Being a "Good Muslim": The Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN), Islamic Reform and Religious Change in Yorubaland, 1954 - 2014

A thesis submitted to the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS), University of Bayreuth, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Dr. Phil.)

By

Adeyemi Sharapha Balogun

Prof. Dr. Eva Spies (Supervisor)
Prof. Dr. Achim von Oppen (Mentor)
Prof. Dr. Benjamin F. Soares (Mentor)

October 2019

Table of Content i

Chapter One

Introduction

Chapter Two

Locating the MSSN in Religious Change

Chapter Three

Yoruba Muslims: Religious Encounter and Social Change up to 1960

Chapter Four

A Muslim Student Movement in Nigeria: MSSN and the Promotion of Islam, 1954- 1990

Chapter Five

Between New Epistemological Perspectives and Competing Reform Orientations: MSSN's Reform, Organizational Crisis and Division, 1980 – 2005

Chapter Six

Diversity in Reform: Islam, MSSN and the Challenges of Ethical Practice, 1980-2014

Chapter Seven

Afiwekewu/Akewukewe: **MSSN and New Forms of Islamic Education**

Chapter Eight

Summary and Conclusion

Acknowledgement

List of Abbreviations

AG	Action Group
AMSA	Ahmadi Muslim Students' Association
ASU	Academic Staff Union
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
COMYO	Council of Muslim Youth Organisations of Oyo State
FCE	Federal College of Education (Technology), Akoka
IIFSO	International Islamic Federation of Students Organisation
IIIT	International Institute of Islamic Thought
IIYO	International Islamic Youth Organisation
JNI	Jama'atu Nasril Islam
LASU	Lagos State University, Ojo
LIA	League of Imams and Alfas
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MSA	Muslim Student Association
MSSN (MSS)	Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria
MUSWEN	Muslim Ummah of Southwest Nigeria
MWL	Muslim World League
NACOMYO	National Council of Muslim Youth Organizations
NBA	Nigerian Bar Association
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons
NPC	Northern People's Congress
NSCIA	Nigeria Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs
OAU	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SU	Scripture Union
TIMSAN	Tijaniyya Muslim Students Association of Nigeria
TMC	The Muslim Congress
UI	University of Ibadan
UNIBEN	University of Benin
UNILAG	University of Lagos, Akoka
UNILORIN	University of Ilorin, Ilorin
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WAMY	World Assembly of Muslim Youth
YABATECH	Yaba College of Technology, Yaba

Notes on Orthography

The Arabic words in this study are based on the transcription of authors from Brill reference.[1] A few Arabic words which have been anglicize in English dictionaries such as the "Qur'an" and "hadith" are also used in the study. The Yoruba terms in the study draws from the Lagos, Ilorin and Oyo dialects.

Abū (Arabic): father

Adab (Arabic): a practical norm of conduct

Adhān (Arabic): call to prayer

Àgbọ́yé (Yoruba): understanding

Ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamāʿa (Arabic): people of the example [of Prophet Muhammad] and the community [of believers].

Aje, (Yoruba): the goddess of wealth and fertility

Alaṣeju (Yoruba): 'over-doer,' one who does more than what is required.

Alafia (Yoruba): well-being; peace

Al-ʿAṣr (Arabic): late afternoon

Alfa (Arabic, '*khalīfa*,' referring to successor): cleric

Allāh (Arabic): God

Allāhu ʾakbar (Arabic): God is great

Alọ (Yoruba): folktales

Al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ (Arabic): pious predecessors

Amīr (Arabic): commander, referred to as President in MSSN

Anṣār (Arabic): supporters

ʿaqīda (Arabic): creed

Aṣa (Yoruba): custom/fashion

Aṣa ibilẹ (Yoruba): traditional; country fashion

Babalawo (Yoruba): 'father of the mysteries,' priest

Baraka (Arabic): blessing

bayʿah (Arabic): oath of allegiance

Bayyina (Arabic): clear, evident

Bid'a (Arabic): unlawful innovation

Burqa' (Arabic): brocade face veil

Da'wa (Arabic): "invitation," propagation of Islam

Dalīl (Arabic): evidence.

Dhikr (pl. *adhkār*) (Arabic): 'remembering' God, reciting the names of God.

Dīn (Arabic): religion

Duʿāʾ (Arabic): invocation

Ewi (Yoruba): poems

Ẹgbẹ (Yoruba): society/association/party

Egúngún (Yoruba): "masquerade," representing spirit of the dead

Ẹbi (Yoruba): family

Èṣù (Yoruba): trickster; messenger

Fatwā (pl. *fatāwā*) (Arabic): legal opinion

Fayḍa (Arabic): emanation, flood

---

[1] Brill Reference online at
https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/subjects/Middle%20East%20and%20Islamic%20Studies

Fiqh (Arabic): jurisprudence

Ḥadīth (Arabic): report of the saying and deeds of Prophet Muhammad

Ḥajj (Arabic): pilgrimage

Ḥalqa (Arabic): "circle," religious gathering

Ḥijāb (Arabic): "screen" also referred to as headscarf/veil

Ḥizb (Arabic): party

Ḥujja (Arabic): proof

ʿibāda (Arabic): *worship*

ʿīd al-aḍḥā (Arabic): the feast of sacrifice

ʿīd al-fiṭr (Arabic): feast at the end of *Ramaḍān*

'*Idadiyyah* (Arabic): intermediate level

Ifá (Yoruba): system of divination

Iḥyāʾ (Arabic): revival

Ijaza (Arabic): authorisation

ʿilm (Arabic): knowledge.

Imām (Arabic, *imam.* Yoruba: *lemomu*): the one who leads in prayer

Īmān (Arabic): faith

ʿishāʾ (Arabic): night prayer

Iṣlāḥ (Arabic): purification

Itan arosọ (Yoruba): oral prose

Iwe (Yoruba): book

Jāhiliyya (Arabic): ignorance

Jamāʿa (Arabic): congregation

Jihād (Arabic): struggle

Jilbāb (Arabic): a cover-all garment worn by women

Kalima (Arabic): "utterance"

Khātam Al- Nabīyīn (Arabic): seal of the prophets

Khaṭṭ (Arabic. Yoruba: *hantu*): Arabic script.

Khimār (Arabic): a woman's veil which covers the head to the bosom.

Khuṭba (Arabic): sermon

Kitab (Arabic): book

Laylat al-qadr (Arabic): night of power

Madrasa (Arabic): place of study/Qur'anic school

Mahdī (Arabic) the guided one

Maqāṣid (Arabic): purposes, objectives

Maʿrifa (Arabic): gnosis, referring to a state of unification with the divine

Mawlid al-nabī (Arabic): Prophet's birthday

Mẹkunnu (Yoruba): the poor

Mujāhid (Arabic. pl. *mujāhidīn*): "struggle," one who struggle

Murshid (Arabic): one who gives right guidance

Nahw (Arabic): grammar

Nāʾib (Arabic. Yoruba: *naibul*): deputy imam

Nikāḥ (Arabic): marriage

Niqāb (Arabic): a woman's veil which leaves the eye region open

Ògún (Yoruba): god of iron

Oogun (Yoruba): medicine

Olódùmarè (Yoruba): Supreme Being

Ori (Yoruba): head

Oríkì (Yoruba): panegyric

Òrìṣà (Yoruba): divinities; deity

Òwe (Yoruba): proverb

Ọbá (Yoruba): king

Ọlaju (Yoruba): enlightenment

Ọlọla (Yoruba): wealthy

Ọṣun (Yoruba): goddess of the river

Qurʾān (Arabic): "recite," the divine scripture of Islam

Ramaḍān (Arabic): fasting month

Rukūʿ (Arabic): bowing in prayer

Ṣadaqa (Arabic): voluntary charity

Ṣaḥāba (Arabic): the companions of the Prophet

Sahwa (Arabic): awakened

Sanad (Arabic): chain of transmission

Ṣalāt (Arabic): ritual prayer

Ṣalāt al-jumʿa (Arabic): Friday prayer

Ṣalāt al-*maghrib* (Arabic): evening prayer

Ṣalāt al-Tarāwīḥ (Arabic): is a time of extra prayers at night in Ramaḍān

Ṣalāt al-ẓuhr (Arabic): noon prayer

Ṣàngó (Yoruba): god of lightning and thunder

Ṣarf (Arabic): morphology

Ṣawm (Arabic): fasting

Shahāda (Arabic): testimony, profession of faith.

Shaitān (Arabic): satan

Sharīʿah (Arabic): "the way," Islamic law

Shaykh (Arabic): Islamic scholar and religious leader

Shirk (Arabic): associating partners with God

Shūrā (Arabic): consultative

Sīra (Arabic): history

Sirr (Arabic): secret

Subḥān Allāh (Arabic): God is perfect

Ṣūfī (Arabic: *taṣawwuf*): mysticism

Sujūd (Arabic): prostration in prayer

Sunna (Arabic): deeds and sayings of the prophet Muhammad

Sūra (Arabic): chapters

Tafsīr (Arabic): exegesis of the Qurʾān

Tahajjud (Arabic): vigil

Tajdīd (Arabic): renewal

Tajwīd (Arabic): elocution

Takfīr (Arabic): to declare a someone a non-Muslim

Taʿlīm (Arabic): education

Taqwā (Arabic): 'virtuous fear'; piety
Tarbiya (Arabic): education, pedagogy
Tasbīḥ (Arabic. Yoruba: *tẹsuba*): prayer beads
Tawḥīd (Arabic): assertion of oneness of God's
Tira (Yoruba): Islamic texts; amulet
ʿulamāʾ (sing. ʿ*ālim*. Arabic): scholars
Umm/ummahāt (Arabic): mother
Umma (Arabic): Muslims community
Wákà (Yoruba): poem
Walīmah (Arabic. Yoruba: *wolimo*): banquet
Wasaṭiyya (Arabic): moderation/balanced
Waʿẓ (Arabic:): admonishment, sermon
Wazīfa (Arabic): daily group recitation
Wird (Arabic): litany
Zināʾ (Arabic): adultery

List of figures

Summary

This study focuses on the history of the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN) and its involvement in the religious change among "Yoruba Muslims" in Southwest Nigeria from 1954 to 2014. It posits that the notion of being a "good Muslim" has changed significantly, especially among Western educated Yoruba Muslims since the colonial period and that the MSSN not only play a key role in this change but also represent this change. The main questions that guide the study are thus, how has the MSSN contributed to religious change and the ways of being Muslim in Yorubaland and how is the MSSN itself subject to change? The study argues that central to this change is the fact that the MSSN developed from a religiously affiliated students' club into an Islamic reform movement. This includes its own fragmentation caused by different discourses that shape its reform as well as to the foundation of other Islamic movements who promoted ways of being Muslim that both intersect and differ from the position of MSSN. To understand this change, the study, on the one hand, describes how the MSSN became involved in wider religious changes among Yoruba Muslims. On the other hand, it illustrates how social changes due to Christianization, colonialization, the formation of the nation-state, socio-economic change, and transnational Islamic movements shaped the self-definitions and practices of the MSSN as well as its transformation to a reform movement.

The study adopts a multidisciplinary approach largely situated in the fields of history, religious studies and anthropology. This approach is reflected in the type of sources and methods employed which include fieldwork, archival study, and analysis of literature. The conceptual framework of the study is based on the notion of Islam as a "discursive tradition" and its interlinkages with the concepts of "Islamic reform," "religious change," and "Christian-Muslim encounters." These additional concepts not only help to understand discursive traditions as fragmented but also give voice to the different actors and dynamic positions involved. The study draws on a wide range of literature on these analytical frames, and at the same time, it contributes to this literature.

The study has four central results: firstly, it notes that the reasons for the formation of the MSSN in 1954 are closely linked to the Yoruba Muslims' encounter with Christianization and the social change that was facilitated by colonialization since the mid-nineteenth century. To illustrate this, the study explores the history of Yoruba Muslims and their experiences up to the 1950s when the MSSN was founded. A major aspect of their history is how they negotiated their religious identities over the schools that were established or managed by Christian

missions and instructors in order to be part of the new economic and political systems created by the British colonialists. Many young Muslims who were affected by the decisions of their parents also got involved in this negotiation following their encounters in the schools. While the encounter motivated the formation of MSSN by students and the way its objectives were promoted in Nigeria, the students also aimed to promote a way of life that fits into their changing world.

By 1954 when the MSSN was founded, the Yoruba Muslim communities had been diversified and fragmented by a number of debates on Islam, which were often in relation to the activities of Christian missions and the colonial government. These debates involved clerics of the Qur'anic schools and religious movements like the Ahmadiyya and Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society (later Ansar-Ud-Deen Society), and the outcomes of the debates shaped what being a good Muslim meant for many Yoruba Muslims. A few of these debates emphasised the non-adoption of prophetic traditions (*sunna*) that were deemed less suitable in the Yoruba social context, the use of Yoruba and English during mosque sermons, the public participation of women in religious and secular life, the enrolment of Muslims in Christian mission schools, and the employment of Muslims in colonial service. The knowledge of a good Muslim from this broader perspective also informed the understanding of Islam of the students who formed the MSSN, and for many years, this knowledge, in turn, shaped their social lives and the activities of the MSSN as an organisation. Over time, while the MSSN upheld many aspects of this notion of Islam, it nevertheless contested some of the fundamental positions in which the understanding of the religion is embedded. The emphasis on the adoption of prophetic traditions as the definition of what it meant to be a good Muslim was generally at the centre of this contest.

Secondly, the study discovers that reform in the MSSN was inspired by historical and epistemological developments that were not only connected to the Yoruba Muslim communities but also the globalized Muslim world. The historical developments relate to the link between the MSSN and transnational Islamic movements such as the International Islamic Federation of Students Organisation (IIFSO), the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) and the Muslim Brotherhood as well as the emergence of graduate students who studied abroad and in local Qur'anic schools. On the other hand, the epistemological development relates to the emphasis on proof based on the Qur'an and the Hadith, and on a different interpretation of prophetic traditions. These developments paved way for critical discourses on Islam and the MSSN practices as well as the revival of the prophetic traditions. But while the discourses

shaped new ways of being Muslim in the MSSN, they also inspired its factionalisation by the 1990s.

Thirdly, the study points out that despite the quest for reform, the Islamic discursive tradition in MSSN was neither uniform nor reducible to a fixed understanding of Islam among its members. Rather different existential and social realities in Yorubaland and Nigeria forced the MSSN to construct its ideals of reform on interpretations of Islam that emphasised "moderation," "tolerance," "flexibility," and a "gradual" embodiment of Islam. This reflected in the MSSN's non-rigidity to ethics like veiling and its promotion of popular culture in Nigeria. Generally, the MSSN's interpretations of Islam encouraged a great deal of diversity in the religious and social lives of members and further added to the diversity of Yoruba Muslims.

Fourthly, the study reveals that the MSSN is involved in the transmission of Islamic knowledge and posits that its involvement is one of the ways in which the 'classical' Islamic education has changed in Yoruba society and the Muslim world. The transformation of Islamic education shows evidence of objectification and functionalisation of Islam which reflect in new forms and subjects that are taught to Muslim students. It also reveals some epistemological variations from the esoteric to the exoteric paradigm of knowledge transmission. The new forms of education introduced by the MSSN include the Islamic Vacation Course (IVC), the gendered Brothers' Forum and Sisters' Circle and the Leadership Training Programme (LTP) which are not only used to teach Islamic knowledge but also socio-economic skills. Although the MSSN method of learning appears to challenge the pedagogy and epistemology of the 'classical' Qur'anic schools, the new forms, however, show continuities in various ways with these Qur'anic schools. Thus, this study argues that the new forms of Islamic education are a part of MSSN's contribution to religious knowledge production in contemporary Yoruba Muslim society, and to their religious change as a whole.

In general, the study demonstrates the manifold contributions of MSSN to religious change and new ways of being Muslim, which include the formation of national and transnational Muslim organizations, revival of *sunna*, introduction of new forms of religious education and the production of new Muslim elite. Overall, the case study presented in this study helps to understand how the confluence of local contingencies and global entanglements contribute to processes of religious change.

<p style="text-align:center">Chapter One</p>

<p style="text-align:center">**Introduction**</p>

1.1 **The study**

On the 5th of February 2013, a fourteen year old female pupil named Aisha Alabi of Kadara Junior High School Lagos was flogged many times in the presence of the school's staff and pupils by her principal, Mrs. E. C. Ukpaka, for wearing the *ḥijāb* (headscarf/veil) outside the restricted hours.[2] In schools owned by the Lagos State government, the *ḥijāb* was approved for use only during Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) class and the Muslim noon prayers. The ban, according to government, was issued to "preserve the secular nature of the institutions" and to ensure uniformity in schools' dress.[3] Aisha was aware of this restriction. On that day, however, she attended the IRK class and according to her teacher forgot to remove it before she was apprehended by the principal.[4] Like other people present, Aisha's teacher, Mr. Abdur-Raheem Adekoya who taught the IRK, watched furiously as she was subjected to this humiliation but was helpless to stop the Principal.[5] Barely two weeks following this incident, on February 20, the principal of another Lagos school, Mrs Elizabeth Omidele of Mafoluku Senior Secondary School, harassed a *ḥijāb*-wearing pupil, Bareerah Tajudeen, on her way to school. Like Aisha, Bareerah was also aware of the restriction on the headscarf. Therefore, she only wore it from home and removed it just before entering school (and wore it again on her way home after school). However, according to press releases, the principal who protested that this violated the school uniform seized Bareerah's veil, threw it on the ground and trod on it.[6]

The two incidents infuriated the Lagos Muslim community and led to an altercation between them and the government of the state. With the support of Mr. Adekoya who narrated his account to the Muslim community, they decried the problem of "hijabophobia" in all

---

[2] Many reports claimed she was beaten 43 times. See Abdur-Rasheed Abubakar, *Hijab and the Nigerian Press* (Lagos: Rawshield PR Company, 2016), 6; Sahara Reporters, "Group calls on Governor Fashola to end discrimination and ill-treatment of Muslim women and girls in Lagos State,", http://saharareporters.com/2013/03/20/group-calls-governor-fashola-end-discrimination-and-ill-treatment-muslim-women-and-girls (accessed January 12, 2019).

[3] Onozure Dania, "Appeal Court Lifts Ban on Hijab in Lagos Public Schools," *Vanguards*, July 21, 2016, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/07/appeal-court-lifts-ban-hijab-lagos-public-schools/ (accessed December 13, 2018).

[4] Adekoya Abdur-Raheem, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 30, 2017, Yaba, Lagos; Abubakar, *Hijab and the Nigerian Press*, 6.

[5] Adekoya Abdur-Raheem, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[6] PressTV, "Hijab Controversy in Lagos: INfocus,", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0Ir44fNEBw (accessed January 12, 2019).

educational institutions and the fear of "Islamization" which was articulated by many Christians on the incidents.[7] A major actor in the encounter was the students' movement, the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN, generally known in Nigeria as 'MSS' but also referred to as the 'Society' by its members), established in 1954. On February 28, 2013, MSSN mobilised hundreds of students who protested at the Lagos State governor's office over the harassment of their members. They held banners and placards which expressed their grievances with inscriptions such as "My Hijab, My Right" and "What is wrong with the Hijab?" They also called for the resignation of both principals on allegations of "child abuse and human rights violation."[8] Later in the year, the MSSN contested government's ban on the headscarf in court. In 2014, a High Court judge upheld the ban while an Appeal Court overturned it in 2016.[9]

Aisha and Bareerah's punishments and the reactions they stimulated are products of two interdependent historical experiences of the diverse Yoruba groups in Nigeria, who identified with Islam, also referred to as "Yoruba Muslims" by many scholars (including by T.G.O. Gbadamosi, Stefan Reichmuth, and J.D.Y. Peel).[10] The first is the religious change which is noticed in how they embraced Islam and practised the religion up to recent times. Primarily connected to this change is the second experience, which is their response to the social transformation that started with Christianization and colonization in the nineteenth century and continued into the postcolonial nation-state today. At a broader level, this study is about these historical experiences. However, rather than "Yoruba Muslims" in general, the study focuses specifically on the MSSN, a nationwide Muslim movement in Nigeria, and its role in religious change in present day Yorubaland. This is not to suggest that the MSSN represents the whole "Yoruba Muslims" experience nor restricted to Yorubaland, but the history of the movement (and how it became involved in the veil crisis) is largely interwoven into experiences and definitions of being a Muslim in contemporary Yoruba society. This study thus aims to reconstruct the history of MSSN in the context of the "Yoruba Muslims" experience, and, to an extent the experience of other Muslims in Nigeria.

---

[7] Abubakar, *Hijab and the Nigerian Press*, 8–19.

[8] Ibid; PressTV, "Hijab Controversy in Lagos".

[9] The Lagos government challenged this judgment at the Supreme Court in 2017. See Dania, "Appeal Court lifts ban on Hijab in Lagos public schools."; Ramon Oladimeji, "Lagos Takes Hijab Case to Supreme Court," *Punch*, February 7, 2017, https://punchng.com/lagos-takes-hijab-case-supreme-court/ (accessed January 17, 2019).

[10] See T.G.O. Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, London: Longman, 1978. xiii; Stefan Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims: the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 26, no. 4 (1996); O. M. Opeloye, "The Yoruba Muslims' Cultural Identity Question," *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, (IJOURELS)* 1, no. 2 (2011); J. D. Y. Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion: Three Traditions in Comparison and Interaction,* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016), 158–60.

More specifically, the study is about the change in the notion of a "good Muslim" in Yoruba context. Tracing the history of the MSSN from 1954 to 2014, it shows how on the one hand the MSSN takes part in the formation and transformations of religious identities and moral selves, as well as in wider religious changes among the "Yoruba Muslims." On the other hand, it demonstrates how transformations of social realities due to Christian missions, colonial rule, the formation of the nation-state and transnational Islam feed back into the self-definitions, objectives and practices of the MSSN as a Muslim organisation and its transition into a reform movement with a global perspective. The role of the MSSN in this change of ways about a "good Muslim" has been underscored by Peel in his work on the religious change and historical encounters between "Yoruba Muslims," Christians and *Òrìṣà* (deities) devotees.[11] Peel argues that the identity of "Yoruba Muslims" has changed since the colonial period which is noticed in their rejection of so-called syncretism and the pro-British Ahmadiyya movement, founded in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in India and introduced in Lagos in 1916. In turn, the "Yoruba Muslims" moved "closer to the orthodox Sunni mainstream"[12] and adopted an alternative concept of modernity from Muslims in the Middle East, which thereby reduced their differences from Muslims in Northern Nigeria. For Peel, "no Muslim organisation registered these changes over the course of the 1970s so closely as the Muslim Students Society (MSS)."[13] In this study, I argue that this understanding of "Yoruba Muslim" history and the MSSN by Peel is problematic. My contention is based on his implicit assumption that the MSSN represents the experience of an idealised "Yoruba Muslim," and "Yoruba Islam," which I take up in the next section. Also, it is problematic to conceive of the MSSN as an organization that represents all "Yoruba Muslims" because of the danger of overlooking those who hold a divergent, albeit similar, interpretation of Islam from the movement, for instance, the Sufi[14] brothers. Another problem in Peel's argument, related to the first, is the essentialised notion of "orthodox Sunni" ideals which "Yoruba Muslims" and the MSSN are said to have adopted. Again, this is misleading because it does not consider the multiple interpretations of Islam and the diversity among Muslims, not only in Yoruba society but in other parts of the world. Therefore, while this present study builds on Peel's work, it nevertheless offers a critique of his argument.

---

[11] J. D. Y. Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-Religion: Three Traditions in Comparison and Interaction* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016).
[12] Ibid., 157–59.
[13] Ibid., 159.
[14] Sufi is also called *taṣawwuf* in Arabic referring to mysticism

In addition to Peel, the studies by Gbadamosi and Reichmuth are also connected to this religious change among the "Yoruba Muslims." Gbadamosi's study focuses on the Islamization in Yorubaland, tracing the process from the mid-nineteenth century to the first decade of the twentieth century.[15] Generally, his work provides a useful background to understanding the historical experience that led to the formation of the MSSN in 1954. Reichmuth's study, on the other hand, looks beyond the first decade of the twentieth century and unveils how "Yoruba Muslims" dealt with the social changes that were brought about by colonization and Christianization. As an illustration, he used the Ansar-Ud-deen Society, established in 1923, to show how they employed religious associations to promote education and Islamic reform in order to cope with some of the aspects of these changes, such as conversion to Christianity. The MSSN, as this study will demonstrate, is another form of association that was established to deal with other aspects of these changes that are specifically related to Muslim students. This study is, therefore, also aimed at contributing to these existing studies on religious change of "Yoruba Muslims."

The main argument in this dissertation is that there has been a change in how Islam is portrayed and articulated by a significant number of "Yoruba Muslims" since the colonial period and that the MSSN plays a key role in this transformation. Central to this argument is that the MSSN also transformed into a movement that focuses on reform and revival of Muslim traditions in the past and helped to shape what is understood as a "good Muslim" for many students. Although founded as an organisation of students/pupils, the history of the MSSN goes beyond that of students wanting to reassure themselves as Muslims in a Christian/secular school system. It is also about its own change to a movement of reform that turned away from many of its initial objectives and interpretation of Islam in the wider "Yoruba Muslim" society where it was established. Besides, the MSSN activities and contributions are about negotiations and transformations of Muslim identities and practices, including beliefs, religious rituals, manners of dressing, the notion of a youth/student, associational life, and inter- and intra-group relations within the wider context of the Muslims in Nigeria and beyond. In addition, the history of MSSN is about its contribution to the changing methods and episteme of Islamic education in Nigeria.

The MSSN contribution further draws attention to some of the ways in which "Yoruba Muslims" engaged Christianity, from the early years of Christian missions, and dealt with the

---

[15] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*.

legacies of colonial rule. The history of the MSSN also shows why this engagement caused a shift in the lived religion of everyday life of many Western educated Muslims in Yoruba society and in Nigeria. At the same time, it helps us to understand the different efforts made to define and negotiate "Islam" and how these efforts are entangled with wider socio-political transformations and power relations. The notion of "being a good Muslim" in the title of this study refers to these efforts which I consider to be inspired by the consciousness of Islam among Muslim students and aimed at shaping and transmitting 'Islamic' ideals in non-Muslim settings. It also refers to the identification with Islam and the preservation of this religious identity without disregarding the moral values of the social context of the students and the modern world. These efforts and the conditions that gave rise to them are important to understanding what it means to be a "good Muslim" in the MSSN.

In making my argument, I depart from Peel's understanding of religious change among the "Yoruba Muslims." Instead, I build on Talal Asad's argument on the importance of approaching Islam as a "discursive tradition."[16] Taking Islam as a discursive tradition, as Asad contends, helps us to think of multiple interpretations of Islam and ways of being Muslims that aspire to uniformity on Islamic traditions in various historical times and settings among Muslims. This conception of Islam is crucial for this study because it suggests that while there has been a change in how Islam is defined and represented by many "Yoruba Muslims" and the MSSN, the idea of a "good Muslim" or "Sunni orthodoxy" is neither fixed by one actor nor limited to a specific point in their history but is rather an ongoing debate by many agents. Accordingly, I argue that the leading members of the MSSN and the Society as a movement are part of the agents involved in this debate.

