

Yoruba Muslims and Ethno-Religious Chauvinism in Sokoto Metropolis: Implications for National Integration

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Abstract

The Yoruba Muslims are one of the dominant people and earlier settlers in Northern Nigeria since antiquity. The people have played, and still playing tremendous role in the propagation of Islam wherever they settle in the host community. They enjoy the vantage of the monolithic Islam in Sokoto metropolis, a factor which culminated into expression of Islam concomitantly with Yoruba culture. This in consequence resulted into excruciation of Yoruba Muslims in the study area, fundamentally for not allowing Islam to play superseding roles. By implications, it led to improvisation of new ideas and ideologies making it extremely subtle and complex for some of them to absolutely divorce ancestral beliefs from Islam as ordained in the Glorious Qu'ran and Hadith. It should be noted that systematic manipulation of Islam manifested in the 1970s by some Yoruba Muslims in the host community, and thus proliferated vision for separate Yoruba mosques, Islamic societies, distinct Islamic social gathering among others. This was also a response to Christian evangelism which has become percolated among the Yoruba in the southwest of Nigeria and gradually spreading its ideologies to the north. To achieve national integration in Nigeria, the paper provides some recommendations for didactic comprehension of the basic tenet of Islam; absolute embracement of Yoruba Muslims by the Hausa host; de-emphasising of ethno-religious cleavages, dichotomies and others. The methodology adopted for the study is the synthesis of primary and secondary sources as to validate the reliability of data.

Keywords: *Yoruba, Muslim, Implication, National, Integration, Sokoto, Metropolis.*

Introduction

The paper explores a chequered history of Yoruba Muslims ethno-religious chauvinism in Sokoto metropolis and implications. The Yoruba estimated to be about 28 million people according to the 2006 population census unquestionably constitute one of the major Nigeria

ethnic nationalities among whom Islam receives wide acceptance.¹ Islam is a comprehensive code of life revealed by the All-Merciful Creator for the guidance and betterment of humanity in this world and the hereafter. No aspect of life is bereft of proper guidance from the religion. Likewise, the religion has laid down a straight path for its adherents to follow in all spheres of their lives, and serve as the fibre of life within the Islamic context.² Therefore, any anachronism is tantamount to syncretism. However, Islam is a complete way of life that caters for both spiritual and temporal well-being of man who is created by Allah for a purpose as stated in the Glorious Qur'an: "*And I (Allah) created not the Jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me (Alone).*"³ In another verse of the Glorious Qur'an, He says: *O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslim (in submission to Him).*⁴ In a similar vein, Allah says: *If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to God) never will it be accepted of Him...*⁵

In this connection, empirical evidence illustrated that the Yoruba Muslims, since antiquity have been deeply embroiled in cultural activities. They have been integrated it into practice, and interpretation of some aspect of Islamic practices even when they arrive in Sokoto metropolis. A ubiquitous phenomenon that permeates among them is that most of the syncretic practices integrate to Islam were incurred from excessive patriotism. This arises from profound cultural belief culminating in multiple interpretation of some ideas of some Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions antithetical to the teaching of Islam. These ideas and ideologies became sturdy and deeply enshrined in Yoruba Islamic practices in such a way that it allows the finding of solutions to problems through other faiths (Christianity and indigenous religions). According to Opeloye,⁶ a typical Yoruba Western educated Muslim has multiple identities by been traditional Yoruba, Islamic and Western. This is related to what Mazrui refers to as the "Triple Heritage" in his famous television documentary on "The Africans." These multiple identities are bound to result in the problem of cultural identity. In the word of Mohammad, Islam became the ideological point which enable Muslims to make

¹ Federal Republic of Nigeria official Gazette, Abuja 2nd February, 2009, No. 2, Vol. 96. See also M.O Opeloye (2011), "The Yoruba Muslims' Cultural Identity Question," in *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies (IJORELS)*, Vol.1, No.2, p.1.

² M.A Akanni (2015), "The Activities of Yoruba Muslim Communities in the Development of Islam in the North-Western Nigeria: A Study of Kano, Kaduna and Sokoto States, 1980-2013," Ph.D Thesis, Department of Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, p.1.

³ A.A Yusuf (1975), *The Glorious Qur'an Text, Translation and Contemporary*, United Kingdom, pp. 51-56.

⁴ Qur'an 3: 102.

⁵ Qur'an 5: 103.

⁶ M. Opeloye (2011), "The Yoruba Muslims' Cultural Identity Question," in *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, (IJORELS)*, Vol.1 No. 2, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, pp.1-20.

sense of the world in which they live.⁷ It could be observed according to Gbadamosi that, the foundation of Yoruba Islamic institutions and associations was, and indicative of the way Islam had taken root in Yorubaland. It is germane to construe that Yoruba enculturation into Islam practices were responses to Euro-Christian evangelism which has become percolated among the Yoruba in the Southwest and gradually spreading its ideologies to Northern Nigeria.⁸ It is in this perspective that by 1970s, the manipulation of religion as opined by Usman⁹ became pervasive and proliferated, cropping in with all vagaries practices ranging from different doctrinal ideas and ideologies.¹⁰

By implication, the nature of their insipid behaviour which characterises this phenomenon undermined the orthodox way of Islamic practice which tend to create the scenario for radical critique from the host *Salaf* or *Izala* Muslim community. It is as well furthering the creation of sordid image for the practice of Islam and cleavages for other faith from the propension ensconced by some Yoruba Muslim ethno-religious chauvinistic behaviour. These developments made many a Yoruba Muslim to face myriads of implications and challenges leading to unleashing of nauseating sermons and preaching among Muslims adherent in the host community. However, Muhammad avers, henceforth, “any accretion after the initial pristine years of *Sala* for the first three generations of Islam was considered *Bidi'a*, this mean blameworthy innovation which must be eradicated once and for all.”¹¹ The foregoing assertion however suggests the unworthy character precipitated by the ever growing influence of Yoruba Muslim clerics to establish their sway among their followership which is repugnant to Qur’anic laws. The questions that arise are: Is the Yoruba Muslim one whose practice of Islam separates him from Yoruba cultural practices, or is he whose Islam accommodates elements of indigenous tradition? In other words, what way of life distinctively defines a Yoruba Muslim?

