

Journal of Arabic & Religious Studies

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NOTE: The views expressed in this journal are those of the individual authors and not necessarily of the editorial board or of the department.

MASĀ'IL MUHIMMAH:¹ THE WORK, ITS ESSENCE AND POSITION AMONG THE ARABIC WRITINGS OF ʿUTHMĀN DAN FODIO

by

MR I. O. OLOYEDE

Introduction

ʿUthmān² ibn Muhammad ibn Fūdī popularly known as Shaykh ibn Fūdī or Dan Fodio³ was the leader of the 18–19th centuries Islamic revolution in the Northern part of the present day Nigeria. He was born at Maratta on Sunday the 15th day of December 1754 to a Fulani family of high reputation for learning and social respectability.⁴

Apart from military expedition which ʿUthmān led, he and his immediate lieutenants – Abdullahi and Muhammad Bello contributed a lot of works to the development of Arabic prose and poetry in Northern Nigeria. Their works form the essential bulk of indigenous Nigerian contributions to the various fields of Islamic Studies in the 18th and 19th centuries. ʿUthmān was very prolific to the extent that the actual number of his works is still uncertain. Various lists⁵ of his works have been provided, yet many of his other works exist in private libraries of different scholars all over the world particularly Nigeria. *Masā'il Muhimmah* is one of the important books written by Shaykh ʿUthmān Dan Fodio.

Some scholars⁶ have called attention, in passing to the significant and strategic position of *Masā'il Muhimmah* among the works of the Shaykh. This paper is aimed at explaining and analysing the likely reasons for the importance attached to the work. This paper is meant to reveal not only the essential features of the work but also call attention to recent research activities on the work. A comparative analysis of the content of the book and that of *Bayan wujūbi 'l-hijrah* – which is the major work of ʿUthmān, written after *Masā'il Muhimmah* – will also be made.

General Background to the writing of *Masā'il Muhimmah*:

All the known works of ʿUthmān Dan Fodio could be classified into three broad categories which are based on certain historical turning points in his life. Under the first category were his pre-jihād (1774–1795) writings which were written when the Shaykh least expected any confrontation with the political and religious authorities of his time. *Ihvā'u 's-Sunnah wa'ikhamadu 'l-bid'ah'* is a good sample of this period of mild and liberal opinions. The second period – 1795–1808 C.E., was a period of militancy and strictness. The period stretched from when a show-down was imminent to the first stage of the jihād. This second period, is divisible into two distinct sections, the period immediately before the jihād (preparatory period) and the period when the jihād was in full-force. Writings of ʿUthmān during this period also possess the distinct characteristics which distinguish them from his writings during other periods of his life. *Masā'il Muhimmah* represents the first part of this second stage, while *Bayan Wujubi 'l-hijrah 'ala-'l-'ibad*⁸ represents the second part.

The last period (1808–1817 C.E.) was the last stage of the Jihād. *Tamyīzu 'l-Muslimīn*⁹ adequately represents his work of the period which was noted for the mildest and most liberal of his opinions. This liberality we may quickly add, earned ʿUthmān serious negative criticism even from his brother and close associate – ʿAbdullāhi.¹⁰

The exigencies of each period, in all probabilities, dictated not only the relevant issues raised at that particular time but also the response and length of discussion on them. His attitude and pronouncements during the first period were dictated either by the fact, as noted earlier, that ^cUthmān had not, by then, suspected any possible encounter with the political authorities or that he, in avoidance of what could have been a tactical error, was not ready to dabble into a confrontation with the authority, until such a time when he would have accumulated enough human and material wherewithal for such an encounter. Furthermore, he saw the need for him to educate the people and ensure that they knew the dos and don'ts of Islam; that they were knowledgeable in the requirements of the *Sharī'ah*.