In addition to my understanding of Islam as a discursive tradition, I will analyse the role of the MSSN in the religious transformation of "Yoruba Muslims" with the help of a conceptual framework that focuses on the processes of "Islamic reform," "religious change," and "Christian-Muslim encounter," and shows their individual contribution to understanding religious transformations as well as their linkages. My understanding of conceptual framework is based on Joseph Maxwell's definition as "primarily a conception or model of what is out there that you plan to study, and of what is going on with these things and why—a tentative *theory* of the phenomena that you are investigating."[17] Based on this definition, I consider

---

[16] Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam,* Occasional Papers Series (Washington D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1986), 14.

[17] Joseph A. Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, 2.ed. 41 (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2005), 39.

"Islamic reform," "religious change" and "Christian-Muslim encounter" as theory-driven terms for the description and analysis of empirical processes and events that help to clarify the role of MSSN in "Yoruba Muslim" religious change. Islamic reform, religious change and Christian-Muslim encounter are the central concepts I developed based on my empirical research data and the literature review, and I take them to be framing 'the things that are going on' in the history of the MSSN since 1954. Through a wide range of literature on these terms, I will show in this study that understanding Islam as a discursive tradition also implies an understanding of Islamic reform, religious change and Christian-Muslim encounter as interrelated discursive fields. Taken together they provide an understanding of the role of MSSN regarding the transformation of practices and identities of many Western educated "Yoruba Muslims."

To further understand the MSSN as an important object of religious and historical study in Nigeria, I wish to draw attention to how the Society connects with these points: the contemporary forms of "religious organisation" and the concept of "religion," the link between youth and religion, and the interaction between religious movements and the nation-state. Starting with the first point, the MSSN can be understood as an organisational framework of Western educated Muslims that illustrates one of the new forms of religiosity which began in the second half of the nineteenth century among the "Yoruba Muslims." The history of the Society is therefore important to understanding the role of religious organisation in the conceptualisation of "religion." Many studies show that "religion" is a contested term, as the attempt to define it usually leads to the creation of boundaries on what is "in" and "out" of its frame.[18] Attempting to define "religion" is beyond the scope of my study. Nonetheless, without implying a universal definition, I consider it to be discursively constructed based on the ways people talk about and relate to what they understood variously as the supernatural and sacred. Meredith McGuire argues that one of the modern characteristics of religion is "institutional specialisation" in which there is a standardised doctrine, specialists with religious responsibilities, and an organisation that ensures uniformity of rituals, facilitates group teachings and coordinates programmes.[19] When comparing this argument to the MSSN, it can be said that the Society as an organisation has clearly defined objectives and mission statement, administrative units, personnel with varying duties, structured educational programmes and

---

[18] Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context*, 5th ed. (Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 2002), 1–14; Robin Horton, "A Definition of Religion, and Its Uses," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 90, no. 2 (1960): 201.

[19] McGuire, *Religion*, 99.

social activities, all of which are coded in a constitution. By showing the history of the MSSN, this study demonstrates one of the ways in which modern Muslim religious practices developed as well as their organisational structures and why the practices and structures are changing.

Also, the experiences of the members of MSSN is useful in understanding the relationship between Islam and the youth. Many studies have shown that the focus on the youth is important because they helped to communicate new expressions and orientations of Islam.[20] As Marloes Janson argues in the case of Tabligh Jama'at, a reform movement founded in India in 1926, the new expressions of Islam are represented "in terms of age and generation" and they could be in the form of conversion from a cultural interpretation of Islam to more modern interpretations.[21] Focusing on the youth is also significant because, as Janson points out, the concept of "youth" is modern and what it means to be a "youth" remains largely controversial.[22] The history of MSSN further reveals the complexity of making sense of the term. It shows that while a 'youth' is generally understood to be a 'student' and defined in terms of an age category in Nigeria, the MSSN departs from this conceptualisation. Instead, it adopts a contentious idea of a 'student,' which is less restricted to age, as the definition of a Muslim. The history of the Society thus shows that members have their ideas of what it means to be Muslim youth in ways that challenge the meanings of the two categories among other Nigerian religious groups.

Also, the history of MSSN sheds light on the interaction between religious movements and the nation-state. To an extent, the MSSN is also a 'movement' that seeks change of state policies that go against its interpretation of Islam. My understanding of the MSSN as a movement borrows from the social movement scholars, Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, who are of the view that we can identify three distinctive features of movements: their involvement in *conflictual relations* with clearly *identified opponents*, linkage by informal *networks*, and a distinct *collective identity* which unites its members.[23] According to Simone Flynn, movements are also assumed to be *voluntary organisations* that employ *collective action* to *make* or *block*

---

[20] See Marloes Janson, *Islam, Youth, and Modernity in the Gambia: The Tablighi Jamaʿat* Volume (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Adeline Masquelier and Benjamin F. Soares, eds., *Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016); Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera, eds., *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Abdoulaye Sounaye, "Irwo Sunnance Yan-No! 1: Youth Claiming, Contesting and Transforming Salafism," *Islamic Africa* 6, 1-2 (2015).

[21] Janson, *Islam, Youth, and Modernity in The Gambia*, 14.

[22] Ibid., 15.

[23] Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Malden, Mass., Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 20. Emphasis in italics mine

changes in society, and whose interest is in *group goals* rather than individual goals.[24] As a movement, the MSSN is a voluntary association of students who have commonalities such as religion and education, and its members are opposed to certain government policies that affect the expression of their religiosity, as illustrated in the veil crisis. Among its stated objectives is to fight for student religious rights and protest government policies that are considered to affect the public. But beyond fighting for the rights of Muslim students, the history of MSSN also illustrates that government policies have also shaped some aspects of its own change such as Islamic education.

In the same vein, the MSSN is an interesting case study for recognising one of the efforts to strengthen the ties between the culturally diverse Nigerian groups.[25] Since the colonial period, the wide diversity of Nigerians, coupled with their competing interests, has led to a situation where three major ethnic groups, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, are suspicious of one another, from fear of domination over power and economic resources. This resulted in a recurrent political instability and a series of violent ethnic conflicts, including a civil war in the first decades of Nigeria's independence.[26] The suspicion between different ethnic groups often affect their relationships on religious practices such as their disagreement over religious public holidays and the implementation of Sharia. To deal with the problem of fear of domination in Nigeria, the MSSN promotes the importance of brotherhood in Islam of all Muslim students in Nigeria and encouraged them to be united regardless of their cultural diversities and political affiliations. However, despite promoting national unity, the MSSN relationship with the Nigerian state has not always been consistent. For instance, while the Society has opposed the government over its constitution, it has nevertheless encouraged active participation of Muslims in public life and democratic governance.

---

[24] Simone I. Flynn, "New Social Movement Theory," in *Theories of Social Movements*, ed. Editors of Salem Press, 88–98 (California: Salem Press, 2011), 88–89. Emphasis in italics mine

[25] Several policies have been made in this regard, among which are state creation, federal character principle, and national youth service. For detailed discussions on these policies, see Adiele E. Afigbo and Toyin Falola, eds., *Nigerian History, Politics and Affairs: The Collected Essays of Adiele Afigbo* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World, 2005), 423–36; Richard L. Sklar, "Unity or Regionalism: The Nationalities Question," in *Crafting the New Nigeria: Confronting the Challenges*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg, 39–59 (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2004), 39–59; R. T. Akinyele, "States Creation in Nigeria: The Willink Report in Retrospect," *African Studies Review* 39, no. 2 (1996); Yemi Balogun, "Why Youth Service in Nigeria: The Contests and Agitations in 1972-1973," *Journal of Pan African Studies* 7, no. 8 (2015).

[26] Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 8; Jean Herskovits, "One Nigeria," *Foreign Affairs* 51, no. 2 (1973): 392–3. Some of the most detailed studies of ethnicity in Nigeria are Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension publisher, 1978) and Onigu Otite, *Ethnic Pluralism and Ethnicity in Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Shaneson, 1990).

By encouraging Muslims to seek appointment in public offices, the Society also sets itself apart from many Islamic groups such as the Boko Haram in Northeast Nigeria that has taken up arms against the government. The group, whose name, *Boko Haram*, translated as "Western education is forbidden,"[27] has been inspired by the traditions of the Salafis (followers of pious predecessors regarded as *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) while emphasising a *jihadi* (violence) worldview.[28] From 2004, the founder of the group, Muhammad Yusuf (1970-2009), spoke against the need for Muslims to acquire Western education and work for the government, a position that was opposed by his teacher, Ja'far Mahmud Adam, as counterproductive for the Muslims goal to fight their Western enemy. Yusuf also rejected the legal system of Nigeria and other institutions of the nation-state such as the police and the judiciary. Since 2003, the argument of the group steadily turned into violent clashes with the Nigerian government, from attacking police stations and carrying out suicide bombings (of markets, churches and mosques) to kidnapping women and taking over towns and villages.[29] While the MSSN has positioned itself differently from the Boko Haram, its own history specifically reveals that an Islamic movement can work with a non-Muslim nation-state system despite having contradictory visions with that state. In the next section, I wish to clarify how I use the term, "Yoruba Muslim." I will also provide a short narration of the aspect of religious change among "Yoruba Muslims" in order to show the continuities and discontinuities of their history in the MSSN as well as the MSSN history in Nigeria.

1.2 The MSSN in Yoruba Muslims experiences: forms of Islam, education, and associational life

The term "Yoruba Muslim" is controversial among those who identify with Islam in Yorubaland, and, this controversy is related to my critique of Peel's work. For many Western educated Muslims in Yorubaland, the term does not describe their "proper" identity because it suggests to them that a person is first a 'Yoruba,' a so-called "Traditionalist" in practice, before

---

[27] The group was initially called *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jama'a wa-l hijra* (the people of the Sunna (of the prophet) and the community (of Muslims) as well as (those who accept the obligation) to emigrate. See Roman Loimeier, "Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria," *Africa Spectrum* 47, 2-3 (2012): 151. At various times, it was also called Yusufiyya, Taliban, and eventually, Boko Haram. The name Boko Haram which derives from its argument against Western education is sometimes translated erroneously as "Western education is sin." See Abimbola Adesoji, "The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria," *Africa Spectrum* 45, no. 2 (2010): 99–100. The new name of the group *Ahl al-Sunna li-l-Daʿwa wa-l-jihād* (Salafis for Proselytisation and Jihad) is reflected in a recent study by Alexander Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria: Islam, Preaching, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 193.

[28] Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria*, 193–96.

[29] Roman Loimeier, "Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria," *Africa Spectrum* 47, 2-3 (2012): 149–52; Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria*, 202–18.

he is a 'Muslim.'[30] Here, I used the term "Traditionalist" to refer to a Yoruba who identifies with cultural practices and beliefs which many Yoruba Muslims and Christians call "Traditional Religion."[31] Given the debate around the term, I discovered that Gbadamosi, Reichmuth, and Peel do not clarify why they use the term, "Yoruba Muslims" - in their studies. However, in his comparative analysis of indigenous culture and Islam, Peel seems to employ the concept together with another term, "Yoruba Islam," to imply 'tolerant' and 'peaceful' Muslims and form of Islam in contrast to what is noticed among Muslims in Northern Nigeria. In one instance, where he commented on a young Muslim of Yoruba origin, Michael Adebolajo, who hacked a soldier to death with a cleaver in London in 2013, Peel argues that,

> The bitter irony of his having adopted a *violently jihadist form of Islam* is that *Yoruba Islam is not at all like this*. In Yorubaland, Islam and Christianity, although rivals, coexist peaceably within a framework of shared community values*, in marked contrast to the situation in Northern Nigeria*, where a *jihadist* tradition has contributed to a pattern of endemic religious violence whose most recent manifestation is the militant Islamist organization known as Boko Haram.[32]

On the contrary, the arguments in many studies show that this is an oversimplifying way of categorising Muslims and forms of Islam. Rüdiger Seesemann argues that such categorisation can be linked to the colonial image of 'African Islam' which suggests "contaminated," "syncretist," or "malleable" Islam as a deviation from the "original," "violent," and "Arab' Islam.[33] This dichotomous view is problematic because it denies change and diversity of Islam as a religious tradition as well as Muslim identities. My work will present such cases of change and diversity and thus shows the danger of this dichotomy. Contrary to Peel, "Yoruba Muslim" is used in the study simply to refer to the diverse 'Yoruba group' who identify with Islam and whose identifications have changed over time in relation to religious and social changes in Yorubaland, Nigeria and the Muslim world.[34] Importantly, it is employed to draw attention to Muslims whose experiences differ, but intersect, the Hausa and Fulani who have been the subject of numerous studies on Islam in Nigeria.[35] As is the case with the Hausa and Fulani,

---

[30] Afis Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, April 2016 - January 2017, Ibadan.

[31] As I will show in Chapter Four, the cultural practices of the Yoruba were not framed as 'religion' before the arrival of Christian missions in the 1840s. However, I am using the term "Traditional Religion" to show what those cultural practices are now called.

[32] See Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 2. Emphasis mine

[33] Rüdiger Seesemann, *The Divine Flood: Ibrāhīm Niasse and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11–12.

[34] The word 'Yoruba' is sometimes difficult to use to describe the people because the diverse nationalities in the region do not agree in their identification with the term. In chapter Three, I will draw attention to this difficulty and why the word came to be used to create a sense of unity among them.

[35] Such studies include Lovejoy, *Slavery, Commerce and Production in the Sokoto Caliphate of West Africa*; Roman Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria* (Illinois: Northwestern

Yoruba Muslims follow Sunni tradition and the Maliki school of jurisprudence. They are also a largely diverse Muslim community which reflects not only in their everyday practices but also religious organisations and orientations about Islam.

Patrick Ryan and Gbadamosi's studies reveal that many Yoruba had become Muslims by the nineteenth century.[36] As they embraced the religion, their practices were shaped by Islamic traditions taught by clerics of different orientations, who they called *alfa/alufa*, many of who operated as itinerant preachers and Imams (called *lemọmu),* in mosques and teachers in Qur'anic schools.[37] The different orientations of the *alfas* ensured that the Yoruba Muslims grew as a diverse religious communities in the colonial period. Apart from Islam, studies by J. F. Ade Ajayi and Peel showed that the arrival of Christian missionaries from the 1840s onwards also led to a religious transformation in Yoruba communities.[38] The missionaries established schools which offered education alongside the gospel to win souls for Christ and promote 'civilisation' based on European ideals.

Even though the schools encouraged many people to convert to Christianity, it was the influence of colonial rule that facilitated it. Education was required for employment in the colonial service, acquisition of modern professional skills, and access to new hierarchies of power. As Peel rightly pointed out, education was seen by many Yoruba as a form of *Ọlaju* ('enlightenment' or 'civilisation') and a means to enable progress in the society owing to its link to the new opportunities created by colonization.[39] Islam was also understood as *Ọlaju*, but, for many Yoruba Muslims, it offered a way of life which was less 'western' than the one Christian missions promoted.[40] For many Yoruba, the term 'western' refers to the ways of life, education, language and system of government, among others, that are associated with

---

University Press, 1997); Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate,* Ibadan history series (London: Longman, 1977); Elisha P. Renne, *Veils, Turbans, and Islamic Reform in Northern Nigeria* (Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018); Ostien, Philip, Jamila Nasir and Franz Kogelman, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Sharia in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2005)

[36] Patrick J. Ryan, *Imale: Yoruba Participation in the Muslim Tradition*: *A study of Clerical Piety* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1978), 104–17; Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba,* 22–39.

[37] The Qur'anic school, where Arabic literacy and various subjects on Islam are taught, is understood to mean *madrasa* by many Yoruba. This is why I use Qur'anic school and *madrasa* interchangeably in this study. See 'Lai Olurode, *Glimpses of Madrasa from Africa* (Lagos: Islamic Network for Development, 2009), 52–53.

[38] J. F. A. Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: The Making of the New Elite* (London: Longmans, 1965); J. D. Y. Peel, "Religious Change in Yorubaland," *Africa* 37, no. 03 (1967).

[39] J. D. Y. Peel, "*Ọlaju*: A Yoruba Concept of Development," *The Journal of Development Studies* 14, no. 2 (2007).

[40] Stefan Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims: The Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 26, no. 4 (1996): 366.

European civilization.[41] They also see the schools established by the Christian missionaries as part of what constitutes the 'western.'[42] My usage of the term, "Western education," in this study is informed by this assumption.

Western education and colonization presented challenges as well as opportunities for the Muslims, and how they reconciled with the situation impacted on why their self-understanding and practices as Muslims changed. Many parents enrolled their children in the mission schools (some of whom converted to Christianity), while the majority showed antipathy towards them. In the 1890s, the colonial government addressed this antipathy among the Lagos Muslims and facilitated the establishment of the first set of institutions designated as "Government Muslim schools" between 1896 and 1899.[43] Unlike the Qur'anic type, they were schools that offered both Western (e.g. the 3Rs, English, Geography and History)[44] and Islamic teachings. Although they received financial support from the government, the management of these schools was in the hands of the Muslims.

Over time, these schools produced Western educated Muslim elite.[45] But, despite the higher number of Muslims in the population, Muslim members of the educated elite were few compared to Christians. Worried by the huge gap and their disadvantaged position, the Muslim elite began to promote Western education in many Muslim communities. In 1916, some of them invited the Ahmadiyya Movement-in-Islam to Lagos for this objective.[46] In this period, the movement was at the forefront of promoting Western education as part of its programmes of Islamic reform in Muslim societies of Africa. Some other young Muslims were also inspired by the importance of Western education in reform, and, in 1923, they formed the Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society (now Ansar-Ud-Deen Society).[47] Like the Ahmadiyya, the Ansar-Ud-Deen and other movements established during the colonial period, focused primarily on providing

---

[41] Michael Omolewa, "Traditional African Modes of Education: Their Relevance in the Modern World," *International Review of Education* 53, 5-6 (2007): 594; Muhib O. Opeloye, "The Yoruba Muslims' Cultural Identity Question," *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, (IJOURELS)* 1, no. 2 (2011): 3.

[42] Opeloye, "The Yoruba Muslims' Cultural Identity Question": 3.

[43] G. O. Gbadamosi, "The Establishment of Western Education Among Muslims in Nigeria, 1896-1926," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4, no. 1 (1967): 107.

[44] Ibid., 110.

[45] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 370–1.

[46] Ibid., 371. For a history of how the movement was founded, see John H. Hanson, "Jihad and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community: Nonviolent Efforts to Promote Islam in the Contemporary World," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 11, no. 2 (November 2007): 77–86

[47] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 372–5.

access to Western education among Muslims.[48] In addition, they promoted some reforms which inspired new practices such as the use of elective officers and written constitutions for socio-religious activities as well as the adoption of English and Yoruba for the *khuṭba* (sermon) during Friday prayers, thereby adding to the diversity of Yoruba Muslims.[49]

The operation of the Qur'anic schools and their *alfas* was challenged by the popularity of these western-style Muslim schools. Many Qur'anic schools adjusted to the new social order by borrowing from the pedagogies of the Western schools. Sakariyau Aliyu's study of these *madrasas* showed that this was started in 1938 by an itinerant Ilorin scholar in Lagos, Shaykh Kamalud-deen Al-Adaby (1907-2005).[50] Despite the criticism of many *alfas* against his innovation, Al-Adaby's school witnessed large enrolment and became one of the leading institutions of modern Islamic education in Yorubaland. The *madrasas* that adopted the western-style pedagogies like the Al-Adaby's model later produced students who became teachers and leaders in the MSSN from the 1960s.

Besides religion and education, there were changes in other aspects of Yoruba Muslims social lives from the nineteenth century. The changes were in associational life in areas like recreation, religion, occupation, education and politics.[51] A number of Muslims belonged to the non-religious associations that emerged in this period, but they also had religiously exclusive ones for themselves. One of the most successful in terms of members was the Killa Society (c.1895) which propagated mutual-help and modernisation of Muslim life and festivities.[52] The establishment of MSSN was part of this growing associational colonial life, and, like the Ahmadiyya and Ansar-Ud-Deen, it symbolised a specific effort to promote some objectives in light of the prevailing social changes.

However, unlike other founders of Muslim associations, those of the MSSN were mainly secondary school students. What led to the formation of MSSN was their encounter with a

---

[48] Other groups founded in the colonial period were the Jama'at-ul-Islamiyya (est. 1924), Zumratul-Islamiyya Society of Lagos (est. 1926) and Isabatudeen Society of Ibadan (est. 1958). See Ishaq O. Oloyede, "Islam in Nigeria: A Century of National Islamic Societies," *Journal of Islam in Nigeria* 1, no. 1 (2015); Gbadamosi, "The Establishment of Western Education among Muslims in Nigeria, 1896-1926".

[49] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 367.

[50] Sakariyau A. Aliyu, "Transmission of Learning in Modern Ilorin: A History of Islamic Education, 1897-2012," (PhD Thesis, Leiden University, 2015), 113–27.

[51] The specific dates when most of these associations were established are not known. For those reported in the newspapers, see Nozomi Sawada, "The Educated Elite and Associational Life in Early Lagos Newspapers: In Search of Unity for the Progress of Society," (PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011), 98–108; Philip S. Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 53.

[52] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 370.

Christian way of life and an understanding of religion in the schools owned by missionaries and the government in Lagos. Students in these schools received lessons from the Bible and also participated in socio-religious activities organised by associations like the Students Christian Movement (SCM) founded in Nigeria in 1940. While these schools facilitated the study of the Christian faith, Muslim students were concerned about not having opportunity to learn about their own religion. Dawud Noibi contends that the inability of many of them to attend a *madrasa* in this period further posed a limitation to their knowledge of Islam.[53] These students were also worried that they had no associational platform for social activities that promoted their own religious tradition. [54]

Lateef Adegbite (1933-2012) of King's College and Tajudeen Aromashodu of Methodist Boys High School were among the students who expressed these concerns.[55] While Adegbite discussed with his friends about the need to have a platform similar to the SCM for Muslims, Aromashodu discovered a group named Muslim Students Society (est. 1923) in Burma (now Myanmar) in a monthly magazine of the Ahmadiyya, *The Islamic Review*.[56] Following correspondence with Burma, the texts on the activities of the group were sent to Aromashodu and used to develop the objectives of MSSN when it was established in 1954.[57] In addition to the Burmese influence, the Ahmadiyya also contributed to the formation of the ideals of MSSN, even though the Society later severed ties with the Ahmadis.[58] Also, the growth of the MSSN was supported by most Muslim organisations and prominent individuals, including politicians and market chiefs, in Yorubaland and Northern Nigeria. They encouraged their children to join the Society and provided financial and material aids during the Society's activities. This support provides an important insight into the relationship between the MSSN and the Muslim community in Nigeria.[59]

---

[53] D. O. S. Noibi, *Yoruba Muslim Youth and Christian-Sponsored Education* (Ijebu-Ode: Shebiotimo Publications, 1987), 17.

[54] Prof. Saidat and Prof. Fathi Mabadeje, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 22, 2016, UNILAG Mosque Akoka Lagos.

[55] Adegbite, who is a prominent figure in this study, was a great-grandson of a Sierra Leonean recaptive. He rose to become an academic, a minister and Secretary of the highest Islamic body in Nigeria, National Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA). See Musa A. Adedayo, *Abdul-Lateef Adegbite: A Life for the People* (Lagos: WEPCOM Publishers Ltd., 2006), 11–35.

[56] More details is given on the magazine in Chapter One. MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria," *Ash-Shabaab (The Youth) Pen*, 2004, http://www.mssnlagos.net (accessed November 14, 2015).

[57] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

[58] Peter B. Clarke and Ian Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria: A Study of a Muslim Community in a Post-Independence State, 1960-1983,* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1984), 49–50.

[59] Prof. Saidat and Prof. Fathi Mabadeje, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

Generally, in Nigeria, the postcolonial period witnessed a series of contestations by Muslims against the British colonial legacies. Of major interest, as Peter Clarke and Ian Linden pointed out, was a rise in national organisations which considered Islamic belief and practice as viable alternatives to the nation-state.[60] Adegbite, the first national President of the MSSN articulated this in the ideals of Muslim brotherhood. He was also of the view that the brotherhood would help to tackle the problem of ethnicity that was, from his point of view, created by colonialism.[61] This idea saw the MSSN spread from its Lagos base to other parts of Nigeria in less than a decade, and in the late 1960s connected to students in Africa and other parts of the world. In this period, the membership base of the Society also grew from secondary schools to tertiary institutions, and over time it included academics, medical doctors, engineers and artisans.

The MSSN also promoted an objective that sought to defend the interests and rights of Muslim students. In many cases, it went beyond Muslim students' interests by protesting perceived marginalisation of Muslims in politics, corruption and the non-adoption of Sharia in Yorubaland.[62] But, despite challenging the postcolonial system, there were also concerns that Muslims could take advantage of various opportunities it offered such as education and appointment into public services. This was considered in the MSSN as a measure to solve the disparity between Muslims and Christians in educational attainments and social status.

Over time, while protesting the postcolonial order and trying to provide alternatives to educational and communal life, the understanding of Islam in the MSSN and the practices of students also underwent major changes. In the 1980s, the MSSN promoted a series of reforms that challenged the Ahmadis, Sufi orders and some Yoruba cultural practices such as kneeling and prostration to greet elderly people. In addition, the Society revived some traditions of Islam from the past and stressed the importance of the ways of life of Prophet Muhammad and his companions, known as the *sunna*. These efforts to "reform" and "revive" prophetic traditions shaped new identities and practices among students which, for instance, were symbolised in keeping beards and wearing ankle-length trousers by the males and veiling by the females. Indeed, many Yoruba Muslims were aware of many aspects of these "prophetic models" before this period, but they were either considered to be voluntary acts or less suitable in their context unlike the MSSN.

---

[60] Clarke and Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria*, 81–90.
[61] Lateef O. Adegbite, "The Role of MSSN: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," *The Muezzin* (1975), 6–8.
[62] Ishaq Kunle Sanni, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 9, 2016, Bodija, Ibadan.

The MSSN emphasis on the reform and revival of the *sunna* in the 1980s deepened its own transformation as a reform movement. This transformation was inspired by many transnational revivalist movements such as the International Islamic Federation of Students Organisation (IIFSO) founded in Germany in 1969 and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) established in Saudi Arabia in 1972.[63] The success of the 1979 revolution in Iran was also an inspiration for many students. In addition to these movements, the revival was produced from the teachings of scholars who studied in countries such as Kuwait, Egypt and the United Kingdom and those who graduated from local *madrasas*. But while the discourses facilitated knowledge production, it also led to the factionalisation of the Society. In the 1990s, most of these factions left the MSSN to establish their societies, thereby adding to the diversity of Muslim groups in Yorubaland. The most prominent of the newly founded organisations are The Muslim Congress (TMC) (estb. 1994), the Dawah Front (estb. 1996), the Tijaniyya Muslim Students Association of Nigeria (TIMSAN) (estb. c.1990) and various groups who identified as Salafis.

Although it was anchored on the notion of *sunna*, the reform in the MSSN showed 'diversity' rather than a fixed practice nor a single interpretation of this concept. I used diversity in this context to mean multiple and often contradictory ways in which what is understood as *sunna* is portrayed. Many factors gave rise to this diversity in the MSSN, among which was the concern that the knowledge of Islam cannot be fully comprehended at once. There was also opposition by many parents and guardians of Muslim students to practices such as veiling, due to "hijabophobia" in public establishments as the veil crisis above shows. These challenges inspired the leaders of the MSSN to promote notions of Islam that emphasised moderation, tolerance, flexibility, multiple authorities and an acknowledgement of the social realities of Yorubaland and Nigeria in general.

