

Living Islam: On Being Muslim In Yorubaland

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Abstract

Though, the date of the islamisation of Yorubaland cannot be fixed with precision, the advent of Islam in the area has been long enough for it to have the kind of impact that Islam envisages on the lives of its adherents on the Muslims in the area. As a religion and a way of life, Islam is supposed to be a standard by which its adherents live as it charts a course for them to follow. The extent to which Muslims, as individuals and as a community follow this course of life is however determined, to a large extent by factors like the environment in which the Muslim(s) live, the willingness and determination of the individual Muslim to follow the Islamic principles, the leadership of the Muslims in the area among others. Conversely, however, Muslims in Yorubaland have lived side by side with people of other faiths and have also had to contend with many challenges including those of culture, secularism and modernity. There are also Muslims of other tribal and geographical extractions with different cultural backgrounds also living in Yorubaland. All of these will determine the forms, nature and quality of Islam being practised in Yorubaland. Using the historical and descriptive methods, this paper critically examines Islam as a way of life in Yorubaland with a view to identifying its impact on the lives of the people, the challenges facing its growth in the area as well the impact of the Yoruba culture on its practice. Some recommendations that will further enhance its growth and development are offered.

Keywords: Islam, Muslims, Yorubaland, Southwest Nigeria.

Introduction

The advent of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula changed the course of things in the area. Hitherto, life in the Peninsula was characterised by distrust, violence, disorder among other vices. The Peninsula was an epicenter of women oppression and exploitation, female infanticide, intra-tribal wars, brigandage and alcoholism. The powerful, before the advent of Islam, had no compassion for the weak; the rich considered the poor as dregs and scums of the earth (Haykal, 1982). But, with the introduction of Islam in the Peninsula by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in the seventh century, the Peninsula witnessed fundamental changes in all aspects of human life. The teachings of the religion became the way of life of the people.

What happened in the Arab Peninsula during the 7th century eventually served as the precursor for the impacts of the religion wherever it found patronage and acceptability. Such is true of the religion at its advent in Yorubaland. This paper attempts to explore how Islam has helped change the course of things in Yorubaland. The paper critically assesses the way of life of Yoruba Muslims in the light of the teachings of Islam to see the extent to which the teachings of the religion have permeated the lives of the people and has consequently positively impacted their day-to-day activities. In a somewhat eclectic manner, these shall be serially examined from the perspectives of 'ibaadaat (acts of worship) to mu'amalāt (social responsibilities).

Islam is both a religion and a way of life. It is a religion in the sense that it defines the relationship between man and his Creator, and a way of life because it prescribes rules and codes of conduct for the relationship between man and his fellow creatures. In precise words, the religion sets a standard for its adherents in all aspects of life, both the spiritual and the mundane (Qur'ān 45:18). Apart from matters of worship, this standard, otherwise known as the Sharī'ah, also stipulates what the individual should do with himself with reference to eating, drinking, and clothing; and how to relate with people of other faiths as well as the larger human community. Its rules and regulations also cover treatment of animals, trees and how to relate to the environment. The Sharī'ah is so comprehensive that there is no aspect of the Muslim life that is left unregulated (Qur'ān 6:38). The conformity of the entire life of a Muslim with this standard is what makes

him or her devout Muslim. Becoming a Muslim, therefore, calls for total rejection of any ideology, philosophy, or culture that could challenge or threaten the supremacy of the Islamic law (Qur'ān 6:162).

However, while being Muslim relates, to a large extent to the individual, Islam holds that individuality does not achieve its purpose in faith unless or until it is realised in community. The standard set by Islam for the individual Muslim life, therefore, is expected to be inscribed into the communal life of Muslims as a whole (Quadri, 2000). This explains why the Qur'ān describes the Muslim community first as one whole body of believers that must work together for the good of the society (Qur'ān 3:103) and more importantly as “the best of peoples evolved for humankind, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong; and believing in God...” (Qur'ān 3:110). But how true has this been for Muslims in Yorubaland? That is the focus of the next section of the paper.

The worship of one and indivisible Allah as the cardinal teaching of Islam rent the air across Yorubaland. Sermons and public lectures drawing attention to the oneness of God are given daily and weekly in the print and electronic media. The *da'wah* methods of some vibrant young and old Muslims of all strata in the area are dedicated to why only Allah alone and no other deity deserves to be worshipped. The love and agitation for the worship of only one God in the area have even pitched some Muslim preachers against people of other religions, particularly adherents of Traditional religions as well as some Muslims in the area who practise syncretism. A number of great Islamic preachers like late Ajagbemokeferi in Ibadan, and Apalara and Bisiriyu Akodo in Lagos among others earned their reputations on the ground of preaching against idolatry. Some of them lost their lives to the struggle, having being brutally killed by the idolaters (Adeniran, 2012). All of these are efforts to ensure the spread and entrenchment of the *Kalimat ush shahaadah* across Yorubaland and this has been achieved to a great extent.