However, it should be noted that the precision for x-raying Yoruba Muslims lies in its accelerating rate, crestfallen and vilification injected in Islamic practices in Sokoto metropolis.

⁷ G. B Mohammad (2009), “Religion, Politics and the Nigerian State: Reflections on the Experience of the North-West Zone,” in O.A Olutayo, I.S Ogundiyi and J. Amzat, *State and Civil Society Relations in Nigeria*, Hope Publication Ltd, Ibadan, Nigeria, p. 149. See also Y. B Usman (1987), *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria, 1977-1987*, Vanguard Printer and Publishers, Kaduna.

⁸ T.G.O Gbadamosi (1978), *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, Longman Group Limited, London, p.92.

⁹ Y. B Usman (1987), *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria, 1977-1987*, Vanguard Printer and Publishers, Kaduna.

¹⁰ Oral interview with Chief Imam, Alhaji Raheem of Yoruba Mosque, Anwar Islamic Society of Nigeria, ShagonGoro area, Sokoto, 12/10/2017.

¹¹ *Op.cit.*...G.B Mohammad (2009), “Religion, Politics and the Nigerian State: Reflections on the Experience of the North-West Zone,” in O. A Olutayo, I. S Ogundiyi and J. Amzat, *State and Civil Society Relations in Nigeria*, Hope Publication Ltd, Ibadan, Nigeria, p. 148.

Conceptual Exploration

Having explicated on the background, this conceptual exploration examines some of the key words in the subject matter. The fundamental responsibility of a Muslim is to believe in the unity of Allah (Tawhid), His Angels, Prophets, Books, The Day of Judgment and Allah's control over destiny. A Muslim is someone who submits his life to Almighty Allah. He is the one who surrenders and commits himself to the will of Allah and reconciles with one another towards peace making.¹² Allah (SWT) says: "*O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims (in submission to Him).*"¹³

It should be noted that the aim of man's life is to accept the laws which Almighty Allah has created and to follow the code of conduct which He taught. This constitutes total surrender to Him as He is the "Lord of all being."¹⁴ However, the most important thing to a Muslim in Islam is *Taqwa* (fear of Allah) which means piety or fear of God in day-to-day activities. The Glorious Quran describes a person who is conscious of God as one who sincerely practices Islam both outwardly and inwardly. *Taqwa* would obviously improve the attitude and behaviour of the person who possesses it. He is firm, generous and kind to family and relatives and to beings. The Glorious Qur'an testifies to this in *Surah al-Hujrat*: "*The best among you in the eyes of Allah are those who are stronger in Taqwa (fear of Allah).*"¹⁵

In all perspectives, a Muslim is someone who professes the basic articles of Islamic faith such as observation of the pillars of Islam and whose code of life is wholly governed by the *Shari'ah*.¹⁶ Allah says: "*Muslims are those who We establish them in the land, establish regular prayer and give regular charity, enjoin the right and forbid wrong, with God rests the end (And decision) of (all) affairs.*"¹⁷

According to Merriam Webster's, the term 'ethno' is conceptualises as a race, people or cultural people,¹⁸ which akin to culture. In this connection, culture is the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behaviour that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. It is also the customary beliefs, social

¹² *Op.cit.*...M.A Akanni (2015),...p.136.

¹³ K. Ahmad (1977), *Islam its Meaning and Message*, Islamic Publications Bureau, Lagos.

¹⁴ Qur'an: 3:102.

¹⁵ Qur'an, 49:13.

¹⁶ I.A Doi (1994), *Shari'ah the Islamic Law*, Taha Publication, London, p.114.

¹⁷ Qur'an, 22:41.

¹⁸ Merriam Webster (2006), *Collegiate Dictionary*, Eleventh Edition, Springfield, Massachusetts, U.S.A, p. 429.

norms and material traits of a racial, religious or social group.¹⁹ According to Patrick, culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law morals, customs and all other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.²⁰ Linton sees culture of a society as the way of life of its members, the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation.²¹

Since culture and religion are inseparable and are essential factor in human society, in this regard, the term 'religion' is the service and worship of God or the supernatural or commitments or devotion to religious faith of observance.²² As it relates to Yoruba ethno-religion chauvinism, this could be expressed as personal set or institutionalised system of religious attitude, belief and practices embroiled by people's culture playing superseding role. This often deal with excessive exaltation or deference of dictates of religion in which to some extent contradicts Allah's laws.

The term metropolis could be expressed as a large population centre and its adjacent communities, with which it has a high degree of economic and social integration. It is also known as an urban agglomeration. Such a region typically has a large city as the hub that extends its sphere of influence into the surrounding communities. These communities may not be urban in character but are linked closely with that through transportation (roads and public transit), employment (commuters), media (city newspapers, and radio and TV stations) and leisure activities (clubbing, dinning, entertainment and professional sport).²³ Within a metropolitan society, integration remains the major fulcrum of association. According to Sambo,²⁴ integration is the outcome of immigrant' action. Integration is the stability of relations among parts within a system-like whole, the borders of which clearly separate it from its environment. It can also be referred to as stable, cooperative relations within a clearly social system, and of introducing new actors and groups into the system and its

¹⁹*Ibid...*

²⁰A. E. Patrick (2003), "Basic Concepts in Culture," in P. Ade Dopamuet *al* (eds), *African Culture, Modern Science and Religious Thought*, citing from Tylor E.B., *Primitive Culture*, Nigeria Association for the Study of Religions, Ilorin, University of Ilorin, p. 193.

²¹*Ibid...*

²²*Op.cit...* Merriam Webster's (2006), *Collegiate Dictionary*,...p.1051-1052.