The transformation of MSSN and its contribution to religious change were also observed in the method of religious knowledge transmission. The Society introduced several forms of learning that combined the pedagogies and epistemes of modern schools, the Qur'anic schools and the ideals of Muslim modernist thinkers such as Hassan Al-Banna (1906-1949). These forms of learning facilitated what Dale Eickelman refers to as "objectification" of religion, whereby

---

[63] Hisham Altalib, *Training Guide for Islamic Workers*, 4th ed. 1 (Herndon, Va.: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2001), 23; Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 175.

'Islam' is made a separate object of study in relation to other subjects.[64] They also led to what Gregory Starrett called "functionalisation" of religion which refers to the process of making Islam work for socio-economic and political ends.[65] The Islamic education in MSSN, promoted through platforms like the Islamic Vacation Course (IVC) and *Usrah* (family in Arabic, but referred to as the learning circle in the MSSN), emphasised Qur'an memorisation and a wide range of knowledge focusing on spirituality, gender, leadership skills, politics, and entrepreneurship considered to be necessary for being Muslim in modern society. As will be shown in this study, these forms of learning illustrate the changes in Islamic education of many Western educated Muslims in Yorubaland. With this brief description of the Islamization of Yoruba Muslims and its link to the MSSN, I wish to give a short review of studies about the MSSN and draw attention to the importance of research on the Society in Nigeria.

1.3 **The MSSN in studies of Muslims in Nigeria**

The significance of researching on the MSSN cannot be ignored as many studies have highlighted the involvement of the Society not only in the religious change of the Muslim elite in Nigeria but also in the socio-political history of the country. To avoid repetition, I wish to note that the study by Peel which underscores the role of the MSSN in Yoruba Muslims' religious change, referred to earlier, is one of these studies. Apart from this, there is a study by Clarke and Linden which describes Islam in modern Nigeria and shows the various ways Muslims grapple with the post-independence state.[66] As mentioned earlier, these include the formation of national organisations of which the MSSN is one. Clarke and Linden also emphasise the role of MSSN in the emergence of "Islamic fundamentalism" in Nigeria from the late 1970s which is mostly expressed in the contest against the country's constitution in place of the Sharia and the opposition to Western education.[67] Several publications have also demonstrated that some aspects of Muslim-Christian encounters have contributed to political instability and religious crisis in Nigeria.[68] Don Ohadike in one of these studies argues that the

---

[64] Dale F. Eickelman, "Mass Higher Education and the Religious Imagination in Contemporary Arab Societies," *American Ethnologist* 19, no. 4 (1992): 646–7.

[65] Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[66] Clarke and Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria*.

[67] They refer to this fundamentalism as the "modern attempt to seek to realise the fundamentals of Islam in contemporary Nigeria." ibid., 76.

[68] For instance see Patrick J. Ryan, "In My End Is My Beginning: Muslim and Christian Traditions at Cross-Purposes in Contemporary Nigeria," in *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa*, ed. Benjamin F. Soares, 187–220 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006); Olufemi Vaughan, *Religion and the making of Nigeria,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria: The crisis of religious politics and secular ideologies*, 2nd ed. (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2009); Muhib O. Opeloye, "Religious factor

MSSN is one of the movements responsible for this volatility in the 1980s.[69] He buttresses his argument with examples of the MSSN clash with a Christian preacher in Kaduna in 1987 and its protest against a church cross overlooking the mosque at the University of Ibadan in 1986.

Some studies have also revealed that the crises that grappled the state in Nigeria are motivated by the failure of political leadership, corruption and economic recession which led many people to identify more with religion than the state.[70] Within the context of tertiary institutions, Ebenezer Obadare argues that religiosity has been accentuated because the economic crisis of the 1980s led to decay in educational infrastructures and restriction of bursaries to students.[71] This allowed many religious groups an opportunity to fill the void, typically in a very competitive manner. The MSSN, according to him, provided this support for Muslim students by encouraging piety and actively guiding against the advances of Christian groups seeking to convert its members. Besides the effect of economic crisis, Obadare calls attention to the view that the students' religiosity is embedded in the process of modernity which includes the university system. What is more, is that students' religiosity is also an indication of the rapid transformation of youth identity.[72]

The agency of MSSN has also been identified in researches on new Islamic reform movements in Nigeria.[73] One of the most prominent and well-researched is the Yan Izala (Society for the Removal of Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition) founded in 1978 in Jos. Ousmane Kane demonstrated in his study of this movement that the MSSN provided the platform for many students who identified with it outside the schools. Together with Yan Izala, these students criticised the Sufi orders and advocated a return to Prophetic traditions. Also, Kane contends that many reform movements in Northern Nigeria are splinter groups of the MSSN. A well-

---

in Nigerian politics: implications for Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria," *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs. Journal* 10, no. 2 (1989); Akinola E. Olojo, "Muslims, Christians and Religious Violence in Nigeria: Patterns and Mapping (June 2006 - May 2014)," *IFRA-Nigeria working papers series*, no. 32 (2014).

[69] Don Ohadike, "Muslim-Christian Conflict and Political Instability in Nigeria," in *Religion and National Integration in Africa: Islam, Christianity and Politics in the Sudan and Nigeria*, ed. O. J. Hunwick, 101–23 (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 107–13.

[70] See Matthews A. Ojo, "The Contextual Significance of the Charismatic Movements in Independent Nigeria," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 58, no. 2 (1988): 183–8; Abdul-Raufu Mustapha and Mukhtar U. Bunza, "Contemporary Islamic Sects and Groups in Northern Nigeria," in *Sects and Social Disorder: Muslim Identities and Conflict in Northern Nigeria*, ed. Abdul Raufu. Mustapha, 54–97 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2014), 71.

[71] Ebenezer Obadare, "White-Collar Fundamentalism: Interrogating Youth Religiosity on Nigerian University Campuses," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 45, no. 04 (2007): 523–4.

[72] Ibid., 521.

[73] See Peter Clarke, "Islamic Reform in Contemporary Nigeria: Methods and Aims," *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1988): 521–7; Ousmane Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria: A Study of the Society for the Removal of Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition* (Boston MA: Brill, 2003), 73.

known one is the pro-Shi'a Muslim Brothers (later Islamic Movement of Nigeria [IMN]) led by Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, a former member of MSSN.[74]

The reference to the MSSN in these studies confirms its importance in the modern-day religious history of Nigeria. However, it is curious to note that there has been no major research on the Society and how it links up with contemporary Nigeria's religious history. As a matter of fact, except Ohadike, and Clarke and Linden who used two paragraphs, the history of the Society is only in one paragraph in each of the studies mentioned above, which includes the work of Peel. This excludes the few references often made to it on other issues discussed by the authors. But in the absence of a major research, I found two publications on two different aspects of the history of the Society. The first is Saheed Ahmad Rufai's work in 2011 on the experiences of students that gave rise to the MSSN.[75] Rufai argues that the MSSN was founded because of the "persecution" of Muslims in mission schools. This persecution, according to him, was in discriminatory practices which included not allowing Muslim students to practice their religion and requesting them to convert to Christianity before enrolment.[76] As I will show later, this argument is inadequate to explain why the MSSN was founded. The second work is by Abdullahi Adamu Sulaiman and Aminu Mu'allimu Kambari in 2014 which only discusses the recurring challenges, which include finance, of the MSSN in one of its Area Units located in Nasarawa State.[77]

Besides these publications, others are mainly undergraduate and graduate projects. The most recent from the year 2016 is the doctoral thesis of Mufutau Bello which explores the activities of MSSN inspired schools and a credit scheme in Ekiti. Bello argues that the schools helped to mould the religious identities of students, while the credit scheme facilitated mutual support among Muslims.[78] There is also a master's project by Rasheed Asimiyu (2011) on the causes of conflicts in the MSSN from the 1980s.[79] The study notes the factors responsible for the conflict which include differences in the interpretation of Islamic texts and leadership tussle.

---

[74] Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria*, 73–98.

[75] Saheed A. Rufai, "Da'wah in the Face of Christian Persecution: The Historical Development of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN)," *Jurnal Al-Tamaddun*, no. 6 (2011).

[76] Persecution is used in this work to mean many practices such as making Muslims to adopt Christian names and not allowing Muslims holidays in missions schools.

[77] Abdullahi A. Sulaiman and Aminu M."a. Kambari, "The Activities and Challenges of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN) in Nasarawa State, Nigeria," *IOSR, Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 19, no. 1 (Jan. 2014).

[78] Mufutau O. Bello, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria and Development of Islam in Ekiti State, 1954-2014," (PhD Thesis, Ekiti State University, 2016).

[79] Rasheed A. Asimiyu, "Conflicts Among the Members of MSSN in Tertiary Institutions in Southwestern Nigeria," (MA Thesis, University of Ibadan, 2011).

Another MA project by Muhammadu-Thani Muhammadu-Mukhtar in 2006 examines the impact of Al-Banna's writing on the reform in MSSN. The study argues that the litany, called *Al-Ma'thurat*, produced by Al-Banna was influential in the "spiritual development" of MSSN members because it was used to discourage the use of charms among them.[80]

Some BA essays have also focused on the annual activities of MSSN outside the schools. The main activities in this regard are the village *da'wa* (invitation/propagation) and hospital visitation which take place in many communities such as Ibadan, Lagos and Kwara.[81] Another interesting essay is the one by Sherifa Bankole on the role of the MSSN in the ethical formation of students. In the essay, she notes that the attitude of many Muslims is affected by "modernisation," "Western fashion," "media," and "inferiority complex" and that the MSSN aims to inspire good morals by guiding students on how to manage these concerns.[82]

I consider these researches very useful, but they are not enough. In fact, some arguments in them are also misleading. For instance, Ohadike, who based his argument on the non-tolerant posture of students in Northern Nigeria, claimed that the MSSN was "most active" in the North in the 1980s and thus, more active than in the South.[83] This is a narrow way of analysing the MSSN because it suggests that activism only corresponds to protest and displays of anger. It will also be mistaken to follow the argument of Rufai that the MSSN was founded because of the persecution of Muslims. Although he acknowledged that there were other factors that led to its formation, his study however remained silent on these factors.[84] This theory of persecution, still widely held in the MSSN and among many Yoruba Muslims, is also reproduced by Kane in his study.[85] As this thesis will show, this theory is inadequate because it excludes other important reasons for the founding of the MSSN like the need for Islamic education and enjoyable social activities in that period.

---

[80] Muhammadu M. Muhammadu-Thani, "The Impacts of Hassan's Writings on the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria," (MA Thesis, University of Ilorin, 2006), 56–65.

[81] Shuaib G. Olanrewaju, "A Study of Activities of Hospital Visitation: Jama'ah of the Muslim Students Society, University of Ilorin," (BA Essay, University of Ilorin, 2011); Najib A. Abdul-Malik, "A Study of the Activities of Village Da'wa of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria, University of Ilorin Branch," (BA Essay, University of Ilorin, 2016); Jamiu A. Wasiu, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria and Its Da'wa Activities in Edeland," (BA Essay, University of Ilorin, 2016).

[82] Sherifa F. Bankole, "The Role of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria in the Development of Islamic Ethics in University of Ilorin," (BA Essay, University of Ilorin, 2006).

[83] Don Ohadike, "Muslim-Christian Conflict and Political Instability in Nigeria" in *Religion and National Integration in Africa*, 107.

[84] Rufai, "Da'wah in the Face of Christian Persecution".

[85] Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria*, 72.

This study does not only argue for the need to address these misconceptions, it is also aimed at situating the history of MSSN in the studies of Muslims in Nigeria. Specifically, it seeks to contribute to the existing literature in many fields that are related to these Muslims. First, it adds to studies on religious change among Yoruba Muslims. To achieve this, it draws attention to how Western educated Yoruba Muslims facilitated the revitalisation of traditions of Muslims in the past while they sought to remain attuned with current realities. Second, it adds to studies on Christian-Muslim encounters with a focus on Yoruba society. Specifically, it situates the role of young Muslims in this encounter and shows the co-constitution of religious identities and traditions in and through these encounters. Third, the thesis contributes to studies of Islamic reform. Using the case of MSSN, it draws attention to the conception of reform in the MSSN and the way it was inspired and produced. Also, it will show how reform was propagated by the MSSN and trace the changes it produced both in the MSSN and Yorubaland. Fourth, this study also connects to the literature on the impact of the colonialization on Muslim societies. As a movement formed in the colonial period, the study illustrates that the establishment of the MSSN is one of the ways the Muslims in Yorubaland dealt with the legacies of colonial rule.

1.4 **Arguments and questions**

This research is guided by the assumption that the MSSN has contributed to the change in the idea of a "good Muslim," especially among the Western educated Muslims in Yoruba society. The MSSN did not only help to mediate this change, it also became an object of this change by transforming into a reform movement. One of the aims of this thesis is to trace the history of the MSSN to better understand this religious change among Yoruba Muslims. It analyses the main objectives for which the MSSN was founded, the way they were applied in many activities from the beginning and why they shifted over time. The study also explores the transformation of the MSSN into a reform movement and why the Society actively shaped what came to be accepted as "Islam" or as "good" Islamic practice. To specify what this changing tradition includes, the impact of MSSN reforms in selected spheres will be analysed: the sphere of Islamic education, modes of dressing, religious rituals, Yoruba cultural practices, and modes of sociality. Furthermore, the study draws attention to the fragmentation of the MSSN which began with the isolation of the Ahmadis and later the breaking away of many factions such as The Muslim Congress (TMC) and those who identified as Salafis.

This study is also anchored on the argument that the MSSN contribution to Yoruba Muslims religious change did not occur in isolation but largely connected to encounters with Christian missions, the social transformations of the post/colonial Nigerian state, as well as to

developments in the world of Islam. Another objective of this thesis is to establish why these entanglements feed back into the history of MSSN. Specifically, the thesis draws attention to several MSSN efforts to prevent Christianization of Muslim students and close the Muslim educational gap with Christians in order to increase their share of opportunities in Nigeria's economic and political sectors, which until recent times is predominantly in favour of Christians. Furthermore, the thesis will point to why the MSSN challenges the Christian way of life in the school system in Yorubaland and helps its members to negotiate the ideals of modernity. Also, it will demonstrate the MSSN endeavour to fashion ways of being Muslim that include the adoption of some practices from Christian groups, and at the same time to integrate the cultural practices of the Yoruba, global Islam and the modern world.

One of the key arguments in this study is that the involvement of MSSN in religious change does not correspond to every non/Western educated Yoruba Muslim experience. As observed in many Muslim societies, the Yoruba Muslims are diverse in their religious expressions, and the MSSN is only an aspect of their diversity. Clearly, the MSSN was aware of the varying orientations of its members from the start and aimed to create a sense of uniformity while respecting their differences. The reform in the Society in the 1980s appears to challenge this diversity as certain creeds such as those of the Salafis and Sufi brothers began to be questioned. However, the reform only narrows the possibility of diversity in the Society rather than eradicating it entirely. To illustrate this, I draw attention to the different expressions and notions of Islam in Yoruba society and the form of diversity in MSSN in the periods before and after its reform. I also shed light on the central arguments that shape the diversity in MSSN in order to understand why it promotes varying interpretations of Islam and ideas of a "good Muslim."

Although the MSSN as an organisation is at the centre of my study, I pay little attention to analysing it from an organisational perspective. However, I show why it can be understood as a reform movement following its emphasis on reviving age-old Muslim traditions. Also, I highlight the principal actors, both in local and international spheres, that helped to shape the history of the MSSN, and thereby show why changes in the notions of Islam and correct practices are the subject and object of an ongoing local and transnational Islamic discourses.

The central question that guides this research is how has the MSSN contributed to religious change and new ways of being Muslim in Yorubaland which includes its own transformation? The research explores four questions to answer this. First, what were the objectives for which the MSSN was established and how were these objectives put into action? Second, in what

ways was Islamic reform inspired and produced in the MSSN and why did the MSSN become fragmented after the reform? Third, what were the impacts of Islamic reform on Muslim students and the MSSN as a movement? Fourth, what are the forms of Islamic education in the MSSN and what kind of knowledge is taught to Muslim students through these forms? In the section below, I describe the methodology employed to answer these questions and achieve the research objectives.

1.5 **Methodology**

The study adopts a historical perspective to show how the MSSN has developed and changed over time. This perspective underscores my use of the historical method of data collection and interpretation which involves a systematic collection of sources produced by various events about the MSSN and analysing them in line with the research objectives. A major aspect of the method employed in the study is also based on an ethnographic approach to data collection and analysis that involves participant observation, interviews and reflexivity. There are two major reasons behind the use of this ethnographic method. Firstly, it is useful for me to supplement the paucity of sources on the MSSN, which I will refer to later. Secondly, it allows me to understand the history of the MSSN and its activities from a nuanced perspective. The study also takes insights from concepts such as 'discursive tradition,' 'Islamic reform,' and 'religious change' in other fields, especially the Anthropology of Islam, Islamic Studies and Religious Studies. These concepts contribute to how I frame and analyse the activities of MSSN within a time perspective. In the sections below, I describe the scope of this study, the limitations, the sources (from the archives, libraries and interviews) as well as my fieldwork experience and challenges.

Scope of the study: This study is from 1954 to 2014. However, it also addresses issues that are beyond this time frame. Most importantly, it traces the history of Yoruba Muslims before the 1950s and the MSSN up to the time of writing this thesis. The opening period, 1954, is when the MSSN was formed, while 2014 happens to be its sixtieth anniversary. This period is deemed long enough to research about the changes occurring on the diverse generations of Muslims who are associated with the Society. Moreover, this time frame can also be linked to a popular narrative in the Society about its genealogy. The narration is based on the writings of its former leaders such as Adegbite. In 1974, Adegbite divided the history of MSSN into three decades, namely: the Foundation Decade, 1954-1964; the Decade of Consolidation, 1964-

1974; and the Decade of Crusade, 1974-1984.[86] In 2014, Afis Oladosu, a former leader of the Society, built on this form of classification and identified six decades, but with a different interpretation, of the history of the MSSN referred to as: the "Era of Inauguration, Proclamation and Expansion, 1955-1965"; the "Era of Consolidation, 1965-1975"; the "Decade of Progress, 1975-1985"; the "Emergence of Schism, Dissensions and Extreme Opinions, 1985-1995"; the "Era of Total Balkanization, 1995-2005" and the "Era of Rediscovery and Reconstruction, 2005-2015."[87]

However, while this time frame is useful for thinking about chronology, the course of events in the Society does not fit into rigid boundaries, because they are linked and overlapped. This is why I only adopt this timeline where it fits into my argument. As Ivan Hrbek points out, "historical periodisation is one of the means by which the historian can see historical development not only as a chronologically arranged succession of events and facts, but as a phenomenon with its own inner laws, with different stages, that can be interpreted in causal terms and that offers itself to a synthesis."[88] Hrbek further contends that historians' approaches to their subject matters would determine the periods they employ.

In 1955, with the election of national officers, the MSSN became a national organisation in outlook, although it was only in the following year that students from Northern Nigeria began to participate in the activities of the Society.[89] However, this change was not reflected in the constitution of the Society until about 1966 when some branches of the Society had been established in the region. The constitution divided the Society into two zones: the A-Zone (representing Northern Nigeria) and the B-Zone (Southern Nigeria). The MSSN members in Yorubaland are in the B-Zone together with students in the South-East and South-South regions.[90] In the B-Zone, Yorubaland presently has six administrative divisions, which correspond with the geopolitical state system in Nigeria, referred to as Area Units. They are the MSSN Lagos Area Unit, the MSSN Ogun Area Unit, the MSSN Oyo Area Unit, the MSSN Ondo Area Unit, the MSSN Osun Area Unit and the MSSN Ekiti Area Unit.[91] This study

---

[86] Lateef O. Adegbite "The Role of MSSN": 6-7.
[87] Afis Oladosu, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria at 60: Impact, Problems, Challenges and Lessons for Today's Generation," Address at Trenchard Hall, University of Ibadan, MAY 4, 2014.
[88] Ivan Hrbek, "Towards a Periodisation of African History," in *Emerging Themes of African history*, ed. T. O. Ranger (Nairobi: East Africa Pub. House, 1974), 37–38.
[89] Rufai, "Da'wah in the Face of Christian Persecution": 81–2.
[90] Abubakr Tajudeen, *MSS at 30: The History and the History Makers of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria* (Ibadan: The Islamic Book Centre, U.I.M.S.S., 1984), 7–8.
[91] Yusuf O. D. Olayinka, "Administrative Report of MSSN B-Zone between Feb. 2012 and Feb. 2014," in *Annual Zonal Conference*, 4–15.

focuses on these six units. But it also refers to Yoruba students in other regions, especially Kwara, which according to the political map of Nigeria, is part of the North.

As noted earlier, the membership base of MSSN has extended from secondary schools to tertiary institutions and to Muslims of various professional fields since the 1960s. While it remained a voluntary organisation, its national outlook makes the history of the Society key to understanding the experience of many Muslim elites who have gone through the formal school system in post-independence Nigeria. Despite embracing Muslims from all over the country today, its formation is still seen by many Muslims in Nigeria to based on the experience of Yoruba Muslims in their reaction to the activities of Christian missions.[92] This is one of the reasons I situate the study in Yorubaland. But, given its national outlook, the history of the MSSN should not be understood as a Yoruba affair. Having said this, however, one cannot but query the boundary between Yoruba Muslims (and why this study is worthy of research in Yorubaland) and other Nigerian Muslims if the MSSN is a national organisation. A simple way to recognise this is to view the MSSN beyond the main factors that unite its members which are Islam, Western education and their common goals. Besides these common factors, the members have different histories with regards to ethnicity, language, economy, social organizations and cultures which shaped their understanding of Islam and the nature of their interreligious encounters.[93] Indeed, such differences are responsible for the diversity of lived Islam in Muslim societies around the world.

Another crucial factor to think about is the uneven demographic distribution of Muslims and Christians in Nigeria that also shaped the pattern of religious encounter in different regions of the country. Although there is no reliable figure on the population of Nigerians by religion, Muslims appear to be the majority in the North, the Christians are the majority in South-East and South-South, while Yorubaland has an almost equal number of Muslims and Christians.[94] This disparity has led to a fluid political power distribution and social hierarchy between Muslims and Christians in various regions. For instance, in most parts of Yorubaland like

---

[92] Clarke and Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria*, 49–50; Amidu O. Sanni, "Conversion and Reversion in the Power Accession Narrative: Muslim Prayer Groups in Nigeria," *Journal of Oriental and African Studies* 21 (2012): 158.

[93] Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies*, 2nd ed. (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 1.

[94] Ibid.; Philip Ostien, "Percentages by Religion of the 1952 and 1963 Populations of Nigeria's Present 36 States," *Nigerian Research Network Background Paper*, no. 1 (2012): 8–10; Insa M. Nolte, Clyde Ancarno and Rebecca Jones, "Inter-Religious Relations in Yorubaland, Nigeria: Corpus Methods and Anthropological Survey Data," *Corpora* 13, no. 1 (2018): 31.

Ondo, Ekiti, and Osun, while Christians dominated political administration, civil service and professional fields for many years, the situation varies in a place like Lagos where Muslims may occupy political offices with Christians dominating the work force.[95] Viewed from this angle, it becomes even more problematic and enormous methodologically to study the MSSN as a national organisation with the aim of paying serious attention to the key variables that shape different understanding of Islam and social encounters in many parts of the country. A focus on the MSSN in Yorubaland is however more manageable. To this extent, my study of the MSSN in Yorubaland should also be considered as studying an aspect of its history in Nigeria in relation to the wider religious encounter of the Yoruba since the colonial era.

Limitations: This study has some limitations which are due to the problem of data. It was difficult for me to find all the sources on the history and activities of the MSSN up to about 2000s. This is mostly due to the absence of a functional regional secretariat and archive in the MSSN over much of this period. To be certain, the MSSN B-Zone had no 'identifiable' office up to 2003 when it acquired some acres of land at Ogunmakin, Ogun state, along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway. The facilities at this site also remained under construction up to the time of my fieldwork, and therefore, it did not function except during the annual events of the Society. However, the MSSN in tertiary institutions referred to as "Branches" have secretariats which are in their mosques. But the problem with these Branches is that most of them do not have properly maintained archives. A major consequence of this lack of systematic documentation is the production of contradictory accounts on the Society such as the differences between the timeline and titles provided by Adegbite and Oladosu mentioned above. There is another source produced at the Lagos branch of the Society whose timeline differs completely from those written by Adegbite and Oladosu.[96] I discovered from the testimony of OIadosu that this contradiction arises because each author writes from his/her perspective and experience in the Society.[97] This suggests that the lack of a functioning secretariat is not the only reason for the inconsistencies in these accounts; the standpoint of the writer is also a factor.

While this problem of data constitutes a major challenge in establishing certain facts about the history of the MSSN, I was able to mitigate the challenge with a few memoirs and journals produced by the Society which were given to me by my respondents. Also, I employed data

---

[95] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orişa-religion*, 143–49.
[96] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".
[97] Afis Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

sourced from archives, libraries, oral testimonies, participant observation, books and the internet. Parts of the data also came from the website of the MSSN and its social media accounts, especially Facebook. A few of my respondents also shared information with me through WhatsApp. Together, these sources provided me with information on the MSSN and the Muslims in Yorubaland in general. The major part of these sources draws from nine months of fieldwork. Below, I describe these data, where they were obtained, how they were collected, and my encounter.

Archives and libraries: In June 2016, I visited the archive of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos (NIIA) where I collected documents on interreligious encounters in Nigeria. This is a specialised archive on issues that link religion with politics, economy and international relations regarding postcolonial Nigeria. I also visited the National Archives Ibadan (NAI) between October and November 2016. The aim was to look for records that show the history of Yoruba Muslims up to the end of colonial rule as a background to the formation of MSSN. However, I only found a few records on this period. These records are on pilgrimage, education, festivals, sports, relations with the Islamic world, inter-religious encounters and columns in newspapers. There is also information on Muslim organisations such as Nawair-Ud-Deen, Ansar-Ud-Deen, and the Ahmadiyya movement. Besides these organisations, I could not find any record on the MSSN despite being established in the colonial period.

Furthermore, in November 2016, I collected data from the archive of the *Nigerian Tribune* (*NT*) at Ibadan, a prominent newspaper outfit established in 1949. The *NT* has collections of other newspapers such as the *Daily Times*, the *Nigerian Observer*, *The Guardian*, the *Concord*, and the *Daily Sketch* from the colonial period up to the present date. There is a handful of information on the MSSN and Muslims in Yorubaland in this archive that is similar to those at the NIIA. Finally, in July 2017, I found some very useful data on the MSSN and Yoruba Muslims at the archive of the Institute of African Studies (IAS), University of Bayreuth, Germany. In addition to these archives, I visited the libraries of three universities in Nigeria in 2017. These are the Lagos State University, the University of Ibadan, and the University of Ilorin. The libraries of these universities keep many undergraduate essays and graduate theses on Muslims in Yorubaland including the MSSN.

Oral interviews, respondents and location: I collected oral testimonies from at least eighty respondents. Generally, the testimonies were acquired through structured and semi-structured interviews. In some cases, the interviews were less formal. But a few of these interviews

followed the focused group model. My informants included the key actors in the MSSN, including the pioneer members. I interacted with these informants either in formal settings in their homes or places of work. I also held discussions with many respondents in tertiary institutions which include the University of Ibadan, Ibadan (UI); Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso (LAUTECH); University of Lagos, Akoka (UNILAG); Lagos State University, Ojo (LASU); Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife (OAU); Federal College of Education, Akoka (FCE); Yaba College of Technology, Yaba (YABATECH); and Adeyemi College of Technology, Ondo (ACE). The MSSN secretariats in these institutions, which are in the mosques, are the main sites of the Society's activities and the point of contact between students and other members of the university Muslim community irrespective of differences in their creeds. I used these mosques as part of my research locations.

