

Religious Fanaticism in North Nigeria: Elnathan John's *Born On A Tuesday*

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Abstract:

In Nigeria, where Boko Haram, the fundamentalist Islamist movement, has turned the North of the country into a battleground, certain writers have sensed the danger and produced significant oppositional works. Elnathan John, an eminent novelist, is such an oppositional voice: in his *Born on A Tuesday*, he delineates the emergent situation, more or less, accurately. Dantala, the protagonist, is an *Almajiri* who went to study at Quranic School, and then left the school to join street boys of Kuka tree. When his leader died, Dantala decided to return home to Sokoto and became one of Sheikh Jamal's followers recognizing the modest Islam. The assistant of Sheikh Jamal, Malam Abdul-Nur, was a religious fanatic who thrashed young boys and stole the money of donations. Returning from Saudi Arabia as a leader to new Islamic Movement Abdul-Nur claims to apply "Shari'a" and establishes his own Islamic state calling his followers "Mujahedeen". Dantala is exposed to two different kinds of Islam: the modest and the fanatic ones, however he manages to keep himself away from being absorbed into fanaticism. By the end of the novel fanatics kill Sheikh Jamal and his

followers while the city falls into riot.

Keywords:

Fanaticism- Radical Islamic Movements in Nigeria- Religious fanatics in Nigeria

المخلص،

يتناول هذا البحث الحركات الإسلامية الراديكالية في شمال نيجيريا و التي حولت البلاد الي ساحة حرب. و قد أحس العديد من الكتاب بالخطر المحقق الذي تعاني منه البلاد و قرروا معالجة هذا من خلال أعمالهم الأدبية. و قد نجح الكاتب الشهير الناثان جون في رسم الصورة بحرفية بالغة من خلال بطل الرواية "دانثالا" الذي ذهب الي الشمال ليدرس القران و لكنه فشل في اعتناق الفكر المتشددو عاد الي بلده سوكوتا ليصبح احد أتباع "الشيخ جمال" و الذي تعرف من خلاله علي الإسلام الوسطي و المعتدل. لكن المساعد الأول للشيخ جمال و هو المعلم عبد النور، كان علي النقيض من شيخه، و كان يعتنق الفكر التكفيري التشددي و الذي عمل علي تأسيس إمارته من خلاله عقب عودته من المملكة العربية السعودية مدعيا تطبيق الشريعة عن طريق ما أساهم المجاهدين.

و يقدم الكاتب من خلال الرواية الوضع في شمال نيجيريا من خلال الاسلام الوسطي متمثلا في الشيخ جمال و أتباعه، و الاسلام الراديكالي متمثلا في المعلم عبد النور و أنصاره من المجاهدين. و يحذر الكاتب من تمزق البلاد و تحولها لساحة حرب دائمة من خلال أنصار كل فكر ، كما يحذر من جذب الشباب الصغير الي الفكر التكفيري من خلال مفاهيم خاطئة يتم زرعها في عقولهم.

الكلمات الدالة،

التعصب- الحركات الإسلامية الراديكالية في نيجيريا- المتعصبون دينيا في نيجيريا

Introduction

Though he is only 35 years old, the young Nigerian writer Elnathan John is one of the distinguished contemporary writers not only in Nigeria but also in Africa, and his works were nominated for many prizes. He was born in Kaduna where the majority is Muslims and moved to Zaria to study law. After graduation, he worked as a lawyer for two years until 2012 when he came to realize the great political corruption that polluted everything even courts. He quit his job and devoted himself to writing and he is the first writer to speak about Islamic fanaticism in North Nigeria away from Boko Haram; his debut novel *Born on A Tuesday* (2015) is the first work to speak about life and relations in North Nigeria.

John has many literary works including: *A short Story Collection* (2008), stories published in magazines like ZAM Magazine, Evergreen Review, and Per Contra. His stories *Bayan Layi* (2013) and *Flying* (2015) were short listed for the Caine Prize. *Born on A Tuesday* was chosen as one of the ten best debut novels of Winter/Spring 2016 by US Bookseller's Association Indies Introduce. He has also written non-fiction pieces, most recently *The Keepers of Secrets*, a journalistic piece published in the 2016 Commonwealth anthology of creative non-fiction, Safe House

Fanaticism: An Overview

The term “fanaticism” refers to extremism to a certain idea, doctrine, religion, or political group. Christopher Harmon, among other philosophers who defined fanaticism, explains that it “involves great

energy, single-minded direction and a lack of any restraint or moderation. It is characterized by extremes of effort and fervor of intensity." (101) Moreover, fanaticism is universal and is related to many activities, but widely connected to politics and religions; it is "*related to human traits so it can be found in almost any activity where people are involved.*" (Marimaa 34)

