

## **Qur'anists' Deviant Da'wah as Reflected in Their Trends of Tafsir in Northern Nigeria.**

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**Abstract:** This article is a study on the deviant Da'wah propagated by Qur'anists in Northern Nigeria as reflected in their trends of Tafsir. It is based on the study of their open air field Tafsir which is also reproduced on DVDs and CD Roms. Their *Tafsir* focused mainly on the belief that the Qur'an has contained everything religious in it in great details; as such it requires no other books to explain it as perceived by other Muslims. They argued that the Prophet never uttered any religious word beside the Qur'an. The primary aim of their *Da'wah* therefore is to justify their position of rejecting *Hadith* and other religious books beside the Qur'an as a source of religious guidance and they also considered the *Hadith* followers as idol worshippers and hypocrites. They are more of Kharijites in disguise. In all their *Da'wah* work they interpreted the verses of the Qur'an out of context in support of their sectarian views. This study have defined, identified the leaders of Qur'anists in Northern Nigeria and their frequently quoted verses out of context to defend and support their deviant claim.

**Keywords:** Deviant Da'wah, Qur'anists, Trend, Tafsir, Northern Nigeria

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Qur'anists, Qur'anism or Qur'aniyyun as they are named, is a sect that holds the Qur'an to be the only source of law in Islam thereby rejecting the authority of *Hadith /Sunnah* and they consider it inconsistent with the Qur'an. In other words, they do not accept any source of law beside the Qur'an, thereby rejecting *Hadith /Sunnah* as the second primary source of legislation as held by the Muslims [1]. This sect quoted many Qur'anic verses out of context to support their claim. Some of the frequently quoted verses include;

And indeed we have put forth every kind of example in this Qur'an, for mankind. But, man is ever more quarrelsome than anything. [Qur'an 18:54]

Shall I seek other than God as a judge when He has sent down to you this book sufficiently detailed?" Those to whom we have given the book known it is sent down from your Lord with truth; so do not be of those who have doubt. The word of your Lord has been completed with truth and justice; there is no changing His words. He is the Hearer, the Knower. [Qur'an 6:114-115]

Within the Qur'an itself, a number of verses that mentioned *Hadith* are used by Qur'anists to propagate their deviant preaching these include:

The revelation of the book is from God, the Noble, the Wise. . . These are God's signs that we recite to you with truth. So, in which *hadith*, after God and His signs, do they acknowledge? [Qur'an 45:2-6]

It is an honorable Quran. In a protected record. None can grasp it except those pure. A revelation from the Lord of the worlds. Are you disregarding this *hadith*? [Qur'an 56:77-81]

So in what *hadith* after it will they acknowledge? [Qur'an 77:50]

In Northern Nigeria the Qur'aniyyun was also known as the "Qala Qato" literally means "the man said". They were so called because they believed that any "Qala" (he said) that is not "Qala Allah" (Allah said) is "man said" which is not accepted as religious authority in Islam. They rely entirely on the Qur'an and

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they are mostly found in rural areas with pockets of them in the urban areas of Northern Nigeria. A group of Qur'aniyyun were initiated into the sect by Isa Othman – a Nigerian High Court judge from Maiduguri. Until his death, he was a leader of the Qur'anists in Nigeria. He was influenced by the ideas of Rashad Khalifa. Malam Isyaka Salisu is also one of the most well-known Qur'anist leaders in Northern Nigeria. His group are also called "Yan Qala Qato". Among their leaders is also Uthman Muhammad Dangungu a contemporary leader of Qur'anists in Northern Nigeria. He is presently living in Kaduna at Ibrahim Taywo road, Tudun-Wada, Kaduna. He engaged in converting many ignorant people through his deviant Da'wah in the Tafsir of the month of Ramadan and other lessons he delivered in his mosque after prayers.

Another leader of this deviant sect known as "yan Tatsine" or "Yan Qala Qato" was Muhammed Marwa, their leader and founder, initially a Qur'anic scholar, he engaged in constant preaching using abusive and provocative words against established institutions like the emirate and the political class. He was detained in prison several times for his provocative preaching and acts of lawlessness against the state as Falola puts it:

He (Marwa) was a Qur'anic teacher and preacher. Forceful, persuasive and charismatic, he rebelled against many popular opinions among Kano Islamic circles, denouncing certain parts of the Holy Qur'an and even criticizing Prophet Muhammad. At one stage in his career, Marwa granted himself his most prestigious credential when he revealed himself to be an annabi; a prophet with divine power and a mission to save the world...He was alleged to have replaced the name of the Prophet Muhammad with his own in personal copies of the Qur'an...He was opposed to most aspects of modernization and to all Western influence. He decried such technological commonplace as radios, wrist watches, automobiles, motorcycles, and even bicycles. Those who use these things or who read books other than the Qur'an were viewed as hell-bound 'pagans [2].