²³ B. Oladokun (2015), "Urbanization and Industrialization in Nigeria: A Case Study of Kaduna Metropolis, 1957-2007," M.A History Dissertation, Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, p.98.

²⁴ Z.S Sambo (2015), "Security and Integration: The Case of Ilorin Emirate in the Pre-Colonial Period," in *Degel; Journal of the Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies*, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Vol. 11, ISSN 0794-9316, p. 31.

institutions.²⁵Immigrants' actions depend upon their capacities for learning and acquiring new competences; the host society, however, must also learn how to relate to its new members.²⁶

Emergence of the Yoruba Muslims in Sokoto Metropolis

The emergence of Yoruba Muslims in Sokoto could be premised on three important factors which include the search for sustainable peace, religion and economic advantages.

The search for sustainable peace and harmonious relationship was firstly experience through the receptive response of the Hausa host in Sokoto to the Yoruba migrants. This was highly hospitable and accommodative as it enhanced the degree of relationship leading to economic interaction and integration of Yoruba Muslims in the study area. In the search for peace, the Islamic relationship which permeates among the Hausa and Yoruba Muslims was a factor responsible for high level of interaction leading to an elaborate amusement which includes eating, drinking and others. It has led to chatting particularly during the month of Ramadan and other Islamic festivities. Due to the accommodative and receptive nature of the Hausa hosts, in consequence, there evolved inter-ethnic marriages vis-à-vis, between the ethnic groups. This relationship increased the degree of protection, security and peaceful relations that thus consolidated their economic cum political interactions which lingers up till date.

It is based on the peaceful nature of the metropolis that the Yoruba migrants established their settlement concomitantly with the 1930s which includes Ahmadu Bello area along Jegawa, Kalfu area, Shagon-Goro area, Marafa Danbaba area, Aliyu Jodi area and others.²⁷ Hajia Risikat Mohammed extolls that the settlement of Sabon-Gari Sokoto was established in the mid-1930s and a large proportion of its population were in fact Yoruba Muslims.²⁸ There were large concentration of Yoruba Muslims business men who engaged in bread baking and other businesses; these included Alhaji Salawudeen Arikewuyo in Aliyu Jodi, Late Alhaji Kajola, Alhaji Owodunni and other non-Yoruba Muslim in the state. They established themselves in Sokoto metropolis because they see Hausa Muslim as their blood brothers irrespective of their

²⁵ W. Boswack and F. Heckman (2006), "Integration of Migrants: Contributions of Local and Regional Authorities, being a Report work of European Foundation for the Improvement of Living Conditions, Dublin, p. 11.

²⁶*Ibid...*

²⁷*Ibid...*

²⁸*Ibid...*

origins and creeds.²⁹ This was also spurred by the prevalent of Islamic monolithic religion of Northern Nigeria which some Yoruba have already accepted right from their homes.

On economic perspective, the migration of Yoruba to Sokoto could be dated back to the 19th century,³⁰ when the Sokoto Caliphate possessed an extensive and powerful inter related economic activities. These economic activities were of great benefit to the Yoruba since the time of Alimi of Ilorin 1817,³¹ -the grandson of Muhammadu Zubairu Janata.³² However, the symbiotic relation between the Yoruba people and Sokoto people transcended mere economy or political influence, but was also enhanced by religious development which impact still remains up till today. Prior to the 1804 reformist movement, Ilorin as part of Yorubaland became the base for successive military operations because of its involvement in the war of expansion which influenced from the use of horse acquired from Hausaland.³³ This military might was enhanced through the erstwhile political economy of trans-Sahara trade which old Oyo Empire had involved. This in effect included the spread of Islamic religion, ethics and culture, Arabic language and others.³⁴ It is essential to note that another integrating factor between the Yoruba and Hausa people was the political economy of the states, especially slave trade, export and import of horses, cowries and firearms. For instance, Falola portends that, the old Oyo Empire (where large proportion of the Yoruba migrated) formed part of a much bigger socio-economic and political entity in Western Sudan. Oyo produced marketable commodities and benefitted from a complex flourishing import and export trade.³⁵

In addition to economic realities, in the 19th century, the establishment of multinational companies in northern Nigeria attracted quite a number of Yoruba migrants. The extension of multinational companies like G.B.Olivant (GBO), Petterson and Zochonis (PZ) and Compagnie France la' Africa Occidentale (CFAO) located at Abdullahi Fodio in Kantin Daji area Sokoto attracted the employment of Yoruba Muslims who combined their Islamic activities with the job they secured. More significantly was the creation of North Western states in Nigeria by the administration of General Yakubu Gowon in 1967. This stride

²⁹ Oral interview with Idrisu Ayinla, 54 years, Civil Servant, Aliyu Jodi, Sokoto, 15th April, 2017.

³⁰ R.J. Gavin, "The Impact of Colonial Rule on the Ilorin Economy, 1879-1930," in Centre Point, *University of Ilorin Journal*, Vol. 1, 1977, p. 20.

³¹ *Ibid.*...

³² L.A.K Jimoh (1994), *Ilorin: The Journey So Far*, Atoto Press, Ilorin, Nigeria.

³³ *Ibid.*...

³⁴ J.S Trimmingham (1962), *A History of West Africa*, Oxford University Press, London.