In matters of *Salat*, a good number of Muslims in Yorubaland do this with utmost sense of commitment. Mosques, built through philanthropic and communal efforts, are seen in every corner of the towns, cities and villages in Yorubaland to facilitate this. However, the mosques are built at no meaningful distance to one another so much that Akanni (2013) had to call for their integration into the town planning laws of the country. Nonetheless, the “call to prayer” in the mosques and on the electronic media at every time of the five daily *Salat* tells how regular Muslims in the area are at the appointed time for the daily prayers. It is worthy of note that people of other religions live in harmony with Muslims in the area, except on few occasions when zealous members of one religious group or the other attempt to infringe on their rights. For example, more often than not, the traditional worshippers impose curfews restricting people's movements which infringe on the rights of Muslims in the area especially in the observance of the five daily canonical prayers and in the month of Ramadan. Muslims in Yorubaland have always resisted this and insisted on enjoying free movements as guaranteed by the constitution of the country. When these happen, the security agents are always on hand to curtail the problem.

Muslims in Yorubaland observe the annual Ramadan Fasting with pomp and pageantry. They organise all sorts of programme like Pre-Ramadan lectures, health talk, health care services etc to educate and support Muslims, preparatory for the holy month. Everyone partake in the search for the new moon for the month, as phone numbers of prominent Muslim leaders to contact when and if the new moon is sighted as provided. Prominent Islamic organisations like the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), League of Imams and Alfas in Yorubaland, Muslim *Ummah* of South West Nigeria (MUSWEN), and National Council of Muslim Youth Organisations (NACOMYO) among others play significant roles in this regard. Information about the sighting of the new moon is freely shared among the people. In the hope of getting reward, all manners of righteous deeds like exchange of greetings in text, audio and video messages about the virtues of Ramadan, sponsorship of Islamic programmes in the print and electronic media, exchange of gifts among friends, family and relations etc are engaged in this holy month. Quiz competitions on Islamic matters with prizes and gifts ranging from copies of the Glorious Qur'an, Islamic literature, food items, clothes, electronics and even landed properties are also given to participants. *Tafsir* sessions are equally

held in mosques by individuals and organisations. Topical issues are discussed with eminent Islamic scholars on hand to address and answer audience/callers' questions. The level of Islamic education that is available to people at this time can only be imagined as such educational programmes about Islam are run in that manner throughout the month. Ramadan picnics, Ramadan visits and *Iftar* are also organised by families, groups and organisations. As the month draws to an end, Muslims in Yorubaland take full advantage of the last ten days of the month by engaging in all forms of spirituality as enjoined in Islam. They intensify the recitation of the Glorious Qur'an which they would have started since the beginning of the month, intensify their *sadaqah*, increase the number of superogatory prayers that they observe, engage in *'itkaf* (spiritual retreat) and seek the *laylatul Qadr* (the Night of Majesty). Some even pay their annual *Zakat* in this holy month in the hope of getting greater reward. A number of Muslims in Yorubaland take time out to go on *'Umrah* in this holy month. The payment of *zakatul fitr* is also done with joy and a sense of humility. The *'id* (festival) marking the end of the fasting period is also celebrated with pomp and pageantry. All of these make the observance of the third pillar of Islam a memorable annual event in Yorubaland.

Few Muslims in the region attach much significance to the payment of *Zakat*. Many do not even know the differences between it and other similar religious activities like the *sadaqah* (alms giving) and *zakatul fitr* (festive charity). Those who know do it arbitrarily, by giving amounts of their choices to the Imams behind whom they pray, knowing fully that the amounts do not represent the *Zakat* due on their wealth. More often than not, the Imams pocket a larger part of it, or give part of it to some perceived deserving individual fellow Imams and Alfas. Some even believe that the religious rite of *Zakat* had been fulfilled when a few Naira notes is given to some individuals who approach them for assistance on daily basis. Some also see the fulfilment of *Zakat* in sponsoring family members and neighbours to perform the holy pilgrimage to Makkah. This is the way *Zakat* is perceived by many in Yorubaland. It is for this reason that Oloso (2008) concludes that *Zakat* does not have the effects envisaged by Islam on Muslims in Yorubaland as beggars continue to intimidate rich Muslims at their doors. In recent times, however, some Islamic organisations have shown interest in helping Muslims who wish to pay *Zakat* do so by providing educational and administrative services about it and also help locate deserving people among the Muslims in the area. Ashafa (2016) gives a good account of the few Islamic organisations that are presently doing this in Yorubaland as well as the impact they have made since they started it.

