacher who educated not only a generation of women, but through these women, also educated many children. She was indeed a torch that lit up the path of the revolution and a pillar that held Islam aloft even in the most trying periods. Jean Boyd, who has pioneered research on this remarkable woman, suggests that she managed to step out of her role as ‘a teacher of women’ and to enter the world of politics, ‘boldly campaigning to keep the idealism of the Shehu alive’. But in any event, it was Nana Asma’s role as a teacher and ideologue, more than anything else, that has left her indelible imprint on the history of the Sokoto Caliphate, and indeed of Nigeria.

Asmau has a place in the history of the Caliphate, and when a history of the idea of the Jamaa is produced, how they were nurtured, metamorphosed, sustained and propagated, Asmau’s role will be shown to have been of significance. Her influence which, in the Islamic context, is unusual in its scope, was found acceptable in Gobir and Zamfara, while her scholarship and her commitment to the perpetuation of the memory of the Shehu and his ideals find ready acceptance in the Jamaa.

Her merit lay principally in combining the education of women with looking after the well being of the poor and the deprived. Her husband was responsible for public welfare in the early days of the caliphate, but Asma eventually came to symbolize both the aspirations of women for education, respect and justice, and the yearning of the poor for justice, health and comfort.

One can only wonder at the scale of the change in men’s attitude to women brought about by the revolution, and wonder too at the rapid rise of women. Previously, women were seen as mere utensils; thereafter they were spoken of with respect and even reverence:

The tireless lady who exceeds in everything
She has to do, or has done.
East and West, near or far, she is known for her wisdom

Meritorious work and scholarship which

is like a river with waves (spreading out).

When the venerated lady died, a great sense of loss overwhelmed the caliphate. It was as if the last pillar of the revolution — the sayyidatuna, as she was reverently addressed — had been lost.

Asma showed the extent to which a determined and well-bred woman can influence society. She showed the height a woman can reach in knowledge and moral consciousness, and how she can use these to keep a revolutionary society on its feet. Successive caliphs looked to her for guidance. Indeed her influence on the general course of the caliphate, enhanced by her stature as a saint and daughter of the Shehu, might yet prove more decisive than we read in books. Today her poems on religion, history, politics and military activities of the caliphate can be heard from the lips of women all over Nigeria, and she lives still in the minds of many.

The Ascendancy of Islam

Beyond the singular achievements of Shehu Usman, lie still greater ones: he came into the scene when religion was in decline, but at his death Islam was the dominant force in Hausaland, ready to stir the whole of western Sudan into revolution. For a man who had devoted his life to this single cause, nothing more could satisfy him than that when he was dying; he had no fear of leaving a weak structure for posterity: he was confident that Islam had gained the upper hand and was bound to make further triumphant inroads into the untenable frontiers of kufr. In addition, the caliphate was not to be a dormant political structure but a state that took its responsibility for the defense and enhancement of Islam very seriously. In the philosophy of revolution articulated by the Shehu, the state, as much as the individual Muslim, had to commit its energy, resources and its very life to the propagation of Islam, the expansion of dar al-Islam, the abasement of unbelief, and ensuring that the perpetual conflict between Islam and unbelief would be resolved in favor of Islam. ‘In general’, Smaldone observed concerning the extent of wars fought by the caliphate, ‘It would not be very inaccurate to estimate that there was at least one major military expedition conducted per emirate per year. Such a record of intensive and frequent warfare can be matched by few states. Sokoto and its subordinate emirates must be numbered among the most militant states in history.’

Finally, the Shehu showed clearly that the life of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) can be recreated by Muslims at any age and in any place. The Shehu’s life was in a very fundamental sense like the life of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) reconstructed in the twelfth century hijra in Hausaland, which testifies to the universality, not only of Islam, but also of the process of Islamic revolution. ‘Shaykh Uthman had been consciously emulating the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace),’ Professor Ismail observes, ‘and in many respects his actions were made to approximate those of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) who was his ultimate example. The similarity in the development of their careers should not be overlooked.’
Smaldone has made the observation that ‘one cannot fail to be impressed by the historical parallels between the development of military organization in Arabia in the seventh century and the evolution of military organization in the Sokoto Caliphate’. The two armies, although separated by a thousand years or so, he further observed, maintained ‘striking resemblance’ in their tactics and strategies. Similar resemblance is to be found in the conduct of war in Sokoto and the prophetic generations, a fact which convinced Smaldone that ‘it was the Islamic content of these two societies that explains many of their common military doctrines’.