³⁵ T. Falola (1991), "The Yoruba Caravan System of the 19th Century," in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol, 24, No.1, p. 115.

stimulated many Yoruba Muslims to migrate and worked in the bureaucracy of Sokoto³⁶ as teachers, clerks, medical doctors and a host of others. By the late 19th and 20th centuries, Yoruba Muslims have already established themselves in every nooks and crannies of Sokoto and interact easily with the Hausa host and other members of the society.³⁷

In the search for knowledge, Yoruba Muslims are one of the dominant people and earlier settlers in Northern Nigeria since antiquity. After the Jihad, some Muslim scholars who participated for the reformist movement subsequently settled in Ilorin for the continuation of their desired aspiration in the propagation of Islam. This factor however made Ilorin an important centre of Islamic learning in the Yorubaland. Since then, Yoruba Muslims have not relented on their oars and quest for more Islamic knowledge through migration to Sokoto, a place epithet as “a centre of Islamic learning.”³⁸ It is a salient fact that most of these earliest Yoruba Muslims settled in Sokoto because of the monolithic nature of Islam and the religious importance of their spiritual existence. In line with the pronouncement of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) that we should search for knowledge as far as China.³⁹ The Yoruba Muslims did not relent in their efforts for constant search of knowledge. In this connection, many Yoruba migrated basically to Sokoto in search of Islamic knowledge with also the opportunity to acquire free Western education introduced by the government. Although Olaniyi opines that many Yoruba Muslims migrated to Hausaland because they are better viewed by their kinships than those that remained at home.⁴⁰ This reason and many others spurred Yoruba Muslims migration to Hausaland.

Above all, according to Eades,⁴¹ kinship plays an important part in channelling migration, as people move to join their relatives in other towns to find jobs. However, beyond the colonial institutions, for most Yoruba in Northern Nigeria, migration occurred within the kinship and social networks. Yoruba developed diaspora communities through migration of kinship linkages from the same town and family compounds. Successful “pioneer” migrants

³⁶ Oral interview with Alhaji Sakirudeen Olapade, 56 years, Contractor, at Bodinga Town on 14th September, 2017.

³⁷ Oral interview with Malam Salisu Bashir, 45 years, Trader, Aliyu Jodi, Sokoto, on 13th September, 2017. See also Olaniyi R. “From Citizen to Stranger: British Rule and the Transformation of Yoruba Migrants Identity in Kano C. 1913-1953”, *Inter-group Relations in Nigeria During the 19th Centuries*, Aboki publishers, 2006.

³⁸ Usman Y.B (1980), *Studies in the History of Sokoto Caliphate*, Sokoto. See also Ahmad Kani (1984), *The Intellectual Origin of Sokoto Jihad in Nigeria*, Iman Publication, Iwo Road, Ibadan.

³⁹ A. A. Al-Baihaqy (1410 AH), *Shu'ab al-Iman, Dar al-Kubub al-Ilmiyyah*, Beirut Lebanon, Vol. II, p. 253.

⁴⁰ R. O Olaniyi (2006), “Approaching the Study of Yoruba Diaspora in Northern Nigeria in the 20th century,” in *IFRA Special Research Issue*, Nigeria, pp. 67-89.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*...J. S Eades (1979), “Kinship and Entrepreneurship among Yoruba in Northern Ghana,” in W.A. Shack and E.P. Skinner, (eds.), *Strangers in African Societies*,...pp.169-182.

encouraged others to follow, and supportive social mechanisms emerged to connect places of origin and diaspora. As a result of time and changes, some of these people which includes numerous *Alfas* remained in Sokoto while others have left on invitation to their ancestral home to perform Islamic functions, while many are dead. Among those that are still residing in Sokoto include *Alfas* Abdul Yakeen Alao, Abdul Azeez Alani, Abideen Olaolu, Sakirudeen Balogun, Abdulganiyu Badamasi, Taofik Abdulazeez, Waliyyi Muhammed, Rashid Owolabi, Shina Abdulwahab, Lamidi Abdulsalam Oriare, Sheikh Musodiq and others who graduated from different Islamic scholars of both formal and traditional institutions. It should be noted that quite a number of these people arrived Sokoto between 1960s and 1970s.⁴²

It should be noted that as a result of gradual development in the level of interaction between the Yoruba Muslims and their Hausa host, in 1948, the Yoruba Muslims attempted the building of what is now the Yoruba Muslim Mosque known as *Ansar-ud-deen* Central mosque located at Ahmadu Bello way. This singular action was responsible for the emergence of Islamic schools, other Yoruba Juma'a Mosque as well as series of Muslim associations and societies in the study area.⁴³

Factors for Yoruba Muslims Ethno-Religious Chauvinism

The Yoruba had their earliest contact with Islam through the itinerant Arab Muslim scholars who visited the Yoruba country in the 15th century. However, dominant Islamic influence was not recorded until the Hausa-Fulani penetrated the region from the second half of the 18th century.⁴⁴The adoption of Islam, for some Yoruba as early as 14th century, constituted the acquisition of an additional way of life, while for others it was an alternative religion.⁴⁵In acknowledgement of Maroney⁴⁶ assertion that syncretism is simply borrowing. He further asserts that syncretism occurs when one religion adopts, absorbs or otherwise accepts element of another religion. Against the above backdrop, the following are the internal and external factors responsible for syncretistic practices arising from Yoruba Muslims ethno-religious chauvinism in the study area:

⁴² Oral interview with Alhaji M.T. Lawal, 59 years, Civil Servant, Sahara Area, Sokoto, 2nd February, 2017.

⁴³ Oral interview with Imam Moshood Tijani, 53 years, Imam, Ahmadu Bello Way, Sokoto, 22nd April, 2017.

⁴⁴ *Op.cit.*...T.G.O Gbadamosi (1978),...p.76.

⁴⁵ *Op.cit.*...M.O Opeleye....

⁴⁶ E. Maroney (2006), *Religion Syncretism*, London SCM Press, p. 6. See also M. Eliade (ed) (1987), *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, Vol. 14, New York: Macmillan, p. 220.