Muslims in Yorubaland take pilgrimage to Makkah very seriously. Every Muslim in Yorubaland regardless of his/her level of religiosity or spirituality, like every other Muslim, aims to perform *Hajj*. Priority is given to it by many who even do not observe the five daily prayers regularly or fast in the month of Ramadan. Many of those who perform the pilgrimage annually do so without corresponding commitment to other tenets of Islam. Some parents even send their children and wards on the pilgrimage as a mark of affluence. Some spirited individuals, including politicians also sponsor people for the pilgrimage for all manners of reasons. *Hajj* is about the most observed and most celebrated of all tenets of Islam in Yorubaland.

The *Mu'amalaat* (Social Responsibilities)

From the perspective of the *mu'amalaat*, Muslims in Yorubaland have done well to a large extent. In matters of marriage, for example, majority of them marry women in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Often times, Muslim marriages in Yorubaland are scenes to behold. A lot of money is spent by both parents and the intending couples to put up befitting marriage ceremonies, whether those involved are rich or not. Almost every marriage among Muslims follows the four-stage pattern of marriages in Yorubaland today viz: the introduction stage, the engagement stage, the *nikkah* stage and the wedding reception stage. Majority of those who are capable of multiplying wives also do so within the *Shari'ah* limit of four at a given time. A good number of them also take good care of their wives and children, taking full responsibilities for their feeding, clothing and shelter.

Divorce is so common among Muslims in Yorubaland. When the need arises, few of them observe the *'iddah* (i.e the waiting period of three menstrual cycles/months). Hence, there are very many cases of single-parenting with serious implications for the accommodation and education of the children of the marriage. The struggle for the custody of the children often leads many of the children to living with their grandparents and family relations where they receive little care or get converted to Christianity. Most Muslim marriages are dissolved arbitrarily by the couples at will or in customary courts as there are no *Shari'ah* courts in Yorubaland to address such issues.

The traditional Islamic scholars are readily on hand to provide spiritual counselling and services for safe delivery of the child among Muslims in Yorubaland. Necessary questions and consultations are made to Islamic scholars regarding choosing a good name for the child and giving it a befitting naming ceremony according to Islamic rulings. The birth of a child in Yorubaland always calls for celebrations among the entire family members as everyone supports the couple morally and financially to have a memorable naming ceremony.

Muslims in Yorubaland bury their dead ones as soon as the death is confirmed. They resist attempts to delay burial, even by family members. The traditional Islamic scholars perform necessary Islamic burial rites and services for the deceased Muslims often times at no cost. At this stage, rites and services are considered the duty of every Muslim. A good number of Muslim cemeteries exist in Yorubaland, though many of them are not well maintained.

The education of the Muslim child in Yorubaland is commendable. Many parents are conscious of the significance of both western and Islamic education for their children. They spend huge sums of money to educate them. The challenge of using western education as a tool to convert Muslim children to other religions (Bidmos, 2013) is no longer there as there are many Muslim-oriented schools that provide Muslim children with sound western and Islamic education. A good number of Arabic schools which provide Qur'anic and *'ilm* education abound in Yorubaland (Opeloye, 1996). The performances of Muslim children from Yorubaland in Qur'anic recitation and Islamic quiz competitions in recent times show that adequate attention is being given to Islamic education of Muslim children in that area (Akanni, 2001).

Muslims in Yorubaland still largely follow the traditional method in widowhood practice. Muslim women stay indoors as required by Islam but the number of days varies between eight, twenty-one, forty days and four months and ten days stipulated in Islam. This is largely determined at will by individual wife/wives, depending on the relationships between her and the late husband on the one hand and on the other, on the economic prowess of the woman. Often times, women claim the deceased husbands did not marry them legally, traditionally or Islamically and do not therefore deserve or warrant being observed complete *'iddat ul wafa'i* for. There are also situations when women who had divorced their husbands and are married to new husbands returned to their former husbands' houses upon their deaths to observe *'iddat ul wafai*. They claim to be doing this in honour of the children born for the deceased husbands.

Although, there are a few fragmented efforts here and there to apply the Islamic Law of inheritance by certain individual Muslims in Yorubaland, it appears it will take a long time for majority of Muslims in Yorubaland to adopt this Islamic law if the current trend which favours traditional and western methods of sharing among them continues.

