

The Crack of Dawn of Muhammad's Tradition: Mild Approaches in Enugu Indigenes' Ritual Obligation to Allah

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Abstract

This paper has made an attempt to interrogate Islam as Muhammad's Tradition and also examined the uniqueness of Enugu as one of the Igbo states in the Eastern part of Nigeria wherein Islam prospered from around 1760 till date. Therefore, using Enugu as Igbo settlement for analysis of the mild movement of Muhammad's tradition into the area becomes necessary as ritual obligation to Allah. The penetration was made possible due to their proximity and boundary link with Kogi; Igala, most especially the Yoruba speaking sect through trade, marriage and education, among others. The absolute focus of Islamic piety is Allah and Prophethood of Muhammad; Allah's messenger. This tradition is the fastest growing religion in the world today. The tradition came around 610 A.D. Thus, the success of any religion is premised on its appeal to the indigenes not on the foreigners, but from their exemplary behaviours. This becomes a strong and powerful influencing factor on the inflow of any religion into any society which Enugu State is a reflection of such attitude as demonstrated by its indigenes.

Keywords: Muhammad's tradition, mild approaches, Enugu indigenes, obligation to Allah

Introduction

Nobody is bounded by an obligation unless it has first been freely accepted (Ugo, 2008). Igbo Imams, Sheikhs, Alahajis, Alahajas and Mosques once few and exotic (foreign) are now a common sight in one of the most homogeneous Christian regions in Africa (Nnorom, 2003). Historically, there is no invasion of a place without the support of an insider for such a successful mission. This is because; it is usually with the help of an indigene (insider) that the detailed facts on how to go about the invasion of a place is known. Thus, the success of any religion is premised on its appeal to the indigenes not on the foreigners, but from their exemplary behaviours. This becomes a strong and powerful influencing factor on the inflow of any religion into any society. The evidence of the inroad of Islam into Eastern Nigeria is all about the acceptance of the religion by the indigenes. Anybody that destroys the culture (tradition) leaves that society without a soul and he who kills his fellow human beings (people) for any reason either then justice, is like killing the whole humanity. (Hindsight, 2004; Egodi, 2010).

The history of Islamic tradition and system of knowledge in Enugu is without gain saying, as many will want us to believe, defined by the location of the city in the landscape of the Nigerian, Nation-state (Rahim, 2001). This paper made an attempt to answer questions touching on the belief system of Enugu indigenous Muslims who practiced the tradition of Muhammad. This fact is portrayed as if the introduction of Islam was and is still a mild process. At the same time, it negated the forceful tradition of Islam penetration into other parts of the Nigerian Nation-State most especially in the Northern and Southwestern Regions (Ade-Ajayi 2001). In addition, the awareness of the introduction of Islam into Nigeria has been the affairs of the externals Muslims from other places (Ajah, 2010).

These evidences mentioned above reflected in the movement from 15th to 18th Centuries. These movements began from North Africa through Kanem-Bornu to Hausaland to Nupe to Ilorin then to the Southwestern Yorubaland (Ade-Ajayi, 2001). This raised a notion for systemic consideration of introduced of Tradition of Muhammad into the Eastern region of Nigeria. Although, the introduction from generic perspective is external, but from the specific is internal because of the role of these communities namely Ibagwa, Ogrute and Nssuka, (Doi, 1972). The penetration was made possible due to their proximity and

boundary link with Kogi; Igala, most especially the Yoruba speaking sect through trade, marriage and education among others. What could have led to that were the aftermath effects of the attitude of the indigenes of Enugu to this Muhammad's Tradition, is it because of the orientation of the tradition of being religion of peace (Afigbo, 1999; LASU, 2007).

Definition of Concepts

Muhammad's Tradition

The absolute focus of Islamic piety is Allah and Prophet hood of Muhammad; Allah's messenger. It is a monotheistic religion based on the word of God as revealed to Muhammad in the 7th century as the last prophet and messenger of God by Angel Gabriel. (Encarta Dictionaries, 2008). It is also one of the world religions that believed in monotheism or single God. In the Arabic context the word Islam or the Tradition of Muhammad is peace and as a religious doctrine means complete submission or surrender to the will of God. The followers of this tradition are referred to as Muslims; one who surrendered to God. The central teaching of this tradition is that there is one only all powerful, all knowing God and this Being, created the universe (Abdullah bin Fodio). Based on the concept of equality before God by this tradition of Muhammad as religion of peace. It made provision for the sense of loyalty to God which transcends; nationality, race and differences in religious practices. The tradition believes that Muslims belong to one community; *Umma* (*Sahih Muslim vol. 1, Hadith No: 70*). This tradition is the fastest growing religion in the world (LASU, 2007). The tradition came in 610 A.D (Dallal, 2007).