It is very obvious that Marwa exploited the dwindling economic situation and the Almajiri system and was able to attract large followers amongst the commoners, who, unable to afford the basic necessities of life, became die-hard patriots of the sect and Marwa himself.

It is important here to mention that the Qur'aniyyun people consider themselves as Muslims only as such they should be called Muslims only without any label as stated in the Qur'an. In Northern

Nigeria they were not organized in a formal organization but are scattered in almost every where especially in the villages. With the conversion of Sheikh Uthman Dangungu, the movement is gaining a lot of followers in the cities of Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi, Katsina and other places more especially among some elites into the sect. There is also another strong man of this sect whose belief and method is different from the aforementioned groups by name Sheikh Saleh Idris based in Kano. He holds extreme position on restricting everything religious to the Qur'an. The method of Tafsir used by this sect is entirely different from that of other Muslims. A new trend of Tafsir therefore, emerged as Qala Qato trend of Tafsir, referring to Qur'anists.

#### **THE AIMS AND FOCUS OF THEIR TAFSIR**

Since the Qur'anists do not believe in the authenticity of Hadith and any other religious book beside the Qur'an, their Da'wah is aimed at justifying this position. Their Tafsir therefore, focused mainly on the belief that the Qur'an has contained everything religious in it in great details; as such it requires no other books to explain it as perceived by other Muslims. They argued that the prophet never uttered any religious word beside the Qur'an. They cited how the companions asked the prophet (SAW) concerning issues and he never answer them until he received revelation from Allah. There were about 15 cases of 'Yas'alunaka' meaning "They ask you" and if the prophet was saying a Hadith he should have answered them before he receives revelation.

#### **SAMPLES OF THEIR DEVIANT DA'WAH AS REFLECTED IN THEIR TAFSIR**

Below are the samples of Tafsir done by the Qur'anist scholars in attacking the views of those Muslims who use Hadith, Tafsir, Fiqh and other religious sources beside the Qur'an. What they normally do in the course of their Tafsir is that all places where Allah (SWT) address the polytheists, the hypocrites and the people of the book, they refer them to the followers of Hadith and other religious books beside the Qur'an. They resorted to this method of Tafsir to support their sectarian views.

#### **THEIR DEVIANT DA'WAH ON HADITH AND OTHER RELIGIOUS SOURCES**

The Qur'anists believed that following any other source beside the Qur'an is setting up other gods beside Allah. They try to justify this thesis in the course of their Tafsir. For example, Shaykh Usman Dangungu [3] in his attempt to justify this, after translating the verse which says:

So hold thou fast to the Revelation send down to thee; verily thou art on a Straight Way [4].

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He commented as follows:

We have no any reading book except the Qur'an... Hold firm to it. Is it Imamul Bukhari or Tirmidhi or Abu Dawud that set the rules (of Islamic) religion? (The verse says), that which we revealed unto you. Hold it firmly... Therefore, if you love the Prophet (SAW), let us see you with only the Qur'an. If we see you with anything other than the Qur'an, you are an enemy to the Prophet [5].

On Tafsir of the verses;

Ha-Mim. By the Book that makes things clear. We have made it a Qur'an in Arabic, that ye may be able to understand (and learn wisdom) [6].

Sheikh Saleh Idris [7] twisted the meaning of the verse to support their idea of rejecting the Hadith and cursing its scholars in the following comment:

Ha-Mim. We have been saying whenever you hear these alphabets mentioned, what will follow is explanations about the Qur'an. Be silent and listen to the Book of the creator of the heaven and the earth. And the Book that is "al Mubin" (the explained). Here it is of significant to understand what Allah means by His saying and the Book, "al Mubin". Here it is required that the Hadith scholars and the Tafsir scholars are disgraced and their evil mind be disclosed to the public. The reason is that the Hadith scholars are saying that the Qur'an is not self explained, it is only the Hadith that explains it. Qur'an is composite; it cannot be understood without reference to the Hadith. To the scholars of Tafsir whenever you translate a verse they will tell you what of its Tafsir? From whose Tafsir you depend? They want you to discard the words of Allah and follow the nonsensical statements of somebody else as the Tafsir [8].

