

TYPES OF ISLAMIC EXTREMISM IN NIGERIA

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Purpose

One of the most frequently mentioned religious fundamentalisms is Islamic. Nevertheless, Islamic fundamentalism arises under the influence of the Christian one. Islamic fundamentalism and Christian fundamentalism are distinct movements within their respective religions with many similarities. Islamic fundamentalism is often associated with a strict and literal interpretation of Islamic texts and a desire to establish Islamic law (Sharia) as the basis for governance. It often takes the form of political and social activism and can sometimes lead to extremist ideologies and acts of violence. Christian fundamentalism, on the other hand, is a movement within Christianity that emphasizes a strict, literal interpretation of the Bible and often focuses on social conservatism. The comparison between the concept of jihad in Islam and the Crusades in Christianity is also a complex matter. Jihad is a concept in Islam that has multiple interpretations and has been used to justify a range of actions, from spiritual struggle and self-improvement to armed conflict in self-defense. The Crusades were a series of religiously motivated military campaigns by Christians to recapture the Holy Land from Muslim control in the medieval period.

The author's intention is to examine the thesis that when it comes to Nigerian politics, the influence of religion is a direct consequence of the colonial rule of Great Britain and that the exact same influence of religion on politics in Nigeria has produced religious violence and political insecurity in the country. The contact of European explorers with the entity known today as Nigeria occurred in two phases. The first phase took place in the fifteenth century, during the era of geographical discoveries when European explorers (the Portuguese) arrived in Benin around 1477 while seeking a route to India. The Portuguese initially engaged in trade but later took it a step further, believing that Africans needed to be civilized for trade to function more effectively. According to them, being civilized meant being Christian and having basic Western education. The first missionary activities were initiated in Benin in 1515 by Catholic missionaries who established a school for princes and children of prominent chiefs at the royal palace. The second phase and the beginning of enduring influences started in September 1842 when the first British Christian mission arrived in these areas, specifically in Badagry, near Lagos. The second phase of missionary activities was significantly stronger. Other Christian missions were established, including: The Methodist mission, The Church Missionary Society, The Baptist mission, The Catholic missionary organization, etc. Christian missions played a significant role in the transformation of Nigerian society through educational programs and institutions, medical work, the establishment of new churches, and other forms of spiritual, moral, and social work in these regions. No religion in this area spread as rapidly as Christianity in southern Nigeria. Today, we have a clear division of Nigerian society into the North and South, i.e. the Muslim North and the Christian South. This societal division has strengthened a sense of separation among the largest ethnic groups and has

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contributed to a general division that is imbued with a religious dimension. In itself, such a division of Nigerian society is a good precondition for the emergence of violence, which we will discuss later.

Politically speaking, modern fundamentalism is largely Islamic. Two sources of fundamentalist movements that emerged in the 19th century were Salafism in Arabia and Deobandism in India. Both movements arose as a kind of reaction to the influence of British colonialism and the spread of pro-Western modernist ideas, and are characterized by a rigid interpretation of the Quran and rejection of all modernist interpretations. While Salafism spread thanks to the wealthy Persian Gulf monarchies, Deobandism was carried by the poor sections of the society of the Indian subcontinent, under the influence of anti-Westernism and antipathy towards neo-colonialism. Both fundamentalist directions produced extremist currents, which marked the geopolitics of the Middle East, or are still marking it (Heywood, 2004: 126).

Design/Methods/Approach

In this paper, the methods of analysis, synthesis, hypothetical-deductive method, methods of generalization and concretization are used. Extremism represents behavior that is on the border of what is permissible with a tendency to cross that border. However, the boundaries are not uniform and can appear in the form of customs, laws, religious and moral norms, so the concept of extremism itself is different (Đorić, 2012: 46), and Islamist extremism represents an extremely conservative form of practicing Islam that does not necessarily incite violence, but it can lead to violence followed by bombings and murders, in order to achieve the planned Islamist goals (Baran, 2008: 16).

Islamist extremism appears in many variants, but common to all violent Islamists is the belief in the obligation to establish Sharia law on theological and political lines as the basis for the functioning of public and political life. All violent Islamists seek to restore Muslim dignity by restoring the caliphate and believe that violence and intimidation are legitimate methods of overcoming the perceived obstacles and enemies of Islam that limit its goals.

Many extreme Islamist groups count as enemy Muslims who benefit from non-Muslim rule over Muslim countries or encourage it, as well as those who imitate the lifestyle of 'infidels'. While some of these groups are focused on fighting within the state union, many have an expansionist vision and advocate crossing borders to secure territory and recruits. Although they often began their activities as rebels or fighters against local authorities with the aim of achieving national or separatist goals, their ideologies converged over time so that cooperation was established on the broader Islamist issue.