Thus, the sole body of knowledge system is the *Qur'an* (*Koran*) and *Hadith*. In the realization of the perfection of this tradition came the issue of five *Pillars of Islam*; essential religious duties expected of a Muslim adult who is mentally okay. The Pillars includes; Profession of the faith (*Shahada*), Prayer (*Salat*); standing, bowing (*rak'as*) and prostrating facing Jerusalem before it was change to *Kaaba*, this directional posture is referred to as (*qibla*). The prayer can be made during these periods of the day; dawn (*fajr or subh*), noon (*zuhr*), mid-afternoon (*asr*), sunset (*maghrib*), evening (*isha*). The call to prayer (*adhan*) by the caller to prayer (*muezzin*) is another salient point in the tradition as the sura *al-fatiha* is generally read in all prayers made in a day, Almsgiving (*Zakat*), Fasting (*Sawm*) and Pilgrim (*Haji*). These Pillars of Islam are representations of the manifestation of culture of Islamic faith. The central place where this ritual activity, that is, the *Salat* is to be performed is known as the Mosque; *masjid* (Dallal, 2007).

Enugu Indigenes

These are those who came into the city as a result of birth not by any other means. They acquire the citizenship by birth directly or indirectly. The indigenes have to taste and see if it worth being accepted based on experience under the definition of an experimental religion. This is because, it is in the acceptance of the tradition that the piety of Muhammad's tradition will be made a symbol of obligation; absolute morality to the worship of Allah by the Enugu indigenes (www.wikipedia, free encyclopedia, Enugu State').

Mild Approaches

These are the soft movements of a thing into a place. In other words, not by force but individual appreciation of beauty as a result of the orientations of culture to be what is learned, created, shared and adapted in a life style. The reason for the mild approaches is that enjoyment comes before illumination. The religion has not yet been enjoyed by the indigenes of Enugu. Due to this they cannot illuminate their 'world' and make the revolutionary change to come into place in Enugu town which has now made itself topic for deliberation. It is small percentage of the town that has enjoyed the tradition and their level of illumination is relatively small in their level of acceptance or assumption of beauty of Islam as a collective memory (Iwugwu, 2004).

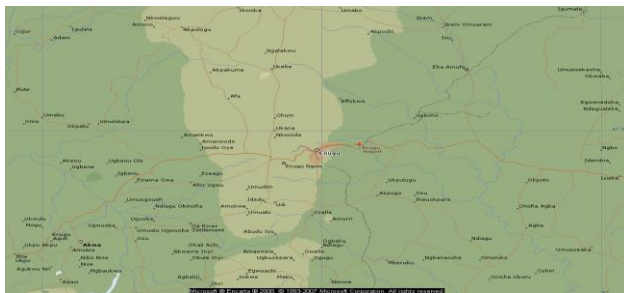
A Ritual Obligation to Allah

This emphasizes the profession of the faith of Islam, acceptance of Allah as God, Muhammad as his only prophet and making effort in performing the six pillars tradition of Islam according to this paper on a daily bases as prescribed in the *Koran* and *Hadith*. Nobody is bounded by an obligation unless it has first been

freely accepted, so the acceptance of the tradition by the Enugu indigenes in a ritualistic manner is mild and this has been the focus of this thesis which is a collected memory. The ritual obligation to the worship of Allah is in a Mosque (Encarta Dictionaries, Obligation, 2008)

Enugu Overview

The phrase Eastern Region came into emergence in 1950s together with other Regions; West and East (Akinade, 2004, Hindsight Magazine, 2004). The Region included the Old Bendel State and part of the South Eastern present States. The Eastern Region later became the defunct Biafra state in 1970. (Stock, 2007; Hindsight Magazine, 2004). The word Enugu interprets; the top of the hill; Miliken and Juju. First European settlers came in 1909. This group of people was led by an Engineer of Mining by name, he is Kikson. In his search for Silver, he got Coal in an area referred to as *Udi* Ridge. Enugu lied in the south-eastern foot of *Udi* (Enugu Ngwo). *Udi* used to be the administrative head to Enugu. This diagram below is the chat of Enugu State, showing Enugu Ngwo as a fragment of the *Udi* axis. (Afigbo, 1999; Hindsight Magazine, 2004)



Enugu (2008)

Due to the interest of Lord Frederick Lugard in Coal, he tried to see to the shipment of first Coal to Britain in 1914 10 (Jacobs, 2004. The discovery of Coal led to the emergence of railway and the township statues of Enugu as a mega city in 1917 (Hindsight Magazine, 2004). With this development she became strategic to the British government which brought the introduction of business firms like; John Holt Kingsway Stores, British Bank of West Africa and United African Company. The emergence of Enugu as a vocal cord in the British administration made it easy for the influence of British to spread to other towns in the Southern Province of Nigeria. The Georgian building and meandering (Roundabout) narrow roads are the evidences of the colonial legacy in Enugu in an area that used to be for the whites, but now it is called Government Reserved Area (GRA) (www.wikipidia, free encyclopedia, Enugu State, Afigbo, 1999).