^cUthmān, as a prominent scholar, teacher and preacher in *biladus Sudān*, enjoyed some degree of goodwill from the political authority during the first period of his life. In 1788, the Sultān, —Bawa— summoned all Muslim scholars in his domain, ^cUthmān inclusive, to a reception at his Magami palace, to mark the Muslim *'Idu 'l-Kabīr*. The sultan offered the scholars some presents but ^cUthmān refused his own present of gold and silver from the Sultān and instead, asked the Sultān to grant him five concessions for the enhancement of the progress of Islam.¹¹ These are:¹²

- (i) To allow me (Shaykh) call people to God in your (Sultān's) country.
- (ii) Not to stop anybody who intends to respond to my call.
- (iii) To treat with respect any man with turban.
- (iv) To free all the (political¹³) prisoners.
- (v) Not to burden the subjects with heavy taxes.

The Sultān granted all the requests.

With this incident, a cordial relationship apparently existed between ^cUthmān and the Sultān who also sought and obtained but did not comply with the advice of ^cUthmān on his (Sultān's) planned attack on Maradi.¹⁴ The cordiality extended to the reign of Ya^cqub who succeeded Bawa in 1790¹⁵ C.E. He too, like his predecessor, consulted Shaykh ^cUthmān on his planned attack on Magami.¹⁶

^cUthmān's popularity continued to grow almost completely unchallenged throughout his stay in Zamfara (1789–1792 C.E.). Typical of similar movements in the medieval history of Islam, ^cUthmān avoided both the courts of the Sultān and any direct confrontation with him. This did not ward off an inevitable clash with the authority who, if not for any other 'crime' would consider ^cUthmān's towering prestige and authority an affront and a potential danger to his (Sultān's) absolute power. The Shaykh returned to Degel in 1792 and later went on another missionary tour of Kebbi,¹⁷ from where he went as far as middle-Niger, then back to Degel from where he went as far as Zama and Zaku.¹⁸

^cUthmān's preaching, coupled with jealousy on the part of most of his contemporary scholars — whom he called venal scholars — created severe hostility between him and other scholars. This hostility to ^cUthmān soon encompassed the rulers whose association with the scholars was one of the reasons that earned the latter severe attack from ^cUthmān. In his *'Ihyā'u-S-Sunnah*¹⁹ which he wrote in 1793, Shaykh did not hide his contempt for most of his contemporary *'Ulamā'* as a result of their unislamic practices. He was, however, careful and moderate in his criticism in order not to appear as starting a confrontation with the Sultan. Syncretic rulers were, by then, adjudged by him as sinners and not unbelievers.²⁰

The stage for the second part appeared set in 1795 when the Shaykh's following had tremendously expanded and his community had, more or less, become a mini-state within the state of Gobir. Shaykh was also aware of the fear of, and likely negative reaction from the rulers. In anticipation of a possible clap-down on him and his disciples, he decreed in 1801, that it was a *Sunnah* for the Muslims to get arms ready.²¹

The atmosphere became charged between the Sultan and ^CUthmān who, despite his apparent avoidance of direct confrontation with the ruler,²² appeared to be playing for time until when, as he later confirmed in his *Masa'il—Muhimmah*,²³ his community was strong enough to confront the Sultān. Nafata succeeded Sultān Ya^Cqūb as the Sultān of Gobir in 1796, at a time when the community of the Shaykh had severed almost all connections with the Sultān.²⁴

In 1802 Nafata made a proclamation which was a direct reversal of all concessions which Bawa had granted to the Shaykh and which Ya^Cqūb had upheld. The decree stipulated that:

- (i) Nobody except the Shaykh, in person, was allowed to preach.
- (ii) No more conversions into Islam should be allowed and all the converts should denounce Islam and go back to their former faiths.
- (iii) Neither veils by women nor turban for men was allowed.²⁵

Thereafter the Shaykh became more aggressive. This marked the inception of the first part of the second stage. The relationship between Shaykh and the Sultan had completely gone sour.²⁶ It was a period of uncertainty and threat of imminent clash with the political authorities. There was the need for ^CUthman to issue guidelines for his immediate disciples and other real and potential adherents.