Thomas Hodgkin, on the other hand, has noted that the predominant objective of Shehu’s movement was to establish a state in the model of the Prophet’s (Allah bless him and grant him peace) — a state totally committed to social justice, guided by the Sharia, and ruled not by despots but by God-fearing people. In this enterprise, Hodgkin implies there was a conscious effort on the part of the Shehu and his lieutenants to follow closely the historical examples set by the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace). Hence, says Hodgkin, ‘the conscious parallelism between Uthman’s mission and that of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace): his withdrawal to Gudu was described as “the hijrah”, and dates in the history of the jihad were calculated from it. Thus the original Islamic drama was, in a sense, being re-enacted in the central Sudan’.

The scale of the Shehu’s success and achievements, the sheer force of his character and the parallels between his life and that of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) impelled many people in central Sudan to believe that the Shehu might, after all, be the Mahdi, or at least, one of the most perfect saints. The Shehu dismissed the speculations. But how did he assess himself? M.A. El-Hajj has translated the mujaddid’s assessment of himself in Tahdhir al-Ikhwan.

Know also O my brethren that I am not the imam-Mahdi, and that I have never claimed the mahdiyya, albeit that is heard from the tongues of other men. Verily, I have striven beyond measure in warning them to desist and explicitly rejected their claim in my Arabic and Ajami writings. For example I said in one of my Arabic compositions, namely al-Khabar al-hadi ila umur al-imam al-mahdi: ‘My purpose in writing this book is not to affirm that I am the imam-Mahdi; my purpose in writing it is to explain to you that Allah the Exalted has favored me with conditions (ahwal) which agree with the conditions of the imam-Mahdi; that the ulama (may Allah be pleased with them) have mentioned in their books. My object is to comply with the command of Allah: Make the favors of thy Lord manifest.’ And after I had mentioned these conditions I said: ‘The imam-Mahdi, however, has certain secret attributes which nobody else can possess. Verily there is a wide difference between the drone of a fly and the melody of a bee. In one of my Ajami compositions, for example, I mentioned thirty-three characteristics which I shared with the Mahdi and then said: “I am not the Expected Mahdi, though it is his garment that I wear. I am the clouds that precede the awaited Mahdi, and it is for this that I am associated with him.”

In a poem he attempted to silence speculation:

This is a poem to refute the long-standing lies which people spread about me. . .

They say that I have been to Mecca and Madina, and they have no doubt about it.

They say that I can fold up the earth, walk on water and fly.

They say that I meet with the hidden people (ahl al-ghayb).
These qualities are attributed [to me] by many people, and I must say they are wrong. And if you chide them for it they are resentful. Having seen a minor quality or characteristic, they refuse to believe that I am nothing. Verily, I am nothing but a stream of light, emanating from him [Muhammad Allah bless him and grant him peace] who is the source of blessing (baraka). . .

Conclusion

What are the fundamental issues of the revolution that may serve as guiding lessons for contemporary Muslims? For the answers we will turn to three scholars of the revolution. The learned wazir, Usman Gidado Dan Laima, one of the architects of the revolution who later shouldered its heavy responsibilities, assessed the revolution in his Rawd al-Jinan, cxiv which may well be the most authoritative available to us. An eye-witness, participant and tireless defender of the revolution, his keen sense of history, his full understanding of the purposes of Islam and philosophy of revolution, and his piety give his assessment an unassailable merit. His son, Abd al-Qadir, is the second scholar who assessed the revolution in his Anis al-Mufid. cxv Finally, Waziri Junaidu, who was one of the greatest contemporary authorities on the Sokoto Caliphate, and the one person who still symbolizes some of the finest elements in the caliphate, left his assessment in his Dabt al-Multaqatat. cxvi

To begin with, the Shehu was confronted with a political situation in which the destiny of Muslims was in the hands of a political class that was either unbelieving or sinful — backed, unfortunately, by a class of ulama that was basically fraudulent. The Shehu’s solution was to initiate a powerful process of mass education with political, social and moral dimensions. ‘The Sheikh’, Waziri Gidado said, ‘exerted himself in elaborating this matter and brought them back to the truth.’ Part of this elaboration was to erode the political base of the ruling class. Part of it also was to expose the fraudulent ulama and to show that their unqualified support for a tyrannical political power was a blatant violation of Islamic principles.