Mis-Interpretation of the Quranic Verses and Prophetic Traditions: This is a common phenomenon among Muslims, and has for several times led to doctrinal differences and syncretic practices. Syncretism is the combination of different forms of belief or practice. People tend to be syncretic when they combine the tenets as well as partake in the worship of more than one religion concurrently.⁴⁷ As it relates to this study, the concept therefore amounts to mixture of two or more religions or the introduction of new ideological belief. Among the Yoruba, the practice takes different forms. For some, especially the earliest Yoruba Muslims, the tendency was to simply add Islam to the indigenous religion thereby becoming loyalists to the two faiths. For example, such people see nothing wrong in being *Sango* (god of thunder) or *Oya* (river) worshippers and at the same time being practising Muslims. For others, the commitment is to one religion with a partial inclination and participation in certain aspects of another. Yet, another form is when one claims to be a Muslim but patronises witch doctors or use fetish, magic, charms and divination at the time of personal crisis. This attitude finds expression in the Yoruba saying “*bótiwuni lààsèmòle ẹni*”, meaning: one practices one’s Islam as one likes.” The saying is corroborated by the song which reads:

A ó soròiléwa ò a ó soròiléwa ò,

Ìmàlekòpékáwamásorò,

*A ó soròiléwa ò*⁴⁸

Meaning: We shall perform our traditional rites;

Islam does not debar us from performing our traditional rites;

We shall perform our traditional rites.

From the song above, some Yoruba Muslims in Sokoto metropolis transferred these insipid ideas, imbibed and adopted similar syncretic practices to befuddle their followers and children. However, this practice in the context of this study could easily be attributable to inadequate comprehension of the language of Islamic liturgy. This factor aided syncretism as much as it encouraged later conversion of some Muslims to Christianity. With the accelerating propension in the activities, there was the partial translation of the Qur’an into Yoruba, and

⁴⁷*Ibid*

⁴⁸ M. A Balogun (2011), “Syncretic Relief and Practices Among Muslims in Lagos State Nigeria: With Special Reference to the Yoruba Speaking People of Epe,” Ph.D Thesis, Department of Religion and Theology, University of Birmingham, pp. 31-32.

more significantly in recent time was the approach of *Nasrullahi-l-Fatih* (NASFAT) to Islamic propagation.⁴⁹

It should be noted that the attitude of Islam to non-Islamic culture is that of accommodation and rejection. Islam accommodates the good aspect of autochthonal culture which are compatible with Islamic tenets and as well rejects it, if it undermines the true belief system of Islam. In this perspective of Islam, there is a school of thought among some Yoruba Muslims, this is the view that, acceptance of Islam should not precipitate a breakaway with the past; rather, it should be an addition to the former religion.⁵⁰ According to this view, it would not matter if a Yoruba Muslim shows interest in religio-cultural festivals by joining the crowd at least and by partaking in the rituals at best.⁵¹ This view is not plausible as it amounts to giving tacit approval to syncretism which has no basis in Islam. On the other extreme, there is the view that reduces Islam to a fixed culture which does not give room to local cultural norms.⁵² This view fails to realise that the strength of Islam has been its ability to fuse with the cultural values of its converts. Even though neither of these views represents the true teaching of Islam, the religion as practised by different age grades in the present-day Yoruba society reflects these diametrically opposed views in different degrees. On this note, it is important to construe that Yoruba indigenous cultural values continue to be eroded faster especially among the youths. This is largely traceable to Euro-Christian influence.

Euro-Christian Belief and Influence: With the advent of Christianity in the early 19th century, Western education was introduced to the Yoruba. The association of Christianity with this Western education caused it to be viewed with a lot of suspicion. The Muslims who eventually imbibed Western education imbibed with it the Western culture.⁵³ The British imperialists who brought Christianity to Yorubaland introduced more of the Western cultural values to the people than Christian values. They contemptuously undermined the capacity of indigenous cultural values which they regarded as incompatible with Christian values. Consequently, as a result of time and vicissitude of change, Yoruba Christians and Muslims

⁴⁹ Personal observation of the researcher during the fieldwork.

⁵⁰ T. Oyelade (2003), "Yoruba Muslims and Cultural Accommodation," in P. Ade Dopamuet *al* (eds.) *Religion, Science and Culture*, Nigeria Association for the Study of Religions, Ilorin, p. 197.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*...

⁵² Y. A. Quadri (2003), "The Yoruba Muslim of Nigeria and the Problem of Cultural Identity," in Ade Dopamuet *al* (eds), *Religion, Science and Culture*, Nigeria Association for the Study of Religions, Ilorin, p. 241.

⁵³ *Op.cit.*...M. Opeloye (2011), "The Yoruba Muslims' Cultural Identity Question," in *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*,...

became more Europeanised than being African.⁵⁴ With the rise in awareness for cultural revival, Yoruba Muslims in Sokoto metropolis began to identify with, and attach more importance to Islamic cultural values as to help to revive the indigenous values in view of their close affinity. It should be noted that because of the pervasiveness of Christianity in Yorubaland, it becomes a very simple phenomenon to find Christian adherents within some family consanguinity relation. This development, overtime has made it inevitable for some Yoruba Muslims in the host communities to establish sturdy divisiveness identity and dichotomy. This overwhelming relations and embracement of Christian tenets concomitantly with Islam created the propensity for religious interactions vis-a-vis participation in Christian activities. It is of significance that the whole matter of religion from Islamic point of view is to enhance the very quality of human life. It is in this connection that Islam maintains a balance that enjoins man to seek for the goodness of this world and hereafter concurrently.⁵⁵

Islamic Leadership Conflict Superiority: According to Ibrahim,⁵⁶ it is pointed out that the level of religiosity is very high and that consequently, religious belief, practice and passion are increasing in intensity. Against this backdrop, the Yoruba, in Northern Nigeria developed its own political organisation influenced by historical specificity and social forces operating in the host communities.⁵⁷ One of the fundamental leadership problem is the excessive belief and exaltation of *Sheikh* or *Shehu* without strict adherence to Islamic precepts by the followership. This syndrome had generated a lot of conflict and squabbles through carnal desire. Among the Yoruba Muslims in Sokoto Metropolis, the Islamic oriented background of different groups or scholars either to *Sufi* or *Salaf* leadership idiosyncrasy implicate and predicate on past and current religious chauvinism. The inclinations to distinct Islamic views and ideologies created the framework for identity in which individual *Alfa* or groups profess the superiority complex to the other. Evidences abound from informants illustrated absolute and excessive allegiance of followership to their *Alfas* and Islamic leaders which in consequence creates *master-serf* relations using the credulity of the followership.⁵⁸ These ideological differences and distinctiveness in belief system substantially impinged and inhibited the practice of Islam

⁵⁴A. B Fafunwa (1980), *History of Education in Nigeria*, George Allen and Unwin, London, pp. 71-7.