Nowadays, our world is suffering from religious fanaticism that is widely spread in many regions, countries and places. We have a lot of religious fanatic groups everywhere in the Middle East, in Africa, in Asia, in America and in Europe. Though all religions call for tolerance and peace, religious fanaticism is "*violent and unreasoning religious enthusiasm as well as the inability of religious adherents to harmonize between those theories and the practical aspect of religion.*" (Balogun 328) Eyeruromo and Allisoh point out that "*religion can be integrative and as well disintegrative, it stabilizes and at the same time destabilizes, rouses hatred and strife in the society.*"(3) It depends mainly on religious explanations in society and how people understand religion without being fanatic to certain ideas.

Fanaticism is found in all religions, not only in certain religion, and each religion has its fanatic groups in different places with different reasons for fanaticism. But what are the main characteristics of fanatics? What are the reasons and temptations that lead them to be fanatic? And what are the consequences of fanaticism on society?

In her essay *The Many Faces of Fanaticism*, Kalmer Marimaa managed to determine the characteristics of a fanatic person as: first,

unwavering conviction about the absolute rightness of one's understanding. A Fanatic person believes that his/her understanding is completely correct; he/she is not ready to accept another idea or explanation to what he/she believes in even if he/she is aware of the contradiction of his/her ideas to reality. Selengut defines three solutions to the experience of cognitive dissonance and chronic religious disappointment: Surrender, which means that "*cognitive and theological surrender deals with these inconsistencies by rejecting beliefs which are felt to be causing the dissonant experience*" (67), Reinterpretation that "*does not call for rejecting the earlier beliefs entirely but rather reinterpreting the dissonant beliefs so as to make the compatible with other beliefs which define the common and acceptable social reality*" (67), and Militant Transformation "*continued religious disappointment and the psychological traumas it endangers result in religious violence.*" (69)

The second characteristic of fanatics is seeking to impose one's conviction on others. As he/she believes in his own ideas as the absolute right, the fanatic is looking at others as lost people; Dominique Colas explains that:

Gathered together in the love of a Great Pronouncer of Pure Truth that is the foundation of their community, fanatics believe that his word is absolute and that they are its only authorized interpreters. Proud to be its servants and instruments, they hate those who ignore or disdain it, and they desire to make the

world comply with the commandments of their supreme rector.(5)

The third characteristic is dualistic world view; the fanatic divides the world into two camps: the good and reasonable section represented in fanatics, and the evil and bad section represented in the other world. Fanatics live in a certain world they create themselves in which they believe that the other world is an evil opponent who lives in darkness and they have to change it into a good society either peacefully or through violence.

The fourth characteristic is self-sacrificial devotion to the goal; Marimaa points out:

A Fanatic is willing to sacrifice not only his/her time and money but even his/her life to make his/her ideas dominant in society. Self-sacrificial devotion to a goal is common to all fanatics, whether their Fanaticism be connected with religion, politics, the world of entertainment, hobbies or something else...the religious or political fanatic needs to win others over to his/her faith or ideology and to change the world according to his/her ideals. (42)

He/she is ready to sacrifice the closest people to him to prove his fidelity and devotion to his sacred goal.

The last characteristic Marimaa mentions is that devotion itself is more important than the object of that devotion. It is easy for the fanatic to be converted and use his Fanaticism to something else; he is not ready

to leave his Fanaticism, but he is ready to change his object “*even if the fanatic may deny it, the devotion itself is more important to him/her than the object of that devotion.*” (46)

Factors and temptations that turn people into fanatics vary from one society to the other, however there are common factors: first, social status and values’ change is a strong reason of fanaticism. The disappearance of some values without eruption of new ones makes man lost and he/she takes fanaticism as a shelter; social frustrated person is an easy prey to fanaticism. Fanatics are self-empty persons and they look for those movements to have a kind of self fulfillment, the great philosopher Eric Hoffer emphasizes:

To the frustrated a mass movement offers substitutes either for the whole self or for the elements which make life bearable and which they cannot evoke out of their individual resources. (25)

The second temptation is the desire of fanatics, especially young aged persons, to try something new and exciting and to go to a better world. Agobiboa suggests that “*in some cases the certainties of the religious viewpoint and the promises of the next world are key motivating factors in driving insecure, alienated and marginalized youths to join religious terrorist groups as a means of psychological, even physical, empowerment.*” (47) Agobiboa clarifies that not all youth are prey for fanaticism, but those who are suffering from alienation, marginalization and insecurity.