Sunni Extremism

The types of Islamist extremism in Nigeria are related to the basic ideological divisions within Islam, so the extremist or terrorist organizations in Nigeria are classified into the following types of Islamist extremism: Sunni extremism, Shia extremism, extremism of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, and extremism of the Quranists. However, although the religious roots of extremism and terrorism in Nigeria are old, terrorism is nevertheless a modern phenomenon. "So, it is clear that we classify terrorism as a modern security threat and that as such it differs from traditional security threats on different grounds." (Bursać, 2022: 154).



Islam is a traditional religion in West Africa, and it came to Northern Nigeria in the 11th century. By the 16th century, Islam was rooted in the capitals of the region, spreading gradually through the villages towards the upper parts of the middle region of Nigeria. There, the advance of Islam was halted by the resistance of local peoples to incorporate it into the Emirati states. The Jihad led by the Fulani in the 19th century brought Islam to the northern Yorubaland area. Nevertheless, the colonial government stopped and slowed down the spread of Islam towards the south of Nigeria, and for the sake of peace in the region it established a rule according to which Christian activities could not take place in the northern Muslim region. Many years later, the two religions continued the competition for converts in the middle region of the country, where ethnic groups and families became supporters of one of the religions. "Thus, the inhabitants of modern day Nigeria were divided along ethnic, regional, cultural and religious lines even before independence. Thus, we conclude that the colonial system laid the foundations for the division of Nigeria, and various post-colonial actions and events significantly helped them." (Bursac, 2021: 63).

Christians and Muslims are relatively evenly represented in Nigeria, so that the proportion of the population of the Islamic religion is 50% compared to 40% of Christians. However, these data refer to the last census that included religious affiliation, which was conducted in Nigeria back in 1963. The central government has avoided releasing any recent data to prevent further unrest. Besides, the last census in Nigeria did not include questions related to religion and ethnicity. According to the International Religious Freedom Report, it is estimated that in Nigeria, Christians and Muslims each make up 49% of Nigerians, and 2% of the Nigerian population belong to other religions. About 90% of Muslims in Nigeria are Sunnis, who profess the Maliki school of Islamic law.² There has also been an increase in members of the Salafist movements, which are mostly linked to the Hanbali school (U.S. Department of State, 2022).³

Two features of Islam are central to understanding its place in Nigerian society and relate to the extent to which Islam permeates other institutions and its contribution to Nigerian pluralism. As an institution in Emirati society, Islam includes daily and annual ritual obligations, such as the pilgrimage to Mecca, observance of the Sharia, establishment of views on politics, family life, communal order and appropriate personal behavior in most situations. Thus, in one part of Nigerian society, Islam permeates daily life, whereby public meetings begin and end with Muslim prayer, and everyone should know the basic Muslim prayers and the five pillars of religion. Public decisions made by local leaders, with the help of religious experts, must be in accordance with the basic principles of Sharia law, primarily the legal school of Malik ibn Anas, a jurist from Medina. Each settlement must have at least one place designated for communal prayers, while larger settlements have mosques. Acquiring a better knowledge of the religion and going on a one or more pilgrimages to Mecca make a Muslim respectable and honorable, and those who are able to devote their daily lives to the beliefs and practices of Islam are deeply respected in society.

Islam in Nigeria is not highly organized but reflects the aristocratic nature of the traditional ruling groups in which there were clerical families whose male heirs were educated at home and abroad in theology and jurisprudence and later held major positions in mosques and the judiciary. For centuries, these ulema, or scholars, were the religious and legal advisors of emirs, nobility and wealthy merchant families in major cities throughout, primarily in northern Nigeria.

2 The Maliki school is one of the four schools of religious law in Sunni Islam. There are also the Hanafi, Shafi and Hanbali schools. The Maliki school is followed by 25% of Sunni Muslims, mainly from North and West Africa, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

3 The Hanbali school is considered the most conservative of all four Sunni schools, and it prevails mainly in the Arabian Peninsula.



“In a general sense, legitimacy means the voluntary submission of citizens to state authority. This means the awareness of the majority of people that their government is religiously, ideologically and above all legally justified and necessary in everyday life.” (Terzić & Joksić, 2021: 69). This is how Islam created and ensured the unifying force of the population in the north, but also in the middle region of Nigeria, where it slowly spread, creating among other things a sense of legitimacy of state and religious authority. The wide range of Islamic beliefs and practices has created a strong sense of community among Muslims in northern Nigeria. This sense of community derives primarily from a set of cultural traditions that influence family life, dress, diet, behavior and personal qualities, which ultimately connect Muslims to each other within national borders, as well as to Muslims outside the territory of Nigeria. At the 1978 constitutional conference, Muslim delegates acted unanimously on the issue of establishing a separate Islamic supreme court. Although their request was not adopted at the time, by the year 2000 as many as 12 of Nigeria’s 36 states had introduced the Sharia legal system. The states, such as Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Kano, Katsina, Kaduna, Jigawa, Yobe, Bauchi, Borno, Zamfara and Gombe adopted the Sharia legal system, and many Christians claim that they did not only introduce Sharia, but adopted Islam as their state religion too. Thus, the Nigerian Civil Liberties Organization considers that the formation of the Religious Affairs Commission in Zamfara State is tantamount to the adoption of Islam as the state religion (U.S. Department of State, 2008).