The Shehu was faced also with a reality that derided any efforts at reform. Perhaps some saw corruption as being already too deep-rooted in society to be eliminated. Others might have looked at the Shehu himself with utter cynicism, for what could an itinerant preacher, without any strong social background, whose tribe was underprivileged, do in a society that was firmly rooted in tradition and with a powerful political culture? Others might have thought his followers were too few to create any impact on society.

Within the context of Hausaland, the Shehu could see no history of Islamic revolution from which to draw lessons. This made his task all the more difficult, since his people might not grasp the issues at stake easily nor see reasons why he should single-handedly and without any precedent attempt to confront the Hausa establishment. But the Prophetic example was there; and several others, too, particularly that of the Askia. The Shehu went on despite the obvious historical gap, and in the words of Waziri Gidado ‘undertook to fight them all [i.e. the people of the Sudan] and cared not [for the consequences]’. Or we may say that he cared not because he was sure of the ultimate victory of truth over falsehood, or justice over tyranny.
Another reality faced by the Shehu was personal to him: it was the choice he had to make between serving Islam wholeheartedly and the attractive requirements of a normal lifestyle. Should he take a job in the court as other ulama did? Should he settle for an occupation as an alim which often was lucrative? Should he stay permanently in one place, build a school, and pursue a contented life? Or should he give up personal pleasures and comforts for the sake of uplifting his nation? He chose the last alternative and as a result ‘he had no settled home’ as Waziri Gidado told us, ‘and he derived no means of livelihood [from his activities]’. He could thus afford to reject the offer of gold from Bawa, which the other ulama could not, and to demand, instead, justice for the people. He could afford also to move from country to country before the jihad in his bid to educate the masses, and to move during the jihad from one region to another in response to military and political developments.

Finally, the Shehu faced the choice of either trusting entirely in Allah or believing in the efficacy of his own designs and abilities. The course of the revolution depicts Shehu as an unassuming personality who never displayed inordinate ambition, nor the desire for power and glory. Indeed, many of the political and military developments — such as the liberation of Kano, Bauchi, Adamawa and other distant places — might have come as a surprise to him. Even in his immediate surrounding, he refused to call on the people to rebel against their rulers; rather he said that he would not be a party to sowing dissension between the people and their rulers. The Shehu seemed to believe that since he was serving the cause of Allah it was not befitting to take advantage of any situation nor to be opportunistic, but to let Allah decide which way matters should go.

**Causes of Success**

Waziri Gidado discerned five reasons for the Shehu’s astounding and overwhelming success. ‘The first was that Allah chose for him a good generation whose hearts were soft, and who listened to him and obeyed his command.’ What would the Shehu have done if the people had refused to listen to him or respond to his call? In other words, the Shehu was raised by Allah at the opportune time: he himself displayed no noticeable desire to hurry the people because he knew that a revolution could not be rushed. When the time came society exploded.

Waziri Gidado thought the profusion of *Quran* reciters, scholars and students who were his assistants in all matters were the second reason. A thorough intellectual preparation was a significant contribution to the success of the revolution. The Shehu took pains to build a formidable body of scholars, jurists and saints — both men and women — on whom he depended almost totally for the dissemination of his message, for his contact with the masses, for the conduct of the war and eventually for the running of the caliphate. The revolution was built almost entirely on an intellectual foundation which perhaps explains its profoundness and its resilience.

