Clearly, there was room for a certain amount of updating in the light of recent research which Willis, perhaps for very good reasons, chose not to do: he may, for example, regard the work as a document in its own right.

This book is, nonetheless, an extremely valuable piece of research, at least at one level. It provides the foundations, historical and doctrinal, for an understanding chiefly of three aspects of Islamic history in the Western Sudan: the Umarian holy war, the formation of the Umarian jama'a and the spread of the Tijaniyya movement. The reason for not wholeheartedly endorsing the work as a historical masterpiece, a hesitation signalled by the qualifying phrase just used 'at least at one level', is the impression that Willis has at times crossed over the line from history to hagiography.

Every student of history and especially religious or cultural history aims at what Weber referred to as emphatic knowledge (Verstehen), an approach most necessary in a non-Muslim historian who writes about a jihad that is in part a war against what was designated as, and indeed perceived and understood as, 'Christian' imperialism. Willis displays this kind of knowledge to a remarkable degree. However, in the process he appears to want to canonise Al-Hajj 'Umar, attributing to him absolute purity of motive, great charisma and many saintly qualities, all of which the historical evidence taken in the round might want to at least dispute. He appears like Carlyle who wanted to say all the good he could about the prophet Muhammad because of the widespread prejudice found in virtually everything else written about him by non-Muslims.

Willis's study is, moreover, a variant of the 'great man' theory of history, one that pays too much attention to 'Umar's personal charisma and too little to social and economic forces. This imbalance would, I believe, have been less obvious and more acceptable had Willis interpreted charisma as essentially a relationship, the way I believe Weber meant it to be understood, and not, as he appears to do, as a personality trait.

These reservations apart, this book has great merit and has been all too long in coming.

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PETER B. CLARKE


Older readers of this journal may remember Abubakar Imam. He contributed to the January 1946 issue (pp. 22—27). This book, an account of his life, is only the second memoir by a prominent Northern Nigerian of his generation since Ahmadu Bello's My Life (Cambridge, 1962). It started as an autobiography and, following Imam's death in 1981, was completed posthumously by his family, in conjunction with a drafting committee of friends and admirers.

Although he was in quick succession and with impressive record a teacher, journalist, politician and administrator, Imam is best remembered as a novelist, unarguably the most profound and prolific Hausa author this century. His first novel, Rusan Bagaja (The Water of Cure) won the competition organized in 1933 by the Northern Nigerian Education Department and immediately saw the light of print. By 1938, when he became editor of the pioneer newspaper Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo (The Truth is Worth More Than a Penny), Imam had written over half a dozen books, among them the two volumes of Karamin Sani Kukumi (A Little Knowledge is Dangerous) and the monumental trilogy, Magana fari Ce (Eloquence is an Asset), which he completed in under six months! (p. 26). Almost a dozen more were to follow later.
Not surprisingly, Imam the intellectual disdained power and the trappings of office that was the fashionable obsession of his peers. He simply did not like the limelight. 'Ka sara wa banza (You have saluted nobody!) was the sneering remark he made in his mind when the Chief Constable of Bida NA police saluted him after he inspected a guard of honour at Baddeg in 1949 (p. 172). In 1954, he resigned from the Northern Nigerian House of Assembly to which he had been nominated three years earlier by the old guard Emir of Zaria, Ja'afaru. But he was not the first to do so as has been claimed (pp. 181-4). Bello, Sarkin Shanu of Kano and Regional Minister for Community Development, had resigned in 1953 to become District Head of Dawaki ta Tofa with the new title of Dan Amar.

Nonetheless, Imam's career as author and journalist inevitably dragged him into the public limelight, so much that it is inadequate to see him only as an author, much as he himself would have liked. Accordingly, the book under review has far more significance. It touches on issues of wider political and administrative significance in the history of Nigeria's evolution to nationhood. Imam's 1943 interview with Lord Lugard, the architect of indirect rule in Northern Nigeria (pp. 77-90), hitherto unpublished except for excerpts which appeared in the New Nigerian newspaper in 1979, is a major document for the study of political dissent in Northern Nigeria; a graphic and insider's account of how the practice of indirect rule through the agency of the emirs had stifled progress in the Northern Nigerian emirates. No less significant are the controversial, indeed acrimonious, exchanges between Imam and Dr Azikiwe over Imam's refusal to sign the 'freedom charter' drafted by Azikiwe, following their West African Press Delegation to the UK in 1943. What readers may find particularly interesting is that these documents, along with correspondence, both official and personal, have been reproduced verbatim. This makes the book a necessary reference work for scholars interested in Nigerian political history; a nostalgic reading for Imam's contemporaries; and a scintillating account for the general reader.

For those who are confused about Imam's ancestry (that is, whether he hailed from Borno, Sokoto, Kagara, Katsina or Zaria) this book has solved the mystery. 'If anybody asks you about my history and origin', Imam told his inquisitive grandson, Mohammad Saifuddin Mora, 'say that my family history is traceable in Borno, my origin is Sokoto, my birth place is Kagara, my town is Katsina and my place of residence is Zaria' (p. xiv).

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ALHAJI M. YAKUBU


This book consists of fourteen papers from a conference in Edinburgh in December 1988, together with the opening and closing speeches. The conference was attended by about 70 people of whom 20 were Batswana. It lasted only 30 hours and was clearly too short to do justice to the papers and participants, some of whom had travelled from Botswana and the USA to attend. Most of the papers were not available in advance and there was barely time to read them, even less to discuss the issues raised. In particular, the conference failed to explore the linkages between education, culture and politics in the way which was originally intended.

The book at least makes the papers available to a wider audience. As with any collection of this sort, the papers vary in length, in depth and in style. There is more