In order to fully adapt to life in northern Nigeria, non-Muslims had to remain in enclaves, living quasi-segregated lives within their churches, within their families and at work. In contrast, conversion to Islam would be a path to full participation in social life and that is why many people from the middle region of Nigeria, especially those with ambitions in politics and business life, embraced Islam. The exception to this rule is Plateau State, where the capital Jos is evenly divided between Christians and Muslims.

Sufism

Since the 11th century, Islamic practice in Nigeria has been Sunni. Sufism is a major feature of Sunni Islam in northern Nigeria, as a number of Sufi scholars visited Hausaland and succeeded in convincing the early Muslims to practice this very jurisprudence of Sunni Islam. Sufism, or Tasawwuf, is defined as an inner dimension in Islam, i.e. mysticism in Islam, which is characterized by certain values, ritual practices, doctrines and institutions that lead to asceticism. The original meaning of the word Sufi is related to the Arabic word *suf*, which means ‘wool’. Hence, the Sufi represents the one who wears wool, and this very meaning is associated with asceticism, because the first Sufis wore coarse woolen clothes. Although it exists in both Sunni and Shia Islam, Sufism is not a different direction, but a method of approaching or understanding Islam as a religion. The famous North African scholar of the 15th century Abdulkarim al Magili, better known as Muhammad al Magili, visited Hausa, Kano, Zaria and Katsina states and converted the ruling class to Islam, influencing the emergence of political and religious reforms (University of Iowa, 2005). The influence of Al Magili and before him Abdul Qadir Gilani, after whom Qadiriya got its name, led to Muslims in Hausaland in the 15th century reluctantly accepting one of the Sufi orders, better known as Qadirich or Qadiriya. Later in the 19th century, the jihad led by Usman dan Fodio, his brother Abdullah and son Muhammad Bello, only consolidated and strengthened the power of the Qadiriya, being the members of it.

The Qadiriya is one of the most widespread Sufi orders in the Muslim world and can be found in most of West and East Africa, Central Asia, Turkey and the Balkans. The Qadiriya did not develop any separate doctrines or teachings outside the main framework of Islam. They believe in the fundamental principles of Islam, but interpreted through mystical experience. This monopoly over Sufi Muslims



was soon challenged by the arrival of another Sufi brotherhood, better known as Tijanih or Tijaniyya. And this brotherhood spread rapidly among the Sunnis in Nigeria, and in certain parts of northern Nigeria it overpowered the Qadiriyya. Its founder was Sheikh Ahmed al Tijani, after whom the brotherhood was named. The center of Tijaniyyah in northern Nigeria was established by Umar al-Futi, who befriended the then Caliph Muhammad Bela during a visit to the Sokoto Caliphate and married one of his daughters.

Advocating for improved lifestyles of poverty-stricken Muslims, social reform and Islamic revival, Tijaniyyah reacted against the conservative and hierarchical Qadiriya brotherhood, which was then dominant and close to the ruling classes. Unlike Qadiriyya, Tijaniyyah is a common man's fraternity, which is why it is still popular in many parts of Nigeria, including most parts of the North Central Zone. Because of all of the above, in many areas of northern Nigeria the Tijaniyya replaced the Qadiriya and became the main Sunni Sufi order in the region.

In addition to these two Sufi brotherhoods, the Muhammadi brotherhood was founded in 1986. Although not as influential and notable as the previous two, the Muhammadi Brotherhood was founded in Bayoga, Borno State, and is an independent order made up of all the residents of this city. It is not violent, but it has certain extreme characteristics that distinguish the members of this brotherhood from ordinary people. Namely, all members of the Muhammadi brotherhood wear a white kaftan (cloak or tunic), white trousers that do not fall below the ankles and a white cap or turban, and the men often have long beards. Women and girls do not belong to this strict dress code and can wear any color, but as a rule they must live according to Islamic rules and are restricted to their homes. Most members of the Muhammadi Brotherhood belong to the Fulani, but there are also followers of other ethnic groups, including the Hausa and Kanuri. The brotherhood is in constant contact and answers directly to the emir of Shani, on whose territory Bayuga is located. The Muhammadiyah also relies on the Maliki school of Islam, but unlike other Sufi brotherhoods in Nigeria, it has completely withdrawn from wider society into relative isolation within its city, where it functions unhindered.