⁵⁵ U. M Adamu (2001), *Shari'ah: Between Acceptance and Rejection*, Tumos Printers and Co. Ltd, Ibadan, Oyo State.

⁵⁶ Ibrahim J (2000), "Religion, Secularism and Democratisation in Nigeria," Final Draft, Paper for International IDEA Democratic Assessment, Project, p. 556.

⁵⁷*Ibid...*

⁵⁸ Oral interview with Alhaji Raheem the chief Imam of Yoruba Muslims as well as Imam of Anwar-ul-Islam Mosque, ShagonGoro area of Sokoto, (age not declared) 12/10/2017. The chief Imam has been in Sokoto for more than five decades. He was a retired staff of Rima Basin, Sokoto State.

from its orthodox system. The religious manipulation allows other religious faith (Christian and traditional faiths) to interfere in Islamic religious affairs through disposition of cleavages supplanted by lack of unity of purpose from the Muslims. This attitude according to Adamu⁵⁹ to religion of Islam is totally misleading and highly irrational. He added that if religion seeks to play a role in man's efforts and his choice of direction, it is because of the unbridled indulgence in desires, unconditional surrender to instinct and appetite and obedience to the commands the ego. This darkens man's life and propels him into a form of unconscious slavery and worship of his own self to his detriment.⁶⁰

As far as the syncretists' leadership styles are concerned in relation to Yoruba Muslims in Sokoto metropolis, it is a similitude of what Opeloye⁶¹ described as "all ways lead to God." This philosophy by implication means one of two things: either that one religion is not enough for salvation, or that no religion has the monopoly of salvation. These dogmas have not been supported by the world monotheistic religions in view of the principle of exclusivism enshrined in them.⁶² Rather than seeing syncretism as a laudable practical effort at enhancing religious interaction, tolerance, understanding and cooperation, it is more of an act of indecision leading to confusion and conflict in cultural identity formation.

Identifying with Excessive Socio-cultural Ethos: From the prehistoric times, religion has always been part of the texture of human society, neither in the past nor in the present is it possible to find a society in which religious issues have not been raised.⁶³ According to Olaniyi,⁶⁴ very often, the Yoruba diaspora communities construct identities that distinguished them from their host communities. This identity could be expressed in terms of settlement patterns, social, religious, political and economic institutions. In this way, the Yoruba in diaspora ensures that their culture survived, transformed and remained relevant even when members of the diaspora have not lived in their original homeland.

It is disheartening to note that tribal sentiments have been given such religious colouration that rarely would a Hausa Muslim condescend to pray behind a Yoruba Imam. In his study of the reasons for the North's discrimination against the Yoruba with reference to Islamic

⁵⁹*Op.cit.*...U. M Adamu (2001), *Shari'ah: Between Acceptance and Rejection*, Tumos Printers and Co. Ltd, Ibadan, Oyo State, p. 5.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*...

⁶¹*Op.cit.*...M. Opeloye (2011), "The Yoruba Muslims' Cultural Identity Question," in *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*,...p.10.

⁶²*Ibid.*...

⁶³*Op.cit.*...U. M Adamu (2001), *Shari'ah: Between Acceptance*....p.3.

⁶⁴*Op.cit.*...R. O Olaniyi (2006),...

leadership, AbdulFattah⁶⁵ identified some contributory factors which include the Yoruba Muslims' acts of syncretism, their involvement in Christian and atheist ceremonial rites, their un-Islamic marriage contracts, especially courtship for a long period, their congregational supplications after *Salat* and their predetermination of dates for Islamic festivals and celebrations, among others. However, against some immoral and inequality practices inherent from religious dogma among some Yoruba Muslims, disunity and discord have manifested among Nigerian Muslims between the Northern and Southern Muslims.

Belief and Sturdy Approaches for Traditional Medical Therapy: Some Yoruba Muslims develop strong avidity in search of solace in traditional medicine whenever crises arise in their ancestral home and beyond. To understand the Yoruba approach to medicine and healing, one has to understand the etiology which has to do largely with the people's worldview. The people's worldview places human beings right in the centre of known and unknown. The enemies could be internal (i.e., from members of the family) or external (i.e., comprising spirits, witches, sorcerers). For example, diseases like small pox, chicken pox and ailments which defy diagnosis are believed to be inflicted by enemies. So also, are mysterious experiences such as food poison in dreams, compulsive profligacy (*agbaana*) and sale-repelling stigma (*okuta*). According to Babalola,⁶⁶ ailments among the Yorubas are classified into three, viz: natural ailments, natural-turned mystical ailments and mystical ailments. In the traditional Yoruba setting, when an ailment is diagnosed to be mystical, divination is the principal method used to get at the root of the problem. Divination is the art or practice that seeks to foresee or foretell future events or discover hidden knowledge usually by the interpretation of the omens or by the aid of supernatural power.⁶⁷In this perspective, the diviner has the power to receive information from the spirit world for the benefit of clients.

Nevertheless, there are other methods of healing used by Yoruba Muslim clerics which are not averse or repugnant to Islam. These consist mainly in the use of the Qur'an. Sometimes, it is

⁶⁵ O. AbduFattah (2010), "Unity and Brotherhood Amongst Muslims Communities in Post-Independence Era in Nigeria," Being a paper presented at an International Conference organised by the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, p. 9.