The Third one is the educational system that has an effective role in creating a suitable environment for fanatics, Perkinson illustrates:

Unfortunately, what we refer to as “education” usually cultivates a propensity toward dogmatism, obscurantism, and authoritarianism. The content of “education” always consists of our present answers and solutions to man-kind’s questions and problems. Now, since we are fallible, these present answers and solutions cannot be perfect... We cannot finally justify any answer as true, or justify any solution as the best possible. So, this impositional educational process, when it works, produces people who “know,” who “believe,” who “accept” the present answers and solutions as true, good, and proper. (173)

Also, social injustice and political corruption sustain the atmosphere of fanaticism. The decrease of governmental role in society is parallel to the increase of the role of other movements and groups that work as financial suppliers instead; John himself emphasizes:

As long as injustice exists, there will be violence, whether religious or otherwise. For as long as people do not trust their government to provide leadership, security, and development, parallel authorities will emerge in the form of religious groups and vigilantes. Every ideology will have believers in its extreme or purist form, whether it is veganism or organized religion.

Funding and poverty do not create ideology—they merely fuel opportunism and give ammunition and credibility to persons who would, in a functional society, be on the fringes. Certainly, however if there were no funding of extremism and no poverty, the capacity of radicalism to cause violence would be greatly reduced.

(On Writing Islamic identity and Being labeled a Political writer 7)

Fanaticism has destructive consequences on fanatic societies as it creates closed minded generations with no ability to think reasonably. It resists modernization and rejects culture change and scientific progress. Also, fanatic societies lose the ability to differentiate between what is right and what is wrong. Moreover, a fanatic society is against democracy as no options are available, only one idea, one attitude, one leader, one discipline, and one ideology adopted by all; those who don't accept this ideology are considered enemies and they have to follow society or to be removed or even killed.

Religious Fanaticism in North Nigeria

Islamic fanaticism movements have widely spread in postcolonial Arab and African societies. Some movements continued for a short time and were removed by military forces, while others managed to stay and widen their activity spots. Nigeria is one of those countries that

represented a fertile land to Islamic fanatic movements. After independence in 1960, Nigeria became a pluralistic and multi-religious nation divided into three sections depending on ethnic, language, and religious aspects; the northern part is inhabited by Muslims representing 50% of the whole population, and 12 Northern States adopted “Shari’a” law. There are many fanatic movements in North Nigeria like Kala-Kato Movement which takes the Holy Quran as the only source of judgment rejecting all explanations of Sufi, Shiaa, and other Islamic organizations and Izala Movement that was founded in 1978 with financial support from Saudi Arabia, from which came Boko Haram, the famous Islamic fanatic Movement terrorizing people of Nigeria and many African countries till today.

For almost seven years, 2000 to 2007, Nigeria witnessed big riots and violence in Northern States claiming the application of “Shari’a”. The reason why North Nigeria attracts fanaticism is argued by Sope Williams Elegbe, Research Director of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) as:

The increasing poverty in Nigeria is accompanied by increasing unemployment. Unemployment is higher in the north than in the south. Mix this situation with radical Islam, which promises a better life for martyrs, and you can understand the growing violence in the north. Government statistics show that the northern states have the highest proportion of uneducated persons. If you link a lack of education and attendant lack of opportunities

to a high male youth population, you can imagine that some areas are actually a breeding ground for terrorism. (qtd. in Agbiboa 59)

Religious Fanaticism in Born on a Tuesday

Born on A Tuesday (2015) started actually in a previous short story called *Bayan Layi* (2015) in which John Speaks about the life of street boys and violence in North Nigeria. Through this novel John wants to talk about *Almajiri*, those people who go to study at Islamic schools in the North and they often do not have names; he says: “*I was interested in what happens when that basic form of identity is taken away. “Born on a Tuesday” is the protagonist’s name, but not a real name.*” (Kellaway 2)

The novel was widely accepted all over the world as it sheds light on the Northern part of Nigeria as a very big and neglected part. Also, it is related closely and strongly to the real events in Nigeria and John “*undertook extensive research on the development of political Islam in Nigeria, ‘in order to include all of its elements in the book’. This allows his work to offer us a glimpse into an ordinarily inaccessible world.*” (Cuadra 2) Ikheloa adds that the novel “*joins a robust body of literary works that are now shaping an intellectual dichotomy between Diaspora writing and writing from within the continent.*” (2)

In a conversation with Leila ABoulEla about Basiru “*the Almajiri from Sokoto I met in Zaria, whose story made me create Dantala, who will probably never read this book*” (198), John clarifies the reasons why

Basiru cannot read the book: first, his lack of secular education, and also his inability to read either English or Hausa, plus his immediate disappearance without mentioning where he went or what he intended to do (Islamic identity and Being labeled a Political writer 7).