Thus, there are three Sufi brotherhoods in Nigeria, two of which, Qadiriyya and Tijaniyyah, were in constant conflict, because the appearance of one represented a potential threat to the other, so intra-Sufi relations were marked by unrest, violence and open conflicts. It was intra-Sufi conflicts that led to the strengthening of anti-Sufi movements in Sunni Islam on the territory of Nigeria.

Salafism

In addition to Sufism, in Sunni Islam there is another type of Islamic extremism on the territory of Nigeria, which is Salafism. The members of Salafism are essentially the most extreme fundamentalists who strive to revive the original or authentic Islam. This kind of Islam refers to "al-salaf al-saleh", i.e. the first three generations of the followers of the Prophet Muhammad himself, better known as "pious predecessors". The term "Salafi" means a person who has special knowledge or abilities to consistently follow Salafist beliefs. In contemporary usage, Salafism is defined as an ultra-extreme form of Sunni Islam which seeks to reshape society in accordance with Islamic laws based on Sharia law. This direction draws its inspiration from the famous Salafist Ibn Taymiyyah (Taqi al-Din ibn Taymiyyah) and Muhammad al-Wahhab (Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab), and it was further developed by prominent theologians from Saudi Arabia. The direction was further developed by Muhammad Jamal al Afghani and Rashid Reed. As Al Afghani was a political activist and Abduh a teacher who advocated social and educational reforms, the Salafist teaching was placed on a broad social foundation. (Bursać, 2019: 43).



The Salafi canon gives individuals and groups of Salafis a sense of identity and belonging to a unique and, for them, superior religious community, which is closely related to their understanding and reading of Islamic scriptures. Salafism as an intellectual stream, theology and methodological approach is transmitted through this canon, which serves not only as a means of proselytizing, but also as a rule book through which its followers determine the boundaries of what is and what is not “Salafism”. The position of most Salafist theologians, officially formulated by Al Tami, is that Islam is a monotheistic religion that requires recognition and that any religious, social or political body can be legitimate only if it is deeply rooted in Islam.

Given that Salafism is a complex religious construction that appeared and spread in West Africa through preaching supported by global and later local Salafism, two currents of it can be distinguished. While one is related to the period from 1880 to 1950 when Sunni scholars from all over the world had a common methodology centered on hadiths, the other stream refers to the period from 1960 to the present day when key Salafist institutions were founded, such as The Islamic University of Madinah and other Saudi Salafist bodies that began to attract and grant scholarships to Sunni students from countries that included Nigeria. The goal of such scholarships is for former students to return to their home country as Muslims rooted in Salafist tradition and ideology in order to spread Salafism among the local population (Thurston, 2016: 34).

“Neutrality in a modern state has been achieved by bureaucratizing the judiciary and administration, but the legislative power in a state with universal suffrage still carries the possibility of prevailing over the interests of numerous social classes, i.e. lower classes.” (Terzić, 2020: 83). In addition to universal suffrage, religion can also play a role as a catalyst for vertical social mobility of the masses. Nigeria’s Muslim-majority north proved to be fertile ground for the spread of Salafism as it allowed local Muslims from humble social positions to challenge the long-standing dominance of hereditary rule by privileged families and the established religious class. Northern Nigeria has been and continues to be dominated by the Sufis, their brotherhoods, sheikhs and emirs, but their long-standing right to rule the region is facing new challenges after the return of Nigerian students from the Salafi scientific institutions of Saudi Arabia.

Like all ideologies, Salafism is perceived in different ways. Followers of this direction of Islam show diverse forms of their Salafist preferences. Due to the wide spread of this ideology, diverse financial status and way of life, Salafists, depending on their orientation, have a different vision of the Salafist mission. Some focus on intellectual endeavors, i.e. the search for purity and justification, as well as the spread of Salafist ideology, while others strive for political changes that have their support precisely in Salafism. The combination of these two directions gave rise to the third, which is known as the Salafist Jihad.

Thus, there are three leading directions in Salafism. While the followers of intellectually oriented Salafism focus primarily on finding and disclosing the Salafist heritage, the politically oriented Salafists advocate the direct application of the Salafist tradition in society. The proponents of the third, jihad-oriented Salafism, believe that jihad is the only and right way to achieve religious goals, while characterizing existing government structures as hostile and doing everything possible to overthrow them.