⁶⁶ D. J Berggren (2007), "More Than the Ummah: Religious and National Identity in the Muslim World," in *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Spring, p. 73. It is pertinent to note that firstly, natural ailments such as headache, stomach ache, gonorrhoea, etc are easily treated with the use of herbs. Secondly is the natural-turned-mystical-ailments, when it defies all treatments, they become mystical. In this situation, witches and sorcerers are believed to be responsible. Thirdly is the mystical ailments belong to the realm of the spiritual, hence witches, sorcerers, spirits, divinities are held responsible. Examples include prolonged pregnancy, infant mortality, sterility, barrenness, etc.

⁶⁷ *Op.cit.*...M.O Opeyoye (2011),...

by writing specific portions of the scripture relevant to particular problems on a black wooden slate to be washed and drank by the client (*hantu*) as well as rubbing on the body. It could even be by writing a Qur'anic passage on a piece of paper to be folded, woven round with thread (*tira*) or armllets and placed at specific places. In most cases, herbs are added as complements to these treatments. Among some Yoruba Muslims in Sokoto metropolis, *hantu* has to be washed with hot drinks or sometimes take laceration on the head, thigh, chest, etc. In some cases, to fast-track the potency of black concocted medicine, the use of Schnapps alcoholic drinks is preferred.⁶⁸ Other forms of therapy include the payment of atonement (*ebo*) or passing of invocation or incantation to exorcise evils, placing of sacrificial meats or materials on roads junctions or slaughtering of rams, goats and sometimes the killing of dog to appease the gods of iron (*ogun*).

It must be stressed that the offering of prayers is a concomitant part of the healing process to ensure its efficacy. It is interesting to note that some Muslims as advocated by Quadri⁶⁹ see it as a talismanic practice and as such un-Islamic. It is pertinent to note that the power of the scripture is further revealed as it reads: “*And if there had been a Qur'an with which mountains could be moved, or the earth could be cloven asunder, or the dead could be made to speak (it would not have been other than this Qur'an.*”⁷⁰ However, the foregoing discourse affirms the use of the Qur'an as its power supersedes whatever one may subscribe to.

Poverty Ridden and Quest for Economic Values: The inordinate quest for self-enrichment and economic sustenance through whatever means among some Yoruba Muslim *Alfas* (clerics) has become a common practice. Ogundiya in Aminu and Basiru⁷¹ is of the view that continuous poverty reinforced by mass unemployment and political corruption is also a major economic impediment facing most Nigerians. This assertion suggests the quintessential fact of Yoruba Muslims profound indulgence in syncretistic activities inimical to Islamic teachings. It is adequate to construe that poverty plays significant role in undermining people's faith, for example, an individual bedevils with poverty tends to improvise different methods of extorting money or materials from affected persons. This is because poverty as a malaise tends

⁶⁸ Oral interviews with Adam Woriyon, business tycoon, Ahmadu Bello way Sokoto, 14/08/2017 and Alfa SulaimanOgidi, Islamic cleric and student, GidanAgwai area, Sokoto, 39 years, 12/09/2017.

⁶⁹ Group interview with some Yoruba Muslims in Sokoto who claimed anonymous. See also Y. A Quadir (1985), “A Study of Izalah: An examination of the Emergence of the Tijaniyya in Nigeria,” in *Journal of Nigerian Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS)*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 76-80.

⁷⁰ Qur'an: 3:31

⁷¹ T. Aminu and U.A Basiru (2016), “Understanding Urbanization and Urban Violence: An Examination of Violence Prone Areas of Northern Nigeria,” in the *Book of Proceedings of International Conference on Research and Development*, Vol. 10, No. 8, September, 19-22, 2016, Port-Novo, Republic of Benin, p.13.

to create undue advantage and avenue through the utilization of the credulity of some followership of Islam. For example, there is greater increase in the extortions of money from Yoruba Muslims followers in any social gatherings (marriage, naming, funeral and house warming ceremonies). This is exhibited through effusive flattering and glorification by the followers with words of elegance even when they indulged in corrupt practices.⁷²

In another dimension as averred by Olaniyi,⁷³ for some Yoruba to booster their trade and commerce, they increasingly turn towards the homeland in search of spiritual stimulation because of the wide spread of traditional religions among the Yorubas. Akanmu⁷⁴ explicates that there were branches of the reformed herbal medicine traders, both itinerant and those in the diaspora, who often sell their products in major markets. It is vital to note that the crestfallen in the practice of Islam among Yoruba Muslims in Sokoto metropolis, has undoubtedly promoted the practice of syncretism.

Implications for National Integration

The Yoruba Muslims ethno-religious chauvinism affects the institutional structure and design of the state polity on religious matters particularly as the practice is susceptible to engender inter-ethnic religious conflict. The scary nature of the pervasiveness of syncretism has systematically render some Yoruba Muslim religious futile and its practices to the lowest ebb. The syncretic practices exhibited by some Yoruba Muslims in the study engenders psychological fears of being attacked during any religious conflicts as prevalent in Northern Nigeria. This is obvious during past religious imbroglio in Sokoto metropolis, some Yoruba Muslim lost hope in the security of the state as well as exposing Islam to serious debate among other religions. The pernicious nature of the implications has led to the redirection of the state limited resources to conflict management, specifically on every Fridays (Jum'mat) prayers. This development discouraged peaceful and harmonious co-existence of the various ethnic group as well as discouragements of the Hausa host from observing congregational prayers with Yoruba Muslim leaders.

In addition, the menace of Yoruba Muslim proclivity to syncretism has led to serious social malaise. This arise from prolong courtship leading to abortion and pregnancy out of wedlock.

⁷² Oral interview with AlhajiAbdulFatai Ahmed Abdulsalam, 'Editor Daily Trust' Newspaper, Tamaje area of Sokoto metropolis, 23/10/2017.

⁷³ *Op.cit.*...R. Olaniyi (2006),....

⁷⁴ I. Akanmu (1999), "Yoruba's Contributions to Spiritual Development in Borno State" in I. Akanmu (ed.), *Yoruba Community in Borno State*, Maiduguri: Yoruba Community Council, p. 23.