The third reason for the success of the revolution, according to Waziri Gidado, was that his call was distinctly phased: the Shehu did not force one stage into another. He patiently disseminated education and moral consciousness among the people for almost three decades, without seeking any occasion to provoke the rulers. Throughout this period, he never mentioned *jihad* in any of his open air preaching’s; rather he sought to purify
people’s faith, enlighten them about worship and transactions, and initiate them into the tariqa. He attacked un-Islamic customs, but did so without any reference to those in power or any attempt to provoke the masses against the rulers. When the Shehu brought about the desired transformation, Allah permitted the social and political transformation of the region as a whole to take place. And as soon as jihad started, the Shehu’s emphasis shifted and he began to speak of hijra—jihad. This went on for several years. When victory came and the caliphate was established, the Shehu changed his themes in response to historical and political changes: the emphasis now was on how to run the caliphate, strengthen the solidarity of Muslims, apply the Sharia and generally how to preserve the order of the umma. The gradualist, systematic approach is the natural one known of prophets and all genuine mujaddids. The Shehu believed in the firmness of Islam, that no one can preserve Islam better than Allah, nor ever hope to love Islam more than Allah does, and that time has never been against Islam. He had confidence in Islam, confidence in Allah’s judgment, confidence in the eventual triumph of his cause — the confidence paid off, and we had an umma, an Islamic order, a caliphate.

The fourth reason, according to Waziri Gidado, was that the Shehu took his appeal directly to the masses — the women, the poor, the slaves, and all other groups of the underprivileged and dispossessed in society. The ulama helped him to reach the masses. He lived like them, shared their aspirations and endeavored to know and experience personally their plight and their grievances. He identified with them completely and championed their cause unconditionally.

It is Islam’s abiding responsibility to defend the poor against the oppressive rich, a tyrannical social order and a tyrannical government; and to secure for them their interests. It is Islam’s duty and commitment to work for the overthrow of any government or social order that denies to the poor their rights, or seeks to tilt the socio-economic balance in favor of the rich.

The fifth reason for the success of Shehu’s revolution ‘was that the body of his consultants and those who worked with him and migrated to him were keen and obedient’. More importantly perhaps was the existence of this body of consultants itself. What appears clearly in the course of the movement is that the Shehu was not working alone: indeed he hardly ever took any decision unilaterally. For example, the election of amir al-muminin was suggested to him, and he left the matter to his advisers. Throughout the jihad decisions on the conduct of war were left to the council. When these advisers became rulers, they were left to follow their own initiatives, for the Shehu withdrew to occupy himself in teaching and training. The movement was not a one-man affair, but a collective undertaking, which rested very much on mutual consultation.

In his Anis al-Mufid, Waziri Abd al-Qadir has added another reason for success. He reckoned the members of the Jamaa preferred the hereafter to the world, and were thus ready to forego their homes, property, families and other personal conveniences in order to undertake the hijra. They chose knowledge rather than ignorance; hence, each of them strove to learn and work by it. They preferred consciousness of Allah to moral degradation and were thus able to shun whatever was contrary to the Sharia. Finally, they preferred social transformation of society to corruption.
The Jamaa worked as a single body and were clear in their objectives and goals: that they were working for a cause the reward of which lay in the hereafter; that they had to acquire knowledge and live enlightened lives; that the triumph of their cause depended on their relationship with Allah and not on the pleasures of this world; that they were involved in a process of *tajdid* and could not accept what was bound to corrupt them. That keen consciousness of a common goal, a mission, a cause and a unique identity helped to weld the Jamaa together and gave it the strength to work for many years and to fight continuously for more than a decade.

A contributing factor to the success of the Sokoto revolution was, of course, the personality, characteristics and methods of the Shehu himself. The author of *Anis al-Mufid* has listed ten ‘countless’ qualities of the Shehu, which are also endorsed by the author of *Dabt al-Multaqatat*. Our concern here is not to give the list of qualities, but rather to categorize them and consider their implications.

With regard to methodology, the Shehu trained his men by personal example and not by theory. His own life was the embodiment of Islam. But that did not prevent his going out to preach: indeed that was his main life-engagement. We are told that his preaching was excellent, that in compliance with the *Quran* he preached with ‘wisdom and goodly exhortation’. And his training of the men around him and his call to people, were all based on knowledge. Thus, the Shehu fully utilized ‘the sciences’ (*ulum*) in his efforts to transform his society, the science of *tawhid*, the science of *hadith*, the science of *tafsir*, the science of *fiqh*, as well as the sciences of medicine, astronomy and mathematics. Any aspect of knowledge which they thought was of benefit to the community was taught and acquired.