Salafists are not only regionally connected, but seek to establish networks and set models of how to live and work in a global context. Thus, many Salafists from West Africa are well connected to Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Egypt. In this relationship, Salafists become local figures of the global religious discourse, which seeks to oppose its traditional enemy, Sufism, but also new actors, such as Shiites, Pentecostals and Ahmadis. The rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran at the global level influenced the shaping of relations among Muslims throughout Africa. Thus, the Salafists and Shiites in Nigeria became participants in that global conflict, but at the local level.



Salafism spread rapidly and became a powerful ideology due to the fact that it presents itself as a new order which offers prospects for improving living conditions, if not materially, then at least in the moral sphere. The promise of a reformed moral order in accordance with human ideals made it a powerful discourse that transformed many communities, not only in West Africa, but throughout the world. Salafism strives to end trust in the existing state, which is often characterized as post-colonial, secular and imposed. They seek to take power in such a state and run it on the basis of Sharia law.

Salafists in Nigeria believe that they have suffered enough, but also tested the existing state, which they label as unjust, corrupt and un-Islamic. That is why they are doing everything possible to promote the anti-state agenda, which should include the emergence of numerous extreme and terrorist organizations. It should be noted that Salafists sometimes encouraged institutional engagement in political processes, asking their supporters to register and participate in elections. Thus, Sheikh Gumi claimed that participation in the elections was of crucial importance for the Islamic issue, and in this way he tried to mobilize Muslims to vote and defend the Islamic interest in the federal system, in which they felt marginalized and abused. Political participation was therefore essential for Salafism and its relationship to the state.

Shi'ite Extremism

In addition to the aforementioned types of Islamist extremism, extremists from the Shiite school of Islam also operate in Nigeria. Although the majority of Nigeria's Muslim population is Sunni, there is a significant Shiite minority in the northern states of Kano and Sokoto. Despite being treated as religious outlaws in the north, Shiites play a significant role in the religious and social life of the region. It is estimated that there are between 5 and 10 million of Shiites (Muhammad & Abdullahi, 2019: 34).

Shia Islam did not have a significant presence in Nigeria until the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979, which inspired many Muslims from northern Nigeria. Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky, who studied Shia theology in Iran, is the primary figure in this direction of Islam in Nigeria. Inspired by the 1979 revolution, Zakzaky founded the Islamic Movement, which quickly established itself as a leader among Shiites in northern Nigeria. Their goal involves the establishment of an Iranian-type Islamic state in Nigeria, and that is why this movement is subject to constant attacks by the security forces and other Islamic currents, both Sufi and anti-Sufi. What separates the Shiites from other schools of Islam is that they exclusively recognize Muhammad's cousin 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib and his descendants as the only full heirs to Muhammad's secular and spiritual authority (Esposito, 2002: 39). According to the Sunni interpretation, Muhammad did not designate a successor, so after his death, the successor was chosen through shura, i.e. by vote or consensus of the community. Then a group of Muhammad's followers chose Abu Bekir as the first caliph. On the other hand, the Shiites believe that Muhammad during his lifetime designated 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib as the true successor several times, and therefore designated the first three righteous caliphs as usurpers.

Shia Muslims do not recognize the authority of elected Muslim leaders. Instead, Shiites have chosen to follow imams, whom they believe were appointed by the Prophet Muhammad or God himself. The word Shia in Arabic means group or support group. From this root arose the term Shia't-Ali or the group of Ali, better known as the Shiites.

Shia Muslims believe that the Imam is sinless by nature and that his authority is infallible, as it comes directly from God. Therefore, they often view imams as saints. They believe that a well-defined clerical



hierarchy can also play a role in state affairs, and a classic example is Iran, where the imam, not the state, represents the ultimate authority.

Shia political thought entered its modern phase during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution which occurred between 1905 and 1911, when the Shiites were divided between the forces of constitutionalism, modernism, reason and secularism, on the one hand, and more traditional interpretations of religion, religious law and the role of priests in society, on the other. The clerical establishment then finally joined the secular revolutionaries in opposing the common enemy, European colonialism. Until the 1940s and 1950s, Shia political thought dealt with issues of communism and nationalism, often presenting Shia thought as an alternative.

During the 1960s, institutional foundations for the spread of modern Shia political thought through Quranic schools and voluntary student associations from Muslim universities were formed. Informal gatherings, led by clerics and intellectuals, were aimed at the promotion of Shia political thought and the general mobilization of like-minded people, and the result of these gatherings was the uprising of 1963 under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, which was raised in order to overthrow the Shah of Iran, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi.

The most effective ideologue of modern Shia Islam was Ali Shariati. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Shariati combined Islam with Third World theories and revolution, transforming it into an activist political ideology. He believed that class war and revolution would create a just and classless society, but also produce a process of decolonization.