Hijab as a symbol of Islamic mode of dressing for female Muslims is so popular among Muslims in Yorubaland. The motivation for this might be the pockets of official memos to the effect that female Muslims are at liberty to use the *hijab* in public institutions either as staff or students as well as the conformity of the Islamic dress code with the Yoruba sense of dressing which requires the covering of the head with 'iboru' to make a complete dressing for a responsible woman in the society. However, overzealous adherents of other religions have often denied female Muslim staff and students the use of the *hijab* in schools, hospitals and other government establishments in Yorubaland. This has often resulted in

skirmishes here and there. Christian bodies, for example, have surprisingly openly challenged the use of *hijab* by female Muslim students in the media and in courts. Muslims in the area have, however, collectively resisted this challenge. The controversies surrounding its use in Lagos and Osun states which resulted in litigations that brought victories for Muslims have further served as impetus for its general use. The celebrated heroine action of Amasa Firdaus to wear the *hijab* on the occasion of her being called to bar in December, 2017 is another milestone in the history of the struggle for the use of *hijab* generally by female Muslims in Nigeria and particularly in Yorubaland. An average female Muslim in Yorubaland today now puts on the *hijab*, even if for social or ceremonial purposes. Students at all levels of education, market women, artisans etc all wear *hijab* in one form or the other. Some parents even introduce it to their children even as young as one, two or three years so that they grow up to see it as part of their dress code as female Muslims. It is one good example of the influence of culture on the practice of Islam in Yorubaland.

Muslims in Yorubaland honour wealthy individuals among them with Islamic titles in emulation of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) who recognised and appreciated certain individuals who helped his prophetic mission for their selfless contributions. Historical accounts of Islam show that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) gave the titles of as-Siddeeq (the Trustworthy) to Abu Bakr, al Faruq (the Distinguisher) to Umar ibn al-Khattab, and Asadullah (the Lion of Allah) to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib among others (Rahim, 1981). Muslims in Yorubaland have generated similar honorary titles, numbering up to one hundred (Arimiyah, 2014) which they give to individuals among them who have distinguished themselves in their selfless services to Islam and the welfare of Muslims in the area. It is an institution that Muslims in Yorubaland cherish so much.

Like their counterparts across the world, Muslims in Yorubaland, celebrate the '*id al fitr*' and '*id al Adha*', marking the end of Ramadan fast and the festival of sacrifice respectively with pomp and pageantry. All towns, cities and villages in the area are agog with festive mood. Relations, friends and colleagues who are non-Muslims join them in the celebrations. It is always a moment of joy for all at any of the periods for Muslim festivals in the area. Muslims in Yorubaland have, however, also made big ceremonies and celebrations from the remembrance of the birth of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) (*Maulid an-Nabiyy*), his historic migration from Makkah to Madinah known in Islamic history as the *Hijrah* and the completion of the reading of the Glorious Qur'an (i.e *Walimat al-Qur'an*). They celebrate each of these with funfair. Akanni (2000), Ogunrinu-Nafiu (2012) and Ejalonibu (2016) in separate researches gave good accounts of the celebrations of these three important occasions among the Yoruba Muslims. They spend a lot of money on these celebrations annually, making interesting and successful celebrations of them every year. For example, special programmes organised on the occasion of the *Hijrah* celebrations include special prayers (*du'a*), special Friday (*Jumu'at*) prayers dedicated to the occasion, Qur'an reading competition, Islamic Quiz competition, Symposia, Special Lectures, career and marriage counselling, peaceful awareness processions and a march past at a grand finale among others (Akanni, 2000). The people also celebrate the birth of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) (*Maulid an-Nabiyy*) with joy and happiness. Surprisingly, however, they celebrate the *Maulid an-Nabiyy* from the beginning of the month of Rabi'ul Awwal in which the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was born till the commencement of the month of Ramadan. There are other few celebrations like the 'Kayokayo' i.e *Ashura* in Epe and the 'Ojude-Oba' in Ijebu among Muslims in Yorubaland. Because of its popularity among the Ijebu, Muslims in other Yoruba towns and cities have adopted the 'Ojude-Oba' festival and called it other names like 'Ariya Odun'. While the Ojude-Oba/Ariya Odun festival is celebrated on the third day of '*id al Adha*' with homage paid to the traditional rulers of their respective towns and cities, the *Ashura* is celebrated mainly in Epe on the 10th of Muharram to mark the new *Hijrah* year.