On the verse which says:

Our lord! Send amongst them a Messenger of their own, who shall rehearse Thy signs to them and instruct them in scripture and wisdom, and sanctify them: For thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise [9].

Majority of the Mufasssirin usually interpreted the term al Kitab to mean the Qur'an and al Hikmah to mean the *Sunnah* of the prophet (SAW). However, Shaykh Alhassan Lamido has rejected this interpretation and declared that the Prophet (SAW) never uttered any religious word beside the Qur'an. He further stated that the meaning of al Hikmah is elucidated in verses 22 to 38 of Surah al Isra' and concluded that 'these are among the (precepts of

wisdom, which thy lord has revealed to thee...' in verse 39 of Surah al Isra'. All the dos and don'ts in the Qur'an are what constitute Hikmah not the so called Hadith attributed to the prophet (SAW) [10]. He finally stated that,

This is al Hikmah (the Wisdom), there is no any wisdom that supersedes this. Therefore, wherever you see to teach them the Book, is referring to the text itself, to know how to read and write it clearly. The wisdom refers to its rules and regulations do this and don't do that. This is the meaning of wisdom, and there is no any other wisdom beside this. The prophet never brings any wisdom outside the Qur'anic context [11].

On the verse which says:

Woe to each sinful dealer in falsehoods: He ears the Signs of Allah rehearsed to him, yet is obstinate and lofty, as if he had not heard them: then announce to him a penalty grievous![12].

Shaykh Dangungun commented on it as:

(One who has this attitude), the moment he heard this, he will start wailing and yelling (to distract attention). If the Qur'an is recited, he says, they are the followers of Maitatsine. They are Gardawas who do not agree with the message of Muhammad. Alright! Are the authors of Qawa'id, Akhdari, Bulugul Maram and Bukhari to be taken as prophets? It was Muhammad (SAW) who came with the Qur'an from Allah (SWT). He who holds fast the Qur'an has agreed with the Prophet Muhammad. And whoever holds anything other than it, is the source of his disbelieve.

When asked about the Anti-Christ, he said:

"The Anti-Christ (according to us) is Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i and Tantawi. Any book that has come after the revelation of the Qur'an, none brought it except the Anti-Christ. Therefore, any book other than the Qur'an, meaning, the Dajjal is the deceptive one. Anyone who takes your mind away from the Qur'an is Anti-Christ..." [13].

Since the Muslims believed in the appearance of Dajjal (Anti-Christ) and the negative role that he is going to play in leading the people astray, he declared that the scholars of Hadith were the Dajjal. This is done so as to win the people's mind to reject the Hadith.

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## THEIR DEVIANT DA'WAH ON SALAT (FIVE DAILY PRAYERS)

Salat is one of the fundamentals of Islam. In fact it is a symbol for identifying a Muslim wherever he goes. Though one may find minor variations among the Muslims while observing the salat depending on the school of law that one is following, the differences are insignificant. There are divergent views among the Qur'anists with regard to the times of prayers, the number of prayers to be performed, the method of praying, call to prayers (adhan), iqamah, etc. With regards to ablution they unanimously agreed on one form as stated in verse 6 of surah al Ma'idah.

O ye who believe! When ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; rub your head (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankle...[14]

Based on this Qur'anic description of ablution they don't wash hands, mouth, they don't rinse in their nose and they don't wash ears. On ablution they did it in uniform with no differences. There is a serious difference on the manner of praying between the followers of Sheikh Saleh Idris based in Kano and that of Sheikh Usman Dangungun of Kaduna. These differences resulted in a debate at Kaduna between the two factions. The debate was between Sheikh Saleh Idris of Kano and Mallam Musa Ibbi representing the Kaduna faction with Sheikh Usman Dangungun and the supporters of the two factions present. Sheikh Saleh was asked to describe how salat is performed according to the Qur'anic teaching. He responded that there is nowhere in the Qur'an where Allah directed the Muslims to pray five times daily reciting the Qur'an and with specific number of raka'at. He stated that *salat* according to the Qur'an is standing and one prostration only. And one is to do the du'ah not to recite the Qur'an. He quoted verse 89 of surah al Nahl where Allah says:

One day We shall raise from all peoples a witness against them, amongst themselves: and We shall bring thee as witness against these (thy people): and We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy, and Glad Tidings to Muslims [15].

He stipulated that the Qur'an has explained everything; therefore, there is no need to go outside the Qur'an to learn how to pray. Sheikh Saleh further stated that "This made me to ask myself since there is everything in the Qur'an where did we have this raka'ats of prayer? Some Qur'anist quoted the following verse to justify the number of raka'at from the Qur'an:

Praise be to Allah Who created (out of nothing) the heavens and the earth, Who made the angels, messengers with wings,- two,

or three, or four (pairs): He adds to Creation as He pleases: for Allah has power over all things [16].