This was the situation when Nafata died. With an alleged involvement of the Shaykh,²⁷ Nafata's son — Yunfa — an old student of the Shaykh, ascended the throne. This change in government reduced the tension, for Yunfa did not only renounce the decree of his father but was also reported to have come on foot, to meet the Shaykh at Degel. He also consulted the Shaykh on policy formation.²⁸

This 'normalcy' in relationship did not debar the Shaykh from his campaign for a return to total orthodox Islam; this is particularly so when, according to report, Yunfa, apparently afraid of Shakh's influence, invited the Shaykh to his palace and made a futile murder attempt on him.²⁹ In addition, cases of alleged aggression against Muslims were brought to the notice of the Shaykh. Shaykh's preaching against the rulers, the venal scholars and the syncretic socio-religious practices of the time, was becoming too critical for the comfort of the Sultān.³⁰

This was the time when ^CUthman, in response to the tense atmosphere, wrote his *Masā'il—Muhimmah*. In it he provided necessary guidelines for the Muslims should there be any military attack or more serious persecution against them. It also sets out clearly ideological principles of the inevitable struggle.

Masā'il—Muhimmah: An Hypothetical Device.

Masā'il—Muhimmah — the master plan was written most probably, to prepare the ground for any eventuality. The author called for bay^Cah - oath of allegiance - and pointed out the socio-political blunder which was inherent in a situation where any Muslim, under an

unfavourable circumstance, stood aloof, without pledging an allegiance to a leader.³¹ He emphasised the obligation of emigration from any land of oppression to the land of Islam.³² Muslims, according to the work, should rise against their rulers whenever the need arises, provided they were capable of doing so, otherwise they should not.³³ On the other hand, wherever they were allowed to practise Islam unhindered, they should stay.³⁴ Should injustice and oppression prevail in any city, the Muslims must depart that city.³⁵ Solidarity in defence of co-religionists who were under attack was a religious duty;³⁶ while possible opponents were classified.³⁷

In short, *Masā'il-Muhimmah* can be summarised as follows:

- (i) Acquisition and proper application of deep reflection on one's deep knowledge of the *Shari'ah* are the tools for firm re-establishment of Islam.³⁸
- (ii) Obligation on every Muslim to swear oath of allegiance to a leader.³⁹
- (iii) The compulsion of emigration whenever the need arises. And it has now arisen.⁴⁰
- (iv) Overt and covert supporters of the opponents (unbelievers) are also unbelievers who should not be spared.
- (v) The opponents are classified for the purpose of attack.⁴¹
- (vi) Rebellion, among Muslims should be curtailed decisively.
- (vii) The methodological approach of attacking different classes of opponents defined.⁴²
- (viii) Social relations with rulers⁴³ and foreigners suspected to be Muslims specified.⁴⁴

It is clear from the content of *Masā'il-Muhimmah* that the Shaykh was at the time not fully prepared for a war. The guidelines in the work were meant to prepare his followers in readiness for any eventuality. On the part of the Sultan many other internal socio-political problems⁴⁵ which he had on hand, did not favour, at least by then, an encounter with the Shaykh. The book was indeed a milestone which, according to Hiskett, "marks the transition from the rather scholarly attitudes of a teacher to those of the actor, reformer and a revivalist".⁴⁶

Acquisition of knowledge is an essential tool for the development of any community. 'Uthmān realised the danger which ignorance could pose to the successful prosecution of the imminent *Jihad* hence, he made knowledge the first pre-requisite for his followers.⁴⁷ Confusion and anarchy could have reigned when the *Jihad* eventually started, had 'Uthmān left every disciple to behave in accordance with his own individual whim which in turn, might have been based on poor understanding or ignorance of the dictates of Islamic Law.

A new dimension which the author introduced into *Ijtihad* - analytical deductions - was that knowledge itself was not enough as basis for action, unless it is accompanied by deep and sound reflection over knowledge and it is correctly applied to new situations. It was expedient for the Shaykh to introduce this new dimension in order to caution his followers who, out of ignorance of the real issues involved in the struggle, might have taken unilateral decisions which could be counter productive to the cause of the community. He divided the people into three classes - the learned ones, the semi-blind and the laymen. Each of the groups was given certain limitations as regards the use of initiative.