John explains his main concern of writing this book:

I want to talk in my book about invisible people, to tell the stories that aren't being told. The part of North Nigeria I'm writing about happens to be about 90% Muslim. You can't talk about them without talking about the conflicts between them. (Cuadra 1)

The novel starts in 2003, the period that witnessed the radicalization of political Islam all over the world. Iraq was ruined by Americans and the gap between Sunna and Shiaa was widened; new fanatic movements appeared with their strategies to dominate the whole world and they are ready to sacrifice the world peace for their own sake. North Nigeria has Sunna and Shiaa who are deeply affected by such movements and their disciplines.

The book is divided into five parts telling the story of the young *Almajiri* Dantala who joined the street boys in Bayan Layi after having been a student at Islamic school that teaches Quran. The beginning of the novel depicts a picture of violence in Bayan Layi and how youths speak about killing as something easy and normal there. Gobedanisa, one of street boys, "talks about killing, you would think he would get *aljanna* for it, that Allah would reserve the best spot for him." (8) Ikheloa

explains that *“through this simple act of dislocation, the reader is taken through a bloody roller-coaster of emotions and violence in Northern Nigeria as life becomes a theater of war for this boy and he is forced to live in strange places and be mentored by even stranger people.”* (2)

Dantala was a clever student to Malam Junaidu, Quran teacher, who had warned him against Kuka tree boys who come to the mosque only during Ramadan or Eid days. Malam Junaidu said *“we despised them because they didn't know the Quran and Sunna like us...A person who doesn't pray five times a day is not a Muslim”* (12), but when Dantala became one of them he discovered that *“some of them are kind, good people.”* (12) So, since he was a child listening to his teacher, Dantala was exposed to Islamic fanaticism dividing people into “us” and “them” where “us” represents good people who are real Muslims, while “them” represents bad and evils who are also Muslims but not considered Muslims by others.

After his friend's murder in a riot where they were burning Big Party office, Dantala decided to leave Bayan Layi and move to Sokoto. Choosing Sokoto not Borno, though Borno is the city of religious violence in North Nigeria is very significant,

The choice of Sokoto as the location rather than Borno, the center of terrorist activity, suggests the transferability of event. The fictional town of Bayan Layi – ‘back streets’ in Hausa- is somewhere in the fringes of society. Elnathan John implies that the conditions for religious violence exist practically everywhere

in North Nigeria: ‘In the end everyone is fighting someone else because they believe they are the ‘real Muslim’. (Cuadra 2)

While Dantala was lying in the mosque, he heard two men discussing the results of elections that have been forged; one man claimed that Southerners were attempting to take power from Northerners who won elections and the other man replied that Northerners are taking religion as shelter to deceive people with *“our Emirs and big men are greedy and are not interested in us or our religion. They only claim to be Muslim and Northern but side with those oppressing us. For them an infidel party that accepts all sorts of kufr is more important than standing with Muslims and with Allah.”* (26) This conversation reveals the great political corruption of religious fanatics who are in fact looking for their own benefit regardless of their followers. They are used by political leaders in a dirty game where both sides benefit, while people are the only losers.

The journey of Dantala’s from the city of Bayan Layi, where he witnesses violence everywhere as the only example before him *“I like using sharp objects when beating a thief. I like the way the blood spurts when you punch”* (10), to Sokoto where he is going to be one of Sheikh Jamal’s boys, symbolizes his journey from the world of sin to the world of known God. He moves from father figure of Malam Junaidu to the father figure of Sheikh Jamal looking for the truth, Dantala says:

A cold, light breeze blows from the door on my right just after I say “Allahu Akbar.” It feels like Allah hears my whisper, and

answers. I can feel his greatness this morning and I am feeling sorry, for the first time, for all I have done. For smoking wee-wee. For breaking into shops with the Kuku tree boys. For striking that man with a machete. For questioning Allah on my way back to Sokoto. (28)

He felt great comfort and self release when he left Bayan Layi where he witnessed religious fanaticism and political violence, and embarks on a better and straight life. Leaving the place where he killed, smoked, and committed sins to look for another place to start a new life is a proof of strong desire to change himself into man of manners. Though he managed to keep himself away from being fanatic, but he did not manage to restore himself to God again as an obedient person.

In the mosque, Dantala started a new life with his new name Ahmad. The mosque was depicted by Elnathan John as the center of Islamic movements in North Nigeria. Inside the mosque Ahmad is confronted with two different Islamic schools: the tolerant Islam represented in Sheikh Jamal, Imam of the mosque, and the opponent school of fanatic Islam represented in Malam Abdu-Nur, Imam's assistant.