Besides, its role as a capital city to the former Southern Province, she became the capital to the defunct Old Eastern Region, which has now been divided into nine other States as at 1996, the states includes; East Central, Rivers and South Eastern (1967), Anambra, Imo (1976), Akwa-Ibon, Cross River (1987), Enugu, Abia (1991), Bayelsa, Ebonyi (1996) (Hindsight Akinade, 2004, Magazine, 2004). She was the capital city to the East Central State; Anambra State (Old Enugu) and the present Enugu State. Enugu State was created on the 27th August, 1991 under the Military Government of Gen. Babagida Ibrahim. The present Governor of the State is Sullivan Chime. Enugu state shares border with Abia and Imo states to the South, Ebonyi state to the East, Benue state to the Northeast, Kogi state to the Northwest and Anambra state to the West. She partly lies in the semi-tropical rain forest belt of the South. Enugu State has a population of 8.6 million of which 99% is Igbo and 1% is Igala sect. The State is filled with large percentage of devoted Christians and 30 percent of Traditional Worshippers. (www.wikipidia, free encyclopedia, Enugu State).

Historicity of the Crack of the Dawn of Muhammad's Tradition in the Old Eastern Region of Nigeria and Enugu in Perspective

Literature on this issue of Muhammad's Tradition in the Eastern region is few, but the available materials were consulted for better grasps of this discourse. The emergence of Islam in the Eastern Region could be said arrived in the mid-18th century; 1760 and early 20th century; 1900 (Nnorom, 2003). This emergence

of the tradition was not well pronounced even at its arrival. The Eze division of the Igbos in Nsukka, in present Enugu State and part of Owerri; the State capital of Imo State found the religion in 18th century (Nnorom, 2003), but they were not spreading it because it is a minor religion in the region then and even till today, due to the expected return from the religion. This diagram below is to portray the general description of Enugu as a town and State, at the same time the place of Nsukka in the South-eastern Region of Nigeria.



Encarta Encyclopedia, 'Republic of Biafra'

The Mild Approaches in the Crack of the Dawn of Muhammad's Tradition in Enugu

In any human endeavour there are approaches to life and issues of life. Based on this judgment the spread or the influx of Islam into Enugu will be considered as mild manifestation of culture (Egodi, 2010). The approaches are these;

- Boundary links with Kogi (External) and Horn of Enugu (Internal); Ibagwa, Ogrute and Nssuka; (LASU, 2007, Obiefuna, 2009);
- Zakat; devotion to God by meeting the needs of the needy and poor is a moral obligation against sadaqa (voluntary charity), this serves as a factor in the introduction of Islam to the Enugu;
- Openness to new members by accepting them the way they tend to be;
- Private declaration and confirmation by Islamic authorities;
- The Mosque built in 1760 in Enugu and more than 14 mosques were built in Nssuka; (Nnorom, 2003);
- Trade; although the influence of trade in East was not as strong as it was in the South and North in the spread of the Muhammad's Tradition in Enugu. Despite this stance, it made a contribution for the crack of its dawn in Enugu Township. This was made possible due to the business orientation of the Enugu people. Thus, before the establishment of the British colonial rule in Igboland, Muslim traders who came to the area won converts for Islam. Those traders include the Hausa, Fulani, Nupe people, and some Yoruba Muslims especially from Ilorin that joined the crusade later (LASU, 2007);
- Marriage; this emphasizes the relationship between the wealthy male Muslims and the female Christians, and the interest of the Muslims in spreading the religion to any part of the world for a compensation by God on the judgment day. This is fulfilled by giving their money as a price paid to please God; it is also one of the pillars of Islam which signifies an obligation. The so-called Sudanese became dogmatic as regard to marrying the Enugu ladies as wives. This led to the emergence of indigenes today claiming to be Muslims in Enugu (Madukwe, 2008; Nnorom, 2003; Egodi, 2010);
- Colonialism in the 20th century (Coal Camp); this is linked to the discovery of Coal in Enugu that gave the town the name Coal city. The discovery was made in Udi bloc like 30 minutes' drive from Enugu town. This location produced an Alhaji very popular in Enugu State before his death. The name of the man

was Suleman Oneyeama. One of his sons tried to continue where he stopped but ended up disappointed because he did not enjoy it and could not illuminate his world immediate to him. Although the father was very rich, I guessed he received some token from the devoted Muslims abroad for the successes recorded; (Nnorom, 2003);