There are a good number of Islamic cooperative societies which assist Muslims in Yorubaland with interest-free loans for businesses and other social welfare services as a way of avoiding taking interest-carrying loans which is the in-thing in the country (Ajani-Muritala, 2014). The introduction of Islamic banking system in the country also offers some hope for the eradication of interest-carrying loans and other non-Islamic economic practices among Muslims in the area.

Muslims in Yorubaland are also making efforts at implementing the *Shari'ah* by setting up *Shari'ah* Arbitration panels/committees at various state and local government levels to adjudicate matters among Muslims in the area on *Shari'ah* principles. With it, the struggle for the implementation of the *Shari'ah* in Yorubaland is sustained despite absence of official *Shari'ah* courts in the area.

Yoruba Muslims and African Traditional Religion

Despite the giant strides in the practice of Islam in Yorubaland, some Muslims still partake in the worship services of other religions, particularly African Traditional religion without any sense of guilt. Some do this as a mark of respect for family ties, others for friendship while some others for cultural reasons. A good number of Muslims in the area, both in the villages and towns participate in traditional festivals just for fun. They see their participation in these festivals as inconsequential for their faith in Islam. According to Adeniyi (2000), this is seen as part of the integration of the Yoruba principle of reciprocity and reciprocal into the practice of their religion, Islam inclusive. The Osun Osogbo festival celebrations in which Muslims actively participate to the extent that the observance of the *Jumu'at* prayer on Friday, which is usually the day of the grand finale of the festival, is delayed to enable the traditional ruler of the town and other Muslims return from the grove is a good example. Ogungbile (1998) recounts a song which depicts Muslims' active involvement in Osun festival thus:

Mejeeji la o maa se	We shall be practising the two together
Ko baje o	It is not bad
Mejeeji la o maa se	We shall be practising the two together
Ko baje o	It is not bad
Kaa s'aluwala	To perform ablution (as Muslim)
Kaa w'odo omo	And go to Osun river
Mejeeji la o maa se	We shall be practising the two together
Ko baje o	It is not bad

As it is with Osun Osogbo festival, so it is with the celebrations of Eyo in Lagos, Agemo in Ijebu, Egungun and other traditional festivals in almost all towns and villages in Yorubaland. Again, the tolerance of the continued existence of the Sango shrine at the main entrance of the Central Mosque of Ago-iwoye in the Ijebu North Local Government of Ogun State speaks volume of the high level of syncretism among Muslims in Yorubaland.

Cultural Infiltrations into Islamic Practices among Yoruba Muslims

There are areas where the Yoruba Muslim has allowed his culture to infiltrate into the practice of his religion. For example, cultural elements in Muslim marriages in Yorubaland include ethnic/tribal consideration in choosing the spouse, divination regarding the future of the marriage, the use of kolanut, honey, salt etc to invoke blessings for the intending couple among other things. Abdu- Raheem (2005) believes that emotional attachment of an average Yoruba to divination and lack of adequate knowledge at the time of the introduction of Islam to Yorubaland which then accommodated divination as part of Islam are responsible for this. In short, Muslim marriages in Yorubaland can exhibit all of the Islamic, western, cultural and civilisation traits, the implications of which have been examined in an earlier effort (Akanni, 2009).

An average Yoruba Muslim couple could also go to any length, including divination and propitiation in seeking for solutions if the arrival of a child in the family is considered unnecessarily being delayed. Even after the birth of the baby, they continue with everything that comes their way in their anxiety to see the child survive, live happily and become prosperous (Nasiru, 1998).

Muslims in Yorubaland also still prefer to bury their dead ones at home, rather than take them to the Muslim cemeteries as recommended in Islam. They see this as of spiritual advantage as in Yoruba culture in which the dead is kept close home in the belief that the departed soul will keep his/her 'protective' eyes on his/her loved ones on the surface of the earth. Muslims in Yorubaland equally celebrate the death of a member of the family, particularly if he or she is of ripe age in a manner similar to the way his or her birth is celebrated. For them, it is a thing of joy that the children, grandchildren and other relations survived the deceased. Some Islamic scholars support this practice on the strength of the *Shari'ah* provisions for prayer and *sadaqah* (charity) for the deceased Muslim. It may take a long time to eradicate this among Muslims in Yorubaland.

Upon the completion of the 'iddah period also, be it for eight, twenty-one, forty days or according to the Islamic rulings of four months and ten days, Muslims in Yorubaland consider it a must to sacrifice a goat to mark the woman's official exit from the 'iddah. She is also made to give out as charity or set ablaze, all clothes and other materials used during the period; hence she restricts herself to few material things during the 'iddah period. This is to finally sever any connection between her and the late husband as serve as security for her in future endeavours. These and some other traditional widowhood practices are still very common among Muslims in Yorubaland.