John put the two examples parallel in a brilliant way to give them the same chance before Dantala to express themselves and their ideas. He did not give one of them a better chance to direct Dantala's mind or feelings to give him the freedom to choose and decide. Though he is still a young boy, but his experience in Bayan Layi helps him to think and

decide, *“Elnathan paid a lot of attention to character design and development and it shows beautifully...these are not stick figures, these are not caricatures, these are thinking people.”* (Ikheloa 5)

Throughout the novel John indicates that poverty of small villages and cities provides a good environment for Radical Islamic Movements to interfere and supply their needs; hence, they dominate their minds and direct their ideas. The Government does not pay attention to those villages and they are an easy prey to such fanatic movements,

People are dying of sickness. There is no water or hospital in Dogon Ice and many people, especially children, purge until they die. The water got contaminated after the flood and although the local government chairman promised to bring water tankers, they have not seen any yet. (35)

When Dantala went home, he was shocked that his twin brothers Hassan and Hussien joined a Shiite group in Tashar Kanuri and came back acting strange; they were brainwashed there and filled with new contradictory ideas. So, Dantala witnessed fanaticism in Bayan layi, and when he returned to his home village he found his brothers became Shiite, which means they are also religiously fanatics. Hence, the place he escaped from was like that he escaped to, so he decided to stop in the middle of the way and he returned to the mosque and be one of Sheikh Jamal's followers.

The second part of the novel starts in 2006 with Dantala's return to Sokoto. Staying in a small room near the mosque, Dantala realized that

Sheikh Jamal is not there most of the time travelling and meeting Sheikh Usman, the great financial supporter to Sheikh Jamal and his movement. In Sheikh Jamal's absence, his assistant Malam Abdul-Nur is the one in charge, he is *"the short man with the big voice. He is a Yoruba from Ilorin. In fact his name was Alex before he converted, learned Arabic and memorized the whole Quran in just one year. There is no Hadith of the Prophet that he doesn't know."* (29)

Malam Abdul-Nur is very strong hearted man and real fanatic; he is so harsh in treating young boys, Dantala comments:

I don't like the way Malam Abdul-Nur hits people, especially the new boys, who have started living in the newly built rooms by the side of ours behind the mosque...Last month he whipped one of the boys, Khalil, with a horse whip until he bled and Chuks had to treat his wounds...most of them were from home in Ilorin, where their uncle used to beat all the children in his house every Friday, just in case they had done something he didn't know of during the week. (63)

Marimaa emphasizes: *"A religious fanatic may also feel him/herself to be all powerful, believing him/herself able to control the weather, heal the sick, ignore the laws of nature and even conquer death by trying to raise the dead. Faith gives immense confidence to the fanatic"* (44)

The fanaticism of Malam Abdul-Nur led some boys to hate the mosque, preachers, and even to rebel against the instructions of Islam. Their rebellion did not take the form of objection or even fight, but they

were making illicit actions without being noticed. Dantala found out that two of his roommates practiced sodomy at night while no one knows. Also, Jibril, Malam Abdul-Nur's brother and Dantala's roommate, took him once to a place where he can commit fornication. Those young guys were victims of religious fanaticism with its restrictions.

Examining the types of fanaticism John has included in his novel, they could be divided into: Verbal fanaticism and Armed fanaticism. Verbal fanaticism appeared many times through the novel: for example, Malam Abdul-Nur's opinion about Shiaa:

There is nothing worse than shirk, and in this matter some Christians are better than the Shiites. You know there are some Christians who don't elevate Prophet Jesus to the position of Allah and they believe that there is no one worthy of worship but Allah. They just don't call Him Allah. Surely then, the Shiites, who set up gods in opposition to Allah, are worse than Christians. (99)

Unlike Sheikh Jamal who is modest, Malam Abdul-Nur is fanatic against Shiite and people of Sokoto are fanatics against them as well,

No one like Shiites in Sokoto. Everyone believes they are dangerous, especially those of them who go to Iran to study and the Shiite Malams who take money from Hezbollah to fight Dariqas and Izalas. (84)

John refers to the financial support Shiaa gets from Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon to fight other religious movements in North Nigeria. Due to this armed conflict, this swath of Nigeria is deteriorating socially and economically.