Data was also collected in secondary schools namely Fatima Grammar School, Ikire; Alegengo Community High School Akobo Road, Ibadan; Isabatudeen Girls College, Akobo Road, Ibadan; and Zumratul-Islamiyya Secondary School, Yaba (Lagos). Also, I collected data during the MSSN activities some of which were held outside the schools. These activities include the Rural Dawah at Igbo-Oloyin, Ibadan; the Convention of Secondary School Muslim Students (COSSMUS), Akinyele Ibadan; the *Usrah* at Ibadan, Lagos and Ife; the Ramadan lectures at the University of Ibadan (UI); the MSSN *madrasa* at UI; Orientation Week programmes at UI and OAU; the Islamic Vacation Course (IVC), Lagos-Ibadan Expressway and the MSSN Lagos Area Unit IVC, Lagos. In addition, data were collected from organisations that have links with the MSSN such as the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Jama'atul-Islamiyya of Nigeria, The Muslim Congress (TMC), Tijaniyya Muslim Students Association of Nigeria (TIMSAN) and some members of the Salafiyya movement. Apart from these groups, I also had interviews with Muslim clerics, parents and non-Muslims who have little or no links with the MSSN.

Participant observation and challenges: As participant observers in the study of religions, researchers must contend with two crucial dynamics referred to as insider and outsider perspectives. Part of these dynamics relates to whether a researcher who belongs to a religious community is in a better position to conduct an academic study in that context than a non-member.[98] Studies by Kim Knott and Russell McCutcheon show that this has become a major problem in the study of religions because it not only inspires a debate on the issue of objectivity

---

[98] Kim Knott, "Insider/Outsider Perspectives," in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. John R. Hinnells, 2nd ed., 243–58 (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 243.

but also on ethics.[99] To deal with the problem, McCutcheon notes that researchers can adopt a middle ground through "methodological agnosticism" in which they "avoid validating and dismissing" questions of truth and values.[100] However, as Rob van Ginkel suggests, none of these perspectives, insider or outsider, should be preferred over the other because each of them has advantages and problems that vary from one context to another.[101] Importantly, van Ginkel argues that both the object and the goal of research usually play central roles in the choice of positionality.[102] In addition, he maintains that it is misleading to think that being an outsider necessarily presupposes objectivity.[103]

For the most part, I faced these dynamics as a participant observer during fieldwork and in my writing. This reflected on the various positions I found myself, which according to Knott can place a researcher in four roles namely; "complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, and complete observer."[104] My experience in the field also shows that these roles are not fixed because there are circumstances that warrant shifting from one to the other. In this regard, I wish to state that my positionality in this study traversed the four roles. I will illustrate this and point to why my different roles aided and affected me in the collection of data in various contexts.

To begin with, I identify as a Yoruba Muslim and I am a former member of the MSSN. But I ceased to be an active member of the Society after my secondary school. Yet, throughout the years of my undergraduate and graduate studies, I often interacted with members of the MSSN especially during prayers at the mosque. Consequently, despite not considering myself as an active member, I find it difficult to place myself in the position of either a "complete participant" or "complete observer." Nonetheless, I went into the field with the impression that I would faithfully 'observe' while I remained a 'participant' only for me to discover that my role consistently shifted between the two roles with different implications. As I interacted with my respondents, I also participated in their religious activities such as lectures and prayers. This largely requires constantly switching between "participant-as-observer" and "observer-as-participant." And, I benefited from each of the positions I found myself in. For the most

---

[99] Ibid; Russell T. McCutcheon, ed., *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (London, New York, NY: Continuum, 2005), 1–2.
[100] McCutcheon, *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, 6.
[101] Rob van Ginkel, "Writing Culture from Within: Reflections on Endogenous Ethnography," *ETNOFOOR* 7, no. 1 (1994): 15–6.
[102] Ibid., 13–14.
[103] Ibid., 12–13.
[104] Kim Knott, "Insider/Outsider Perspectives" in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, 247–48.

part, it was easy for many respondents to relate with me having observed that I was a Muslim. When I introduced myself and made a request for a discussion, many of them responded with enthusiasm. When I later told them that I was surprised by their willingness to answer me, they responded that it was their duty as Muslims to support whatever a coreligionist was doing. But I suspected that being a researcher away from home also played a role in some cases because as Peel suggests, many Yoruba Muslims respect those with higher education.[105] Notwithstanding, I benefited from being an insider in the field because it put me in a position that aided my interaction with the respondents.

But the benefits of being an insider also came with challenges. In some situations, I noticed that while I was gaining insights into my research questions, I was equally learning and experiencing a change in my attitude to issues of Christian-Muslim encounter in Yoruba society. For instance, I learned some rules of prayers for travellers which applied to me in most of the places I visited. On the other hand, I also empathised with the females who suffered discrimination due to the use of the veil in schools or workplaces and with parents who decried the inability of public schools to employ teachers to teach Islamic Studies. These experiences encouraged me to ask several questions surrounding my identity and my object of study. I asked myself if it was possible for a researcher, at the same time an insider, to learn about his religion. I was also concerned about a researcher's empathy towards to the respondents.

Besides these challenges, it was often difficult to identify the object of study in many situations where I found myself. This mostly happened when I prayed with my respondents and interacted with them informally. Also, as a Yoruba Muslim, while I discovered that my understanding of some stories which my respondents recounted to me was pedestrian, I was also quite familiar with their experiences. This difficulty calls attention to van Ginkel's argument that while outsiders face the problem of "how to get into a culture," the insiders' challenge is "how to get out in order to enable them to have an ethnographic gaze at familiar surroundings."[106] It is in this situation that the importance of adopting "reflexivity" which Knott and McCutcheon refer to can be appreciated. Reflexivity encourages scholars to write and think about their objects of study from their contexts and standpoints in a diffuse manner and to be mindful of their powers, statuses and identities.[107] Adopting this reflexive stance helped me to resolve the difficulties

---

[105] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orişa-religion*, 142.
[106] van Ginkel, "Writing Culture from Within": 12.
[107] Kim Knott, "Insider/Outsider Perspectives" in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, 245; McCutcheon, *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, 8–9.

which relate to empathy and making sense of my familiarity in the field. In addition, reading about insiders' ethnographic studies in other contexts was useful because it inspired me to do a comparative analysis as van Ginkel suggests.[108] At the same time, these studies contributed to the understanding of my study.

Another challenging experience I had as an insider was when my role changed into a "participant-as-observer" in one of the MSSN programmes called the IVC. This happened by accident. At this IVC, an officer was called over the public address system to be assigned his duty. Coincidently, the name of that officer happens to be the same as mine, so I answered. Although the announcer discovered that I was not the person in question, he requested if I could support the programme by becoming an officer, and I obliged. Following this, I was assigned duty at the security outfit referred to as the MSSO (Muslim Students' Security Organisation). Even though I was worried about my positionality in this role, it allowed me to gain better insight into the activities of the Society. Through my co-officers, I learnt about the objectives of the MSSO and it how connected to the activities of MSSN.

Scholars like Jenny Wustenberg often argue that those who conduct research at home have several advantages because they are acquainted with their respondents' language, cultural nuances, ability to blend into social situations and the tendency to avoid misconceptions about their object of study.[109] On the contrary, Wustenberg also notes the reports of researchers who experienced difficulties in their home countries. These contradictory findings support my own experience. During my fieldwork, many respondents became reluctant when I requested to record our conversation on tape. In most cases, I pleaded with them and they requested that their names must not be mentioned. But one of them declined to have the discussion on tape. Owing to this, there are many instances in this study where I used pseudonyms of these respondents. Later, I discovered that many of those who were reluctant to have the conversion on record had different reasons. Some of them, for instance, told me it was because of the sensitivity of the activities of the MSSN branches on their campuses. The branches in question are the MSSN UNILAG which was embroiled in a leadership crisis in 2016, and the MSSN Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife where a Salafi faction of the Society had dissociated itself from the wider objectives of the MSSN. Also, the respondent who declined to have an anonymous recording feared that I had another motive apart from research. His suspicion was

---

[108] van Ginkel, "Writing Culture from Within": 12.
[109] Jenny Wüstenberg, "When the Field Is Home: Conducting Research in One's Country of Origin," *APSA-CP* 19, no. 2 (2008): 19–20.

shared by another respondent who had to confirm my identity on the BIGSAS website before granting me an interview and allowing me to record.

In addition, there were MSSN events where my access was denied due to my male identity. For these events, which relate to the female members of the MSSN, I occupied the role of a "complete observer." Among these events were the female IVC and the Sisters' Circle. In these situations, I employed female research assistants to report on these programmes. Apart from this, it was also a challenge for me to approach veiled women because many of them usually guide against interacting with strangers. Moreover, the uncertainty of their identities such as age and social status made it more strenuous to do so. In a few cases, I was lucky enough to meet them through their friends. But in other cases, my female research assistants came to the rescue. Consequently, I rely on second-hand reports of research assistants in these contexts.

If there is another useful lesson that I learnt from participant observation and the other primary sources, it is how they reshaped my research questions and goal of study. I became aware of this because I went to the field with structured questions that were based on my initial knowledge of changes in the MSSN and many theories in the literature on Islam in Africa and research methodology. Although some of the questions were useful, most of them were reviewed due to field experiences. This experience confirms the importance of a grounded approach in which fieldwork data determine our research questions and theoretical frameworks.[110]

1.6 **Structure**
The study is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter introduces the study which includes the main arguments, the state of the art, research questions, significance, methodology and structure. Overall, the thesis adopts a multidisciplinary approach largely situated in the fields of history, religious studies, Islamic studies and anthropology. This perspective is reflected in the type of sources I employed, my fieldwork experience, the conceptualisation of the arguments and the interpretation of the data. The conceptual framework is presented in the second chapter. The framework is based on four empirical driven concepts which describe the processes and events explored in the history of the MSSN: Islam as discursive tradition, Islamic reform, religious change, and the Christian-Muslim encounter. This chapter demonstrates why

---

[110] For a discussion on grounded theory, see Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, (Princeton, NJ: AldineTransaction, a Div. of Transaction Publishers, 2006), 2–6; Amir B. Marvasti, *Qualitative Research in Sociology: An Introduction*, ebook (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 84–85.

the history of MSSN and its contributions to the religious change of Western educated Yoruba Muslims can be understood with the help of these empirical concepts.

Chapter Three provides the historical context for the establishment of the MSSN. The main argument in the chapter is that the history of the MSSN is closely linked to the encounter of Yoruba Muslims with Christianization and the social change that was facilitated by colonialization. To illustrate this, the chapter discusses the history of Yoruba Muslims and their Islamization process. It also points to the forms of changes they experienced and the discourses that shaped these changes. This chapter also draws attention to the definition of Islam by Western educated Yoruba Muslims and their practices in the colonial period and why their conception of Islam and practices linked up with those of Muslim students who founded the MSSN.

In Chapter Four, the study focuses on the history of MSSN as a movement at the intersection of political and social changes of the colonial and postcolonial eras in Nigeria. It explores the immediate factors that motivated its formation in the school system and how these are linked to the broader experience of Yoruba Muslims as well as other Muslims in Nigeria. This chapter also discusses the objectives of MSSN and how they were promoted at different times, including how the Society became a national organisation and joined transnational Islamic movements. The argument in this chapter is that the MSSN was established for Muslim students to promote different objectives that addressed their encounter within the school system. However, the objectives of the Society were modified over time following the widening of its vision beyond the school system and a shift in its orientation to Islam which impacted on its relations with non-Muslims and the Nigerian state in a very significant manner. This chapter argues that while the impact on students' lives was minimal, the new orientation signals the change of the Society to a reform movement.

In Chapter Five, the study discusses how reform was inspired and produced in the MSSN and the further transformation of the Society into a reform movement. The argument in this chapter is that the reform was inspired by historical and epistemological developments which were connected to the MSSN and Yoruba Muslim communities and that these developments facilitated the transition of MSSN into a reform movement. This chapter also argues that the reform was produced by discourses of many agents, who studied in Nigeria and abroad, through the various educational programmes of the Society. In addition, the chapter shows the effects of the reform on the factionalisation and division of the MSSN.

In Chapter Six, the thesis analyses the extent to which Islamic reform has changed the objectives of the MSSN and the practices of Muslim students. The impact referred to in this chapter is connected to chapter five which shows that the reform appears to challenge the MSSN ideal of brotherhood and diversity among Muslims. Chapter six takes the argument further by showing that Islamic reform did not produce a uniform nor an unchanging understanding of the practices of Islam among Muslim students. The chapter demonstrates that a homogenisation did not occur due to the different existential and social realities in Yorubaland and Nigeria which again forced the MSSN to build its ideals of reform on interpretations of Islam that emphasised moderation, tolerance, flexibility, and multiple authorities. The chapter thus shows the way these interpretations are brought into play through religious practices and rituals, mode of dressing and socio-cultural activities in the Society.

Chapter Seven discusses knowledge transmission in the MSSN not only as an aspect of religious change but also an illustration of the MSSN as a reform movement that seeks to produce the ideals of "good Muslims." The main argument is that MSSN involvement in Islamic education is part of the way in which the 'traditional' Islamic education has been transformed following the impact of Western schoolling, colonial policies and technology. The chapter further shows that the major aspect of the knowledge transmitted in the Society is geared towards building moral subjects based on the MSSN understanding of Islam. Some aspects of the knowledge are also meant to develop students' socio-economic skills that are needed in the modern world.

The concluding chapter eight summarises the main argument of the study and findings. It also discusses the implications of the MSSN contribution to Yoruba Muslim religious change and how they connect to wider transformation in other Muslim societies of Africa. Furthermore, it draws attention to the contribution which the thesis made to the literature on religious change in Yorubaland, Christian-Muslim encounters, colonial rule and Islamic movements, youth and Islam, Islamic reform and Islamic education. In addition, it reflects on what the history of MSSN suggests about religion in the public sphere, interreligious encounter and the relationship between the state and religion in contemporary Nigeria.

Chapter Two

Locating the MSSN in Religious Change

2.1 **Introduction**

The conceptual framework that underpins the arguments of this thesis is explored in this chapter. The framework is formulated around existing studies on the concept of Islam as a discursive tradition, Islamic reform and revival, religious change, and Christian-Muslim encounters. This chapter aims to outline the central arguments in these studies and to show why they helped me to understand the involvement of MSSN and Yoruba Muslims in religious change. It also presents how my empirical findings link up with the debates in these studies. Given the main argument of the thesis, this chapter aims to demonstrate why the history of the MSSN and its contributions to the religious change of Western educated Yoruba Muslims can be understood within these debates.

In doing this, I first explore the concept of Islam as a discursive tradition as the basis of my analysis of Yoruba Muslim society and the MSSN history, which includes its definition of Islam and what it means to be a good Muslim. Based on the work of Asad, I note that this conception of Islam is significant because it helps us to appreciate the different ways Islam is lived and interpreted within the MSSN.[111] More importantly, it allows us to know that multiple interpretations of Islam and ways of being Muslim are interconnected with the process of religious change. This is so because religious change is not only practical, it is also discursive. In addition to religious change, approaching Islam as a discursive tradition is also linked to other frameworks of analysis in this chapter; Islamic reform and Christian-Muslim encounters. Islamic reform is an aspect of discursive tradition because it includes an effort to define what is correct and incorrect in the traditions of Muslims. Furthermore, the discursive tradition of Islam in any Muslim society is relational in nature. In this regard, the debates and knowledge of Islam are not only informed, for instance, by the Qur'an and the Hadith, but in relation to the prevailing historical and social contexts of Muslims. Using the example of Yorubaland, the context in which the MSSN discourse of Islam can be appreciated is the one shaped by Christianization and the legacies of colonization.

---

[111] Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*.

In the next section, I focus on studies of Islamic reform and the different orientations of reformist movements in Africa that are connected to the MSSN. In these studies, I show that the meaning of 'reform' for many reform movements is not fixed because they have different orientations. I also demonstrate how Islamic reform has been studied in relation to 'modernity' and the difficulty of the attempt to link the two processes. While I note that the MSSN is a 'modern' organisation, I will also show that the idea of 'modernity' has its limitation for describing the experience of its members. In the third section, I discuss religious change, the factors responsible for it and its different forms. I also show how the history of the MSSN fits into the process and forms of religious change among Yoruba Muslims. The final section focuses on the studies of Christian-Muslim encounters in Africa and shows why the history of the MSSN is an example of these encounters. The literature on Christian-Muslim encounters, based on the work of Benjamin Soares, emphasised the need to study the relationship between the two religious groups in its complex forms rather than focusing explicitly on either co-existence or conflict.[112] I show why the history of the MSSN illustrates this complexity in this final section.

2.2 Islam as a discursive tradition: the background to conceptualisation

To understand the concept of Islam as a discursive tradition, I wish to give a brief background to its conception to show why it inspires my analysis in this study as well as the critique of Peel's position on the idea of "Yoruba Muslim/Islam" and the MSSN shift towards so-called "Sunni orthodoxy." The conceptualisation of Islam as a discursive tradition was proposed by Asad against the background of a search by anthropologists of Islam in the 1980s for a framework to understand 'Islam' and the heterogeneity of Muslims and their practices.[113] This is given the fact that while Muslims frequently refer to the common foundational texts – the Qur'an and the Hadith – and agree on many aspects of their creed, they also engage in debates and give multiple and conflicting positions on a wide range of social, religious, economic and political issues.[114] They also have different practices which might include those adopted from

---

[112] Benjamin F. Soares, ed., *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa* v. 6 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006), 1–16.

[113] Jens Kreinath, ed., *The Anthropology of Islam Reader* (London: Routledge, 2012), 43–44; Ovamir Anjum, "Islam as a Discursive Tradition: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 3 (2007): 656–61.

[114] See Zulfikar A. Hirji, ed., *Diversity and Pluralism in Islam: Historical and Contemporary Discourses Amongst Muslims* (London, New York, London: I.B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010); "The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity,", Forum on Religion & Public Life (PEW Research Center, August 9, 2012); Oliver Leaman, *Controversies in Contemporary Islam* (London: Routledge, 2014); David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History* 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), XVIII.

non-Muslims. What inspired the search for a new framework to understand this diversity, as Ovamir Anjum noted, was that the initial scholarship was dominated by Orientalists who essentialised 'Islam' and showed less sensitivity to the transformations, dialogues, and heterogeneity of lived Islam. Anjum added that many anthropologists also gave up the search for thinking about 'Islam' as 'one' and focused their investigation on the idea of the 'local Islams' rather than conceptualising the religion from a holistic perspective.[115] According to Soares, the focus on these 'local Islams' had certain problems, a major part of which was the tendency for scholars to "attach ethnic and geographical qualifiers to Islam" such as "Moroccan Islam" and "African Islam."[116] This created an assumption in such studies that "Islams" in the local contexts were on the periphery and different from the 'purer' form presumed to be in the Middle East.

In reference to the search for an alternative approach, Robert Launay noted that the task of the anthropologists of Islam was therefore "to find a framework in which to analyse the relationship between this single, global entity, Islam, and the multiple entities that are the religious beliefs and practices of Muslims in specific communities at specific moments in history."[117] Some of the major questions that confronted them include; what is 'Islam' or the 'real Islam' among the 'local Islams'? what is responsible for the diversity of Muslim practices? and, how can scholars conceptualise these diversities using a single framework?[118] Clifford Geertz's *Islam Observed* was one of the studies that attempted these questions with the example of differences in Islamic religious change between Indonesia and Morocco.[119] He showed that there was a unified religious tradition called Islam which was shared by the two societies even though they had two different cultures. Morocco, in the study, was a highly structured "tribal" society while Indonesia was a peasant society. Informed by their cultural differences, Islam in the two countries developed along two dimensions, experiences and traditions: in Morocco, it developed as one of "uncompromising rigorism," "moral perfectionism" and a "purified" creed, while it developed with "partial compromises, halfway covenants, and outright evasions" in Indonesia. Even though he reveals the diversity of Islam

---

[115] Anjum, "Islam as a Discursive Tradition": 656.

[116] Benjamin F. Soares, "Notes on the Anthropological Study of Islam and Muslim Societies in Africa," *Culture and Religion* 1, no. 2 (2000): 278.

[117] Robert Launay, *Beyond the Stream: Islam and Society in a West African Town* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 6.

[118] A. R. Lukens-Bull, "Between Text and Practice: Considerations in the Anthropological Study of Islam," *Marburg Journal of Religion* 4, no. 2 (1999): 1; Anjum, "Islam as a Discursive Tradition": 656–60.

[119] Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Developments in Morocco and Indonesia*, Repr., The Terry Lectures vol. 37 (New Haven: Yale U.P, 1976).

in the two countries, Geertz's study, according to Daniel Varisco, portrays two variants of this, one that is "scriptural" and another one that is "mystical."[120] Many studies have continued to situate Muslims within these two perspectives. However, the wide range of Islamic reform orientations that we have today, as will be shown in the next section, demonstrate that this division is indeed inadequate.[121]

Taking a contrary view from Geertz, Abdul Hamid el-Zein in "Beyond Ideology and Theology" challenges the assumption of a unified religious tradition called "real Islam."[122] His argument built on Geertz's symbolic approach and recognises the diversity in which Islam is expressed. From this perspective, he argues that the diverse expressions of Islam have their own meanings and that Muslims are meaning-making subjects. However, unlike these expressions, the subjects can make meanings that are dynamic and flexible. The disparity between the two, according to him, points to the difficulty of locating the "real Islam" because each expression of Islam has "a web of frozen points of meaning" that is different from the "fluid meaning" which a subject who engages the expression inhabits.[123] Thus, he concludes that "Islam" as an analytical object is not fixed and has no necessary existence. This argument does not only suggest that 'Islam' is unreal, it also implies that what Muslims define as orthodox practice or belief is problematic.

Another scholar who contributed to the debate is Ernest Gellner who draws attention to the importance of the "divine rules" that inform Muslim practices and traditions. He argues that "Islam is the blueprint of social order. It holds that a set of rules exist, eternal, divinely ordained, and independent of the will of men, which defines the proper ordering of society."[124] The problem with this argument is that it does not provide enough answer as to why Islam is understood differently by Muslim groups and individuals. Furthermore, as Asads points out, Gellner's argument implies that Muslims are "actors" who do not think but only 'act' based on the rules set by the divine.[125] Michael Gilsenan's study, however, moved away from that

---

[120] Daniel M. Varisco, *Islam Obscured: The Rhetoric of Anthropological Representation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 30.

[121] This argument has been made in many studies such as Filippo Osella and Benjamin F. Soares, eds., *Islam, Politics, Anthropology* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), s9; Janson, *Islam, Youth, and Modernity in The Gambia*, 10.

[122] Abdul H. el-Zein, "Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6, no. 1 (1977).

[123] Ibid., 250; Anjum, "Islam as a Discursive Tradition": 658.

[124] Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* 32 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1.

[125] Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 7–8.

position.[126] Instead, he suggests that the different things which Muslims referred to as 'Islamic' should be understood within the context of their lives and historical conditions. Based on this assumption, he encourages scholars to pay attention to what a Muslim or Muslim community regards as 'Islam' in their context and accept it as valid. This argument ultimately foregrounds the possibility of 'many islams.' However, according to Asad, Gilsenan's argument created a paradox because it does not answer the question, what is Islam?[127] That is, what is 'Islam' if many Muslims say that what some Muslims take to be Islam is not the "real Islam"? To answer this, Asad proposed the conceptualisation of Islam as a "discursive tradition."[128] Rather than thinking of Islam as a blueprint of society or unreal, Asad argues for the need to consider it as a "discursive tradition." Below, I highlighted the main arguments of this notion of discursive tradition.

2.2.1 Discursive tradition: a framework for studying Islam and Muslim societies

Asad argues that Islam "is neither a distinctive social structure nor a heterogeneous collection of beliefs, artifacts, customs, and morals. It is a tradition."[129] Asad's notion of tradition builds on Alasdair MacIntyre's definition. While earlier scholars conceived tradition as a practice or culture that is fixed over time, MacIntyre posits that tradition is also a "historically extended, socially embodied argument" that is subject to change either by innovation, addition, extinction or depreciation.[130] Relating it to Islam, Asad argues that Islam is a tradition made up of discourses that aim to teach Muslims the proper mode and function of a practice that is historically established.[131]Based on this notion of tradition, he contends that scholars seeking to analyse the questions, 'What is Islam?' and 'What are the reasons for diversity among Muslims?' should proceed as Muslims do, which is through the discourse of tradition. "An Islamic discursive tradition" as he defines it, "is simply a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present."[132] Anjum explained this further noting that the Islamic discursive tradition is defined by its own line of reasoning based on texts, history, and

---

[126] Michael Gilsenan, *Recognizing Islam: An Anthropologist's Introduction* (London: Croom Helm, 1982).
[127] Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 2.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid., 14.
[130] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd edition (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 222.
[131] Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 14.
[132] Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 14.

institutions, but this is not to imply that the reasoning is typically 'Islamic' or inaccessible to non-Muslims.[133]

Also, Asad draws attention to the mistaken notion that all the things Muslims say and practise is part of an Islamic tradition or duplicate of the past because what they do and say is also informed by their interpretation to connect with the past. In addition, he notes that the teaching of "orthodox doctrine," by which he meant "the correct process of teaching" and "the correct statement of what is to be learned," is key to the tradition of Islam. This teaching could be taught by a Sufi Shaykh, an Imam or an untutored parent. However, he contests the assumption that underlies Gellner's thesis of orthodoxy as a fixed body of thought that is found everywhere in Muslim societies. For Asad, orthodoxy is also a specific relationship of power and it can be found in any context in which "Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust correct practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace incorrect ones."[134] This suggests that what is considered as correct practices is an attempt to establish a form of power, which therefore frequently provokes resistance from those who contest the definition of that orthodoxy. Again, Asad contends that the argument and resistance enabled by this attempt are integral to the discursive tradition of Islam and it is important for scholars to pay attention to the social contexts that give rise to them.[135]

Running through Asad's argument is the assumption that historical and social conditions are important factors in the concept of Islamic discursive tradition. These factors are responsible for the heterogeneity of Muslim practices in different societies. The heterogeneity, according to him, is an indication of "the different Islamic reasonings that different social and historical conditions can or cannot sustain."[136] In his elaboration of this point, Roman Loimeier notes that Muslim discourses in different historical eras seek to translate specific traditions in a corpus of "Islamic general knowledge" into local contexts.[137] This corpus, according to him, is what is generally known to Muslims. It includes the Qur'an and the Hadith; "core" places like Mecca, Medina, al-Qudus, and sites of memorable battles; the *Sunna* of the Prophet; iconic symbols like the *ḥijāb*; and "core" religious debates such as the rules of fasting. To translate

---

[133] Anjum, "Islam as a Discursive Tradition": 662.

[134] Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 15.

