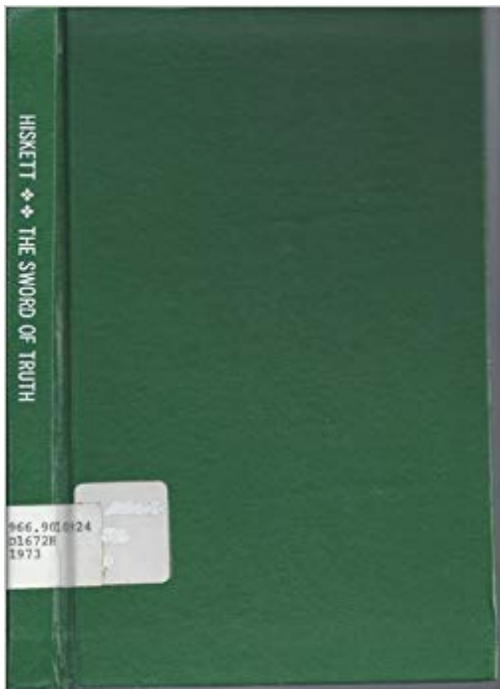


The Sword of Truth: The Life and Times of the Shehu Usman Dan Fodio *by* Mervyn Hiskett



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Reviews of the **The Sword of Truth: The Life and Times of the Shehu Usman Dan Fodio** *by* Mervyn Hiskett

Vudojar

Probably the only biography (or the only one worth reading) of Sheikh Usuman Dan Fodio.

The Sheikh was the leader of an Islamic movement in West Africa amongst the Hausa and Fulani people. He was an Islamic scholar who led a movement that spread from lake Chad almost to the coasts of West Africa down to the gold coast. The Sheikh was a Sufi who followed the Qadari Sufi order but was also initiated into the Shadhili and probably the Naqshbandi orders as well (It is documented that while he studied in Egypt he would have come into contact with Khalidi Naqshbandis there)

Contrary to Saudi propaganda he was not a Wahabbi or 'Salafi' but rather a Sufi. All his works make this perfectly clear as do his students, biography this one included. He was a well educated man and his movement brought schools and literature wherever it went. Hiskett clearly writes a biography of the man from his early life to adulthood. His teachers and opponents. Hiskett tells us about his travels and his return to his homeland and the beginnings of his Jihad against his opponents.

Usuman Dan Fodio was part of a greater movement at the time in the Islamic world that saw a revival of Sufi Islamic thought. Others were Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jazairi, Sheikh Sanusi, Khalid al-Baghdadi and the Khalidi order and Sheikh Umar Tal and the Tijani order.

This is an excellent well put together book highly recommended for anyone wishing to know more about West African history or Islamic history.

Deodorant for your language

As a previous reviewer pointed out this is a now out of print book and most copies are now being sold for silly money (it is doubtful it will ever be reprinted any time soon) But if you can get your hands on a cheap copy it is well worth reading.

Mr Hiskett rightly puts both Sheikh Usuman dan Fodio and the Sokoto Caliphate within the framework of the Islamic world no different than the Middle East. The book includes an excellent introduction to the society of Northern Nigeria and the Hausa/Fulani people before covering the teachings and the jihad of Usuman Dan Fodio. He rightly points out that though the Sheikh may have been sympathetic to the Wahabbi movement in Arabia (many reformist Sheikhs were such as the Sanusi) he was in no way a Wahabbi but a Maliki Sufi Sheikh. The book concludes with a study of Northern Nigeria beyond the Sheikh up to British rule and up to our present day.

Excellent book well worth tracking down.

MegaStar

Usuman dan Fodio was a Fulani cleric from Northern Nigeria. His 1804-08 reformist movement created the Sokoto Caliphate, the largest precolonial African state. Hiskett's study is one of the best on an African historical figure before 1900: solidly researched, readable and manageable in length, it was a reliable teaching tool for three decades. "Sword of Truth" has been in, out, in and (currently) out of print, but hopefully another paperback edition will appear; the 1994 version includes a helpful updated preface. (It's worth holding out till more affordable copies are on offer.) One of its major achievements is to make a Muslim political-religious leader accessible and comprehensible to Western readers, while placing him in proper historical and social context. Usuman is still admired by many Nigerians, especially among the Hausa and Fulani; witness the ongoing 200th-anniversary celebrations of the Caliphate's founding. D. Robinson & D. Smith, "Sources of the African Past" reproduces key primary sources on the jihad of Usuman. M.F. Smith, "Baba of Karo" is a most appealing life history of a Muslim Hausa woman from c.1877-1951. T. Falola, "Violence in Nigeria" paints a darker picture of that country's recent struggles with religious pluralism.

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