Under the second section – *Al-Mas'alatū-th-thāniyyah* - of the work, ^cUthmān called for a pledge of allegiance to whoever emerged as the leader of the faithful. Shaykh's mention of *Amīru'l-Muminīn* who had not been formally chosen, showed that the appointment of an *'Amīr* was in the pipeline.

The *Bay'ah* - oath of allegiance was strategic and desperately needed by the Shaykh at the beginning of the *Jihād* for the following reasons:

- (i) Muslim community should in prosecuting a *Jihād* have a leader who would command unalloyed loyalty of all members of the community.
- (ii) *Bay'ah* is the first step towards *hijrah* which is also the subject of the third section of the work.
- (iii) With *bay'ah*. Shaykh would be able to measure the numerical strength of his supporters.

The third, fourth and fifth sections emphasised in practical terms, how to migrate and the dangers of not migrating; while in the sixth section, attention was called to the need to apply humane and sincere posture of Islam, irrespective of circumstances. *Jihād* according to ^cUthmān was not an excuse for deceit and treachery. All the likely problems in the event of clash were briefly discussed and solutions were proposed for them.

Later a disciple of Shaykh – an Hausa scholar - in Gimbana was said to have disrespected the Sultan who, in turn, ordered a punitive expedition against the Muslim Community at Gimbana. Many Muslims were captured and were being taken in chains, to Alkalawa via Degel, when a group of Shaykh's disciples intercepted them and unilaterally set the captives free. The infuriated Yunfa, in what appeared to us as a demonstration of his respect for the Shaykh, demanded that the Shaykh should leave Degel to allow him (Sultan) deal with his dissident community.⁴⁸ The Shaykh was said to have refused to abandon his community, rather he, with his community migrated, on the 21st of February 1804 from Degel to Gudu.⁴⁹ The emigration to Gudu was the last straw which broke the camel's back. The *Jihād* commenced shortly after the emigration.

Bayān Wujūbi'l - Hijrah 'Ala 'l-'Jbād and Masā'il -Muhimmah: A comparison.

El-Masri⁵⁰ has provided a list of differences between *Masā'il-Muhimmah* and *Bayān...* both of which were written in the same period. Nevertheless the list can hardly be exhaustive.

From the historical background to the writing of Uthmān's works, it is not a surprise that *Masā'il-Muhimmah* is less theoretical than *Ihyā'u-S-Sunnah...*, but more theoretical than *Bayān...*, as far as relationship with the political authorities is concerned. It is also note-worthy that as far as administration and governance are concerned, *Bayān...* is less practical than later works of the author.

Masā'il-Muhimmah being a guideline for possible eventuality, prescribed the two major unavoidable pre-requisites for a successful force. Namely, loyalty (as signified by *bay'ah*) and formation of a strong army (as envisaged through the *hijrah*). Yet the green-light was still to be given for the commencement of the *Jihād*. The *Masā'il-Muhimmah* which was written less than a year before the commencement of the *Jihād*, was followed by a sort of brief 'press-release' *Wathīqah*^b which, more brief than *Masā'il-Muhimmah*, set a twenty seven-point signal for the *Jihād*.

Bayān, which was written three years and eight months⁵² after *Masā'il-Muhimmah* (i.e. during the *Jihad*) was understandably more militant than the latter. For instance, in the fourth section of *Masā'il-Muhimmah* the author explained sympathetically, how and why one should not be rigid in avoiding the people of the book, unlike in the *Bayān* ...⁵³ where he did not give room for flexibility in dealing with the people of the Book. Furthermore the legal status of rulers of Hausa-land was tactically avoided in *Masā'il-Muhimmah*, whereas in the *Bayān* ... they were categorically declared unbelievers.⁵⁴

The distinction which *Masā'il-Muhimmah* made between an unbelieving ruler and his Muslim subjects had, in *Bayān* given way to the rule that "the religious status of a land (with all its populace) is determined by the religious status of its ruler".⁵⁵ The speculative theories in *Masā'il-Muhimmah* had, in the face of real life situation, been modified, widened or in some instances eliminated in the *Bayān*...