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran represent the institutionalization of modern Shia political ideas. Thanks to Ibraheem El-Zakzaky and the successful Islamic revolution in Iran, Shia Islam penetrates the soil of northern Nigeria and manages to spread effectively despite daily government repression in the predominantly Sunni state. The Islamic Movement of Nigeria is a product of El-Zakzaky's radicalism, originating in Zaria among the students of Nigeria's largest university, Ahmadu Bello.

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 inspired many Nigerian Muslims and Sunnis, among whom was El-Zakzaky. For them, Iran symbolized the model that Muslims in Nigeria can and must achieve. Fascinated by Iran, El-Zakzaky took a radical path and eventually adopted the religious features of Shiite Islam. Shiites in Nigeria, including members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria themselves, are the followers of twelve-imam Shiite Islam. El-Zakzaky's hometown Zaria remains his base, but also the base of Shia Islam. While El-Zakzaky spent years in prison due to clashes with the authorities, across northern Nigeria his followers and society were viewed as troublemakers.

The Islamic Movement of Nigeria has long been the face of Shia Islam in Nigeria, but not its only expression. The Islamic Movement of Nigeria itself, as well as its predecessors, were prone to schisms. Some of Al Zakzaky's followers fled after the conflict with the authorities, others left after his conversion and adoption of Shia principles of Islam, and in the meantime, other Shia currents and organizations were founded, which partially or completely differed from Al Zakzaky's Islamic Movement of Nigeria. Among them are the Society for the Restoration of Islam and the Rasul Azam Foundation.

Ahmadiyya Muslim Extremism

Ahmadiyya is a well-known Islamic, messianic revivalist movement originating in Punjab, India, founded in the late nineteenth century. It has been present in Nigeria since the 1920s and is the most



prominent among the Yorubas. It is related to the life and teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who proclaimed himself as the Mahdi, i.e. the eschatological savior of Islam who will appear in order to peacefully achieve the final triumph of Islam and, according to different interpretations, rule for five, seven, nine or nineteen years (Glasse, 2008: 33).

Ahmadiyya was introduced to Nigeria by a group of Muslim youths in the 1920s, believing that there was a need to modernize Islam. Ahmadiyya Muslims follow the same scriptures and teachings as other Islamic believers, the key difference being that they believe the promised messiah (Mahdi) arrived and founded the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in 1889. Ahmadiyya Muslims also follow Islamic sources, instructions and judicial practices, and their main authorities are the Quran, the Sunnah (the traditional customs and practices of the Islamic community, which the Prophet Muhammad transmitted in writings, deeds and sayings) and the Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad recorded in the works Sahih Bukhari, Sahih al Muslim, Sunan abu Daud, Sunan at Tirmidhi, Sunan ibn Maja, Sunan al Sugra by Al Nisai).

Ahmadiyya Muslims also take into account the interpretation of Islamic law (Sharia) provided by classical scholars. They follow the Hanafi school of thought, and consider all matters in the light of the instructions given by the Promised Messiah. Their acceptance of the authority of the four righteous caliphs as the legitimate leaders of the Muslim community after Muhammad's death, and their belief that a caliph need not be a descendant of Muhammad, basically drew Ahmadiyya Muslims closer to the Sunni than to the Shia Islamic tradition.

According to Ahmadiyya Muslim belief, jihad can be divided into three categories: Jihad al-Akbar (the Magnificent Jihad), which refers to the struggle against feelings such as anger, lust and hatred, and Jihad al-Kabir (the Great Jihad), which involves the peaceful spread of Islam, with special emphasis on spreading the true message of Islam and jihad al Asghar (lesser jihad), i.e. armed struggle that is resorted to only in cases of self-defense, i.e. in situations of extreme religious persecution (Why Ahmadi, 2015).

Ahmadiyya Muslims believe that one of the purposes of the arrival of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, i.e. the promised Mahdi, was to remove the innovations and customs that have appeared in Islam over the years, with the clear aim of returning Muslims to true religious teachings.

Ahmadiyya was established in Lagos as early as 1916 and became popular among young intellectuals. The Nigerian branch of Ahmadi Islam was formed under the leadership of the champion of the Nigerian Youth Movement, Alhaji Jibril Martin, and it established the first centers in the north of Nigeria only in 1960. At that time, Ahmadiyya came into conflict with local Muslim leaders, led by Abubakar Gumi.

Like most Muslims in the world, Islamic believers in Nigeria consider Ahmadi Muslims heretics and non-Muslims, primarily because of the view that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is the expected Mahdi. When Ahmadiyya Islam was declared heretical by Abul al-Maududi and the Islamic World League, the members of this movement were subjected to systematic persecution and sometimes state oppression. When Saudi Arabia banned Ahmadiyya Muslims from hajj visas in 1973, there were violent protests in Nigeria in which Ahmadiyya Muslims occupied the Saudi embassy in Lagos. According to some estimates, there are between two and three million Ahmadiyya Muslims in Nigeria, making up approximately 3% of Nigeria's Muslim population (Huang, 2020).