This act has led to separation of families. It equally encourages male and female dancing together in social gatherings as it is repugnant to Islamic tenets. More so, the practices also accelerate the degree of involvement of Yoruba Muslims in *Jalabi* work as a source of income, exploitation, distortion of belief system and degradation of human character through the consumption of alcohol for therapy.

Its implication has culminated in excessive arrogation of Islamic hegemonic power to religious leadership as *Sheikh* or *Shehu* as this is peculiar among some Yoruba Muslims *Alfa*. The institution for serfdom of *master* versus *serf* has subjected quite a number of Yoruba Muslims to servitude where some Islamic leaders exploits the credulity of the weak members due to their disposition of Islamic religious values and knowledge.

Lastly, there is evidence of diminishing propensity in inter-ethnic marriage as most Muslims perceived Yoruba Muslims as heathen or neo-pagan. For example, it has become an incontrovertible that during any religious conflict in the state, the Yoruba Muslims are usually branded as *Kafir*- meaning unbeliever, and thus susceptible to any attack.

Conclusion

The paper investigates and explores the involvement of Yoruba Muslim participation in syncretists act leading to diminishing standard in the quality of Islamic practices as ordained by Allah and enshrined in the Glorious Quran and Hadith of the Noble Prophet. The study x-rayed the precipitating factors leading to syncretism as an aberration from the precept and tenets of Islam. However, the debilitating implications of excessive chauvinism on the lives of people both the host and the settlers are also analysed so as to provide some recommendations to obliterate some of the syncretistic practices.

Recommendations

To assuage the scourge, the paper recommends the re-assertion or re-dedication to Islamic principles and tenets of Islam for national integration in Nigeria. Yoruba Muslims should de-emphasise the stereotyping act of syncretism and integration of secular system into Islamic practices as found in Euro-Christian practices. The host community should embrace Yoruba Muslim and evaluate their inadequacies and tackle it as a collective mechanism so as to create a formidable unity of purpose.

In addition, it should be noted that Islam kicks against the act of tribal inclination as it was practiced in the pre-Islamic era. There are many prophetic traditions condemning the act of tribal penchant. The following are few illustrations: It was narrated from 'Abdur- Rahman bin 'Abdullāh bin Mas'ud that his father said: *“Whoever supports his people on a basis other than the truth, he is like a camel that falls into a well and is pulled out by its tail.”*⁷⁵ It was narrated from Jubair bin Mut'im that the Messenger of Allah said: *“He is not one of us, who promotes tribalism he is not one of us who fights for the sake of tribalism, he is not one of us who dies following the way of tribalism.”*⁷⁶ It is also germane to construe that Almighty Allah Has removed the false pride taking which was practiced in the pre-Islamic period, where individuals took false pride with their ancestors, (forefathers). All mankind belongs (in lineage) to Adam. Adam is created of soil (earth dirt).⁷⁷

In a similar vein, Syed⁷⁸ expresses the Islamic point of view on tribal proclivity as he says: *“Islam rejects the kind of group feeling, which is similar to the one prevalent during the pre-Islamic period, which protects injustice or makes man arrogant or for the gratification of human desires and wasteful activities. Similar to his position on royal authority, he says that ‘when the religious law censures group feeling, it is directed against a group feeling that is used for worthless purposes as was in the case in pre-Islamic times. It is also directed against a group feeling that makes a person proud and superior.’”*⁷⁹

More significantly, the family background that has been eroded through integration and inculcation of pernicious manners of culture or enculturation encoded GIGO meaning ‘garbage in and garbage out’ in computer science local parlance should be halted. This implies that whatever is injected in the mind of children is what he/she will grow with. In this connection, good moral Islamic teaching should be ensconced to reposition Islam in the locale of study. There should be clinical surgery of our minds and mind set which should be as devoid of carnal desires of individual religious leaders. The greatest sin a servant could commit is to associate a partner with Allāh (SWT.)⁸⁰. He who dies associating a partner with Allāh had

⁷⁵ A.S Dawud (2007), SunanAbūDāwud, Dār-al-salam, Vol. 5. No. 5117:420).

⁷⁶ Ibid....A.S Dawud (2007),....Vol. 5. No. 5121, p. 421.

⁷⁷ A.S Sheha, (2003), Misconception on Human Rights in Islam, Trans. by M. S. Dabas, 4th ed. Saudi Arabia, (n.p).

⁷⁸ S.A Syed (2008), The Muqaddimah of Ibn Khaldun: Religion, Human Nature And Economics, Malaysia: Selangor International Islamic University College, p. 148.

⁷⁹ Ibid...

⁸⁰ M. M Khan and M.T Al-Hilāl (n.d), *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an*, Dār As-Salām, Saudi Arabia, Vol. I, p. 419.

secured no any other abode besides hell-fire.⁸¹ The Glorious Qur'an testifies to this as Allāh (SWT.) says: "*Indeed, he who associates others with Allāh -Allāh has forbidden him paradise and his refuge is the fire.*"⁸²

Fundamentally, inter-ethnic marriage should be encouraged as to procreate more Muslims and also to consolidate inter-cultural dialogue within the ambit of Islam. These developments will condemn ethnic prejudices and encourage the polarised people to come together as one Muslim and one Nigeria people. The syndrome of disunity and discord should be treated with scorn so as to dissuade every Muslims from nepotism and tribalism irrespective of wherever one finds him or herself.

Lastly, the inordinate ambition for financial self-aggrandisement should also be discouraged. The phenomenon of poverty ridden as it percolates all spheres of human endeavours should be addressed by the government and Muslim philanthropists in order to improve on the quality and standard of living of Muslims and to discourage corruption. With strict adherence to the recommendations, the assumed national integration and unity will be achieved.

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⁸¹*Op.cit.*...M. M Khan and M.T Al-Hilāl (n.d), *Interpretation*,...Vol. I, p. 533.

⁸² Qur'an: (5:72)

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