Masā'il-Muhimmah contains *Sharī'ah* injunctions⁵⁶ without making much effort to relate them to experience in life. This probably, was to conceal the preparedness of the Muslim community for a clash with the authorities. A distinction had to be made between traditional and Islamic 'rulers' in the *Masā'il-Muhimmah*⁵⁷ the former could, with conditions, be confronted, but in *Bayān*⁵⁸ the latter were not only to be tolerated with their apparent misbehaviour but in addition, respected. The latter apparently referred to the newly appointed Muslim rulers under the new dispensation. From the topic of every section in *Bayān*, the position of the Shaykh on the subject-matter is apparent, but the topics in *Masā'il-Muhimmah* are fairly neutral.⁵⁹ The *Bayān* is more detailed and more comprehensive than the *Masā'il-Muhimmah* which is more of a military message than anything else.

However, up to six of the fourteen 'problems' contained in *Masā'il-Muhimmah*, are not mentioned at all in the *Bayān*... (These are sections one, two, nine, ten, eleven and twelve). One striking similarity between the two books, is the consistency with which the author propagates his own principle, regardless of the status of any other scholar he might have reasons to disagree with. In *Bayān*, he tactically opposed Ahmad Baba's view on the population of Muslims in Hausaland, while in *Masā'il-Muhimmah* he showed some degree of academic objectivity when he indirectly questioned the content of a purported *ḥadīth*.⁶⁰

The Manuscripts of Masā'il-Muhimmah:

Manuscripts of this work of ^Uthmān are available in the following public places in Nigeria:

- (i) The Kaduna archives (3 copies) Kaduna; Nigeria.⁶¹
- (ii) Centre of Arabic Documentation, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, in microfilm labelled CAD/2.
- (iii) University of Ibadan Library, Nigeria.⁶²
- (iv) The University of Sokoto Library, Sokoto, Nigeria.⁶³
- (v) Bayero University, Library, Kano, Nigeria.⁶⁴
- (vi) Ahmadu Bello University Library, Zaria, Nigeria

Many manuscripts of the work also exist in the private Libraries of many Islamic scholars in Nigeria.

The present writer has carried out a research work entitled "A critical edition, Translation and Appraisal of *Masā'il-Muhimmah*".⁶⁶ Copies of the research work are now available at the University of Ilorin Library; library of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan and the Centre for Islamic Studies University of Sokoto.

The edition was based on three manuscripts: that of Bayero University⁶⁶ which was acquired by the University in April 1975, from one Alhaji Boyi of Gidan Ubandoma, Sokoto. The second is the one obtained from the University of Ibadan Library⁶⁷ which the University obtained from Mallam Abdul-Hamidi of Ile Gbagba, Ilorin in July 1963. The third is also obtained from the University of Ibadan Library, labelled 82/86. It was obtained by the University in 1960.

The General Features of Masā'il-Muhimmah:

Every Chapter ('problem') starts with success comes from God" – "*Wa bi'L-Lāhit-Tawfiq*". and ends with "This is sufficient to establish the response to the problem" – "*Wa fi hadha Kifayan litahqiq jawābi 'l-Mas'alah...*" Verbatim quotation which dominates this work is a common feature of ^Uthmān's writings. In reality, for the author to do otherwise would have contradicted the first assertion in the work, which condemns reliance on the dictates of one's whim and opinion in religious matters.⁶⁸ His original contributions are relatively more in 'problems' thirteen and fourteen than in others.

As dictated by exigency⁶⁹ of the time of writing this book, the author was very specific and categorical in his recommendations in *Masā'il-Muhimmah* than he is known to have been in the other major works which he wrote before or after the writing of *Masā'il-Muhimmah*, which though speculative was very firm and definite.