Political strategy was as important and crucial to him as his training and preaching. One of his qualities was *husn al-siyasa* — sound diplomacy and viable political strategies. He had kept aloof from the politics of Hausaland for quite a long time, and had a cordial relationship with the Sultan of Gobir, Bawa, in order to enhance his standing among the people. And as Abdullahi told us, the friendship gave weight to the Shehu’s teachings; those who did not listen to him out of conviction did so because of their fear of the Sultan. The Shehu did not see this as a compromise, but as an integral part of his political strategy. It appears from the sources available to us, particularly *Tazyin al-Waraqat* and *Rawd al-Jinan* that the Shehu used to advise the rulers on crucial matters, and carried, at least in one instance, a weighty voice in the politics of succession.

That ‘cordiality’ did not nullify the basic fact that the Shehu was leading a movement dedicated to the overthrow of the corrupt order, nor the suspicion which the Shehu and his top advisers nursed against the intentions of the rulers. It seems that the Shehu was merely trying to avoid exposing his Jamaa to unnecessary risks such as the wrath of tyrants before it was able to withstand direct confrontation.

The Shehu was also able to attract almost every segment of society, and have in his Jamaa, as Abd al-Qadir indicated, not only the *ulama* but the industrial groups, the professional groups, elements of the army, indeed, all the essential elements in society. Of course, the common people trooped to him in successive waves, which partly explains how the Jamaa was able to conduct the tedious wars and how the caliphate was able within a very short time to stand on its feet and thrive economically. The Shehu was thus
not merely going about preaching, but, perhaps more importantly, creating a broad and sound base for Islam, consolidating his hold in the business establishment, fraternizing with artisans, itinerant traders, farmers and butchers, spreading his pious network into the army.

On a personal level, the Shehu possessed an iron will and an extraordinary strength of character. Waziri Junaidu pointed out that it was this moral strength that enabled the Shehu to face the combined forces of the kings and sultans of central Sudan without being shaken in the least. 'Indeed,' the Waziri said, ‘in spite of their numerical strength and their enormous military prowess, the Shehu fought the combined forces of Hausa kings, strove against them with truth, and Allah opened for him all the lands of Kano, Daura, Katsina, Zazzau; the lands of Bauchi and of Borno as well as those of Kebbi, Burgu, Yauri, Nupe, Yoruba and others in the Sudan . . . He did not fear any of them until Allah gave him victory over them.' It seems also that the Shehu was given to frequent illness, in spite of which he remained active throughout his life.

Johnston sees in the Shehu the marks of a truly great leader. ‘Though a man of peace he sustained a lengthy war and, though an unworldly mystic, he created a territorial empire.’ His ‘spiritual magnetism’, Johnston says further, helped him to maintain the loyalty of his followers for life. His moral courage enabled him, even in most trying and desperate circumstances, to stand on his principles. His faith in his own destiny was so intense that ‘it fired all those who came in contact with him,’ inspiring them to turn defeat to victory in several an instance. The Shehu, moreover, remained totally unworldly, ‘unspoilt in triumph as he had been unshaken in disaster’. To the very end, Johnston concludes his assessment, the Shehu had led a simple, pious and abstemious life, renouncing the world precisely at the time he had gained it. ‘On these achievements alone,’ he says, ‘he deserves to be ranked among the greatest men whom Africa has produced. If his character and achievements are taken together, however, his place is unique.'

Waziri Gidado interpreted the revolution in a parable, in Rawd al-Jinan:

Allah facilitated for him the building of a house for his community upon four pillars, and a roof. Anyone who adheres to it is saved and anyone who neglects it is doomed . . . The first of the pillars is judgment according to the Book of Allah, and anyone who judges according to it, Allah will manage his affairs for him. The second pillar is the upholding of the Sunna of Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace); and anyone who upholds it, the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) will concern himself with his cause. The third pillar is kindness towards the common people in accordance with the Prophet’s (Allah bless him and grant him peace) saying, ‘O Allah, treat with kindness whosoever was appointed over the affairs of my community and treated them kindly.’ And the Most High says ‘Keep to forgiveness and enjoin kindness.’ Allah the most Most High also says, ‘And thou wilt never cease to light upon some act of treachery on their part except a few of them: yet pardon them.’ And the fourth pillar is tact with those whom we should be tactful to in accordance with [the Prophet’s (Allah bless him and grant him peace)] saying, ‘I am sent armed with tact.’ As to the roof, this is taking refuge with Allah through prayers and good works. The Sheikh had three qualities with which he built this house: knowledge, piety and firm resolution.
NOTES


iv The translation of A.D. Biver and M. Hiskat of this work contained in ‘The Arabic Literature of Nigeria to 1804: A provisional account’ is used throughout the present work. See Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 25, 1962, pp. 118-35.