The traditional method of sharing is still very largely practised by Muslims in Yorubaland. The "idi igi" method in which the property of the deceased is shared among the children according to the number of wives of the deceased and the "ori ojori" method in which the property is shared according to the number of children, to the exclusion of the wife/wives are still very much in vogue. It will take a long time to replace this traditional method of sharing with the Islamic method among Muslims in Yorubaland.

Muslims in Yorubaland still cherish the idea of showing respect through prostration or kneeling down as Yoruba culture demands in greeting. Some parents and some sets of Islamic scholars claim that there are no clear cut instructions to the effect that one should not show respect in greeting the elderly in authentic sources of Islamic law, and that Islam allows for accommodation of cultural diversity, which in the case of the Yoruba will permit prostration or kneeling down. From what obtains at present on greeting among Muslims in Yorubaland, it is clear that a battle line had been drawn between advocates of the traditional way of greeting in Yorubaland and the advocates of the Islamic mode of greeting which rejects such.

It is observed that a good number of the titles being conferred on people as Islamic titles in Yorubaland have ritualistic origin in Yoruba culture. Owoyemi (2004) and Arimiyah (2014) each gave some of those titles as Parakoyi Adinni, Sagbua Adinni, Asipa Adinni, Lukotun Adinni, Abese Adinni etc. This, no doubt is a bad aspect of the infiltration of Yoruba culture into the religious practices of Yoruba Muslims. In some towns and cities also, some titles are also permanently zoned to some quarters following the traditional arrangements (Akanni and Owoyemi, 2016). Even in towns like Owo and Ilaro, certain titles are permanently zoned to some families just because one or two people from those families contributed immensely to the growth of Islam in the towns in their lifetimes. In some cases, as we found in Owo, children of those individuals have renounced Islam, and yet the titles still remain zoned to their families (Arimiyah, 2014).

The Influence of Modernity on Islamic Practices among Yoruba Muslims

As with culture, so it is with modernity and civilisation among Muslims in Yorubaland. They have also allowed modernity and civilisation to rub on their practice of Islam. For example, the great number of mosques in Yorubaland does not necessarily translate to the huge number of worshippers in those mosques. Except during Friday prayers, the weekly *Asalatu* sessions of some Muslim organisations and perhaps in the early part of the month of Ramadan, most of the mosques in Yorubaland are not filled to the brim. Only few worshippers are found in them at prayer times, particularly the *ratibi* mosques. This suggests that majority of Muslims in the area either do not observe their daily prayers at all, or do not observe them as and when due or do so at home. It is probable that majority of those who parade themselves as Muslims in

the society only attend the *Asalatu* sessions of most Islamic organisations as means of religious and social identification as well as spiritual fortification. It is enough for most of them to be seen and regarded as Muslims without corresponding acts of *'ibaadaat*, the ultimate of which is *As-salat*.

Sermons and lectures that run on radio and television stations through day and night of the twenty-nine or thirty days of the month of Ramadan also constitute a show of modernity and civilisation among Muslims in Yorubaland. They portray Muslims in the area as capable of using modern communication devices to disseminate Islamic messages. However, these lectures are concentrated only in the month of Ramadan and as soon as the month ends, the lectures and sermons cease.

The abuse of the sanctity of the Night of Majesty in the hands of some Islamic scholars and organizations is another issue of concern here. Rather than individuals seeking the blessings of Allah in the last days of the month of Ramadan as directed by Prophet Muhammad (SAW), these scholars and organisations, driven by the love for money that would accrue to their personal pockets organise programmes on a particular night chosen between 21st and 29th day of Ramadan by either the Imam or the mosque committee and engage the people in some kind of spiritual programmes that may not last more than one hour. The greater part of the night is then spent sing-praising some individuals from who huge sum of money would be collected. Some even print envelopes which are distributed in other mosques for this purpose. This obviously is an aberration and an abuse of the sanctity of the Night of Majesty and the entire month of Ramadan.

Some spirited individuals, including politicians sponsor people for the pilgrimage for all manners of reasons. This gives all kinds of people, including non-Muslims, political thugs, women of easy virtues etc the opportunity to perform the spiritual exercise that is meant to turn the pilgrim into a new being and then become a role model in the society. The title "Alhaji" and "Alhaja", the symbol of which is the golden teeth displayed freely upon return to Nigeria seems to be the greatest attraction. What one sees therefore is an intimidating number of pilgrims returning to Yorubaland annually but whose characters betray the essence of the spiritual exercise. The situation is very pitiful.