[135] Ibid., 16.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Roman Loimeier, "Traditions of Reform, Reformers of Tradition: Case Studies from Senegal and Zanzibar/Tanzania," in *Diversity and Pluralism in Islam: Historical and Contemporary Discourses amongst Muslims*, ed. Zulfikar A. Hirji, 135–62 (London, New York, London: I.B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010), 138; Roman Loimeier, *Between Social Skills and Marketable Skills: The Politics of Islamic Education in 20th Century Zanzibar* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009), 2–3.

any tradition, religious scholars or actors refer to the corpus through a reinterpretation of the corpus in relation to the historical conditions of their societies. However, Asad contends that the diversity produced by this process should not be mistaken for lack of homogeneity in Islamic traditions. At the same time, it should not be assumed that Islamic traditions are essentially homogenous, but that despite their diversities, Muslims seek to achieve coherence even if this is impeded by the unstable and disparate economic and political conditions of their societies.[138]

Largely, the conception of Islam as a discursive tradition reveals that various subjectivities and practices produced among Muslims cannot be reduced to only two categories, "scriptural" and "mystical" traditions, as portrayed by Geertz. It also allows a re-evaluation of one authentic Islam that is represented by a single authority or practised by one Muslim society which is different from others.[139] This is why I consider Peel's idea of "Yoruba Islam/Muslim" and his argument on the Yoruba Muslim adoption of the "orthodox Sunni," represented by the MSSN, as problematic. Taking Islam as a discursive tradition suggests to me that the idea of a good Muslim is difficult to fix to a specific point in the history of Yoruba Muslims or any Muslim society. Furthermore, as Scott Reese explains, discursive tradition also helps us to move beyond the thinking that Islam is a rigid and unchanging body of knowledge because this notion of Islam demonstrates that Muslims everywhere are continuously involved in a process of reinterpretation of their body of knowledge in a way that allows them to react and cope with transformations at different times.[140]

Taking Islam as a discursive tradition is also useful for conceptualising the process of "reform" and "revival," to a large extent. As Ebrahim Moosa and SherAli Tarren posit, we can "think of *reform* as a *discourse* of improvement, recovery, and healing" of tradition.[141] Explaining this further, they contend that discourse of "revival" is "the process of restoring that tradition, of sustaining the promise of its continued repetition and also inventing it simultaneously."[142] They also note that despite the assumption of some modernist reformers that the process is a straight

---

[138] Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 16–17.

[139] Zulfikar A. Hirji, "Debating Islam from Within: Muslim Constructions of the Internal Other," in *Diversity and Pluralism in Islam: Historical and Contemporary Discourses amongst Muslims*, ed. Zulfikar A. Hirji, 1–30 (London, New York, London: I.B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010), 3–12.

[140] Scott S. Reese, "Islam in Africa/Africans and Islam," *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 01 (2014): 23.

[141] Moosa, Ebrahim, and SherAli Tareen, "Revival and Reform," in *Islamic Political Thought: An Introduction*, ed. Gerhard Bowering, 202–18 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 202. Emphasis in italics mine

[142] Ibid., 204.

path, reform does not have one connotation or follow a specific trajectory. And, even though the attempt is to repair an existing practice, Moosa and Tarren insist that reform is capable of producing something new through discourse.[143] Loimeier provides another useful argument on the relationship between discursive tradition and reform movement. He argues that discourse is used by reform movements to develop distinctive positions in relation to their context and to other reform movements of their time and/or in the past.[144] Discourse also allows reformers to contest and denounce some traditions as unlawful innovations (referred to as *bid'a*) using their interpretation of the corpus of Islamic knowledge. In turn, those who are accused of innovation also use discourse to reject the reformers claim and brand them as innovators. But the ultimate success or failure of this argumentation, as Loimeier contends, is not so much about which is right but the capacity of a movement to respond to socio-economic and political crises and to win people for its project of reform.[145]

Approaching Islam as a discursive tradition applies to the history of Yoruba Muslims as well as the MSSN and its reform process in many ways. As I will demonstrate in the study, the concept helps to analyse what inspired reform in the Society, the actors involved and the reasoning that shaped their arguments. It also guides my understanding of why discourses on correct practice led to real contests for power and division in the Society. Besides, the study shows that discourses in the MSSN are not limited to Islam. Many of the discourses also focused on comparing Islam with Christianity and the cultural practices in Yorubaland. This comparative discourse thus shows that Islam is not only understood from the traditions of Muslims but also in relation to the traditions of non-Muslims.

Despite its usefulness, the discursive tradition of Islam is not without its critics. Among them is Ronald Lukens-Bull who argues that Asad's depiction of Islamic discourse placed more emphasis on the Qur'an and the Hadith.[146] It is true that these texts are significant to Islamic discourse, however, according to Lukens-Bull, it is also important to consider other forms of knowledge that play into the Muslim discourses. Among these are the various texts produced by Muslim thinkers (in the past and in contemporary times), local concerns, and non-Muslim discourses and practices. As I will demonstrate in Chapters Five and Six, the history of the MSSN confirms this point.

---

[143] Ibid.
[144] Roman Loimeier, "Traditions of Reform, Reformers of Tradition" in *Diversity and Pluralism in Islam*, 138.
[145] Loimeier, *Between Social Skills and Marketable Skills*, 4.
[146] Lukens-Bull, "Between Text and Practice": 10.

Samuli Schielke also contests Asad's notion of discursive tradition because, according to him, it placed more emphasis on religious tradition while little attention is given to everyday practices of Muslims. He is of the view that the practices and behaviours of Muslims, which are informed by "existential and pragmatic sensibilities of living a life in a complex and often troubling world," show a wide range of ambivalences and inconsistencies that challenge the framework of a single tradition.[147] This implies that despite their attempt to follow the correct traditions of Islam, Muslims are nevertheless unable to do so in many cases. This reality inspired the argument by Schielke that emphasizes the importance of incorporating failures and ambiguities in the conception of Islam to show that it is an incoherent entity. I am of the view that Schielke's argument does not challenge the usefulness of Islamic discursive tradition. As a matter of fact, my sources on the MSSN confirm his observation about the struggles and inconsistencies of being Muslim which I showed in Chapters Six and Seven.

There is also Gabriele Marranci who contests Asad's argument on the "object of study," Islam, as a tradition. Marranci's point is that "the main thing that Muslims share among themselves and others is certainly not Islam, but rather the fact that they are human beings."[148] As humans, Muslims engaged in relationships and behaviours with others and the environment in ways that generate "feelings." Thus, for him, this "feeling" is integral to what it means to be Muslim for many people insofar as "they feel to be Muslims" without adequate knowledge of the Qur'an and the Hadith. Furthermore, he argues that Muslims articulate "feelings" that are different from one another through discourse. Therefore, he suggests that Islam can be conceptualised "as a map of discourses on how to 'feel Muslim.'"[149] This informs his argument that the starting point of our research should be on Muslims rather than Islam which appears theological in orientation.

Marranci's argument is also useful because it shows another important perspective to studying Islam and Muslims. Yet, I disagree with his theory of "feeling" which suggests that people must be emotionally attached to Islam or other Muslims before they can be considered as Muslims. This is problematic because it fails to consider the broad range of ways of being Muslim. There are studies showing how many Muslims converted to Islam in Africa following dreams and divination. These include Gbadamosi's work on the Yoruba and Humphrey

---

[147] Samuli Schielke, "Second Thoughts About the Anthropology of Islam, or How to Make Sense of Grand Schemes in Everyday Life," *ZMO Working Papers*, no. 2 (2010): 1.

[148] Gabriele Marranci, *The Anthropology of Islam* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2008), 7.

[149] Ibid., 8.

Fisher's study on dreams.[150] Moreover, Lori Peek's study of Muslim students in the United States discovered that being a Muslim can be a developmental process, especially from childhood to adulthood.[151] The process, as he points out, starts with Islam being an "ascribed" identity (when it was chosen for them by parents) to a "chosen" identity (when they embrace it for themselves) and later to a "declared" identity (when they strengthened and affirmed their belief). While Peek notes that his example may not be replicated in other places, he maintains that "religious identity is a dynamic and ongoing process" for many Muslims.[152] What I found useful in this argument is the idea of religious *ascription* which can be related to the experience of most members of the MSSN. For the students I worked with, the fact that Islam was chosen for them by their parents does not preclude them from identifying with Islam except we want to say they are not Muslim *enough* as Marranci implies here: "it is that *feel to be* which makes an enormous difference when we try to understand Muslim societies."[153] I can understand Marranci's argument from the point of view of removing theological bias from the concept of Islam. But doing so not only runs the risk of not understanding the wide range of being Muslim, it could also create the impression that there are 'proper,' 'improper,' 'good' and 'bad' Muslims. The concept of Islam as a discursive tradition is, however, useful to help us avoid this impression. In the next section, I will discuss Islamic reform and show how it is related to the concept of Islam as a discursive tradition.

2.3 **Islamic reform** (**movements**)

Over the last two decades, there has been an increase in researches on Islamic reform and movements of reform in Muslim societies around the world.[154] In Africa, the studies include Ousmane Kane's *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria*, Ousman Kobo's *Unveiling Modernity in Twentieth Century West Africa Islamic Reforms*, Roman Loimeier's *Islamic*

---

[150] T. G. O. Gbadamosi, "Odu Imale: Islam in Ifa Divination and the Case of Pre-Destined Muslims," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 8 (1977); J. H. Fisher, "Dreams and Conversion in Black Africa," in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion, 217–35 (New York: Holmes & Meier Publ, 1979).

[151] Lori. Peek, "Becoming Muslim: The Development of a Religious Identity," *Sociology of Religion* 66, no. 3 (2005): 215.

[152] Ibid., 236.

[153] Marranci, *The Anthropology of Islam*, 78.

[154] Of major interest outside Africa are Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016); Francis Robinson, "Islamic Reform and Modernities in South Asia," *Modern Asian Studies* 42, 2/3 (2008); David D. Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Kayhan Delibas, "Conceptualizing Islamic Movements: The Case of Turkey," *International Political Science Review* 30, no. 1 (2009); Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon* v.41 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007).

Reform in Twentieth Century Africa, Terje Østebø's *Localising Salafism*, Adeline Masquelier's *Women and Islamic Revival in a West African Town*, Saba Mahmood's *Politics of Piety*, and Yunus Dumbe's *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana*.[155] However, despite the academic attention it has generated, Islamic reform is not an entirely new phenomenon among Muslims. Historians like Ira Lapidus has traced many reform movements to periods between the ninth and nineteenth century. A major example he cited was the ninth century Hanbali movement in Baghdad and Syria.[156] Nehemia Levtzion also noted that there were many Sufi-oriented reforms in eighteenth-century West Africa which include those of Usman dan Fodio in Hausaland (now in Nigeria) and Sidi Mahmud in Aïr (now in Niger Republic).[157]

But there are significant factors that differentiate past movements from these contemporary movements. Among these are the context in which they are formed, the actors involved and how they deal with contemporary issues. Lapidus argues that the contemporary movements are inspired by what constitutes "modernity" which include "the formation of national states, the organization of capitalist economies, technological and scientific developments, and the cultural and social changes that accompany these phenomenon (sic)."[158] Beyond the role of "modernity" in their emergence, some scholars have emphasised the importance of looking inwardly into situations in different contexts and specific countries. In many countries, John Esposito suggests that the movements emerge as a response to an identity crisis caused by low self-confidence and disappointment after colonialism. Added to this is the failure of governments to address the socio-economic needs of their countries.[159] In many African countries, Benjamin Soares and René Otayek consider that the turn to religiosity, which is exemplified by these movements, must be understood "through the dynamics internal to

---

[155] Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria*; Murzik O. Kobo, *Unveiling Modernity in Twentieth-Century West African Islamic Reforms* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Roman Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); T. Østebø, *Localising Salafism: Religious Change Among Oromo Muslims in Bale, Ethiopia* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Adeline Masquelier, *Women and Islamic Revival in a West African Town* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005); Yunus Dumbe, *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana* 5 (Stockholm [Sweden]: Södertörn University, 2013).

[156] Ira Lapidus, "Islamic Revival and Modernity: The Contemporary Movements and the Historical Paradigms," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40, no. 4 (1997): 448–57.

[157] Nehemiah Levtzion, *Islam in West Africa: Religion, Society and Politics to 1800,* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), VII, 1-18.

[158] Lapidus, "Islamic Revival and Modernity": 444.

[159] John L. Esposito, "Introduction: Islam and Muslim Politics," in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito, 3–15 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 11.

African societies" which include the challenges of governance, economic crisis, worsening educational and health care systems, and population growth.[160]

With regards to the actors, Lapidus notes that these movements draw members from students, civil servants, engineers, medical personnel, lawyers and those with modern education.[161] However, I wish to point out that not all of them are in support of or a product of modern education as Lapidus suggests. On the issues they deal with, Lapidus also contends that these movements seek "to find a legitimate basis for the construction of a modern state and a modern economy."[162] But, I wish to note that this is only part of their concerns. As Robinson's study of South Asia suggests, some of them also placed emphasis on eliminating the age-old person-to-person transmission of knowledge, promoting ethical formation and rationalising Islamic knowledge.[163] Another point to consider is that these reform movements are very diverse in the aims and traditions they promote, and this can be understood by focusing on many concepts associated with "reform" and "revival" and how each movement conceive its projects.

The concept, 'reform,' is one of the most common terms used to describe the transformation which these movements seek in society. Loimeier defines 'reform' "as any transformation that is linked with an implicit or explicit programme of change."[164] For him, a movement of reform should not only advocate for change, it must also have a "programme" to actualise it. However, while this notion of reform is useful, it also tends to generalise the idea of reform which is constructed and realised in multiple ways in different contexts, as I will show later. Another term is 'reformism,' often used interchangeably with 'reform.' Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella refer to this as "projects whose specific focus is the bringing into line of religious beliefs and practices with what are held to be the core foundations of Islam, by avoiding and purging out innovation, accretion and the intrusion of 'local custom'."[165] In spite of its relevance, this notion of reform is also problematic because it suggests a particular interpretation of reform that is advocated by Salafi-minded movements, which I discussed below. Although Loimeier and the Osellas point to the complexity of finding a specific meaning for the term, I think it is rather useful to think of this complexity in order to see the range of diversity in which it is

---

[160] René Otayek and Benjamin F. Soares, eds., *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa* (New York & Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 7.
[161] Lapidus, "Islamic Revival and Modernity": 448.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Robinson, "Islamic Reform and Modernities in South Asia": 261.
[164] Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 20.
[165] Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella, eds., *Islamic Reform in South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), xi.

anchored. To be sure, Loimeier draws attention to this diversity. According to him, reform movements have different orientations which may be noticed in the terms they use to describe their cause or propagation (*da'wa*) in different social and historical contexts. The terms ranged from the more general one referred to as *tajdīd* (renewal) to such others as *iṣlāḥ* (purification or return to the pure values of early Islam), *nahḍa* (renaissance), *iḥyāʾ* (revival or revivification), *sahwa* (awakening), and *taraqqī* or *taqaddum* (progress).[166]

Up to the early twentieth century, Loimeier notes that *tajdīd* was the most frequently used term in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa.[167] John Voll has argued that the basis for using it is a reported saying of the Prophet Muhammad in which he declared, "God will send to this *umma* (the Muslim community) at the end of each century those who will renew its faith for it."[168] The one who is expected to bring about the renewal is called the *mujaddid*. Although the process and situation that would lead to this renewal have inspired debates among Muslims, Voll notes that the idea of a renewer expressed in it is consistent. Because of this saying, the Muslim community is deemed to need a *mujaddid* when it is deviating from the way of the Qur'an and the *sunna*.[169] In the twentieth century, Loimeier contends that the term *iṣlāḥ* became widely used by many reformers in sub-Saharan Africa. The shift, according to him, suggests their reorientation to return to the pure ways of the Prophet.[170] But Voll's argument suggests that this may not be the only idea meant by the term. For him, it is also translated as "reform" and it is close to the notion of "moral righteousness" and "reshaping for the sake of improving effectiveness."[171] Apart from *tajdīd* and *iṣlāḥ*, Loimeier argues that other terms (that is, *nahḍa, iḥyāʾ, sahwa*, and *taraqqī*) are rarely used in sub-Saharan Africa except in Arab countries. Thus, given these multiple concepts around the term 'reform,' Loimeier notes that 'reform' in Muslim societies signifies a motley of ideas which has activist, liberalising, modernising, conservatist and revolutionary undertones.[172]

While reform movements refer to these concepts, according to Loimeier, it is also important to look at the distinct names which they call themselves. Notable examples are *jamāʿa* (union,

---

[166] Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 18–19.

[167] Ibid.

[168] John O. Voll, "Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: Tajdid and Islah," in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito, 32–47 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 33. Quoted from Sulaiman bin Ash'ath Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abu Dawud: English Translation,* 5. vols. 4 (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2008), 512

[169] John O. Voll, "Renewal and Reform in Islamic History" in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, 33.

[170] Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 19.

[171] John O. Voll, "Renewal and Reform in Islamic History" in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, 33.

[172] Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 18.

group), *ḥizb* (party), *ahl* (people), *anṣār* (supporters) and *ḥaraka* (movement). These names are indications of who belong to their group (often identified as 'proper Muslims,' and not all other Muslims) and the religious orientation they offer. Also, the names can be used to articulate a shift in their religious or political goal. Despite the differences in names, the majority of them point out the centrality of the Qur'an and the Hadith. They also criticise some practices in their societies and advocate the form of change they want to achieve.[173] In addition, their viewpoints are not distinctively exclusive but intersect and incorporate one another. In the section below, I draw attention to a few of these reformist orientations in Africa. This is to show their different, but similar, orientations and why they are related to the Muslim students in Yorubaland.

2.3.1 **Reform movements and orientations**

Many reform movements in Africa are Salafi-oriented.[174] Those who identify with such movements consider themselves to be followers of the *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, 'pious predecessors.' They describe the predecessors as the Prophet Muhammad and his companions and the three generations that followed him, and they are of the view that Muslims must return to the practices and beliefs of these predecessors as the only way to achieve piety and the renewal of faith.[175] Despite their claims, many studies show that the term (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) also applies to all Muslims regardless of their different doctrinal positions. Henri Lauzière argues that the term had been used among Muslims before its adoption as a doctrine (by the Salafis) in the 1920s.[176] Besides focusing on the term, Thurston also contends that the Salafis can be recognised through the canon they embodied and transmitted. The canon, according to him, has three streams that include Hanbali thinkers, especially Shaykh Ahmad ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) and Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792); the scholars from Yemen and India who partly recognise ibn Taymiyya; and modernist thinkers like Shaykh Muhammad Rashıd Rida (1865-1935). [177] But, while the Salafi community is known to be fragmented, Thurston maintains that the canon offers a platform for seeing the uniformity of

---

[173] Ibid., 20.

[174] See Østebø, *Localising Salafism*; Terje Østebø, "African Salafism: Religious Purity and the Politicization of Purity," *Islamic Africa* 6, 1-2 (2015); Iris Kolman, "Gender Activism in Salafism," in *Salafism after the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power*, ed. Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone, 187–204 (Kettering: Oxford University Press, 2017); Yunus Dumbe and Abdulkader Tayob, "Salafis in Cape Town in Search of Purity, Certainty and Social Impact," *Die Welt des Islams* 51, no. 2 (2011); Scott S. Reese, "Salafi Transformations: Aden and the Changing Voices of Religious Reform in the Interwar Indian Ocean," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 01 (2012).

[175] Reese, "Salafi Transformations": 71–2.

[176] Henri Lauzière, "The Construction of Salafiyya: Reconsidering Salafism from the Perspective of Conceptual History," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 03 (2010): 373.

[177] Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria*, 18–19.

this community.[178] In general, he added that the Salafis are Sunni Muslims who promote direct access to the Qur'an and the Hadith, rather than through the established schools of jurisprudence. Because of this orientation, they are regarded as 'scripturalists' or 'literalists.' It is also common among them to oppose Sufism which they consider as unlawful innovation (*bid'a*) and to insist on having textual 'evidence' of Islamic knowledge in place of the teachings of scholars.[179] As I will demonstrate, Thurston's study is relevant to this study because the Salafi phenomenon he highlighted in Northern Nigeria plays a role in the understanding of Islam of some Yoruba Muslim students who studied in the region.

Although it has become the subject of criticism of the Salafis, the Sufi-oriented reform is also widespread in Africa. Reese's study of Sufi discourses in early twentieth century Somalia draws attention to this. The work shows that the Qadiriyya provided a model of reform that emphasised the closer connection of people with God in contrast to the Salihiyya, a pro-Wahhabi order that emphasised rigorous adherence to the Qur'an and the Hadith as a way to address social and moral decay.[180] Another notable example of Sufi reform was that of Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse (1900-1975) in the Tijaniyya order in West Africa. The order, founded by Shaykh Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Tijani (1737-1815) in present-day Algeria, had few adherents for more than a century before Niasse's reform. As Seesemann narrates, Ahmad al-Tijani predicted before his death that "a flood shall come upon my companion, so that the people will enter our path in throngs."[181] The 'flood' is from the Arabic word *fayḍa* (and *fayḍa* is not only translated as 'flood,' but also 'abundance of grace,' 'overflowing').[182] From 1929, Niasse declared himself to be the "bringer of the flood." He also propagated the tradition of *tarbiya* ('spiritual training') through which he taught his followers to attain the "interior knowledge" of God regarded as *ma'rifa*.[183] Niasse's teachings led to a massive increase in the members of the Tijaniyya order beyond West Africa. While some followers of Ahmad al-Tijani contested Niasse's claim and his traditions of *fayḍa* and *tarbiya*, Seesemann points out that he was considered by many of his followers as the renewer of the order.[184] From the 1930s, the impact

---

[178] Ibid., 10–11.

[179] Ibid., 5–8.

[180] Scott S. Reese, "The Best of Guides: Sufi Poetry and Alternate Discourses of Reform in Early Twentieth-Century Somalia," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 14, no. 1 (2001): 49–51.

[181] Seesemann, *The Divine Flood*, 3.

[182] Seesemann also notes that one of the disciples of Ahmad al-Tijani explained that the flood was used to mean "experience illumination." ibid.

[183] Also, a very contested term, Zachary Wright notes that *ma'rifa* is "best defined as the realisation of the soul's inherent awareness that God alone is real." See Zachary V. Wright, Living Knowledge in West African Islam: The Sufi Community of Ibrāhīm Niasse (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 134.

[184] Seesemann, *The Divine Flood*, 5.

of Niasse's reform began to be felt in Northern Nigeria, and later in the South, as many Muslims including the emir of Kano, Abdullah Bayero (1881–1953) embraced his teachings.[185] Until that period, as narrated by Peel, Sufism in Yorubaland was limited to some revered *alfas* and elders and was considered too powerful for the young and the laity. However, through Niasse's reform and some of his followers in Yorubaland, the Tijaniyya order was gradually embraced by the young and the laity. One of the key figures that led the movement was Shehu Usman Lanase (d. 1954), who came to Ibadan as a young man from Zaria in the North.[186]

The Tabligh Jama'at shows another reformist orientation. The movement was founded by Maulana Muhammed Ilyas (1885-1944) in 1927 in India to reawaken the faith of Muslims in many ways. The most important of these is to take a full-time duty to preach Islam among Muslims, especially those considered to have strayed from the straight path. While many Muslims consider such a duty to be the responsibility of learned men, Ilyas departed from this and encouraged every Muslim regardless of their knowledge to engage in *da'wa* (invitation or proselytizing).[187] This became the primary activity of its members who moved from one community and country to another in order to mobilise Muslims.[188] Also, IIyas taught the Jama'at some moral lessons to be adopted in their interaction with Muslims and non-Muslims. He encouraged them to stay away from frivolous discussions and unrewarding activities, which include socio-political issues, and follow the Prophetic *sunna*. Most of his teachings are contained in a text called *Fazail-i-Amal* (the Virtues of Pious Deeds) which, as Yoginder Sikand suggests, includes stories of heavenly rewards that await those who follow the commandments of God.[189] While most of these stories have been contested by many Muslims, Tablighis consider them as important teachings to achieve piety.[190] Today, the Tabligh Jama'at is a transnational movement with a considerable number of members around the world. The spread of the movement has been studied in many African countries such as The Gambia,

---

[185] Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 229.

[186] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 178–79.

[187] See Janson, *Islam, Youth, and Modernity in The Gambia*, 72–73.

[188] Lateef F. Oladimeji, "The Role of the Jama'tut-Tablighi in the Promotion of Adult and Non-Formal Education Among Muslims in Nigeria," in *Education Crises in Nigeria: Arabic and Islamic Studies Perspectives*, ed. M. A. Muhbbu-Din (Minna, Nigeria: NATAIS Publication, 2007), 18.

[189] Yoginder S. Sikand, "The Origins and Growth of the Tablighi Jamaat in Britain," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 9, no. 2 (1998): 172.

[190] Yoginder Sikand, "The Tablighi Jamaat'S Contested Claims to Islamicity," *Indian Muslim Observer*, June 24, 2010, http://indianmuslimobserver.com/2010/06/24/issues-the-tablighi-jamaats-contested-claims-to-islamicity/ (accessed February 21, 2019). see also Barbara D. Metcalf, "Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama`at," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 52, no. 3 (Aug., 1993)

Nigeria, and South Africa.[191] In Nigeria, members of the movement appeared to have settled in Lagos in the 1950s. However, they were not welcomed by many Yoruba Muslims due to their reform orientation.[192] Nonetheless, the population of members of the movement has steadily grew over time with an increase of over 300 Tablighi learning centres across Nigeria by the 2000s.[193]

The Society of the Muslim Brothers (Arabic, *Jamāʿat al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*), also known as the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is another influential revival movement. Founded in 1928 by a teacher, Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), in Egypt, it became a transnational movement with members in many parts of the world. While its reform orientations have fragmented over time depending on its leaders, many of the legacies of al-Banna's are still observed in the movement.[194] Richard Mitchell's study reveals that at the early stage of his life, al-Banna belonged to the Sufi order named Hasafiyya and later in life, he was influenced by Salafi scholars.[195] But, in his teachings, he complained of elements like logic and philosophy which he believed to have crept into Sufism. He was also worried that Sufism concentrated more on "isolated spirituality" rather than helping people solve social problems.[196] Thus, he called for "a serious reform effort designed to save 'pure' Sufism from its later accretions."[197] As part of this reform, the MB dissociated itself from those Sufi practices. It also established an organisational structure based on "families" which were used as bases for moral training and fostering loyalty and 'brotherhood' among members.[198] Al-Banna's other goal of reform, referring to Egypt at the time, emphasised the Qur'an as the constitution of the country and an economic system based on this text. Thus, in the mid-1940s, the MB became linked to the politics of Egypt. Al-Banna also advocated for social reforms in the field of education, which for him should have a secular and religious character. In addition, he encouraged welfare

---

[191] See Janson, *Islam, Youth, and Modernity in The Gambia*; Adeyemi Balogun, "Challenges and Affirmations of Islamic Practice: The Tablighi Jamaat," in *Beyond Religious Tolerance: Muslim, Christian and Traditionalist Encounters in an African Town*, eds. Insa Nolte, Olukoya Ogen and Rebecca Jones, 123–49, (Rochester NY: James Currey Ltd, 2017); Muhammad K. Masud, ed., *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal,* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

[192] Adeyemi Balogun, "Challenges and Affirmations of Islamic Practice" in *Beyond Religious Tolerance*, 126–27.

[193] Janson, *Islam, Youth, and Modernity in The Gambia*, 75.

[194] Roel Meijer, "The Muslim Brotherhood and the Political: An Exercise in Ambiguity," in *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*, ed. Edwin Bakker and Roel Meijer, 294–320 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 295–96.