They said that two, three and four here refers to the number of raka'at prayed in the five daily prayers. This verse was quoted out of context and their interpretation is rejected because the verse is referring to the number of wings of angels. He therefore, concluded that since the Qur'an has explained everything in detail it is expected to see how prayer is performed just like other religious duties explained. If there is no place where the method of prayers in raka'at form is mentioned in the Qur'an, then it is from outside the Qur'an, as such it is invented by the Hadith followers and it should be rejected out rightly.

He quoted verse 26 of surah al Hajj and explained that "Allah (SWT) has warned prophet Ibrahim not to associate Him with anything and directed him to purify His house for those who stand and those that do ruku' (bowing) and sujud (prostration)." He said that "here we have three steps, standing, bowing and prostration and it is only once, no repetition mentioned." He also quoted verse 24 of Surah Sad where prophet Dawud felt down bowing in prostration and verse 39 of Surah Al Imran where prophet Zakariyah was called by the angels while he was standing in prayer. He further quoted verses 101-103 of Surah al Nisa' to point out how the prophet taught his companion how to pray as per Allah's directives. He stated that "the first batch prayed with only one standing and one prostration and were asked to go back and let the others do the same. He concluded that this is how the Qur'an taught the Muslims how to pray with only one standing and one prostration [17].

Mallam Alhassan Lamido has contrary view with Sheikh Saleh Idris on reciting the Qur'an in prayers. He addressed those that are not reciting the Qur'an in their prayers as hypocrites and therefore dissociated themselves from their creed. On interpreting verse 58 of surah al Ma'idah, Sheikh Lamido has pointed out the importance of call to prayer and congregational prayer in contrast to Sheikh Saleh who said that it is outside the Qur'anic commands [18]. From what we noticed of great differences between these people on the method of praying, we conclude that another sect has emerged within them since sectarianism started with differences of opinion on understanding issues related to religion. We have now identified two major sects within the Qur'anists in northern Nigeria. These are the Kano faction lead by Sheikh Saleh Idris (Idrisiyyah) and that of Kaduna headed by Sheikh Usman Dangungun with Sheikhs Alasan Lamido and Musa Ibbi (Usmaniyyah).

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## **THEIR DEVIANT DA'WAH ON SAWM (FASTING)**

On the Tafsir of the following verse,

Permitted to you on the night of the fasts, is the approach to your wives. They are your garments and ye are their garment. Allah knoweth what ye used to do secretly among yourselves; but He turned to you and forgave you; so now associate with them, and seek what Allah hath ordained for you, and eat and drink until the white thread of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread; then complete your fast till the night appears; but do not associate with your wives while ye are in retreat in the mosques. Those are limits (set by) Allah: Approach not nigh thereto. Thus doth Allah make clear His Signs to men: that they may learn self-restraint [19].

Sheikh Saleh Idris commented as follows

Allah said, 'Then you complete the fasting to the Night.' So what is night? Allah has explained the meaning of night in surah Yasin verse 37, 'And a sign for them is the night.' What is night? Allah said 'We withdraw there from the day.' Night is when the day is withdrawn completely...and they are plunged in darkness...then darkness is the sign of the night. Sunshine is the sign of the day. When the sun set, we have left the day, but we are yet to enter the night since darkness is yet to commence. This is the end of the day after sunset up to the time when the night commences with darkness...till the disappearance of the red glow. That is why if you are fasting you will not break the fast at Maghreb time until when it is dark...night comes only when the day is withdrawn [20].

To them he who breaks his fast after the Maghrib before the darkness of the night commenced has nullified his fasting. Here they contradict what is established in the Hadith.

## **THEIR DEVIANT DA'WAH ON MENSTRATING WOMEN**

According to Hadith if a woman is in her menstrual period, she should give up prayers and fasting [21], touching the Qur'an, reading substantial part of the Qur'an or sexual intercourse with her husband. Her husband is prohibited from having sexual intercourse with her but is allowed to fondle each other if she wears izar (dress worn below the waist) [22]. And that if the blood exceed its normal period it is no longer a period but from a blood vessel (disease) she should therefore take bath, continue with her ibadat and her husband can cohabit her [23].