Another example for verbal fanaticism is the debate between Malam Abdul-Nur, after returning from Saudi Arabia, and Sheikh Jamal; this debate is actually about Salafism, and the writer's main resource was "*real debates between Sheikh Jafar Adam and Mohammed Yusuf, a former Almajiri who broke away from the Salafists to found the fundamentalist group Boko Haram.*" (Cuadra 2) Malam Abdul-Nur said:

The Europeans needing to conquer Muslim people, sought to start by conquering their culture through worthless and sinful education. He says that if the Europeans had come with guns and ships, it might have been easy to fend them off. But they came with liberal ideas and education to slowly eat at the root of Islamic civilization and control...the basis of the Nigerian government is kufr because democracy is 'a disgusting, anti-Islamic, Western invention which seeks to introduce liberal ideas and kill Islamic values... working for the cause of kufr makes a person a kafir... elections themselves are part of a system of kufr, but by force, because Muslims are bound by submission to the will of Allah. (150)

The stream of fanatic ideas and thoughts of Abdul-Nur as the leader of "Jama'atul Ihyau Islamil Haqiqiy" Movement indicates the division of

Islamic fanatics to those who are real Muslims and those who are not. According to Abdul-Nur, democracy is something new, imported from western civilization and against Islam. As a fanatic he cannot accept new ideas even if they are good and benefited to society, he claims *“I will use Sharia! The Laws of Allah are self-sufficient.”* (152)

Dantala managed to escape the trap of Malam Abdul-Nur who wanted to include him in his fanatic team; he is still thinking of both ways and is not attracted to any of them, even if he liked Sheikh Jamal and the way he treated him. Malam Abdul-Nur bought a radio and new phone to Dantala asking him *“Are you ready to do what Allah wants when He wants it, without asking why?”* (64), but Dantala was always afraid of Malam Abdul-Nur and he did not trust him especially after he saw him stealing the money of donations. Abdul-Nur’s words to Dantala indicate the policy of brain washing used by fanatic leaders convincing their followers and victims that their aim is God’s satisfaction while their actions deny this.

The Second type of fanaticism John depicts is Armed fanaticism. Since the very beginning in Bayan Layi, Dantala witnessed the armed fanaticism of his Quranic teacher Malam Junaidu, *“if we did not understand he would lash us with a whip made from old motorcycle tyres.”* (22) The result was that Dantala left his classes and joined street boys who smoke wee-wee and receive money to burn and ruin during elections.

Even domestically, Malam Abdul-Nur was fanatic against his wife,

Like a donkey. He treats her like an animal that he despises. Some days he locks her in her room without any food because his food is cold or there is too much salt or not enough salt. He beats her with a tyre whip. He forces things into her...anus! Candles.Bottles. He flogs her with the tyre whip when they are doing it. Some days she faints. (114-115)

His treatment towards his wife as an object and whipping her for futile things led her to hate him; her hatred was translated into illegal sexual relationship with his younger brother Jibril once Abdul-Nur left to Saudi Arabia. Both Jibril and Malam Abdul-Nur's wife were making incest and she became pregnant with Jibril's son. Fanaticism of Abdul-Nur against both his brother and his wife led them to hate him, his religious attitude, and his violent instructions; through their relationship each one found consolation for his sadness and through which each one restores his feelings as human, Hoffer explains:

The fiercest fanatics are often selfish people who were forced, by innate shortcomings or external circumstances, to lose faith in their own selves. They separate the excellent instrument of their selfishness from their ineffectual selves and attach it to the service of some holy. And though it be a faith of love and humility they adopt, they can be neither loving nor humble. (62)

The second accident which marks armed fanaticism is Sheikh Jamal's shot in his car. Malam Abdul-Nur insists on attacking Shiite people and he collected people in the mosque seeking to ruin Shiite's mosques in the city but Sheikh Jamal managed to stop them. He was well aware that this would lead to civil war between the two groups and the whole city is going to be ruined. On Sheikh Jamal's behalf, Elnathan John refers to the fate of North Nigeria due to the armed conflict between Sunna and Shiaa, and his fears that Nigeria will be the same as Iraq *"You know what happened in Iraq? The enemies of Islam and of the people, after the Americans turned the country upside down, what did they do? They went to Sunni mosques and bombed Sunni mosques. They went to Shiite mosques and bombed Shiite mosques...very easily they started Civil war."* (101) Though they did not know who tried to shoot Sheikh Jamal, but the aim was to start the war between Sunna and Shiaa.