[195] Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society for the Muslim Brothers*, Reprint 1993 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 214–16.

[196] Ibid., 216.

[197] Ibid., 214.

[198] Ibid., 195–200.

services that promote knowledge dissemination in villages and taught Muslims to stay away from practices like gambling and alcohol.[199] From the 1960s, some Yoruba Muslim students who had links with the MB while studying abroad introduced the movement's orientation into the MSSN. As I will illustrate in Chapters Four and Five, this orientation became part of what shaped the new ways of being Muslim in the Society.

While the four reform movements above have women as members, it is also possible to find movements that are exclusively for females. The women's mosque movement in Egypt in Mahmood's study is a case in point.[200] These women, according to Mahmood, are concerned about achieving piety. They do this by teaching Islamic texts and encouraging themselves to cultivate pious dispositions such as prayers, shyness, fear of God and veiling. For Mahmood, while this form of *da'wa* allowed the female teachers to enter the male-centred field of Islamic education, it also demonstrated women's agency in Muslims societies.[201] Besides women, many reform movements are formed by young people. But studies that focus on them appear to be limited. To an extent, the inadequate scholarly attention is not the only problem; the problem also appears to be the historical trajectories of such movements. An example is the Muslim Youth Movement formed in 1970 in Durban, South Africa. At inception, Abdulkader Tayob narrates that the movement challenged the learning of the Qur'an through a teacher, encouraged women's attendance in the mosque and promoted the use of English in Friday sermons. Over time, it introduced study circles and leadership training. But up to the late 1980s, it continued to be fragmented by different discourses on Islam such that it could not attract a larger number of Muslims.[202] Apart from this type of movement, some movements in Africa identified as "young" or "youth" at inception but dropped the attribute over time. A major example is the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria which was founded as "Young Ansar-Ud-Deen" in 1923. Reichmuth reveals that this movement dropped the term "Young" in the 1960s to reflect its "claim of a national character."[203] One of my respondents narrated to me that this was also done to reflect the generational shift of its members from "youth" to "adults."[204] In all, I consider this change of terms to be part of what defines the fluidity of Islamic reform.

---

[199] Ibid., 260–94.

[200] Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival," *Cultural Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (2001); Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*.

[201] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 57–72.

[202] Abdulkader Tayob, "The Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) of South Africa: Challenging the Ulama Hegemony," *J. Islam Stud.*, no. 12 (1992): 109–21.

[203] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 383.

[204] Sherrifdeen Adegoke, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 2, 2016, Ilupeju Lagos.

It is worth noting that few studies have emphasised the important role of students in Islamic reform in Western educational institutions. Muriel Gomez-Perez, Marie-Nathalie LeBlanc and Mathias Savadogo point to these students in countries like Senegal, Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast.[205] Their work discusses movements like the *Association des Eleves et des Etudiants Musulmans de Cote d Ivoire* (Ivory Coast's Association of Muslim Students [AEEMCI]), founded in 1978 and the *Association des Jeunes Musulmans de Treichville* (Treichville's Young Muslims Association [AJMT]), established in 1988, which organised public preaching, built mosques and promoted the use of the veil among women, all of which contributed to the public expression of Islam.[206] It is also important to emphasise that there are reform-minded Muslims who do not belong to any association or organisation. Masquelier's study of Islamic revival among women in Niger illustrates this point.[207] Her study reveals that reform movements and scholars of diverse orientations are present in Niger. In this context, many women debate Islamic traditions and identify with reformist tenets that fit into their worldviews.

The history of the MSSN can be conceptualised from these diverse reformist orientations above. For instance, in terms of name, the MSSN is also called *"Jama'at Taliban Muslimin Nijiriya"[208]* in Arabic by its members. The name, following Loimeier's argument, is an indication of its reform orientation and the social group it regards as its members. The Society considers itself as a body for all Muslim students in Nigeria, who, often, belong to other Islamic groups outside the schools. One of the arguments used to promote this orientation is that Islam is one and that its members must be viewed as a single community in the school context. But the Society also recognises the diverse orientations of its members and promoted the diversity from inception. Therefore, in addition to its name, the MSSN provides a platform that allows the propagation of many reform orientations among students. Among these orientations are those of the Salafis, the MB, and those that emphasised piety among women. Although the Society has tried in recent times to distance itself from some reformist orientations in the Tabligh Jama'at, Sufi and Salafi movements, many of its members continued to be linked to these orientations. Furthermore, after many years, like the Ansar-Ud-Deen, the MSSN also reframed its identity from a 'youth' to a 'student' movement. In reality, the MSSN was established by 'students,' and it continued to be conceived by many Nigerians as a 'student/or

---

[205] Muriel Gomez-Perez, Marie-Nathalie LeBlanc and Mathias Savadogo, "Young Men and Islam in the 1990s: Rethinking an Intergenerational Perspective," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39, no. 2 (2009).

[206] Ibid., 191–94.

[207] Masquelier, *Women and Islamic Revival in a West African Town*, 11–23.

[208] Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria, 1983, NGA 6.51-17.6, IAS; Abdus-Salam Mikhail, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 2016-March 2017, UI, Ibadan.

youth' association linked to a specific age category. Yet, the Society has embraced the notion of 'student' which is not based on age category. While the term continued to be contested, the Society's theory of 'student' ensures that its members and its reform orientation are not confined to educational institutions.

2.3.2 **Islamic reform and modernity**

In many studies, Islamic reform is frequently linked with "modernity" which is considered to emanate from Europe or the West.[209] In fact, it is either conceived as a form of modernity or a reaction to it in some studies. Among these studies is the work of the Osellas, which uses the term "Islamic modernism" to refer to "projects of change aiming to re-order Muslims' lifeworlds and institutional structures in dialogue with those produced under colonial and post-colonial modernity."[210] Lara Deeb's study of Shi'i Muslims in Lebanon suggests another form of relationship between modernity and Islamic reform by focusing on how piety is promoted in the public by some Muslims. Rather than being a form of modernity or a reaction to it, she contends that modernity interacts and co-exists with Islam such that "religiosity is incorporated into modern-ness."[211] These differing viewpoints suggest that the analysis of "Islamic reform" from the perspective of "modernity" is problematic, as many studies have shown.[212] This prolem arises from our inability to conceptualise "modernity" and its relationship with the process of Islamic reform. Moosa has referred to this problem in the contrasting ways in which modernity has been conceived by reformers since the nineteenth century. He noted that while the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reformists were of the view that modernity was good, many scholars in the twenty-first-century gave a strong critique against it.[213]

This problem calls attention to Frederick Cooper's argument that the use of "modernity" in different discourses might be creating more confusion than clarity.[214] This is why he suggests that rather than finding a better definition, "scholars should not try for a slightly better definition so that they can talk about modernity more clearly. They should instead listen to

---

[209] For instance, Kobo, *Unveiling Modernity in Twentieth-Century West African Islamic Reforms*, 1–32; Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria*, 1–7; Osella and Osella, *Islamic Reform in South Asia*, 11–13.

[210] Osella and Osella, *Islamic Reform in South Asia*, xi.

[211] Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern*, 5.

[212] The problem of conceptualising modernity and Islam is noted in many studies including Benjamin Soares and Filippo Osella, "Islam, Politics, Anthropology," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15, no. 8 (2009): s4-s5; and Martin van Bruinessen, Armando Salvatore and Muhammad K. Masud, eds., *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 1–6.

[213] Ebrahim Moosa, "The Debts and Burden of Critical Islam," in *Progressive Muslims: On justice, gender and pluralism*, ed. Omid Safi, 111–27 (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), 118.

[214] Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, 4th ed. (Berkeley (Calif.): University of California Press, 2009), 113.

what is being said in the world. If modernity is what they hear, they should ask how it is being used and why."[215] But, many studies on Islamic reform and modernity are not consistent with this argument. For instance, Kobo's study of Islamic reform in Ghana and Burkina Faso agrees with Cooper's argument because he narrated that his informants employed words like "modern," "modernity," "progress, and "irrationality," to describe their activities and aspirations, as well as their link with the Western and Arab worlds.[216] Therefore, by focusing on how they imagined their experiences, Kobo analysed Islamic reform from the point of view of modernity that was inspired by colonial rule. In doing this, he juxtaposed the conception of European modernity and its symbols with the reformist orientations in Ghana and Burkina Faso.[217] Nevertheless, Armando Salvatore has contested this approach because the comparison suggests "de-essentialising Islam" and "re-essentialising modernity" based on an over-simplified definition of modernity.[218] To avoid this trap, some scholars have argued for an alternative conception of "modernity" because it privileges the West as the maker of universal history.[219]

Ousseina Alidou in her study of women in Niger shows that this alternative definition can take non-Europeans into account, thereby proving that modernity is "plural and multidirectional."[220] This approach appears in Kane's study of the Yan Izala movement that challenges the basis of modernity linked to colonial rule in Africa. Kane builds on the theories of postcolonialism that emphasised the agency of the colonised and argues that the composition of the modern world is largely the product of the interaction between the imperialists and their subjects. For him, imperialism is "a process of intense interactions of give-and-take" between the coloniser and the colonised.[221] Thus, rather than being transported from Europe to Africa, according to him, modernity is a joint project of the two. From this perspective, Kane departs from Cooper's argument by insisting that the Yan Izala also promote modernity. While I consider Kane's analysis to be very useful, Cooper's emphasis on how modernity is conceptualised by our

---

[215] Ibid., 115.

[216] Kobo, *Unveiling Modernity in Twentieth-Century West African Islamic Reforms*, 22.

[217] Ibid., 27–32.

[218] Armando Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity* (Reading: Ithaca, 1997), xiii.

[219] See for instance Gurminder K. Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (Basingstoke, Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1–2; Lisa Rofel, "Rethinking Modernity: Space and Factory Discipline in China," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 107; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2008), 42–44.

[220] Ousseina Alidou, *Engaging Modernity: Muslim Women and the Politics of Agency in Postcolonial Niger,* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 4–5.

[221] Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria*, 6.

respondents also deserves serious attention. Cooper's argument is important for me not only because I could link the term, 'modernity,' to my respondents, but also because the Yoruba have a concept known as *Ọlaju* that is connected to how modernity is understood by them. Thus, by focusing on how my respondents used 'modernity' and the idea that is connected to it among the Yoruba, I will demonstrate the multidimensionality of 'modernity' and how I approach it with regards to Islamic reform in the MSSN.

Peel has shown that *Ọlaju* is a nuanced concept that is related to many ideas such as "enlightenment," "civilisation," "knowledge," "power" and "progress."[222] From the late nineteenth century, as Peel demonstrates, *Ọlaju* became associated with Western education and other factors of social change stimulated by colonization such as the railways and hospitals.[223] As education was considered a form of *Ọlaju* that confers power on those who acquired it and a capital that facilitates development, it inspired many Yoruba Muslim to embrace it. But despite being educated and, given that they consider being Muslim as part of *Ọlaju*, they have remained critical of the *Ọlaju* of Christianity which they associate with Europe and its ideals of modernity. Kobo draws attention to a phenomenon similar to this as the impact of imperialism and the creativity of the colonised to use "the colonial cultural and material discourse to reinforce local struggles against the remnants of colonial rule."[224] For him, this is one of the ways in which "the colonised used colonial discourse against itself."[225] However, the example of Yoruba Muslims reveals that they are not using the "remnants" of the coloniser in their understanding of modernity. To understand this, it is important to consider the Yoruba Muslims discourse not only as a product of colonization but also part of their broader worldview. As noted above, *Ọlaju* could mean 'enlightenment' or 'progress.' It could also be used in both positive and negative senses. On one hand, it could be conceived of as a factor of 'development' or 'progress' and on the other hand, as a stimulus to immorality or disaster.[226] To this extent, it is not just employed as a critique of European modernity but a discourse of their notion of 'modernity' in its own right. The Yoruba Muslims' critique of European modernity must therefore be situated in this broader sense of the term.

The impact of this notion of 'modernity' came out in the testimonies of many respondents. Generally, when these respondents talk about Islamic reform, they usually avoid terms like

---

[222] Peel, "Olaju": 141–3.
[223] Ibid., 148–49.
[224] Kobo, *Unveiling Modernity in Twentieth-Century West African Islamic Reforms*, 23.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Peel, "Olaju": 142–3.

"Islamic modernism" or "modern" Islam to describe their orientation. This is not to suggest that other Yoruba Muslims, including students, do not consider reform in the sense of modernity. Moreover, the public perception of many Christians about new ways of being Muslims have not helped the resentment which most MSSN members have for this "modern" term. For instance, many Christians refer to Muslims who do not embrace the Salafi-minded practices as either "enlightened," "modern," or "good" Muslims. Owing to this, the MSSN members prefer to talk about their orientation with terms like "real Islam," "authentic Islam," "pristine Islam," "conscious Muslims," and "Sunnatic" (from *sunna*) practice. It is against this background that I avoid the concept of modernity in my conception of Islamic reform in this study.

Nonetheless, I am aware that modernisation is linked to the history of the MSSN. In this regard, I follow Janson's argument about the 'modernity' of the Tabligh Jama'at. Like the MSSN, Janson argues that the Jama'at can be regarded as a typical 'modern' movement in the sense that it emerges under the conditions of processes of modernisation that is characterised by industrialisation, urbanisation and individualism, and that the movement represents an attempt to deal with the transformations caused by these processes. Analysing the history of the MSSN this way also agrees with the views of many MSSN members when they contest the interpretation of the Islam of the Salafis in Yoruba society. For instance, one of the positions of these Salafis is that Islam does not support the formation of 'groups,' 'parties' or 'societies' by Muslims. Although this argument is considered valid by the supporters of the MSSN, however, they see the formation of the MSSN as inevitable in a modern Yoruba society. The supporters of the MSSN also consider the Society to be useful in dealing with contemporary Muslim challenges. This confirms the arguments in many studies that reformists do not seek to do away with every symbol of modernity, rather, they often appropriate and 'Islamise' them.[227] To this extent, while I do not equate Islamic reform with modernity, I still consider that the history of the MSSN can be understood within the context of modern society.

2.4 **Religious change**

The Islamization and Christianization of many parts of Africa by the twentieth century have been theorised by many scholars. Among them is Robin Horton who contends that the conversion to the two religions is due to the religious thought process of Africans and how it

---

[227] See Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 7–15; Jeffrey T. Kenney and Ebrahim Moosa, eds., *Islam in the Modern World* (London: Routledge, 2014), 2–3.

responds to modern situations. [228] He argues that many Africans moved away from the recognition of lesser gods, which they associated with smaller communities and smaller issues, to a Supreme Being, which they associated with larger communities and bigger concerns. For him, the conversion was caused by the inability of lesser gods to cope with or explain bigger concerns such as colonialism, modernisation, and transportation technology. However, Islam and Christianity played the role of catalysts to support the conversion of many Africans because they connected them with the Supreme Being who helped to deal with the bigger concerns. [229]

In his response to Horton, Humphrey Fisher proposes a historical approach to Islamization based on three stages. He notes that there was a "quarantine" stage when Islam gradually made an inroad into the "animist" communities; a "mixing" phase, where the people assimilated Islamic traditions but retained elements of old beliefs and practices; and the "reform" period, where they abandoned these elements. [230] Largely, Horton and Fisher give some insights into the understanding of religious change today. However, Janson's study challenges their approaches because they offered an understanding of religious change as a straight path, that is, a shift from Traditional Religion to Christianity or Islam. [231] Using the example of a member of Tabligh Jama'at in The Gambia, Janson argues that conversion can also be "in terms of a transformation of the self" which could happen within the same religion, either Islam or Christianity. She also calls attention to the conception of this transformation as a fluctuating process rather than a unilinear pathway. [232] Thus, one of my understandings of religious change builds on Janson's argument. Her argument supports the experience of the Yoruba Muslim students in the MSSN because one of the forms of their religious change involves a shift from one notion of Islam to another.

In addition, I build on the conception of religious change by Jack Eller as an aspect of wider cultural change. [233] Eller considers religious change to fit into Bronisław Malinowski's definition of cultural change as "the process by which the existing order of a society, that is, its

---

[228] Robin Horton, "African Conversion," *Africa* 41, no. 2 (1971).

[229] Ibid., 101–7.

[230] J. H. Fisher, "Conversion Reconsidered: Some Historical Aspects of Religious Conversion in Black Africa," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 43, no. 1 (1973): 32.

[231] Marloes Janson, "'How, for God's Sake, Can I Be a Good Muslim?': Gambian Youth in Search of a Moral Lifestyle," *Ethnography* 17, no. 1 (2015).

[232] Ibid., 22–27.

[233] Jack D. Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, Second edition (London, New York: Routledge, 2015), 151.

social, spiritual, and material civilisation, is transformed from one type into another."[234] Though it appears as a unidirectional process, this conception of religious change suggests that transformation in religion will generally affect other aspects of culture. When this happens, the key change processes will function in both religion and culture.[235] The key change processes, as he notes, are "innovation" and "diffusion." Innovation can occur in culture when an individual or group bring a new idea, object or practice into being. In religion, the innovation can be "a new entity to believe in, a new myth to tell, a new symbol to use, a new ritual to perform, etc."[236] For the process of diffusion, it can occur if "an idea, object, or practice from another society is introduced into the first society which entails further cultural processes such as contact, migration, intermarriage, invasion, or conquest."[237]

From a sociological approach, Meredith McGuire contends that the dynamics of religious change relate to a broader process of social change.[238] This suggests that rather than happening in isolation, religious change is also stimulated by social factors. This perspective informs the object of research of many sociologists from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century seeking to understand religion within the society. Among them is Karl Marx who is well-known for arguing that changes in the economy are central to religious and social change.[239] This comes from his conceptualisation of religion as a creation of the material and economic realities of the society and a tool used by the rich to oppress the poor. This view is less popular today because it tends to subject the historical process only to the forces of the market. There is also Émile Durkheim whose perspective to the debate differed from Marx. As Bryan Turner argues, Durkheim considers religion to be the seeds of social life and collective activity. This informs his concept of religion as a "social fact" – "a phenomenon outside the individual, existing independently and exercising moral force over society."[240] Although Durkheim was criticised

---

[234] Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Dynamics of Culture Change: An Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa*, ed. Phyllis M. Kaberry (New Haven: Yale University Press; H. Milford Oxford University Press, 1945), 1.

[235] Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, 151.

[236] Ibid.

[237] Ibid.

[238] McGuire, *Religion*, 171. James Duke and Barry Johnson posit that religious change can also be an aspect of a society's social structure. See Duke, T. James and Johnson, L. Barry, "The Stages of Religious Transformation: A Study of 200 Nations," *Review of Religious Research* 30, no. 3 (Mar. 1989): 209

[239] Andrew Mckinnon, "The Sociology of Religion: The Foundations," in *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Bryan S. Turner, 31–51, (Chichester, West Sussex, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 34.

[240] Bryan S. Turner, "Introduction: Mapping the Sociology of Religion," in *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Bryan S. Turner, 1–29, (Chichester, West Sussex, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 23.

by many secularists for this position, Turner argues that the revival of religion today has made his argument relevant again.[241]

Apart from being stimulated by social factors, religion can also have a significant implication on social change. As Wallis contends, religion can play this role through direct impact on social structures.[242] The impact can also be indirect by functioning through the adjustment of people's lives and thoughts. In turn, social change can affect religion which may be due to generational changes, technological innovation, a transition from war to peace, and economic prosperity. While these changes can reduce previously held beliefs and practices, they can also foster new religious ideas and movements among them.[243]

The various perspectives above show that there are complex factors at play in the process of religious change. This view confirms Peel's argument that "the factors involved in religious change in Africa are very elaborate" such that historians and social scientists can offer different explanations.[244] This heterogeneity of processes of religious change informs my understanding of the concept in this study. This perspective is important because it allows me to approach the history of MSSN in a complex way. As part of the complexity, I consider the establishment of the MSSN as an innovation that was enabled by the social process of Christianization and colonialization. The transformation of MSSN into a reformist movement is also shaped by varying postcolonial realities both in the Muslim world and in Nigeria.

However, despite offering a fluid conception, Eller suggests that the multiplicity of processes involved in religious and cultural change also mean that one is not always certain about the "ultimate source of novelty."[245] This is made more challenging by the problem of reducing phenomena like "religion" to specific meanings. For instance, the notion of "religion," as Wilfred Smith argues, is a reified term confused together with "religious" practices such as rituals and praying, while the idea of "religion as a category that abstracted human activities and experiences" does not exist.[246] The problem of constructing "religion" has therefore raised certain questions in many studies such as those on new religious movements (NRM). As Eller notes, there are questions on "what does 'new' mean?" and "what is 'religious' about NRMs?"

---

[241] Ibid., 20–21.
[242] Roy Wallis, "Introduction: Religion and Change," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 2, no. 1 (1982): 4.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Peel, "Religious Change in Yorubaland": 292.
[245] Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, 151.
[246] Wilfred C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (London: S.P.C.K, 1978).

insofar as many of them integrate other goals like economics and politics.[247] Despite the problem of abstraction, Eller contends that it is possible to view religious change through specific "forms and outcomes," which I will discuss below.[248]

2.4.1 **Forms of change**

Eller posits that the result of religious change may include various processes that include "addition," "deletion" "reinterpretation" "elaboration," "simplification," "purification," "syncretism," and "schism/fission."[249] I wish to point out that even though each of these processes implies different things, they are all connected, in different ways, to how discourse results in a religious change. For instance, "addition," as Eller points out, may occur if a new item is introduced to a pre-existing repertoire. The new item becomes a practice once an argument is made to authorise it. This happens many times in the MSSN and among Yoruba Muslims in general.[250] The major examples are the introduction of the MSSN as a new organisation for Yoruba Muslim students, and the various forms of Islamic education which I discussed in Chapter Seven. Another major example is the introduction of music which is used for entertainment in the MSSN but also regarded as a type of *da'wa* (propagation of Islam). However, employing music for *da'wa* raised several debates on whether it was a correct practice in Islam and was dropped by the Society in the late 1980s. The dropping of the music is part of what Eller refers to as "deletion" in which a society or religious organisation discontinues a ritual.

Eller also identifies the case of "reinterpretation," a process in which initial beliefs and practices may be given new meanings. This can occur due to generational difference or by the introduction of new viewpoints.[251] This process calls attention to the idea of reform and how it was inspired in the MSSN, discussed in Chapter Five. In this case, the Society gave a different perspective to the notion of *sunna* which departed from how it was conceived by many Yoruba Muslims. A major example is the use of certain veils that cover the woman's face which many Yoruba Muslims considered being less obligatory but was emphasised by the MSSN as central to what it means to be a good Muslim.

---

[247] Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, 155.

[248] Ibid., 151.

[249] Eller mentioned other forms such as "abandonment" and "extinction," which are however, not relevant in this study. See ibid., 151–52.

[250] Generally, in Yorubaland, this will include the introduction of Islam and the establishment of Islamic organizations such as the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society.

[251] Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, 151.

An aspect of this process of "reinterpretation" is what Eller refers to as "elaboration" which occurs when an old idea or action is widened and improved.[252] In the MSSN, it happens that after promoting a different notion of *sunna*, the understanding and practices considered as *sunna* such as veiling were also expanded. To illustrate this, before the reform, female Muslims in Yorubaland used the loose scarves during prayers and in the public domain. This is not to suggest that these scarves are no longer in use. However, these scarves are not considered to fit into the prophetic examples with which many female MSSN members wish to be associated. This has made different types of knitted veils, some of which are in the form of a garment, popular among these female MSSN members.

Another aspect of reinterpretation can be "simplification" which involves reducing the detail of an existing idea or practice.[253] This is noticed in the method of transmission of knowledge in the MSSN which I discussed in Chapter Seven. For instance, while education in the classical *madrasas* starts with the mastery of Arabic, the MSSN promotes the use of English translated texts in the acquisition of knowledge. This is not to suggest that the Society de-emphasises the importance of Arabic. However, the English texts have been simplified following the process of objectification and they fit into the Western educational pedagogies which the students are familiar with.

Besides, Eller explains that "purification" can also be a variant of reinterpretation.[254] In this case, the effort is to get rid of an element which an individual or group considers to be wrong or alien and to return to the 'real' or 'pure' form. This happened when the MSSN dissociated itself from the Ahmadiyya movement and the Sufi orders because they were regarded as innovation (*bid'a*) into the 'real Islam.' Islamic reform, discussed above, is therefore an example of this process of "purification."

The other form of religious change is "syncretism."[255] This is assumed to be a new religion or culture showing elements that are derived from the blending of two or more cultural/religious sources. Such blending may either occur consciously or unconsciously. Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart point out that in many studies syncretism is regarded as a form of 'infiltration' and 'contamination' of the 'original' and 'pure' religious tradition by other symbols or

---

[252] Ibid., 151–52.
[253] Ibid., 152.
[254] Ibid.
[255] Ibid.

meaning.[256] However, they contest this way of thinking because it suggests that every religion is impermeable to other cultures and practices. My study also departs from such an erroneous conception of syncretism. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Three, some aspects of this erroneous notion of syncretism which developed among Yoruba Muslims include participation in cultural festivals and divination, although these syncretist practices are contested by reform movements such as the Ahmadiyya, Ansar-Ud-Deen and the MSSN.

Lastly, there is "schism," which Eller refers to as a condition of reproduction of religion as a chapter or denomination of initial beliefs and tradition. He notes that over time, a denomination may become a full religion following its break away from the main group.[257] This form of religious change sheds light on the factionalisation and defection of many groups from the MSSN. As I will show in Chapter Five, these groups established their own movements with varying ideals of Islam which, nevertheless, intersect those of the MSSN.

I consider that the forms highlighted by Eller above are very important for understanding the dynamics of religious change. Yet, as noted in Wallis' argument above, religious change can also be stimulated by social factors. The role of social factors is relevant to my perspective of religious change and my understanding of the role of discursive tradition in this change because they create the conditions on which various topics on Islam, such as piety and education, are constructed and understood in the MSSN and among Yoruba Muslims. In the next section, I explore these social factors within the contexts of 'deprivation' and 'colonial rule' which appear in many debates on religious change.

2.4.2 **Context of change**

In her explanation of the social factors that lead to the formation of religious groups, McGuire notes that many studies focused on 'strained economic conditions.'[258] For instance, the economic factors resonate in Salihu Hamisu's account of why the Boko Haram movement emerged in Nigeria in 2002.[259] However, McGuire contends that the economic deprivation thesis is inadequate because it fails to capture a wide range of empirical conditions which are beyond this factor. Rather than focusing on economic deprivation, she calls attention to an alternative model called "relative deprivation" that captures the various conditions which can

---

[256] Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw, eds., *Syncretism/anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 1–9.

[257] Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, 151–52.

[258] McGuire, *Religion*, 171.

[259] Hamisu Salihu, "Is Boko Haram a "Child" Of Economic Circumstances?," *International Journal of Social Economics* 45, no. 8 (2018).

lead to the formation of a religious movement. Relative deprivation, as Charles Glock contends, refers to "any and all of the ways that an individual or group may be or feel disadvantaged in comparison either to other individuals or groups or to an internalized set of standards."[260] This suggests that an individual or groups may not only feel deprived in economic terms, but also social, political, and ethical ways. When people feel this way, and if they can "mobilise," McGuire argues that they will form a religious or social movement.[261] This proposition supports the experience of students who established the MSSN. As I will demonstrate, the students who founded the MSSN were not only concerned about conversion to Christianity, they were also in need of many things which included Islamic knowledge and a platform for social activities to cater for only Muslims. Based on Glock's proposal, I will show in chapter four that the theory of "persecution" of Muslim students, which Rufai[262] emphasised as the main stimulus for founding the MSSN, is both weak and unhelpful in the understanding of these students encounter with Christianity.