Ahmadiyya, however, is not the only Islamic group among the Yoruba. Similar Islamic groups, consisting mostly of Yoruba members, include the Ansarudin and Navairudin societies. Both are present to a small extent in the northeast of Nigeria, and most Muslims from that part of the country label these groups primarily as Yoruba Islamic groups, and only then as Islamic. Certain mosques founded



50 years ago by these groups in the Hausa-Fulani part of Maiduguri are called Masallacin Yarabawa, i.e. mosques belonging to the Yoruba. Therefore, the ethnicity prefix is clearly highlighted in this regard as well (Loimeier, 1997: 212).

Extremism of Quranists

Quranism represents a type of Islam in which the Quran is the sole source of Islamic law and guidance. Quranists reject Muhammad's Sunna and Hadith, believing that the message of the Quran is clear, unambiguous and complete, so that it is possible to understand the Quran without the help of Sunna and Hadith.

Quranic ideology dates back to the time of Muhammad, who was against hadiths, and his friend and later successor Umar/Omar banned the writing of hadiths, destroying the existing collections (Aisha, 2008: 6). Adherents of Quranism, therefore, oppose the religious authority, authenticity and reliability of hadith and are all united in the view that the Quran is the only source of Islamic law. Quranists consider both Sunni and Shiite hadiths to be apocryphal, as they were written at least three centuries after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. That is why they cannot have the same status as the Quran or the similar one.

Many Islamic scholars, including those often condemned as too moderate, condemn Quranism. They believe that the Quran even commands Muslims to follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad or the Sunnah, and that without the hadith many Islamic concepts would be abstract and without substance, because it is the hadith that teaches and describe in detail how Muslims should pray, fast, and how they should give obligatory alms, or how Muslims should go on the pilgrimage to Mecca. Moreover, authors led by Hawramani believe that Quranism is an attempt to simplify the lives of Muslims by providing them with a single and clear source of guidance. However, that simplification can be bad if overdone. Hawramani further states that the Quran clearly implies that one should follow the Prophet Muhammad and respect his views, i.e. that the Quran is the main source of instructions supplemented by hadiths wherever necessary (Hawramani, 2019). It is difficult to estimate the number of people who follow this direction in Islam, due to the fact that, as a general rule, they avoid functioning in the form of an organized religious group or organization. There are, however, several Quranic groups that have gathered and organized into a recognizable unit, such as the Ahle Quran, whose founder is Abdullah Chakravali. This movement relies entirely on the chapters and verses of the Quran, and its adherents consider the Quran to be the most perfect hadith and the only source of Islamic tradition. While the second group is represented by Izgi Amal, a Quranic organization in Kazakhstan whose leader is Alsbek Musin, the son of an influential Kazakh politician, Kala Kato is a Quranist movement with its headquarter in Zaria, the capital of Kaduna state in northern Nigeria.

This organization is considered the direct heirs of Muhammad Marwa, an Islamic scholar and preacher who moved from Cameroon to Nigeria in 1945 and established the radical Islamic Maitatsine sect there. The Kala Kato, like their Maitatsine predecessors, reject the Hadith and the Sunnah, and accept only the Qur'an as an authoritative guide to faith and practice. Kala Kato marks as unbelievers all those who do not blindly follow their beliefs. They do not pray in mosques with other Muslims, nor do they associate with them in any other way. They publicly preach their religion, burn hadiths and condemn parents who send their children to school. Most often, these public sermons end in clashes between members of Kala Kato and the authorities. Members of Kala Kato are considered uneducated, both by Western standards and in the Muslim understanding of education. They still exist in many places in northern Nigeria, but they live on the margins of society.



The majority of these associations, as well as the majority of Quranists, are bound by the fact that they see the Quran as the only Islamic authority, while they reject all hadiths, be they Shia or Sunni, in whole or in part. Among them is the Malaysian Quranic Society, which was founded by the Malaysian intellectual, writer, poet, politician and scholar Kasim Ahmad. This organization was created as a result of efforts to bring the Quran back into the heart of Malaysian society. They believed that Muslims had lived in ignorance for thousands of years and that they had to return to the Quran, as the only and clear source of Muslim tradition.