viii Ms in possession of present writer.


xiii A Hausa translation of Hidaya, with the text, was published by Gaskiya Corporation, Zaria, Nigeria [1960]?

xiv Ms in author’s possession.

xv All the hadiths quoted in this section, except as otherwise stated, are taken from Sharh al-Sunna of Imam al-Baghawi.
Muhammad Bello adds four other important recommendations — Salat al-istikhara, Salat al-haja, Salat al-tauba and Salat al-tarawih, which are all parts of Prophetic practice.

Muhammad Bello adds the fasting on the day of Ashura, the one on the day of Arafa and fasting as many days as one can in the month of Muharram.


Muhammad Bello stresses that the taking care of one’s family and relatives is the most superior form of sadaqa and is therefore more rewarding.

The Hausa translation (with text) of Usul al-Wilaya was published in the early 1960s by the Ministry of Education of the Northern Nigerian Government.

Some of these sources, especially the Sabil al-Najat and possibly the Tariq al-Janna, were of a later period; but all of them represent a process which began with the movement itself.

Abdal-Aziz Batran in his doctoral thesis quotes Sidi Mukhtar al-Kunti from whom Bello draws the ideas in Taat as defining Mudara: ‘Mudara is the etiquette of the faithful. . . . It is utmost kindness and adherence to gentleness, not harshness towards people in word and deed. It is the doing of good and offering one’s wealth in the proper ways without desiring any benefit; it is the sacrifice of part of one’s wealth to safeguard the remainder. All this is necessary in addition to upholding one’s honor and religion and preserving oneself: Mudara is the antithesis of adulation, which is association with transgressors and condemnation of their un-canonical acts.’

Tibyan (Ms in author’s possession) was written in the latter period, but as we have already indicated, it was rather a reminder to the community of its initial commitments and social responsibilities.

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The Risala was probably written between 1207/1793, when Ihya al-Sunna was written, and 1212/1798, when the Shehu wrote his poem beseeching Allah to help him establish Islamic order in Hausaland. Thus the first significant effort to get the great ulama into the movement was made in the beginning of the third decade of Shehu’s preaching.


The hadith continues: ‘Some people are afflicted by wrong actions and some people are protected from it. Be merciful to the people of affliction and praise Allah for His protection.’ Muwatta.
The full title is *Tanbih al-Ikhwan ala Jawaz Ittikhadh al-Majlis li ajl Talim al-Niswan ilm furud al-Ayan*. Ms in author’s possession.

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Quran 3:28.

Quran 60:13.

Waziri Gidado writes of the Hijra: ‘The Sheikh migrated with his followers to the town of Gudu. He found Ali, the commander of the army, had already built a house for him … [The Sheikh] then said, “Bring my preaching bench”. When he had sat upon the bench and greeted the Jamaa, he waved his hand about between the sky and the earth and clenched it, saying, “I have deprived every bearded person of the management of his affairs today except in regard to the management of the affairs of his family. He is [now] in my power.” He passed his hand a second time and clenched it and said, “I have taken away the power of every one with power in this country except him who comes to my side …’. Then the Sheikh moved his hand once more, clenched it and said, “Allah Most High willing, he who has expelled me from my house will be expelled from his house”. Events occurred as he said.’ See Malmfashi, *The Life and Ideas of Sheikh Uthman dan Fodio, Being editing, translating and analysis of Rawd al-Jinan and al-Kashf wal bayan*, Part One, p. 22.


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See also chapter nine of Mahmud Tukur’s *Values and Public Affairs: The relevance of the Sokoto Caliphal experience to the transformation of the Nigerian polity*. Ph.D. thesis submitted to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1977.

Quran 4:97-8.

Quran 3:28.