Dantala managed to keep his stability; the presence of Sheikh Jamal and his tenderness towards him make Dantala happy. He has an inner conflict whether Sheikh Jamal is right or Malam Abdul-Nur is right? But every time he is sure that Malam Abdul-Nur is a fanatic who takes everything violently; he sees how he deals with his younger brother whipping and violating him for every simple action, he sees the great anger and refusal of Malam Abdul-Nur to follow Shiekh Jamal's peaceful instructions and he always takes the initiative in taking his gun to use against others. Ikheloa comments:

It is a society that is deeply dysfunctional and violent even as its leaders preach peace. Dantala finds comfort in violence-and his religious fate. As if they are both linked. His religion takes him to a peaceful place but the road is strewn with violence. He is awed by raw wealth, power and education. (4)

The novel witnesses a dramatic change in part four after Malam Abdul-Nur's return from Saudi Arabia. He was sent there by Sheikh Jamal to achieve a certain mission and he stayed there for few months. He returned to Sokoto with a new Movement in opposition to Sheikh Jamal and too much money that no one knows how he got it, "*in Dantala's world, we find pockets of wealth lying side by side with a culture of poverty and misery marinated in a sea of organized religion.*" (Ikheloa 4) Dantala adds "*All we know is suddenly there are black- and-white banners, flags and stickers everywhere that read either 'Mujahideen' or 'Sunna Sak'*" (143)

The return of Malam Abdul-Nur from Saudi Arabia is the most dangerous time Sokoto and all North Nigerian cities witnessed. He became the leader of the new Movement with their fanatic attitudes, and they built a camp far from Sokoto where "*they fire weapons and a man from Chad teaches them how to dismantle, assemble and clean guns.*" (149) Jibril told Dantala how Abdul-Nur "*has shot someone in the thigh who was caught trying to leave the premises. 'He even has a little cell, where he keeps people who have committed offence.'*" (150)

Malam Abdul-Nur claimed applying Shari'a in his camp, he chopped off someone's hand because said he stole some raw meat after they slaughtered a cow. Jibril said to Dantala "*He made everybody watch... He used the butcher's axe. I've never seen so much blood in my life. He has gone crazy!'*..." 'Early this morning. The boy died about an hour ago. The bleeding refused to stop. They are digging the grave on the edge of the farm.'" (164) The two men, the one whose hands were chopped and the one who was hit in his thigh, did not recognize or have been persuaded by the aim of their Movement, and as Eric Hoffer points out:

Both they who convert and they who are converted by coercion need the fervent conviction that the faith they impose or are forced to adopt is the only true one. Without this conviction, the proselytizing terrorist, is likely to feel a criminal, and the coerced convert see himself as a coward who prostituted his soul to live. (123)

For Abdul-Nur the real aim is not religious one, but he seeks power, money, leadership and dominance.

This Religious fanaticism of Malam Abdul-Nur towards his followers is the reflection of his failure in the debate before Sheikh Jamal; he did not answer Sheikh Jamal's questions and he insisted on proving his ability to be a leader through violence, Sheik Jamal comments:

Abdul-Nur is mad. He is doing this because I floored him in the debate. He is trying to prove to me that he can run an Islamic state. But he will kill all those people... I even hear that in the village where he is, people are leaving because they are afraid of him. In just a short while he has taken over everything and terrorises everyone including the village head. Allah forbid! If there is any one mistake I made, it is Abdul-Nur. Now I can't even look Alhaji Usman in the eye because he will say he told me. Everyone told me but I thought I had him under control. A Yoruba man is a Yoruba man. No matter how Muslim they become. They stab you in the back. That is how they are. Hypocrites. (161)

The last line emphasizes the bigotry in North Nigeria and the tribal system that dominates. Though both Abdul-Nur and Sheikh Jamal are Muslims, but Sheikh Jamal still looks at Abdul-Nur as a betrayer Yoruba.

Armed fanaticism reached the climax in slaughtering Sheikh Jamal; John indicates that fanatics do not respect age, rank, or even weakness. The followers of Abdul-Nur came in the uniform of police with their motorbikes and they act *"like they own the world"* (169), they fired all people who tried to escape out of the mosque and they managed to catch Sheikh Jamal. The disgusting way of dealing with Sheikh Jamal as an enemy is described by Dantala who was looking from behind the fence,

After a couple of minutes there is silence. They drag Sheikh out and make him kneel by the taps. They take off his turban. One of the men is taking photos with a small camera. I cannot hear what they are telling him as they slap him across the cheek. They tie his hands behind his back and lay him on the ground. Then one of the men brings out a short knife. He steps on Sheikh's head then rolls him over to make him lie on his belly. The man steps on Sheikh's back and pulls his hair to expose his throat. As two others pin Sheikh down, the man begins to cut. (170)