Sunni-Quranic Society, Submitters, Tolué Islam and Zumratul Jamiu Mumin are among the Quranic groups. The Sunni-Quranic Society is a Quranic organization based in India. In this society, for the first time in the history of India, a woman led congregational prayers. Their base is in Kerala, where there is a large Quranic community (Khan, 2016: 49). The Submitters is a Quranic organization whose followers believe in absolute devotion and submission to God. Adherents believe that the Quran is the complete and clear message of Allah and that it can be understood without reference to any other sources. Although they appreciate the Prophet Muhammad's role in revealing the Quran, they do not believe that it is necessary for believers to observe and study his life in order to understand and interpret his words. Submitters reject all hadith literature, viewing them as forgeries and the scholars who base their opinions on them as inauthentic. They point to alleged inconsistencies in the hadith literature that emerged after the death of the Prophet Muhammad and characterize these inconsistencies as "proof", indicating that the hadiths cannot be trusted. They also criticize the practice of some Muslims who put the Prophet Muhammad on a pedestal and point out that only Allah should be truly respected. The founder of this movement is the Egyptian chemist Rashid Khalifa. Rashid Khalifa was a self-proclaimed messenger, who came to "return" the Islamic religion to its original form and purify the faith from man-made innovations. He believed that the chapters, verses, words, number of words from the same root and other elements in the Qur'an followed a complex 19-based code (Gardner, 1997: 16). Rashid Khalifa was killed in the Tuscan Mosque in Arizona in 1990, and his followers split into several organizations with headquarters around the world: The Submitters, the International Community of Submitters, and The Submission, Quranic Islam movement.

Tolué Islam is a Quranic organization which focuses on understanding the Quran through logic, empiricism and appropriate application of rules. The founders of this Quranic organization are considered to be a Pakistani philosopher, academic and politician Muhammad Iqbal, who is also called the spiritual father of Pakistan, and Ghulam Ahmed Pervez, an Islamic Pakistani theologian. The organization still publishes and distributes books, pamphlets and recordings of Pervez's teachings (Farasat, 2013: 6).

Unlike other Muslim organizations whose goal is to gain new followers and reawaken the Muslim spiritual consciousness, the main intention of Zumratul Jamiu Mumin is to involve different religious leaders, among them Muslims, in discussions on religious issues. This organization believes that only the Quran and the Bible are holy books and that they represent the only authority in determining religious matters. According to them, the use of hadith is a deviation from true Islamic values. This organization is based in Ogun State, western Nigeria (Modish Project, 2018).

There are two organizations of Quranists in Nigeria. Kala Kato is most present in the Samuru area, in the ancient Nigerian city of Zaria and is characterized by radicalism, and their actions represent forms of classical extremism. In contrast to the members of the Kala Kato, the followers of the Nigerian penitents are characterized by the great sophistication and high education of the followers. This group consists of the followers of Rashid Khalifa, and their headquarters are in Nigeria, more precisely in Kano, Kaduna and Katsina. In Nigeria, they are also known as Al Quran, i.e. those who accept only the Quran as the source of Islamic tradition, view Muhammad as the messenger of Allah and are focused



on obeying Allah's orders in the Quran, while rejecting all hadiths. Their well-known representative was Maiduguri High Court judge Isa Othman. The composition of the group can be described as elitist, because its followers are mostly Western-educated, and they also have their own version of the Quran, different from the one used by other Muslims (Abdalla, 2002: 5). Although the Nigerian Penitents are believed to still be present, little or nothing is known about the group following the death of its benefactor, Justice Isa Otaman. The majority of Muslims claim that Quranism arose as an American attempt to destroy Islam by distorting the content of the Quran, so Quranists are often the subject of attacks by other Muslim groups.

Findings, Originality and Value

Religion in Nigeria is the foundation of the divisions of Nigerian society. Under the influence of colonization, i.e. artificial amalgamation, after independence, Nigeria became a society of religious, ethnic, and regional divisions, i.e. a "state without a nation" and thus opened the way to constant conflicts.

Central to the formation of the identity of religion and its transformation from conflict to violence is the rise of religious extremism throughout the country. Extremist groups show significant intolerance towards members of their own and other religions. In the beginning, there is the creation of stereotypical assumptions between ethnic and religious affiliations, which lead to many discriminatory practices, and eventually can lead to conflicts.

In the paper, we made a clear distinction between the leading types of Islamist extremism in Nigeria and classified them into four groups: Sunni, Shia, extremism of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, and extremism of the Quranists. We also stated that it is precisely the violent Islamists, i.e. Islamic extremists, who strive to restore Muslim dignity by returning the caliphate and believe that violence and intimidation are legitimate methods to overcome the perceived obstacles and enemies of Islam, which limit the success of this project. Instead of unifying a highly heterogeneous nation, colonial policies promoted political and religious ideologies that fueled ethnic, religious and regional prejudices and led to escalation of violence.

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