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out to the Jamaa for them to pay homage to me on the Quran and Sunna. Let us see what you will do to me.” His followers swore allegiance to him upon the Quran and Sunna.” Mahumfashi, The Life and Ideas, pp. 27-8.


lxviii Quran 9:71.

lxviii Quran 49:10.

lxviii Quran 3:195.

lxviii Quran 4:59.

lxviii El-Masri, Bayan, p. 22.

lxviii Quran 2:193.

lxviii Quran 4:95-6.


lxviii E.J. Arnett, The Rise of the Sokoto Fulani, being a paraphrase, and in some parts a translation of Infakul Maisuri of Sultan Muhammad Bello, pp. 56-7.

lxviii Quran 6:45. This conclusion in the original text has been left out by Arnett.


lxviii Quran 8:60.


lxviii Murray Last observes, ‘The Kebbi expedition was crucial: the Kebbi capital and the Kebbawa fled upriver. The campaign made the next move, to Gwandu, possible, and allowed a permanent settlement to be founded there, thus ending Muslim’s trek.’ The Sokoto Caliphate, Ibadan History Series, 1977, pp. 33-4.

lxviii A contribution to the biography of the Shaykh Usman, Studies, p. 468.


lxviii The Fulani Empire of Sokoto, pp. 56-7.

lxviii Abdullahi, Tazyin, pp. 118-20.

lxviii After this meeting Bello set out on an expedition to Yan Doto. The town had been a long-standing centre of Islamic learning, but the intellectual community there opposed the Shehu and denounced his tajdid as a misleading venture. On arriving at Yan Doto, Muhammad Bello sent a message to the ulama community there asking for a dialogue. ‘If’, Bello said in his message, ‘it should be proved that we were in the right then we would repent and leave that on which we were set’. The ulama rejected his overtures. ‘We will not talk to him at all’, they replied. ‘We do not even wish to see him, lest God join us with him and his father Shehu in this world and the next’. The town was then attacked, and that ulama community virtually annihilated.

lxviii Halil Said, Revolution and Reaction, p. 159.

lxviii Aihaji Nasira Kabara says that it was Uthman who called Abdullahi back through his prayers. ‘This pious report probably means that Uthman, realizing the danger of a breach in his camp, entreated Abd Allah to return.’ M.S. Zahradeen, Abd Allah ibn Fodio’s Contributions to the Fulani Jihad in Nineteenth Century Hausaland, Ph.D. thesis submitted to McGill University, 1976, p. 175.

lxviii The Fulani Empire of Sokoto, p. 59.

Imam Al-Ghazali wrote, ‘A holder of authority should understand that there is no greater dupe and fool than he who sells his religion and future life to another for the sake of this life. His officials and servants will all work for the sake of their own interests in this life. They will cause injustice to appear good in the eyes of the ruler, and thus send him to Hell, in order that they may attain their own ends. What greater enemy is there than one who promotes your utter destruction for the sake of a few unlawful dirhams that (he hopes) to grab?’ *Counsel for Kings*, p. 23.

The Sokoto Caliphate, pp. 59-60.

Published in the 1960s by the Northern Nigerian Government.

Published privately by Alhaji Abdullah Magayaki.

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See also Mahmud Tukur, *Values and Public Affairs*, pp. 239-48. ‘It could be inferred from the Shehu’s non-commital attitude that any of the opinions quoted has some form of support and therefore cannot be wholly illegitimate. The conclusions which can be drawn from the opinions of a section of the ulama are: (i) If the incumbent caliph identifies “the most suitable” person who is not his son, he can make the appointment even without consulting those with authority to select a successor. (ii) The incumbent can appoint his son to succeed him either with the consent of the electoral counsel or in his own right because he is in charge of affairs. (iii) The incumbent can appoint a relative who is not his son to succeed him on the ground that a kinsman is like a distant person. While these “pre-emptive succession” rules are derived from opinions other than the Shehu’s, the mere fact that he presents them as alternative answers to the question he asked, gives them some sort of legitimacy in the eyes of a community which is used to having its standards set by him.’

Malumfashi, The Life and Ideas of Shehu Usman dan Fodio, Part One, p. 28.

Quran 25:67.


Quran 4:49-50.


MS in author’s possession.

Quran 8:27.


MS in author’s possession.


Ismail, ‘Reflections’, in *Studies*, p. 171.


MS in author’s possession.

MS in author’s possession.

*The Fulani Empire*, pp. 111-12.