Slaughtering Sheikh Jamal is actually a slaughter to social peace and modest Islam. Dantala realizes then that the followers of Malam Abdul-Nur "*are enemies of people and enemies of Islam*" (172); they do not understand or think about their beliefs, but rather they judge their opponents as Kafir and they find vindications to kill them. Dantala remembers the words of Sheikh Gamal,

Some of the worst enemies of Islam are the ones who deceive innocent people into thinking they are Muslims. Somebody who has no understanding of Islam and its percepts will go around calling himself a Mujahideen. Islam does not put people in bondage like they are doing, or in fear. These are the people who are our greatest enemies, the traitors from within. You sit on a farm with ignorant people around you and alone fatwas according to your whims. How is that Sharia? How is that Islam? (166)

Though Dantala lost his God father, Sheikh Jamal, but he learned a lot from him about tolerance of Islam. He learned how to think and consider subjects not to be tended to any fanatic group. His journey from Bayan Layi carrying his loads of guilt to Sokoto opened before him new ways of thinking and analyzing religious disciplines in his society.

John refers to education as one of the ways to develop societies suffering from religious fanaticism. He created his protagonist, Dantala, as a person who is able to rescue himself by learning, *“Dantala is able to overcome his circumstances through his ability to learn and look ahead, imagining alternatives to the status quo.”* (Cuadra 3) Toti Obrien adds:

Dantala comes from illiteracy, yet he is bright, extremely curious, capable of memorizing pages and pages in Hausa, Arabic, and English. Listening to the radio, figuring how the same events are reported in several idioms, opens up his mind and sharpens his awareness. He is thirsty for words and their meaning, dictionaries and all sort of reading. (3)

Dantala learned many English words that are closely related to stages of his life like Patron, Desolate, Gibberish, Terrify, Obsess, and Anthropology. Sheikh Jamal was happy when he knew that Dantala could read English *“there are things he tells me-his plans for the future...Big plans that I am not supposed to tell anyone.”* (89)

However, John states that western schools that colonizers spread all over Nigeria to educate English caused a kind of identity obliteration. In an interview with Premium Time Magazine, Elnathan John points out:

English did not liberate Dantala from the surrounding darkness. Yes, it opened up new worlds, as did Arabic, but it was only one point in his evolution. His libration, if indeed there was such, flowed from the entire journey to knowledge, from his curiousness, from his resilience. Libration is a process, along one, especially for Dantala; it is a journey rather than destination. (1)

By the end of the novel, Dantala was jailed for nine months being suspected as one of Mujahedeen, but he was released and returned to his home again. After being tortured in the prison, there is a hope for Dantala to start again away from religious fanaticism. He found a note by Jibril that gave him the hope that Jibril is still alive. Dantala then decided to take the bus and go wherever it is headed looking for new life, new start, and new tolerant society. Unigwe asserts “*we know that when Dantala gets where that bus is headed, he will do what he does best. Dantala will survive. He will reclaim the innocence lost*” (2)

Conclusion

This paper analyzes the theme of religious fanaticism in North Nigeria with Muslim majority through Elnathan John’s debut novel *Born*

on a Tuesday. Throughout his novel, John defines two types of fanaticism: Verbal fanaticism and Armed fanaticism through the relation between Shiaa and Sunna movements supported by other countries from outside. He managed to convey a complete picture of his society and how they live.

I think that the writer managed to transfer various messages to his readers: first, he referred to North Nigeria apart from Boko Haram as an ignored part by most Nigerian writers and as a fertile land to religious fanaticism. Second, he gives the reader an image of life in North Nigeria and the case of ignorance and destitution that makes them an easy prey to Radical Islamic Movements. Third, the writer draws his protagonist as an example of Nigerian youth capable of learning and thinking; Dantala is exposed to two characters which represent the modest as well as the fanatic Movements, and he managed to keep himself safe from being absorbed into fanaticism. Though he did not turn into fanatic, Dantala committed and witnessed violence during his journey to self-libration. Also, John indicates that leaders of Radical Islamic Movements are seeking money and dominance not religion itself. At the end of the novel, the writer gives Dantala a chance for a new start where the bus goes without determining the place he is going to; he wants to say that if society of North Nigeria continues to be supportive environment for religious fanaticism, the result will be lost characters that cannot decide their fate. Dantala's journey from Bayan Layi to Sokoto is a journey from the world of sin to the world of known God, but due to religious fanaticism his journey becomes aimless and he is not able to decide what

to do or does not know what he is going to meet in his next stop. However, I still believe that Dantala succeeds to some extent when he keeps himself away from being absorbed into fanaticism and dominated by its rules of oppression, choosing the opposite values no matter the cost (values of individual choices, of loyalty and friendship OVER obedience and fear)

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