In his citation of works of other scholars, ^Uthman gives the name of the author or the title of the work and there are occasions when the two are used. Where only the author's name was cited, the task of tracing the work becomes very tedious.⁷⁰ Some earlier work of his were quoted in *Masā'il-Muhimmah*, without any information to that effect.⁷¹

Concluding Remarks

Internal evidences from this book have shown the work as a product of exigencies of the period (which actually it was) in which it was written. The time left no room for long academic arguments. It combined brevity with clarity of the message. The guidelines therein were convincing and backed up with appropriate Islamic authorities. The sections mostly follow one another with a currency of interesting chronology. From knowledge ('problem' 1) to inculcation of loyalty and patriotism ('problem' 2); through *Hijrah* ('problem' 3) to identification of foes and friends and their respective catalogues: ('problems' 4, 5 and 6). Then, from *Jihad* ('problem' 7) to military tactics ('problems' 8 and 9). The second wave took up from prohibition of slave-trading in free Fulani Muslims ('problem' 10) to general prohibition of slave-trading in any one suspected to be a Muslim; pointing out conclusively the negative impact which such selling or buying of foreigners might have on the formation of his community of faithful Muslims ('problem' 11). Problem twelve defines the legal terminologies which are to be applied in 'problem' thirteen to define level of relationship and transactions with unjust ones; while problem fourteen finally defines relationship of any Muslim with Hausa rulers particularly at that period of emergency.

Uthmān demonstrated, as seen in this work, deep foresight. He periscope^d into the future and prescribed adequate solutions to likely problems. His 'guesses' later came to pass with an impressive frequency which suggests a high degree of accuracy of his speculation.

The military capability of Uthmān is vivid from this work. He identified his possible enemies - The unbelievers; brigands; rebels; anathematized Muslims; the apostates and the collaborators of each of them— made provision for appropriate precautionary measures and he defined clearly the goals and aspirations of his movement. He went further to prescribe the methodology of counteracting the ploys of each of them.

Uthmān's academic sagacity is also revealed in this book. His arguments were not only convincing on their own, but were also supported with relevant authorities. He still provided legal justification for every act of his, even when political expediency of the emergency situation in which he was, provided ample justification for his action. Throughout the book, a number of assumptions were made which suggested that he was addressing an already knowledgeable audience.

The posture which this book built of Uthmān is that of a considerate and clear-thinking Muslim leader who was never blinded by fanaticism. Despite the nature of the situation at the time of writing his book, no fanatical or extreme posture is found to have been taken by this great author of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Masā'il-Muhimmah would be a very useful material for building a virile disciplined society of patriotic citizens who are prepared to render selfless services to their community.

Uthmān only demonstrated modesty by over emphasising that his works are more of a collection of earlier works. His ability to draw relevant materials with which he provided the legal needs of his community proved his original thinking and creativity.

A lesson which contemporary and later Muslims need to learn from this work of Uthmān is that every generation of scholars needs to study the totality of Islamic law and make available to the generality of Muslims, relevant guides to contemporary issues. Dynamism of Islam could hardly be brought into play without proper and constant marriage of legal theories to modern realities.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 The full title of the book is *Masā'il-Muhimmah yahtaj ila Ma'rifatiha ba'du't talaba*. It is only known, for short, as *Masā'il-Muhimmah*.
- 2 R. A. Adeleye in his *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria*: Longman, 1971 p.11, however gave his name as Muhammad the son of Uthmān. This claim does not enjoy the acceptability of other historians who give his name as Uthmān the son of Muḥammad. See El-Masri (Ed.) *Bayān wujūb al-Hijra 'Ala 'l-ʿIbād*, K. U. P. et O. U. P. 1978, p.1: D.M. Last: *The Sokoto Caliphate* Longman 1977 p. 3; Abdullahi bn. Muḥammad: *Taẓyīn Al-Waraqāt*: edited and Translated by M. Hisket, (I: U.P.). 1963 p. 41
- 3 Dan is a Hausa word for "son of" while Fudī, Fodio Fudiye or Fodiyo is the corrupt form of the Ffulde word for "learned man", a title said to have belonged to his father, Muḥammad the learned. It is also interpreted as the "elder". See Bivar A.D.H. and Hisket M.: "The Arabic Literature of Nigeria to 1804: A provisional Account" in B.S.O.A.S., University of London, Vol. XXV. 1962, p. 136.
- 4 For full biography of Uthmān, see M. Hiskett: *The sword of truth*, O.U.P., Oxford, 1973 pp. 15ff; I. A. B. Balogun: *The Life and Works of Uthman Dan Fodio*, I. P. B. Lagos, 1975, pp. 15-39 and R. A. Adeleye: *op. cit.*, pp. 5ff.