Furthermore, many studies suggest that colonialization provides a major context that facilitates religious change.[263] Although there are debates on the impact of colonization on this change, these studies suggest that it played an ambivalent role in different settings. This ambivalence, as I understand it, can be placed within the broader process of the making of the colony which, as Achim von Oppen argues, has many contradictions. An example is the colonial "universalising ambitions" which goes hand in hand with the fragmentation of territories and subjects.[264] There is another example in the sphere of religion in Jean and John Comaroff's study where they show that Christianity and colonialization shaped the consciousness of the Tswana of South Africa towards European capitalism and Western modernity.[265] While Christianity prepared the ground for the colonialization of the Tswana, the state after colonization embarked on a policy to control them through the establishment of schools and

---

[260] Charles, Glock, *Religion in sociological perspective*, cited in McGuire, *Religion*, 171.

[261] Ibid., 171–72.

[262] Rufai, "Da'wah in the Face of Christian Persecution".

[263] Among these are Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa," *American Ethnologist*, no. 13 (1986); Nicholas Dirks, *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Sulayman S. Nyang, "Religion and Social Change in Contemporary Africa," (Washington: Howard University, 2010); Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988).

[264] Achim v. Oppen, "Bounding Villages: The Enclosure of Locality in Central Africa, 1890s to 1990s," (Habilitation Treatise, Humboldt University, 2003), 44.

[265] Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa,* Vol. 1, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 1–6.

the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). But, many of those who converted to Christianity later became opponents of the apartheid policy of the state, thereby revealing the contradiction in the colonial agenda.

Besides such policies of control, the structure of colonial rule also played an important role in sharpening religious identities. As Francis Robinson argues, "the growth of the modern state, the introduction of new systems of knowledge, the expansion of capitalist production, and the spread of communications of all forms - telegraph, post, press - made possible the fashioning of all identities at local, regional and supra-regional levels."[266] Focusing on India during the British rule, he contends that the colonial system encouraged a marked distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, the development of Muslim political identity and the gendering of Muslims identity based on Western thoughts. Apart from sharpening Muslims identities, Soares' study in Nioro, Mali illustrates that the colonial system also contributed to the conversion of non-Muslims into Islam.[267] It is understood in this region that the French conquest and end of slavery in Mali from the late nineteenth century were followed by a large migration of non-Muslims of diverse origins, including slaves, who looked for opportunities in commerce, colonial armies, education and jobs in new cities opened-up by the state. According to Soares, because the cities provided spaces for more interaction and independent religious practice than the pre-colonial context, a significant number of the migrants, especially the former slaves who previously had marginal status in the society, converted to Islam.

It is worth noting that even though the colonialization of Africa ended many years ago, its structures did not collapse. Thomas Bierschenk and Eva Spies argue that "1960," which represents the period of independence of many states, "does not necessarily mark the most significant turning point in recent African history."[268] Furthermore, they contend that African states have undergone wide-ranging changes since independence which have made them more complex. These changes resonate on religion, often in ways that challenged pre-existing traditions. Part of these changes, as Bierschenk and Spies observe, is the hitherto form of religiosity at local levels flourishing at the global level. It also includes the development of

---

[266] Francis Robinson, "The British Empire and Muslim Identity in South Asia," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 8 (1998): 271.

[267] Benjamin F. Soares, *Islam and the Prayer Economy: History and Authority in a Malian Town* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, 2005), 66.

[268] Thomas Bierschenk and Eva Spies, "Introduction: Continuities, Dislocations and Transformations: 50 Years of Independence in Africa," *Africa Spectrum* 45, no. 3 (2010): 3.

secular-minded religious actors in the public sphere contesting the normative role of religion in modern societies.[269]

My understanding of the relationship between colonial rule and religious change is in line with these ambivalences. This study contends that the legacies of colonialization resonate on changes in the MSSN in multiple and contradictory ways. Importantly, as I will demonstrate, colonization facilitated contact between students in Nigeria and the Muslim world from the 1950s, thus enabling the exchange of knowledge and cultures among them. Colonialization also encouraged the introduction of Western education that caused a significant transformation of the classical model of Islamic knowledge transmission. In the same vein, it created socio-economic and political conditions that inspired the encounter between Muslims and Christians in Yorubaland. In addition, the social changes caused by colonization impacted on the ways in which varying ideas of being Muslim are constructed, debated and lived.

2.5 **Muslim-Christian encounters**

While I locate the history of the MSSN in the context of religious and social changes above, I also wish to point out that many aspects of the change are historically linked to how Yoruba Muslims encountered the various Christian missionaries and their followers. To understand this point, I build on Soares' discourse on the way Muslims and Christians have encountered each other in Africa. Soares adopts the term "encounter" as an analytical perspective to situate the range of interactions between Muslims and Christians over time. He is of the view that the interactions "cannot be understood as simply existing at a point on a one-dimensional continuum that runs from coexistence to conflict."[270] This argument is a critique of approaches and assumptions in studies that exclusively focus on either 'relation,' 'dialogue' or 'conflict' between the two religious' groups. In many of these studies, according to Soares, Muslims and Christians are treated as single communities that relate as blocs without crisscrossing each other's boundaries. Some of them build on a functionalist approach that conceives of religion as instrumental to stability in society. Apart from this, many of these studies tend to presume that 'peace' and 'tolerance' is the "normal" societal condition. Among these studies which focus on Nigeria is Akintunde Akinade's *Fractured Spectrum*, in which he highlighted the

---

[269] Ibid., 9.
[270] Soares, *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa*, 2.

strained relations between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria and calls for a "dialogue" to address it.[271]

Soares is aware of studies like Akinade's work which seek to respond to the tensions that have characterised the interactions between members of both faiths. Nonetheless, he insists that "interactions between Muslims and Christians in Africa must be understood in their full complexity."[272] To analyse this complexity, as he proposes, is not "to focus exclusively on either conflict or peaceful coexistence."[273] At the same time, the spotlight should not be on religion alone because it is only one of the elements that define social identities. On the contrary, the focal point should be on the wide range of phenomena on which they interacted. To do this, there is a need to be aware that while Muslims and Christians have confronted one another and live side by side in peace, they have also converted to each other's religion. Moreover, they have borrowed and appropriated from each other, and married among themselves.[274] It is this complex form of interaction that informs his conceptualisation of encounter as an alternative analytical category for understanding Muslin-Christian relations.

His argument has been taken further by Insa Nolte and Olukoya Ogen in their study of religious encounter in the Yoruba town of Ede.[275] They show that the complexity of Muslim-Christian interactions may not only be understood from how the two have interacted historically, but also the way they relate with the Traditionalists. By paying attention to the three religious' traditions, they demonstrate that there is a varying degree of conflict and coexistence among them in different settings which challenges the liberal idea of tolerance. Some of the major works by Peel on the Yoruba also show a similar form of interaction between the three religious groups.[276] In one of these works, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, Peel reveals that even though many Muslims are opposed to Christianity, the Christian missionaries appropriated many Arabic terms, and the cultural ones, which have been localised to produce the Yoruba Bible in the colonial period.[277] The missionaries also facilitated the development

---

[271] Akintunde E. Akinade, ed., *Fractured Spectrum: Perspectives on Christian-Muslim Encounters in Nigeria* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 1–11.

[272] Soares, *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa*, 2.

[273] Ibid., 3.

[274] Ibid.

[275] Insa Nolte and Olukoya Ogen, "Beyond Religious Tolerance: Muslims, Christians and Traditionalists in a Yoruba Town," in *Beyond Religious Tolerance: Muslim, Christian and Traditionalist Encounters in an African Town*, ed. Insa Nolte, Olukoya Ogen and Rebecca Jones, 1–30, (Rochester NY: James Currey, 2017).

[276] See J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orişa-religion.*

[277] Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, 152–214.

of Yoruba alphabets and the consciousness of "Yoruba" as a single name for the diverse people. His study thus suggests that the way Christians interact with Muslims contributes significantly to moulding the social identities of the Yoruba. Beyond the Yoruba, Olufemi Vaughan shows a similar process in the construction of the identities of the state in Nigeria. Vaughan is of the view that while the Muslim and Christian projects have historically run at cross-purposes in Nigeria, "their institutions and doctrines are consistently embedded in the structures of society, shaping social relations and the configuration of power."[278] Generally, Peel and Vaughan's studies demonstrate the importance of not only looking at religion in Muslim-Christian encounters but also the project which members of both faiths set to accomplish.

The history of the MSSN provides another useful context for looking into the dynamics of Muslim-Christian encounters in Yoruba society. The educational institutions, for instance, show how one of these dynamics can be appreciated. As I will demonstrate, the Muslim students interact in the same settings with Christian students whose church missions pioneered the school system and set many of its pedagogies. The school is also a place where the Muslim and Christian students acquire the capital and skills which they both need to achieve economic and political resources from the opportunities provided by the state. Beyond their quests for knowledge, the school also facilitates a varying degree of co-existence and borrowings between the Muslim students and their Christian colleagues. The establishment of the MSSN, for instance, was inspired by those of the Christian mission schools called the SCM and SU. At the same time, the interaction between Christian and Muslim students in the schools showed many incidences of conflict and critique of each other's religion and way of life. To illustrate this, I give examples of MSSN's protest of a church cross in Chapter Four and a lecture that specifically focused on comparing Islam with Christianity in Chapter Seven.

In conclusion, it is possible to link the conceptual frameworks in this study by arguing that religious change is a process which takes different forms in many areas, some of which, in the context of a Muslim society, are made possible through the process of reform or revival of certain traditions. The prevailing social and historical conditions in a society can also shape the outcome of religious change. Certain forms of religious change can equally be motivated by encounters between people of different religions, particularly in a multireligious society. In all, discourses and counter-discourses are central to these three processes because they are used to frame the introduction, interpretation and discontinuity of a practice and what to belief. This

---

[278] Olufemi Vaughan, *Religion and the Making of Nigeria* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 2.

understanding of the process of religious change is what runs through the whole empirical chapters of this dissertation. I will begin by showing this process in the next chapter from the Islamization of Yorubaland and why the social experiences of Yoruba Muslims led to the formation of the MSSN in 1954.

Chapter Three

Yoruba Muslims: Religious Encounter and Social Change up to 1960

3.1 **Introduction**

By the 1950s, almost all Yorubaland had encountered Islam, Christianity, colonial rule and Western culture. The encounter led to a significant change in social relations, religious identity, economic and political development in several communities. How the Yoruba interacted with the two foreign religions and colonialization, and the conditions under which their interaction took place, created new crises and opportunities, as well as diversity among them. On the one hand, this chapter explores this encounter between the Yoruba and Islam, and on the other hand between Yoruba Muslims, Christianity and colonial rule. The first aim of the chapter is to show the social context and experience of Yoruba Muslims up to the period when the MSSN was established, and how this experience shaped the visions set out for the Society. This is in line with the main argument of the chapter that the history of MSSN is linked to the encounter of Yoruba Muslims with Christianity and the social change that was facilitated by colonization. Secondly, this chapter aims to illustrate the process of religious change of the Yoruba Muslims and its connection to the history of MSSN.

The first section focuses on the history of the Yoruba, showing the various aspects of their culture, religion, economic and political organisations. Although I refer to the past in this section, I discussed many aspects of Yoruba history in the present tense to show their continuity in contemporary times. The second section is on the history of Islam among the Yoruba. This section points attention to the origin of the religion, the factors that facilitated its development and how it was practised and organised. In the third section, I focused on the process of Christianization of the Yoruba and why the educational activity of Christian missions challenged the Yoruba Muslims. This section also demonstrates the process of the imposition of colonial rule, which facilitated modern economic and political developments in Yorubaland, and why the broader colonial system benefited the cause of the Christian missions. The fourth section describes the response of Yoruba Muslims to the social transformation caused by Christianization and colonization and how this response impacted their new ways of life and identities as Muslims. In the fifth section, I show the experiences of Yoruba Muslim students and what their experiences tell us about the Yoruba Muslim society up to the end of colonial

rule. I conclude the chapter by reflecting on the process of religious change among Yoruba Muslims up to the end of colonial rule.

3.2 **Yoruba: people, culture and society**

The geographical location of the Yorubas has changed since the end of the twentieth century. However, the majority of the Yoruba have remained in their former location which is in the present-day southwest region of Nigeria made up of six states: Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo. Other Yoruba groups in Kwara and Kogi States are part of the North-Central region of Nigeria. It is difficult to give an accurate population of the Yoruba due to errors and politics that have been associated with the figure since the colonial period.[279] But in 2017, the population of Nigeria was estimated to be 182 million. The Yoruba are estimated to be twenty-one per cent of this figure which is second to the Hausa and Fulani's twenty-nine per cent.[280] In the diaspora, Yoruba communities are in several countries across the world, notably the Republic of Benin, Togo, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Cuba and Brazil. This study is based on those in southwest Nigeria.

The ethnogenesis of the Yoruba has been a subject of academic and theological debates. A popular Yoruba oral tradition claimed that the universe was created at Ile-Ife (now a city in Osun State) after Oduduwa descended from heaven.[281] Oduduwa is thus held as the mythical hero of the Yoruba while Ile-Ife is regarded as their sacred home. Another tradition propounded by Samuel Johnson suggested that the Yoruba were from the Middle East in Upper-Egypt. He was of the view that the Yoruba were subjects of the Egyptian conqueror named Nimrod, who followed him to a battle in Arabia before migrating to Ile-Ife.[282] Academic historians rejected this argument partly because it confirms the 'Hamitic theory' which colonialist historians such as C.G. Seligman used to reject African civilisation. The Hamitic theory suggests that African civilisation was not indigenous but benefited from the Middle East.[283]

---

[279] Babatunde A. Ahonsi, "Deliberate Falsification and Census Data in Nigeria," *African Affairs* 87, no. 349 (1988).

[280] National Population Commission, "Nigeria's Population Now 182 Million: NPC,", http://population.gov.ng/nigerias-population-now-182-million-npc/ (accessed November 29, 2017).

[281] Jacob K. Olupona, *City of 201 Gods: Ilé-Ifè in Time, Space, and the Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 29–30; P. C. Lloyd, "Sacred Kingship and Government Among the Yoruba," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 30, no. 3 (1960): 223.

[282] Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, (Lagos: CMS Bookshop Nigeria, 1921), 6–7.

[283] Robin Law, "The "Hamitic Hypothesis" in Indigenous West African Historical Thought," *History in Africa*, no. 36 (2009).

An alternative theory was propounded by P. C. Lloyd who suggested that the Yoruba migrated from the savanna belt to the forest in different groups.[284] Academic historians such as I. A. Akinjogbin are also of the view that the Yoruba had settled in their location for a very long time before Oduduwa arrived.[285] Several archaeological findings at Ile-Ife and other Yoruba towns from 1910 including those of Leo Frobenius, Frank Willet,[286] Gérard Chouin and Adisa Ogunfolakan,[287] gave some credit to this theory. While the Yoruba ethnogenesis remained controversial, what I consider noteworthy is that some of these theories indicate that there is a link, which remains unclear, between the Yoruba and the Muslim world before the large-scale adoption of Islam in Yorubaland. Later, I will demonstrate this with reference to the *Ifá* divination and the conversion stories of some Yorubas to Islam.

As a cultural group, the Yoruba are widely diverse. Before the twentieth century, there was little or no common consciousness which suggests that they were one 'Yoruba' people. The word 'Yoruba' was mostly used to refer to people of the old Oyo empire by their neighbours and traders which included the Hausa.[288] By the second half of the eighteenth century, the old Oyo empire was the largest and most powerful in Yorubaland with an army based on cavalry. Its capital was in the savannah of the Niger valley and it stretched over Nupe, Dahomey and southeast towards Benin Republic. Following its destruction in 1830, the capital shifted to the south where a new empire was founded at its present location.[289] Besides the reference made to Oyo, the people refer to themselves in terms of the name of their towns and cities such as Ife, Oyo, Ijebu, Abeokuta, Ilorin, Osogbo, Ilesa, Eko, Ibadan and Ogbomoso.[290] However, they speak different dialects which are mutually intelligible and categorised based on their towns. It is in the writings of those who documented them such as Sultan Bello of Sokoto, European travellers and Christian missionaries that the word 'Yoruba' was found and began to be used as an identity marker for these linguistic groups.[291] Today, it is plausible to refer to them as a

---

[284] Lloyd, "Sacred Kingship and Government among the Yoruba": 222.

[285] I. A. Akinjogbin, *The Cradle of a Race: Ife from the Beginning to 1980* (Port Harcourt: Sunray Publications, 1992).

[286] Frank Willet, "Ife and Its Archaeology," *The Journal of African History* 1, no. 2 (1960).

[287] Chouin, L. Gérard and Ogunfolakan, B. Adisa, "Ife-Sungbo Archeological Project: Preliminary Report on Excavations at Ita Yemoo, Ile-Ife Osun State and on Rapid Assessment of Earthwork Sites at Eredo and Ilara Epe, Lagos State," (2015).

[288] Robin Law, ed., *Contemporary Source Material for the History of the Oyo Empire, 1627-1824* (Toronto: York/UNESCO Nigerian Hinterland Project York Univ., 2001), 1; Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 6.

[289] Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire, C.1600-C.1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

[290] Lloyd, "Sacred Kingship and Government among the Yoruba": 223.

[291] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 150; Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas: From Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, (Lagos: CMS Bookshop Nigeria, 1921), 6.

linguistic group rather than a 'Yoruba nation' as economic and political reasons within the larger Nigerian context have been used to create a sense of unity among them.

The traditional socio-political organisations of the Yoruba are varied. In his study of their political systems, N. A. Fadipe identified four monarchical models based on how governments and royal lineages are organised. This includes the Oyo, Ife, Ijebu-Ode and Egba models.[292] The Ibadan and Lagos models are different from these four.[293] In these monarchical structures, there are kingdoms such as Ife, Oyo and Owo which are headed by sacred kings regarded as *ekeji Òrìṣà* (second to the gods). They also performed secular functions,[294] usually with the assistance of titled chiefs and, to an extent, by honorary chiefs. The family (*ẹbi*) is the smallest unit of social organisation in Yorubaland. Polygamy is socially acceptable in this family unit, but monogamy is also widespread. It is common for members of the families to live together in the same compound called *agbo-ile* (a flock of houses which adjoin each other with a wall between adjacent apartments).[295] The compound is both a residential and political organisation named after the head male called *baale,* who is respected by the juniors. In most cases, members of the *agbo-ile*, except women who are married into it as wives, are usually related to the father.[296] The *agbo-ile* is central to the development of urbanization of the Yoruba in that several of it make up the *ìlú* (city-state or town). But there are also farm villages called *aba* or *abule* which are temporary settlements for farmers.[297]

The traditional Yoruba economy is also diverse.[298] Up to the 1960s, farming was the major occupation of the people. In this period, several farmers changed from subsistence to commercial production by the mid-nineteenth century and later benefited from the crash crop export of goods like cocoa, rubber and palm oil in the colonial period.[299] Many other people engaged in trade, wood carving, fishing, metalworking, hunting, dressmaking, dyeing and

---

[292] N. A. Fadipẹ, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970), 199.
[293] Lloyd, "Sacred Kingship and Government among the Yoruba": 222; Fadipẹ, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, 199.
[294] Fadipẹ, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, 206.
[295] Ibid., 97.
[296] Ibid., 107.
[297] J. S. Eades, *The Yoruba Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 38.
[298] See Toyin Falola, *The Political Economy of a Pre-Colonial African State: Ibadan, 1830 - 1900* (Ile-Ife: Univ. of Ife Press, 1984); Adeoti, Oladele Ezekiel and Ojo, Oluranti Edward, "The Dynamics of Pre-Colonial West African Economy: The Yoruba Experience," *Nigerian Journal of Economic History* 11, no. 12 (2014).
[299] O. G. Muojama, *The Nigerian Cocoa Industry and the International Economy in the 1930s: A World-Systems Approach* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 22–23; Julian Clarke, "Households and the Political Economy of Small-Scale Cash Crop Production in South-Western Nigeria," *Africa* 51, no. 04 (1981): 818–20.

basket weaving. Even though there are modern economic activities today, these occupations continue to be the mainstay of many Yorubas. The economy in the precolonial period also developed a financial institution that made money available for commercial transactions. A. G. Adebayo has argued that the impact of the monetization of the economy in precolonial Yoruba facilitated the development of social classes and aided the formation and accumulation of capital.[300] A major example was the city of Ibadan where powerful war-chiefs like Basorun Oluyole (d. 1847), Balogun Ibikunle (d. 1864) and Aarẹ Momodu Latoosa (d. 1885) emerged following the collapse of the former Oyo empire in the nineteenth century. Apart from leading wars, these warriors also accumulated wealth through agriculture and trade, which they needed in order to support their families and maintain soldiers and slaves.[301]

In their social lives, the Yoruba usually form organisations or associations called *ẹgbẹ*. *Ẹgbẹ* may also be used to mean *union*, *party*, *club* or *society*. Their emergence is often considered to be from Yoruba compounds, ethnic and kinship group.[302] While this is true in some cases, the trajectory of several other *ẹgbẹ* did not follow this trend. In a number of cases, associations are also formed to promote and protect common interests in various fields such as trade, politics, religion and recreation. A major example is the age-grades, *Regberegbe*, in Ijebu-Ode. Since the nineteenth century, the *Regberegbe* have developed into highly organised social groups within the political structure of Ijebu-Ode and have played a major role in community development.[303] Although MSSN was inspired by the prevailing condition of Muslim students in the 1950s, its formation is a continuity of this Yoruba associational life.

Another common feature in the social relation of the Yoruba are the attributes which they used to describe their rival groups. Olufunke Adeboye in her study on intra-ethnic segregation between the Ijebu and Ibadan showed that such attributes may be considered stereotypes and taunts that developed in the nineteenth century crises in Yorubaland.[304] Beyond stereotypes, these attributes are important because they illustrate the nature of diversity among them and

---

[300] A. G. Adebayo, "Money, Credit, and Banking in Precolonial Africa: The Yoruba Experience," *Anthropos, Bd 89.* 4, no. 6 (1994): 379.

[301] Bolanle Awe, "Militarism and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Yoruba Country: The Ibadan Example," *Journal of African History* XIV, I (1973): 65–70.

[302] Fadipẹ, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, 243; Abimbola O. Adesoji, "Progressive Unions and the Competition for Community Development in Nigeria: A Study of Ifon, Ilobu and Erin Progressive Unions, 1940-1970," *African Study Monographs* 29, no. 2 (2008): 52.

[303] Margaret O. Areo, "Regbe-Regbe: Multidimensional Impact of Cloth and Colour in Ojude-Ode Oba Festival," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 5, no. 5 (2016): 55–9.

[304] Olufunke Adeboye, "Intra-Ethnic Segregation in Colonial Ibadan: The Case of Ijebu Settlers," in *Security, Crime and Segregation in West African Cities since the 19th Century*, eds. Laurent Fourchard and Isaac Olawale Albert, 303–20 (Ibadan: Karthala et IFRA, 2003), 303–20.

how they understood themselves. They also point to the various aspects of their social encounter. Johnson gives a general feature of these attributes,

> "dogged perseverance and determination characterise the Ijebus, love of ease and a quickness to adapt new ideas the Egbas, the Ijesas and Ekitis are possessed of a marvellous amount of physical strength, remarkable docility and simplicity of manners, and love of home… the Ibarapas are laborious farmers, the Ibolos are rather docile and weak in comparison with others, but the Epos are hardy, brave, and rather turbulent whilst the Oyos of the Metropolitan province are remarkably shrewd, intelligent, very diplomatic, cautious almost to timidity, provokingly conservative, and withal very masterful."[305]

Despite these stereotypes, values such as chastity for women, hospitality, paying homage and respecting senior persons and those in authority are generally upheld. The young greet the elderly person by prostration (for male), kneeling (for female) or sitting and reclining on the left elbow (for female).[306] There is also a rich oral literature among the Yoruba which includes proverb (òwe), folktales (alọ), poems (ewi), panegyric (oriki) and oral prose (itan arosọ) used to teach morals, praise, honour, entertain and ensure social control in the society.[307] This may be accompanied by dance and musical instruments during ritual festivals and life-cycle ceremonies.[308]

As in many African societies, religion permeates the social, economic and political institutions of the Yoruba. Peel's study shows that the concept of "religion" is unknown to the practitioners in the past.[309] Rather, they talked about aṣa (custom/fashion) or aṣa ibile (country fashion). The term "country fashion", according to Peel, is employed to mean a "shifting and unbounded body of customary practices rather than a definite and integrated 'religion'."[310] The customary practices encompass "religion" and other phenomena like manner of greeting, dress, food, burial ceremonies, marriage and system of governance.

---

[305] Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 102; Olufunke Adeboye, "Intra-Ethnic Segregation in Colonial Ibadan" in *Security, Crime and Segregation in West African Cities since the 19th Century*, 310–11.

[306] Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 109.

[307] See Adesoye Omolasoye, "Yoruba Oral Literature as a Panacea for Unemployment in Nigeria," *Knowledge Review* 25, no. 1 (2012); Oludáre Ọlájubù, "The Use of Yoruba Folktales as a Means of Moral Education," *Fabula* 19, Jahresband (1978); David Welch, "Ritual Intonation of Yoruba Praise-Poetry (Oríkì)," *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* 5 (1973); Karin Barber, *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow: Oriki, Women and the Past in a Yoruba Town,* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1991).

[308] Fasan, "Women and Child-Naming Song Poetry of Southeast Yorubaland," *Research in African Literatures* 46, no. 1 (2015): 107.

[309] Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*., 88-89.

[310] Ibid., 90.

A fundamental belief in the "religion" of the people is the existence of a supernatural Supreme Being called *Olódùmarè* whom they believe can be reached through spirits and deities referred to as *Òrìṣà* (divinities). Among these deities are *Ògún* (god of iron), *Ṣàngó* (god of lightning and thunder), *Ọṣun* (goddess of the river), *Èṣù* (trickster and messenger) and *Egúngún* (lit. "masquerade," representing the spirit of the dead).[311] Bolaji Idowu is of the view that these divinities are regarded as the ministers of *Olódùmarè* in a theocratic government of the universe.[312] Because the Yoruba considered these divinities to be relevant in their relationship with *Olódùmarè*, these divinities are believed to play important roles in what happens to individuals and the community including security, prosperity and outbreak of epidemics.

Rituals and festivals are also associated with these divinities.[313] The rituals and festivals could be performed on the advice of *Ifá* when the need arises, for example in times of misfortune or insecurity. Broadly speaking, *Ifá* is at the centre of religious practice of the Yoruba. It is regarded as a corpus of coded messages in poems (*ẹṣẹ*) about the past which are organised under some figures called *odu*.[314] Omotade Adegbindin argues that *Ifá* is also a collection of myths, history, proverbs and one of the expressions of the Yoruba thought system.[315] It may be consulted by individuals or the community before undertaking any major action and could explain the procedure that is needed to accomplish it.[316] This is necessary to seek the favour of deities and spirits which are believed to reside in different spaces such as the markets, or environmental and natural resources like the earth, trees, rivers and thunderstorms. Deities and spirits are also believed to reside in some individuals such as kings, twins, albinos, and people with hunchbacks.[317] In the nineteenth century, Peel argues that Christian missionaries associate this "religious" custom with terms like "heathenism" and "idolatry" which suggest a cult of local idols. These terms were employed to imply that the custom was lower in rank to Christianity which was seen as an 'ideal religion.'[318] Even though it is debateable, many studies

---

[311] Ibid., 89–107; John A. I. Bewaji, "Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief and the Theistic Problem of Evil," *African Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1998): 7–12.

