John N. Paden. *Muslim Civic Cultures and Conflict Resolution: The Challenge of Democratic Federalism in Nigeria.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005. xiii + 303 pp. Maps. Tables. Index. $32.95. Paper.

Muhammad S. Umar. *Islam and Colonialism: Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria to British Colonial Rule.* Leiden: Brill, 2006. xiv + 295 pp. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. $145.00. Cloth.

With the tumult unfolding in Iraq and Sudan, it is natural to see growing apprehension over Nigeria's prospects for stability, and in particular the possibility of growing Islamic radicalism there. One does not have to search long these days for a Web site such as "World Defense Review" telling us, in very authoritative tones, that "traditional syncretistic Islam" in West Africa is being swept aside by "militant Islamism." In this situation, we are in dire need of well-researched works on Islam in Nigeria that are rooted in long experience and careful analysis rather than ideological opportunism. Two new books take on this challenge. Muhammad Umar's *Islam and Colonialism* is a study of literary and intellectual expression in Northern Nigeria, and particularly the lands of the former Sokoto Caliphate, during the colonial period. John Paden's *Muslim Civic Cultures and Conflict Resolution* looks at the role of Islam in politics in the whole of the Nigerian federation since independence.

Umar investigates the response of the Northern Nigerian traditional ruling elite and Islamic scholars to the swift and sudden onslaught of British rule in 1903. He draws on a wide range of sources in Arabic, Hausa, and English, including poetry, narrative, Islamic religious commentary, and administrative documents, working to adapt his methods to these diverse sources. He provides detailed excerpts where suitable, careful consideration of translation problems, and insightful analysis.

For the leaders of the Sokoto Caliphate, the British conquest came as a shock. Its rulers were descendants of those who came to power with the Sokoto jihad led by 'Uthman Dan Fodio in the early nineteenth century. Deeply imbued with the rhetoric and doctrine of the jihad, their initial response, Umar shows, was one of proud defiance. Many of those in positions of power at the time of the conquest (1903) did resist, and when resistance failed, they undertook *hijra*, flight from the infidel. Yet there were other members of the elite, and of the same extended families as the resisters, who stood ready to work with the British.

Umar effectively demonstrates the literary, legal, and psychological strategies that they used to cope with this situation. *Taqiyya*, or dissimulation, is the Islamic term used to convey the outward acceptance of collaboration for the sake of survival. "Compartmentalization" is an English term conveying a somewhat different version of this, an approach in which one clearly separates the Islamic aspects of life from the Western ones to avoid contamination of the former. Umar shows that the British authorities were

especially wary of any transnational Islamic connections, and occasionally went into panic mode when they intercepted a letter from an Islamic leader in Morocco or Senegal, a pattern emulated by today's neoconservative commentators. Perhaps because his sources are so Nigeria-centered, Umar himself pays limited attention to the wider historical context, for instance the Saudi/Wahhabi takeover of Mecca in 1924. Looking at that wider context can help one understand the emergence of debates over questions such as funeral rituals which cropped up in the 1920s and '30s, not only in Nigeria but in other Muslim settings as well.

The study ends around 1945, in other words, at the time when all of the convenient compromises of indirect rule were in danger of unraveling as the emirates of Northern Nigeria began to awaken to the fact that, while the British had been kind enough to leave their structures in place, they had quietly made them part of a larger entity, Nigeria.

JOHN PADEN TAKES ON the task of explaining the role of Islam in that larger, very complex entity. He begins with independence in 1960; unfortunately, a reader of the two books will be left with a blank spot in the transitional era from the late 1940s to independence, an era when many key questions about the role of Islam within Nigeria began to emerge. Paden's book strikes a note similar, but not identical, to Umar's. He emphasizes the ability of Nigerians, and especially Muslim Nigerians, to find ways to negotiate their differences. The ruling classes, traditional and modern, are acutely aware of the importance of having *kofa*, or gates, intermediary persons through whom they might negotiate or at least stifle a dispute without its reaching a crisis point. This might be seen as an old Hausa tradition, summed up in the advice given by a pagan chief to Kano's ruler Sarki Shekkarau in about 1300: "If the dominions of the ruler are wide, he should be patient."

Paden brings to his book an experience with Nigerian politics dating back to the 1960s and a keen knowledge of personalities and localities. He is able to explain, for instance, the intricate ramifications of the dismissal of Sokoto Sultan Ibrahim Dasuki in 1996; or the way in which the lack of traditional roots in Kaduna, the administrative capital of the former northern region, established by the British, makes the city prone to conflict. Paden draws insightful comparisons between the roles played by Islam in the different settings of Sokoto, Bornu, and the Yoruba states.

Both books tend to suggest that Nigerians have a genius for compromise and for preventing conflicts from spinning out of control. Yet sometimes what seems like compromise can also be seen as simply an avoidance of issues. The question of the role of Islamic law in Nigeria can be seen as one such issue, and both Paden and Umar fail to elucidate fully how this has happened. Paden does explain quite well the politics of Shari'a, the way in which from 1999 on the issue was co-opted by state politicians in the north eager to enlist Muslim youth who might otherwise have been drawn

to the banner of a radical Islamist such as Ibrahim al-Zakzaky. The restoration of Islamic criminal law in northern states was seen as radical by many in the West, but as Zakzaky himself saw, it was really a convenient reinforcement of the status quo.

In the end, to understand clearly the question of Islamic law in Nigeria, it will be necessary to view it not simply from the perspective of politics, as Paden does, or the perspective of religious or administrative discourse, as Umar does. One needs to go to the grass roots of day-to-day judicial practice, a task made possible by British insistence on record keeping in the emirs' judicial councils and *alkalai*'s courts from as early as 1912. And one needs to investigate the key institutional question: why has it proven so difficult to establish a higher level Islamic judicial institution at the regional or national level? This is often portrayed as a "fundamentalist" project, yet it also could have the potential to contribute to such Western goals as separation of powers and to reform in such areas as age at marriage or real property rights.

One final note: in the present-day context we need to consider not simply issues of law but also issues of medicine. Paden confines discussion of HIV/AIDS to a footnote, and there does not seem to be any discussion in his book of the debates that raged over polio vaccination in Kano, a by-product of abuses in Western pharmaceutical companies' drug testing practices there. Umar, too, has little to say about medicine. Yet this is an integral part of the Western impact on Africa and the Islamic world, and it needs to be brought into the mainstream of discussions on Islam in Nigeria.

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