- 6 Last: *The Sokoto...op.cit.* pp.237-248; I. A. B. Balogun, *The Life ... op.cit.*, pp. 43-48 Each of the two sources gives a list of over 100 works of ^cUthman.
- 6 I. A. B. Balogun: *A Critical Edition of the Ihya* ?
- 6 *Al-Sunna Wa Ikhmad Al-Bida^cah*; Ph.D. Thesis, University of London 1967, p. 469. It has been partly published as 'The Life and Works of Uthmān Dan-Fodio' *op.cit.* Aisha A. Rahman AT-Tarjūmah: *Handbook of Islam*. Diwan Press, London 1978 p.6; F. J. Arnett: *The Rise of the Sokoto Fulani, being a Paraphrase of Infaq^c 1-Maisuri* of Sultan Muhammad Bello, Kano, 1922; p. 126; F. H. El-Masri: *op.cit.*, p. 24; M. Hiskett: *op.cit.*, p. 119 among others.
- 7 Edited by I. A. B. Balogun, *op.cit.*, It was written in 1893 C. E.
- 8 Edited by El-Masri: *op.cit.*, written around the year 1806 C.E.
- 9 ^cUthmān Dan Fodio; *Tamyizu 1-Muslimin mina 1-Kafirin*, M.S. Ibadan 82/113, University of Ibadan.
- 10 Tazyin., *op.cit.*, p.XXX.
- 11 *Ibid*, pp. 88-9; Last *op.cit.*, p. 7
- 12 I. A. B. Balogun: *Critical...*, *op.cit.*, p. 39
- 13 Specific successful request was said to have been made for the release of the Chief of Zamfara—Abarahi who was a political prisoner. Hiskett: *The Sword...*, *op.cit.*, p. 15.
- 14 *Ibid*. p. 45
- 15 I. A. B. Balogun: *The Life...*, *op.cit.*, p.81
- 16 Hiskett: *The Sword...*, *op.cit.*, p. 45
- 17 Tazyin..., *op.cit.*, p.95
- 18 I. A. B. Balogun: *The Life ...*, *op.cit.*, p. 82
- 19 I. A. B. Balogun: *Critical...*, *op.cit.*,
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88
- 21 Last: *op.cit.*: M. Bello: *Infaq^c*, *op.cit.*, p. 67; and Tazyin..., *op.cit.*, p. 27
- 22 M. Bello: *Infaq^c* *op.cit.* p. 66. Tazyin..., *op.cit.*, p. 27
- 23 Problem 3 of *Masa'il-Muhimmah* i.e. The focus of this piece.
- 24 Tazyin..., *op.cit.*, p. 105
- 25 *Ibid*. p. 54 and M. Bello: *Infaq^c*, *op.cit.* pp. 67 and 130.
- 26 I. O. Oloyede: "A Critical Edition, Translation and Appraisal of *Masa'il-Muhimmah*", M.A. Project, University of Ilorin, 1984 pp. 45ff.
- 27 Last: *op.cit.*, p. 13
- 28 Hiskett: *The Sword...*, *op.cit.*, p. 70
- 29 Tazyin... *op.cit.*, p. 55
- 30 Hiskett: *op.cit.*, pp. 70ff
- 31 First 'Problem' in *Masa'il-Muhimmah*.
- 32 Most Probably, the anticipated community of ^cUthmān — Sokoto Caliphate.
- 33 The third "Problem" in *Masa'il-Muhimmah*
- 34 *Ibid*.
- 35 *Ibid*.
- 36 *Ibid.*, the Nineth "Problem".
- 37 *Ibid.*, The Seventh and Eight "Problems".
- 38 *Ibid.*, The Firsr "Problem".
- 39 *Ibid.*, The Second "Problem".
- 40 *Ibid*. The Third "Problem".
- 41 *Ibid.*, The 4th, 5th, 7th and 8th "Problems".
- 42 *Ibid*. The 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th "Problems".