Muslims in Yorubaland display elements of western civilisation by registering their marriages under the English Law and in the English dresses worn by the couple. Though, Islamic marriages also allow the exchange of wedding rings, this is done often in Muslim marriages with the same intent that it is being done under the English Law. At wedding ceremonies, they engage the services of middle women who add glamour to the occasion by singing and dancing. These middle women do all sorts of prohibitive things such as making the bride still on the lap of the father in-law and the mother in-law back the groom.

A good number of Muslims in Yorubaland also become couples due to pregnancies that resulted from sex outside wedlock. Muslim children particularly, girls freely get married to non-Muslims against the position of the Qur'an without any sense of guilt even by the parents. Many also multiply wives without corresponding financial capacities to bear the consequences with women and children who find themselves in this situation fending for themselves. This is, however, only common among the uneducated, particularly artisans, commercial motor drivers and motor cyclists. It will require a high level of education and awareness to address this phenomenon and its dire consequences among the people.

It is not uncommon to see Muslims in Yorubaland serve alcohol generally at parties, even religious ones such as marking the birth of a child into the family or marking the conferment of an Islamic honorary title. This, to an average Yoruba Muslim is part of the celebrations. Only a few conscious ones do not engage in this and other anti-Islamic practices on such joyful occasions.

Generally, Muslims in Yorubaland care more for the western and informal education of their children. Only a few show concerns for the Islamic education of their children. While they pay heavily for the western education of their children, even at the expense of their comfort, they find it difficult to take full advantage

of the free Islamic education provided by the traditional Qura'nic teachers, using the children's time outside school hours for home lessons. This often results in many Muslim children lacking Islamic education, the consequences of which are many. In the opinion of Nasiru (1998), one cannot expect much from the affected child where the ideal environment is lacking and parents themselves are so ignorant of the Islamic Laws that they cannot shield their child from non-Islamic societal influence.

The educated Yoruba Muslim finds it convenient to share his/her property through wills written and deposited with lawyers but also without consideration for Islamic provisions in preparing the wills (Qur'an 4:11-12). To him, it is better than the traditional method of sharing according to "idi igi" and "ori ojori".

Despite the popularity of the use of *hijab* among Muslims in the area, there is no corresponding attitude to match its use in most female Muslims. Often times, those in these *hijabs* wear it along with clothes that can hardly be described as modest. They wear the *hijab* along with clothes that are knitted to fit so much that sensitive parts of their bodies are easily identified. Such dressing cannot fit into the description of dressing of Muslims given in Qur'an 7:26. Again, the use of *hijab* by female Muslims in Yorubaland has also attracted bad comments from people around as a result of the bad attitude allegedly being put up by some of those who use the *hijab*. They are accused of not being of exemplary character as expected of people in *hijab*. It may be that there are attempts to cheat them, in the hope that being in *hijab*, they will not resist the attempts. It however, becomes a different game entirely when parents also accuse their female children in *hijab* of bad character. That obviously is consequential. There is the popular saying of "abori ma bo'wa" (meaning, "there is no corresponding good character to match the covering of the head") among the Yoruba to describe the scenario.

Muslims in Yorubaland do not completely follow the Prophet's model in the criteria used in selecting recipients of the Islamic titles. Wealth is the major criterion used for selecting recipients of these titles. While it is not wrong to use wealth as part of the criteria, it should not be the major and perhaps the only criterion. People like Umar, Uthman and 'Ali were honoured with titles by Prophet Muhammad on the strength of their physical, mental and intellectual contributions to the growth and development of Islam (Masud ul-Hassan, 2001). Restricting the criteria for selecting recipients to financial contributions to the development of Islam in Yorubaland will be an aberration of the Prophetic Model. It is also important to note that these title-holders often rub shoulders with the Imams and Alfas who are the spiritual leaders in the administration of mosques and Muslim affairs. Often times, they are recognised by government and are considered the spoken persons of Muslims on important matters of national interest, whereas they express opinions that are not often totally correct about Islam.

Muslims in Yorubaland devise all manners and means to take money from those who attend the *Maulid an-Nabiyy* ceremony and the ceremony marking the completion of the reading of the Glorious Qur'an (i.e *walimat al-Qur'an*). They take a lot of money from the people attending the programmes, stretching the time of the programme from 10.00 in the morning till around 7.00 in the evening, most times, ignoring the *Zuhr* and *'Asr* prayers at their prime times. It is also noteworthy that the birth of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) (*Maulid an-Nabiyy*) is no longer celebrated by groups and organisations alone as it used to be in the past but also by individuals. This obviously shows that there is more to the celebrations than the love of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the Glorious Qur'an and this could not be any other than economic gains as awards and titles are given on such occasions with donations taken from the awardees.