The Qur'anist have contrary views on this, they stated that there is no evidence from the Qur'an where Allah forbade the women from praying and fasting while in their menstrual period. They said that blood has nothing to do with salat and fasting. The Qur'an stated that if one is impure by intercourse or excretion and did not get water to purify himself he should not leave prayer because of impurity he has to perform tayammum (dry purification) and pray. They said it is equally impurity like blood of menstruation and confinement. They also stated that the Qur'an has directed the husbands to keep away entirely from the menstruating women until they are purified but the Hadith permitted what Allah has prohibited and this is a proof that Hadith is not the words of the prophet but satanic fabrications aimed at diverting people from the path of Allah [24]. On Tafsir of the following verse,

They ask thee concerning women's courses. Say: They are a hurt and pollution: So keep away from women in their courses, and do not approach them until they are clean. But when they have purified themselves, ye may approach them in any manner ordained for you by Allah. For Allah love those who turn to Him constantly and He love those who keep themselves pure and clean [25].

Sheikh Alhassan Lamido has this to say,

...tell them that the menstrual blood is a hurt. Inform the men to keep away from women on where the blood is coming out, not the whole body. This is the first prohibition.... Do not commit intercourse with her in as far as the blood is coming out from the virginal...the second prohibition is don't come near the women in their period until they are purified, that means ritual bath.... And you say you can return to her after fifteen days if the blood didn't stop....it means you say one can have intercourse with her in her menstruation...and you said she should stop praying...what is its relationship with menstruation? Prayer has no relationship with menstruation. Allah is He who directs her to pray, and Allah is He who can direct one to stop praying. From surah al Baqrah up to surah al Nas (in the Qur'an) there is nobody who Allah exempted from prayer except the one who is unconscious. No matter your sickness you have to pray even if it is blinking of eyes. Whether you are lying, standing, sitting, lying on your ribs you must to pray. Who prohibit prayer because of blood?...if you are ill or on a journey and you are impure and there is no water or that you excreted or touch women...are these entire not impurity? Then you leave prayer? No. get a purified place and stroke your hands, do Tayammum (dry ablution) and pray...if you

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get the water later then you wash and you are not to repeat the prayer....don't let him (Hadith follower) turn you unbeliever because of menstruation [26].

## CONCLUSION

From what we have seen of the Qur'anists Tafsir, we have noticed that they interpreted the Qur'an in line with their understanding of the Qur'an as the only source of religion accepted by Allah. The primary aim of their Da'wah is to justify their position of rejecting Hadith and other religious books beside the Qur'an as a source of religious guidance. They considered the Hadith followers as idol worshippers and hypocrites. They are more of Kharijites in disguise. In all their Da'wah work they interpreted the verses of the Qur'an out of context in support of their sectarian views.

Though the Qur'anists have considered themselves as the only true believers, there is a great difference between them in understanding some concepts in the Qur'an. They differed sharply on the manner of praying and other aspects, and this led them to attack each other in their Tafsir and preaching sessions. With this, we observed that differences of interpretation has emerged within them, this led to the existence of two major factions within them, these are the Kano faction lead by Shaykh Saleh Idris (Idrisiyyah) and that of Kaduna headed by Shaykh Usman Dangungu with Shaykh Alasan Lamido and Musa Ibba (Usmaniyyah).

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4. Surah al Zukhruf : 43
5. Field notes, Sheikh Usman Dangungu Tafsir on DVD, 8/6/2011, Tudun Wada Kaduna.
6. Surah al Zukhruf: 1-3
7. Sheikh Saleh Idris is a known Qur'anist based in Kano. He acquired western education and read Arabic language and literature. His methodology of Qur'anism is different from that of the Dangungu group who formed the majority. He prays only once in a day with standing and one prostration only, and the Qur'an is not recited. He said that there is no where Allah said one should read the Qur'an in prayers. It is only a du'ah. After a debate between him and Mallam Musa Ibba at Kaduna, he agreed with four times of prayers out of the normal five. He didn't believe in Asr prayers and there is no adhan, no raka'ah, and no congregation.
8. Field notes, Sheikh Saleh Idris Bello, Complete Tafsir al Qur'an in Hausa Language on DVD, Produced by Danbaiwa Studio, Lafia, Nassarawa State Nigeria.
9. Surah al Baqrah: 129
10. Field notes, Sheikh Alhassan Lamido; Tafsir on DVD, 11/1/2007, Tudun Wada Kaduna.
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14. Surah al Ma'idah, .6
15. Surah al Nahl, 158.
16. Surah al Fatir, 1.
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22. Ibid. Volume 1, Book 6, Hadith Number 299, 300.
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