- Artisans; these are the people that were employed by the White to work at the Udi site where the Coal mineral was discovered for British benefits. The Artisans were not only indigenes but foreigners who came for greener pasture for their lives' existence. Through this medium Islam might have crept into Enugu town because they all arrived with their religions or tradition of beliefs. Consequently, during the British rule, most of the labourers used in road construction and as warrant officers assigned to look after some of the places around Nsuka were Muslims from Nupe and Hausa lands and they assisted the traders in disseminating of Islamic faith (Nigeria Since Independence vol. 9);

- Quest for Oriental and Western knowledge system; the religion of Islam also lays emphasis on literacy. Prior to the arrival of the colonialists, it was only the Muslims that could read and write, though in Arabic language. The desire to acquire these skills attracted adherents to the religion (Abdul Radi). Therefore, many of the indigenes were and are still struggling to acquire Oriental and Western education in search of this they found themselves in different parts of environments where such a tradition is being practiced. For them to be accepted, they had to renounce the religion they came with for the new one, for their success in the secular world's education to be a reality. An example of such an attitude is Shaikh Ibrahim Niasse Nwagui of Afikpo who got converted in 1960s (Ozigbo, 1998) In another way, the foreigners who came to study most especially the Sudanese and Indians came with their religion, Islam and through this medium of transmission the dawn of the tradition came into emergence (Egodi, 2010);

- Influx of Foreign Scholars; Mr. M.S. Ahmad a Pakistani, Dr. Muhammad Wasim an Egyptian, Dr. Nurudeen Siddiqi an Indian, Professor Abdul Rahman Doi an Indian in the Education sector of the region in 1970 (Doi, 1972; Ozigbo, 1998);

- 1950s-1960s converts; Shaykh Yusuf Awah, Alhaji Sufyan Agwasim, shaykh Abdul Gafar Emetuma and Alhaji Tijani Akpikpo among others (Ozigbo, 1998);

- Civil War (1967-1970); it was one of the factors that influenced the spread of Islam in Enugu because many of the Easterners withdrew from the North to their different home towns. The arrival of these people was not without a gift for their different communities. One of the gifts they came with is Islam, Muhammad's Tradition. Examples of such are; Sheikh Adam Abdulahi Idoko, Sheikh Abdulrasheed Anagha Okafor, Sheikh Harun Ogbonnaya Ahaj, Sheikh Aminu Igwegbe etc; (Ozigbo, 1998); and

- Politics; Orji Uzor Kalu building mosques in Abia State, Okorocho Rochas in Imo State. These two states are no too far from Enugu state.

Reasons for the Mild Approaches of the Crack of the Dawn of Muhammad's Tradition in Enugu

The reasons are these;

- The only route into the region where the sample of the tradition can be found was in Kogi (Igala tribe) that has the blend of the tradition;

- Minority of the tradition in the region as a collective memory;

- The strong base or root of Christianity in the region via the contact with the white as an example of a revealed tradition in the early years of the 15th century;

- Active jihad, struggling to please God ended in 1870s in the Southwestern Region of the federation. No serious player like Lake Chad and Sefawa dynasty in the spread of the tradition in the East;

- The tradition is subjected to a single language of Arabic;

- No sense of pride in the devotees of the tradition because it has not evolved into the age of culture of the people of the region, Enugu. In other words, it is not a state Religion;
- The segmented political system;
- Western Education (Nnorom, 2003);
- Slave Trade;
- It is assumed to be foreign by the Igbo sect who happened to be the largest in the region etc.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that the culture and the influence of the white played and it is still playing a strong role in the efficacy of Islam; Muhammad's Tradition in the defunct Biafra Republic (Eastern Region) of Nigeria as a threat to the religion. Notwithstanding this submission, the Tradition of Muhammad's belief could still be felt in the air and space of Enugu which has served as our point of reference on how Islam entered the region. Despite this challenge in the spread of Islam in the East, the religion has not failed in its quest of gaining the region for Allah as converts. Evidences have shown that some of the indigenes of Enugu have made an obligatory ritual to Allah in the silence of their hearts and minds either by enjoyment or frustration based on life's experiences and challenges. So, there are committed Muslims indigenes in Enugu ready to serve the only wise God; Allah. Not minding the approach used in getting to them or the softness of the crack that was not heard by many, in the early morning of the 19th and 20th centuries in the history of South-eastern Region and likewise this 21st century.

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