It is also worthy of note that Muslims in Yorubaland join their Christian counterparts to mark the new Gregorian calendar year, seeing it as the new year for all. Some even organise special *tahajjud* prayer over the night while other mark the first day of the year with recitation of the complete Glorious Qur'an and special prayers. The traditional Islamic scholars are readily on hand to offer the prayer as it is a means of financial reward for them.

Muslims in Yorubaland cannot also be totally exempted from the various gambling institutions around the country. A good number of them actively participate in it.

The Way Forward on Being Better Muslim in Yorubaland

For the practice of Islam to be properly entrenched in Yorubaland, missionaries of Islamic organisations will have to impress it on members of their organisations to take the observance of Islamic tenets particularly *As-Salat* important as it determines who is and who is not a Muslim. There is also the need to continue with the sponsorship of Islamic programme in the print and electronic media after the month of Ramadan. The level of Islamic education that would be available to people can only be imagined if such educational programmes about Islam are run in that manner throughout the year. Imams and missionaries of Islamic organisations will also have to educate Muslims in Yorubaland on the differences between *Zakat* and other similar religious activities like the *sadaqah* (alms giving) and *zakatul fitr* (festive charity) and as well emphasise its importance, purpose and the significance of its payment in Islam so as to benefit the people of the area with it. There is great hope that the level of poverty among Muslims in the area will be drastically reduced if the administration of *Zakat* in the area is given the much attention it deserves.

Imams and missionaries of Islamic organisations will also have to educate Muslims in Yorubaland on the adequacy of Islamic laws in marital, burial and widowhood matters as well as the dangers of bringing cultural and western elements into them. There will equally be need for another look at the arrangements and criteria for selecting recipients of honorary titles among Muslims in Yorubaland if its positive impact is to be seen. The Imams and Alfas themselves must realise that they are accountable to Allah on the kind of leadership they provide for their people as all is not about wealth acquisition. Above all, all Muslims in Yorubaland will have to be prepared to practise Islam in its totality as it is sufficient as a way of life. Female Muslims using the *hijab* in the area in particular will need to do more to convince those who do not and particularly the general public on the essence and significance of using the *hijab* in Islam if it is to be accorded the honour it deserves.

Conclusions

From the foregoing, one can see that the practice of Islam in Yorubaland displays both hopes and fears. Hopes in the sense that much of what Islam expects from its adherents are adequately being done by a large number of Muslims in Yorubaland, and fears in that much still need to be done. Generally speaking, one can see the secularisation of life in some degree among the educated class who have adopted western culture and the display of cultural influence among those who are less educated. Whatever may be the effects of secularism and culture on the individual Yoruba Muslim, the fact remains that the practice of Islam in Yorubaland can be said to be above average as majority of Muslims in the area identify with Islam and are struggling to improve on their quality of Islam. As a result of social change, many of the traditional beliefs and practices of the people have gone, though a great deal still remains either visibly or potentially “under the surface”.

Recommendations

To ensure an improvement in the practice of Islam among Yoruba Muslims of South-west Nigeria, there is need for those on the wheel of administration of Islam and Muslims’ affairs in Yorubaland to continue to provide conscious purposeful leadership that will give direction to Muslims in the area as individuals and as a community so that, Muslims will, on their part become and see themselves as models that the Qur’an calls them while other people in the society also look up to them for direction in all matters, thereby serving the purpose with which they were described (Qur’an 3:110). This responsibility, as of today remains that of the Muslim *Ummah* of South-west Nigeria (MUSWEN). In doing this, MUSWEN will have to develop a blueprint for every aspect of Muslims’ life in Yorubaland. It will have to draw a plan for Muslim education, Muslims in politics, business, and virtually all walks of life. There have to be plans for widows, orphans, the aged, physically challenged, and other vulnerable Muslim members of the society. The traditional Islamic scholars too will have to be integrated into a scheme that will make them function within the control of the Muslim *Ummah*. There also has to be a data base for Muslim professionals in all walks

of life so that as the need arises, needed manpower could be drawn from the pool in the data base. Functional libraries should also be established at strategic places across Yorubaland. Some kind of collaboration and networking among the various Muslim organisations in Yorubaland are also necessary. All these will bring about a vibrant Muslim *Ummah* that will ensure the proper practice of Islam in Yorubaland any day anytime.

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