- 43 The Unspecified "worldly people".
- 44 *Ibid.*, The 13th, 14th, 10th, 11th, and 12th "Problems"
- 45 Last: *op.cit.*, pp. 12-14
- 46 Hiskett: *The Sword...*, *op.cit.*, p. 119
- 47 *Masā'il-Muhimmah*, First "Problem".
- 48 Many incompatible accounts of the incident have been given. What we have stated is based on a common conclusion, directly or indirectly accepted by all sources within our reach e.g. Last: *op.cit.*, p. 13; Tazyin..., *op.cit.*, pp.55 and 108 and M. Bello: *Infāq...*, *op.cit.*, p. 168.
- 49 *Ibid.*, Adeboye: *op.cit.*, p. 33
- 50 El-Masri: *op.cit.*, pp. 24ff.
- 51 A. D. H. Bivar (ed.); Ibn Fudī: 'Wathīqah min ibn Fudī Al-Amīru 'l-Muminīn 'ila jamī' ahli 'Sudan in *Journal of African History*, Vol. II (1961) pp. 235-43.
- 52 El-Masri *op.cit.*, p. 34
- 53 E. g. 'Uthmān ibn Fudī: *Bayān op.cit.*, Chapter 5.
- 54 *Ibid.* chapter One.
- 55 *Ibid.*
- 56 Islamic Law and Jurisprudence.
- 57 *Masā'il-Muhimmah* 3rd "Problem".
- 58 U. Ibn Fudī: *Bayān op.cit.*, chapter 2.
- 59 Each of the topics in *Masā'il-Muhimmah*, only states "the problem concerning" this or that issue but topics in *Bayān* are such as "the obligation (or prohibition)" of this or that action.
- 60 See Oloyede: *op.cit.*, chapter One.
- 61 D. M. Last: "Arabic manuscripts in the National Archives, Kaduna" in Hunwick (ed.) *Research Bulletin*, Centre of Arabic Documentation, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. It is sad to note that like this manuscript, many Arabic manuscripts which are supposedly in the archives are no longer found. Reliable reports have it that the original copies of some of these manuscripts are now available in some foreign Libraries particularly in Britain. This writer observed a criminally weak security arrangement which is currently made for the preservation of the remaining manuscripts at the archive.
- 62 The manuscript cited by I. A. B. Balogun in *The Life...* (*op.cit.*,) p. 44 as *Al-Masā'il-al-Muhimmah* and which he pointed out to be available at the University of Ibadan Library (82/391); C.A.D. 21; and B.N. Arabe 5678 should not be confused with the manuscript which is now being examined i.e. *Masā'il-Muhimmah*.
- 63 Despite frantic efforts this copy was not released for photocopying.
- 64 An identical copy exists in both Bayero University, Kano and A.B.U. Zaria.
- 65 As an M.A. degree -Project in the Dept. of Religions, University of Ilorin
- 66 Labelled MS/document no. 119
- 67 Classified as MS 82/259
- 68 *Al-Mas'alat al-'Ula*, First "Problem" in *Masā'il-Muhimmah*.
- 69 As explained earlier in this paper.
- 70 El-Masri's work (*op.cit.*,) has been of tremendous assistance in some of such cases.
- 71 For instance many sections of *Masā'il-Muhimmah* are identical with some sections of the *Nuru'l-Albāb*