[312] Bolaji E. Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1973), 62.

[313] Bolaji E. Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longmans, 1962), 108–9.

[314] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 36.

[315] Omotade Adegbindin, *Ifá in Yorùbá Thought System,* (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2014), 18–20.

[316] Peter Morton-Williams, William Bascom and E. M. McClelland, "Two Studies of Ifa Divination," *Africa* 36, no. 04 (1966): 406; Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, 98–99.

[317] Ade Dòpamu, "The Yorùbá Religious System," *Africa Update* 4, no. 3 (1999). Andrew Apter, "Notes on Orisha Cults in the Ekiti Yoruba Highlands. A Tribute to Pierre Verger," *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 35, no. 138 (1995): 370–5.

[318] Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, 89.

on the Yoruba today use this controversial concept of 'religion' to describe the custom of the people as the "Yoruba (traditional) religion" or part of what is understood as "African Traditional Religion" (ATR) in African societies.[319]

The extent to which religion functioned in determining the social, economic and political administration in pre-colonial Yorubaland is not known in detail, and it is not likely that people's beliefs and practices remained static before the arrival of Christianity and Islam. Trade, migration and marriage brought new Òrìṣà into different towns, and these Òrìṣàs were adopted into existing pantheon often in ways that were different from their origin.[320] Traditional practices and beliefs were further modified following the introduction of Islam and Christianity and the imposition of colonial rule. New practices and religions influenced Òrìṣà worship also because they resonated with pre-existing ones. Thus, we see the former Ọ̀ọ̀ni of Ile-Ifẹ, Ọbá Adesoji Aderemi (1889–1980) emphasizing the similarity in traditional and Christian values by pointing to the shared emphasis on a mother's sacrifice for the greater good in the celebration of Moremi (in Ile-Ife) and the story of the Biblical Mary, mother of Jesus.[321]

Generally, the pre-colonial situation of Yorubaland was not static. Many kingdoms such as the former Oyo collapsed and new cities including Ibadan, Ijaiye and Modakeke were founded in the nineteenth century.[322] Trade with the Hausa in the north facilitated the appropriation of Hausa, Nupe and Arabic words, staples and clothes by the Yoruba.[323] Some towns became urban areas as trade encouraged constant movement and settlement of people of diverse origin among them.[324] There were non-Yoruba who became assimilated into the Yoruba society such that the notion of 'Yoruba' either as culture or people becomes flexible to construct. In Lagos, for instance, the Aworis were considered to be the first Yoruba settlers from Ile-Ife, but they were followed by other groups such as Benin, Nupe, Ijebu and Hausa. The Benin group, led by

---

[319] See Jacob K. Olupona, "The Study of Yoruba Religious Tradition in Historical Perspective," *Numen* 40, no. 3 (1993): 240; J. O. Awolalu, "What Is African Traditional Religion," *Studies in Comparative Religion* 10, no. 2 (1976): 5–10; J. D. Y. Peel, "The Pastor and the Babalawo: The Interaction of Religions in Nineteenth-Century Yorubaland," *Africa* 60, no. 03 (1990): 338.

[320] See Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 52–70; Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah, "The Origin of Egungun: A Critical Appraisal," *African Study Monographs* 17, no. 2 (1996): 61–6.

[321] "Wole Soyinka on Yorùbá Religion: A Conversation with Ulli Beier," *Isokan Yorùbá Magazine* 3, no. 3 (1997).

[322] G. O. Oguntomisin, "Political Change and Adaptation in Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 15, no. 2 (1981): 225–8.

[323] Rasheed O. Olaniyi, "Hausa-Yoruba Relations, 1500-1800," *Journal of Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2007): 58.

[324] Noah E. Attah, "Nigerian Inter-Group Relations: Emerging Trends and Challenges," *African Identities* 9, no. 1 (2011): 89–91; Muhammad M. Gatawa, "Inter-Group Relations in Historical Perspectives: A Case Study of Yoruba and Hausa Communities of Agege, Lagos, Nigeria," *African Journal of History and Culture* 5, no. 9 (2013): 171–5.

a noble class, had a significant impact on Lagos history by establishing dynastic houses in places like Lagos Island and Ikorodu.[325] Apart from this internal development, contacts and exchanges also developed with European traders and travellers in coastal areas of Lagos, Badagry, Ikorodu and Epe from about the fifteenth century. Largely, the introduction of Islam, Christianity and colonial rule may be considered as part of this social change in Yorubaland. The trajectory of Islam in Yorubaland will thus be considered in the next section.

3.3 *Imale*: the trajectory of Islam in Yorubaland

The exact period the Yoruba first had contact with Islam has remained controversial in academic debates.[326] Based on the evidence of a prominent Yoruba Muslim cleric called Shaykh Adam Al-Ilory (1917-1992) in his studies of Yoruba religion, Muhib Opeloye argued that Islam was first known in Yorubaland in the fourteenth century through the influence of Wangarawa traders from Mali.[327] Patrick Ryan has suggested that the fourteenth century date was only a possibility. He opined that the seventeenth century was the most likely date because the period witnessed the visit of some Muslim traders and clerics into Oyo from its northern neighbours.[328] Gbadamosi however took a different view arguing that Islam came to Yorubaland unannounced because the first Muslims might have practised the religion privately. But he noted that by the seventeenth century, a few Muslims were in many parts of Yorubaland.[329]

While the debate continues, what I found useful, though still unclear in these studies, is the relationship between Islam and the formation of the identity of 'Yoruba Muslims' by the end of the eighteenth century. These studies showed that Islam was introduced to Yorubaland by missionaries and traders called *Imale*[330] from 'Mali,' which was the former capital city of the Mandingo (or Malinke) empire of Western Sudan (c.1200-1600AD).[331] According to Henri Labouret, the city was formerly built at Djeriba (or Djariba) but later moved to Niani. Labouret noted that the inhabitants might have referred to it as Melle, Mane or Melli depending on their

---

[325] O. R. Ajetunmobi, "Early Socio-Political Organisations," in *Evolution and Development of Lagos State*, ed. Rasheed Ajetunmobi, 74–89 (Lagos: Centre for Lagos Studies, 2003), 74–89.

[326] Ryan, *Imale*, 104–6; Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 4; Muhib O. Opeloye, "Religious Humanism Among the Yoruba of Nigeria," *Studia Missionalia* 47 (1998): 168.

[327] Opeloye, "Religious Humanism among the Yoruba of Nigeria": 168.

[328] Ryan, *Imale*, 104–6.

[329] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 4.

[330] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 169-170.

[331] Ibid; Ahamad F. Ogunbado, "Historical Development of Muslim Education in Yoruba Land, Southwest Nigeria.," *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* 4, no. 8 (2016): 14; Opeloye, "Religious Humanism among the Yoruba of Nigeria": 168.

dialects.[332] Due to this link, many Yoruba Muslims began to identify themselves as *èlẹ̀sin Imale, Imale* or *Male* (*lit.* worshipper/believer of Malian religion) up to the late nineteenth century, a term which non-Muslim Yoruba also called them. 'Islam' also continued to be called *Imale* (Malian religion) by many Yorubas.[333] It is important to note that this translation, "Malian religion," is misleading if we assume that *Imale* or *Male* was already known in Mali. In the 1970s, Yoruba Muslims protested the use of this term, and according to Peel, their "motive" was to identify with other Muslims around the world rather than be seen "to bear a name that seems to tie them into a local and particular history."[334] But, this was not the only reason for rejecting the name, one other key factor was the corruption of the term by non-Muslim Yorubas to mean 'aggressive people' and 'hard knowledge' in Yoruba. In Chapter Four, I draw attention to how the MSSN was encouraged to use songs to counter this stereotype. In addition to Mali, Islam also penetrated Yorubaland from Hausaland in the North. Given the routes of the religion, the social history of Muslims in this period thus showed that most of them were non-Yoruba speakers. The leading Muslims were itinerant *mallams* (scholars) of Malian, Nupe, Kanuri and Arab descent. There were also Muslim traders and slaves of Hausa, Nupe and Kanuri origin.[335] Despite the presence of these other groups, Lisa Castillo[336] suggested that 'Yoruba Muslims' were more often identified as *Male* in the nineteenth century.[337] But in another study, João Reis argued that the usage of the term was not limited to a specific group because it was generally used for West African Muslim slaves including the Yoruba and Hausa living in Bahia (Brazil) in the nineteenth century.[338] This suggests that *Imale* is not a fixed category. Yet, how it is linked to the 'Yoruba Muslim' is important to understanding the formation of their identity and Islamization process.

For the most part, their Islamization process in the early stages was not without some challenges, which varied from one community to another. Up to the early nineteenth century, many of them prayed in their houses and could not make the *adhān* (call to prayer) in public. In places like Ede, Oyeweso noted that the *adhān* was called into a keg in order not to attract

---

[332] Henri Labouret, "Mali," in *E.J. Brill's First Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1913-1936*, ed. M. T. Houtsma, 203–4 v. 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

[333] Opeloye, "Religious Humanism among the Yoruba of Nigeria": 168.

[334] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 169.

[335] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 4–6.

[336] The word *male* and *Imale* is also used for Muslims of Yoruba origin. See, Lisa Earl Castillo, "Mapping the Nineteenth-Century Brazilian Returnee Movement: Demographics, Life Stories and the Question of Slavery," *Atlantic Studies* 13, no. 1 (2016).

[337] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 169.

[338] João J. Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* [Transl. Brakel, Arthur], (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 96–97.

the attention of the Traditionalists.[339] However, trading ensured that there was contact between Muslims and the Traditionalists. Many of these Traditionalists, including the kings, also sought the services of Muslim clerics for prayers and charms.[340] Alaafin Ajagbo (1650-1658) of Oyo, and the duo of Ọba Kosoko (1845 to 1851) and Ọba Adele Ajosun ([1811 – 1821], [1835 – 1837])[341] of Lagos were among the prominent kings who tolerated Muslims in their courts to the consternation of the *Òrìṣà* priests.[342] Despite their relationship, the conditions of the Muslims became uncertain after the collapse of old Oyo. This was after many Hausa slaves declared support for the revolt led by a chief of the Oyo army, Afonja (d. 1823), the *Aarẹ-ọna-kankanfo*, which led to the breaking away of Ilorin in 1817. Before then, Ilorin had attracted many Muslims such as the Fulani preacher, Alimi al-Salih (d. 1823) who fought on the side of Afonja. Ilorin later became an emirate under the Sokoto caliphate in 1823.[343] This provoked suspicion and intolerance of the remaining Muslims in other parts of Yorubaland, some of whom were restrained and attacked by the Traditionalists.[344] The varying experiences of these Muslims are cases that challenge the notion of religious tolerance which the Yorubas are said to epitomise by many scholars such as J. F. Ade Ajayi.[345]

Later in the nineteenth century, the relationship between the Muslims and the Yoruba improved in many towns. This was partly due to the efforts of Muslim slaves such as Oshodi Landuji Tapa (c.1800 to 1868) of Nupe origin, who supported the war efforts of Ọba Kosoko in Lagos. Muslim clerics also made charms which were believed to ensure the victory of many towns in wars.[346] In addition to the ease in tension, there was an increase in the Muslim population in many towns. One of the main factors responsible for this was the influx of Muslim refugees

---

[339] Siyan Oyeweso, *Ede in Yoruba History* (Lagos: Multivisions Publishing House, 2002), 77–108.

[340] Afiz Oladimeji Musa and Hassan Ahmad Ibrahim "Jalabi Practice: A Critical Appraisal of a Socio-Religious Phenomenon in Yorubaland, Nigeria," *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research* 5, no. 1 (2015): 122–3.

[341] Oba Adele Ajosun first reigned from 1811 to 1821 when he was dethroned. He was reinstated in 1835 and reigned for only two years before his death. See Siyan Oyeweso, *Torch Bearers of Islam in Lagos State: Essays in Honour of Alhaji Femi Okunnu* (Ibadan: Matrixcy Books Ltd, 2013), 29–48; Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 5.

[342] Oyeweso, *Torch Bearers of Islam in Lagos State*, 23; Toyin Falola and Akíntúndé Akínyẹmí, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 173.

[343] S. Y. Omoiya, "Conflict as a Propelling Instrument of Change and Continuity: The Ilorin Example," *Journal of Law and Conflict Resolution* 6, no. 4 (2014): 78–80; Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, 33.

[344] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 11–12.

[345] J. F. A. Ajayi, "Promoting Religious Tolerance and Cooperation in the West African Region: The Example of Religious Plurality and Tolerance Among the Yoruba," in *Proceedings of the International Congress of Dialogue on Civilizations, Religions and Culture in West Africa*, ed. Ikeogu Oke, 43–7 (Paris: UNESCO, 2005), 44–46.

[346] O. M. Daré, "Trade and Religion in Ìkòrodú," (BA Essay, University of Lagos, 1982), 40–42; Oyeweso, *Ede in Yoruba History*, 77–1080; Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, 197–200.

displaced from old Oyo who settled in places like Ile-Ife, Abeokuta, Iwo, Ede and Ibadan.[347] The image of these Muslims was boosted when some former Muslim slaves arrived from the Americas especially Cuba and Brazil, and Sierra Leone from the 1840s. Those who came from Sierra Leone were referred to as the Saros (or Creoles) by the Yoruba while those from Brazil and Cuba became known as the Agudas.[348] Living in places like Lagos, Abeokuta, Badagry and Ibadan, the social status of these Muslims caused a change in the perception of Islam in Yorubaland because, as Gbadamosi narrated, many of them were ship owners and merchants who were educated in Western literacy and who celebrated Muslim festivals with pomp.[349] Also from the 1850s, Yoruba Muslim kings and chiefs emerged in several towns like Epe, Iwo, Ibadan, Ede, Ikirun, Lagos and Ijebu. The conversion of these traditional chiefs encouraged many Yoruba to embrace Islam and practise the religion without fear of persecution.[350] A leading example was the Muslim king in Ede, Timi Abibu Lagunju (d.1900) who encouraged Muslim clerics to live in the town. He also fought against their persecution and gave his princesses to chiefs who embraced Islam.[351] There were also Ọba Aliyu Oyewole (d. 1912) in Ikirun and Oluwo Momodu Lamuye (1858-1906) in Iwo who not only encouraged their chiefs to embrace Islam but also applied the Sharia in their courts.[352] Prominent war chiefs and entrepreneurs like Balogun Odueyungbo Kuku (1899-1907) of Ijebu and Aarẹ Latoosa of Ibadan also declared their conversion to Islam and were followed by several members of their compounds and retainers.[353] Even though the clashes between the Muslims and the Traditionalists did not disappear, there was a significant increase in the Muslim population by the late nineteenth century. Based on the account of R.F. Burton during his visit to Lagos, it was estimated that the Muslims numbered 800 out of about 30,000 residents in September 1862. By 1871, the figure increased to about 10,600 of the total estimates of 60,200 residents.[354]

---

[347] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 22–26.

[348] Earl Castillo, "Mapping the Nineteenth-century Brazilian Returnee Movement": 36.

[349] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 26–32.

[350] Siyan Oyeweso, "'Jesus Is a Stranger Here': The Healing Jesus Crusade and Its Perception by the Muslim Community of Ede, Southwestern Nigeria," presentation at ASA conference held in Indianapolis, Indiana, November 20, 2014, 3.

[351] Oyeweso, *Ede in Yoruba History*, 78–90.

[352] Isiaka Raifu, "Interrogating Shariah Practice in Yorubaland, 1820-1918," *IOSR, Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 21, no. 12 (2016); Lateef M. Adetona, "Religious Models for Peace and War in a Heterogenous Society: A Case Study of the Sharia Law Model in Yorubaland," in *Islam in Africa South of the Sahara: Essays in Gender Relations and Political Reform*, eds. Pade Badru and Brigid M. Sackey, 313–28 (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 314.

[353] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orișa-religion*, 138; Taiwo O. Olaseni, "Knights of a Global Countryside: The Balogun Institution of Ijebuland, Nigeria," *NSUKKA Journal of History* 3 (2016): 8–10.

[354] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 50–51.

Apart from the support of the chiefs and kings, Gbadamosi argues that several factors facilitated the conversion of many Yoruba to Islam. These include the little to no elaborateness in the ceremony required to become a Muslim, which was usually after saying the *shahāda* (a statement testifying the oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad). Also, the early Muslim clerics did not forcibly require people to abandon many of their cultural practices and beliefs, which made their process of conversion gradual. For many, such cultural practices as polygamy and belief in a Supreme Being which were found in Islam were considered parts of the continuity with their cultural practices, thus making it easy to relate to the new religion. Being married to a Muslim and the need to have good economic relations with Muslims also influenced many people. Added to this was the conversion of people linked to the oracular cult, *Ifá*. This conversion story gave rise to the notion of pre-destined Muslims which includes those of the kings mentioned earlier; Lamuye, Lagunju and Oyewole.[355] At birth, *Ifá* was said to have revealed their Muslim faith, although it would later be discovered that *Ifá* also advised many Yoruba to become Christian. But the saliency of *Ifá* in the stories of these Muslims is important in the understanding of both the history of the Yoruba and their Islamization.

In a study of four divination tablets in Africa, Wim van Binsbergen suggests that *Ifá* may have a link to the Arabians in the past.[356] Many Yoruba Muslims and Traditionalists also believe in this historical connection to date. This is expressed in a popular narrative by them, *ayé la ba ifá, ayé la ba imọle, ọsan gangan ni 'gbagbọ wọ le* (we met *Ifá* in the world, we met Islam in the world, only later [in the mid-day] did Christianity came into the world). They used this narrative to differentiate the link between the Yoruba 'religion' and Islam on one hand, and Christianity on the other hand.[357] In fact, they sometimes employed it to trace the origin of the Yoruba to Saudi Arabia and their relationship with Islam. Louis Brenner has suggested that the *Ifá* in this narrative may have developed in response to Islam from the sixteenth century and that it existed parallel to the divination of Muslims by the nineteenth century.[358] I also consider it significant to underline Peel's argument that the link between *Ifá* and Islam (and Christianity) is due to its pragmatic and client-centred system which "embrace a multitude of individual

---

[355] Gbadamosi, "Odu Imale".

[356] Wim van Binsbergen, "Regional and Historical Connections of Four-Tablet Divination in Southern Africa," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 26 (1996): 13-23.

[357] Oyeweso, "'Jesus is a Stranger Here'", 8; Jacob K. Olupona, "Slaves of Allah: Ifa Divination Portrayal of Islamic Tradition - an Intertextual Encounter," in *Alternative Voices: A Plurality Approach for Religious Studies*, ed. Afe Adogame, Magnus. Echtler and Oliver. Freiberger, 75–85 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 79–80.

[358] Louis Brenner, "Muslim Divination and the History of Religion in Sub-Saharan Africa," cited in Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orisa-religion*, 157.

perspectives (albeit within a common framework of cosmology and ritual practice) rather than impose any kind of collective ideology - hence, indeed, its openness to Islam and Christianity."[359]

Following their conversion, the development of Yoruba Muslim practices was largely in the hands of the *alfas* (Arabic, *'khalīfa,'* referring to a successor). The *alfas*, who many Yoruba Muslims referred to as "cleric" were of Ilorin, Nupe, Fulani and Hausa origin. Those who led congregational prayers among them were called *lemọmu* (Arabic, *Imām* referring to a leader).[360] In many big cities, there were Chief Imams called *Lemọmu agba* who was the head of Imams in the Muslim communities referred to as *ratibi*. As the Chief Imam, he presided during Friday prayers and the two annual Muslim festivals (*ʿĪd al-fiṭr,* feast after Ramadan and *ʿīd al-aḍḥā*, the feast of sacrifice). A notable example was the Chief Imam of Ibadan, Ibrahim Gambari (d. 1892).[361] Apart from prayers, some *alfas,* called *alfa oni jalabi*,[362] rendered spiritual services for the Muslims. In many communities, it was also the responsibility of the *alfas* and *lemọmu* to preside during the Muslims life cycle ceremonies such as marriages and funerals. Their responsibilities also extended to knowledge transmission through *madrasas* located in their houses or mosques. In the fasting period of Ramadan, many of them held open-air preaching which was often the major avenue to transmit knowledge to many Muslims who could not attend the *madrasas.*[363]

As the Yoruba Muslim community grew, its diversity also began to develop. The diversity often reflected in the incorporation of cultural practices into Islam, which showed continuity with their past tradition.[364] This includes chieftaincies titles which were modelled after the traditional political system in various towns for prominent Muslim chiefs and *alfa.* Among these chiefs was Sule of Erunwon who returned from Bida and became the *Ọba Imale* (king of the Muslims) in Abeokuta. The post, which was created during the reign of Ọba Gbadebo (1898-1920), was part of the traditional political system which included the Chief Imam, and

---

[359] Ibid., 77–78.

[360] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 34–35.

[361] Ibid., 58–64.

[362] *Jalabi* has an Arabic root referred to as *j-l-b*, which has different meanings. It is synonymous with *al-Jazb*, meaning to draw or attract. It is also closer to the word *al-Kasb*, meaning to earn a living or to obtain something. See also Afiz Oladimeji Musa and Hassan Ahmad Ibrahim, "Jalabi Practice"; Ryan, *Imale*, 161–81

[363] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 35–36.

[364] H.O. Danmole, "Religious Encounter in Southwestern Nigeria: The Domestication of Islam Among the Yoruba," in *Òrìṣà Devotion as World Religion: The Globalization of Yorùbá Religious Culture*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona and Terry Rey, 202 – 235. (Madison, Wis., London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008).

other sectional *ọbas* in the city.[365] In Badagry, there was the influential merchant and returnee slave, Seriki Williams Abass (d. 1919), who became the head of the Muslim community referred to as *Seriki Musulumi*.[366] In other towns, there were *Baba Adinni* (patron of the religion), *Giwa Adinni* (District head of Muslims), *Iya Sunna* (head of the *Asalatu* or praying group) and *Iya Adinni* (matron of the religion).[367] Apart from these titles, cultural practices like the use of kola nuts during rites of passage such as naming ceremonies continued to be used. The practice of casting *Ifá* at the beginning of every year at the palace of the king was also replaced with g*bigbọhun- tira* (listening to the voice of the Qur'an). Like the *Ifá*, this was done to ascertain what the new year promises and how misfortunes in that year could be averted in the town. Added to this, many Muslims did not abandon their Traditional religious rites. At festivals, they showed their commitment with the song: *awa o ṣ'oro ilé wa o* (2ce), *Imale ko pe\e\o, Imale ko pe kawa ma ṣ'oro, awa o ṣ'oro ilé wa o* (we are going to fulfil our traditional rites, Islam does not prevent us, Islam does not prevent us from fulfilling our traditional rites, we are going to fulfil our traditional rites).[368] While the later generation of reformist Yoruba Muslims argue that those practices are *bid'as* (unlawful innovations) or belonging to the period of *jāhiliyya* (the period of ignorance) of Yoruba Muslims, H. O. Danmole suggests that the participation of Yoruba Muslims in these festivals cannot be regarded as violating the tenet of Islam because they are symbols of unity rather than religious.[369] Yet, accommodation of such traditional practices also created the impression among many Muslims in Northern Nigeria that Yoruba Muslims are not good Muslims.[370] This perception is one of the ways which many northerners seek to exercise power and define what is orthodoxy in Islam among the other Muslims in Nigeria. Despite such criticisms, many of those practices have not been abandoned[371] and I consider them as constituting how Islam is localised in Yorubaland.

---

[365] Saheed A. Rufai, "Rethinking the Proliferation of Muslim Chieftaincy Titles in Contemporary Yorubaland (Southwest. Nigeria) for an Effective Administration of Muslim Affairs," *Jurnal Hadhari* 3, no. 1 (2011): 72.

[366] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 58.

[367] Hakeem A. Akitoye, "Islam and Traditional Titles in Contemporary Lagos Society: A Historical Analysis," *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences* 25 (2014); Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 56–59.

[368] Peter B. Clarke, "Book Review: Islam in Yorubaland Imale: Yoruba Participation in the Muslim Tradition. A Study of Clerical Piety, by S.J. Patrick Ryan, Missoula, Montana: Scholars' Press, 1979.," *The Journal of African History* 21, no. 02 (1980).

[369] H.O. Danmole, "Religious Encounter in Southwestern Nigeria" in *Òrìṣà Devotion as World Religion*, 203.

[370] Adedayo, *Abdul-Lateef Adegbite*, 139.

[371] Saheed A. Rufai, "Emergent Issues in Heterodox Islam Among the Yoruba of Nigeria," *Jurnal Hadhari* 4, no. 2 (2012).

The Islamization of Yoruba Muslims also involved conflicts with the Traditionalists which showed that the process was far from being straightforward. At Ikorodu, for instance, the Muslims had to engage the Traditionalists who prevented them from building their mosques, and, over time, they were emboldened to challenge the Traditionalists. A prominent figure in their struggle was Alhaji Alifat Mustapha who was notorious for publicly denouncing those who 'mixed' Islam with Traditional practices. He clashed with members of the *Agẹmọ* cult who forbade the construction of a "storey building" in Itunmọja near the *Agẹmọ* shrine and earned for himself the title, *Ajágbe mọ kèfèrí* (the one who shouts at non-Muslims).[372]

In the same vein, the Islamization also involved critical debates on many issues which shaped different understandings of Islam and diversity of their practices. The debates often led to divisions in several mosques and communities. One of the debates, inspired by an itinerant Hausa cleric in Lagos named Mallam Sulaiman, centred around the interpretation of Islamic texts. During one of the Ramadan lectures organised in 1875, Sulaiman claimed that the Qur'an alone was enough to expound itself, a position which was against many clerics who insisted on the centrality of Hadith in the explanation of the Qur'an. Sulaiman's argument caused a wide split among the Muslims in Lagos and it led to the formation of *Ẹgbẹ Alalukurani* (Qur'anic group) who left the central mosque to build their own.[373] From the first decade of the 1900s, members of the Lagos central mosque were further divided into two groups referred to as the Lemọmu and Jamat parties. In the split, the Chief Imam, Ibrahim Ankuri (1891-1923), who led the first party was opposed by the Jamat (mobilised around Mustapha Adamu Animashaun [1885-1968]), for his high-handedness, mismanagement of mosque donations and abuse of power.[374] As I will demonstrate below, other debates in different Yoruba Muslim communities continued as they encountered the Christian missions and colonial rule.

3.4 Christianity and colonial encounter

From the 1840s, the position of Islam and the *Òrìṣà* began to be challenged by Christian missionaries who sought to win souls for Christ. The leading missionaries were the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist

---

[372] Adeyemi Balogun, "The Dynamics of Traditional Religion in the Political Economy of Ìkòrodú," *Yoruba Studies Review* 2, no. 1 (2017): 82–3.

[373] Rushdat O. Ojelade, "The Emergence, Doctrines and Practices of the *Alalukurani* Group of Lagos," (PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan, 1990), 28–31.

[374] H. O. Danmole, "The Crisis of the Lagos Muslim Community, 1915-1947," in *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*, eds. Ade Adefuye, Babatunde Agiri and Jide Osuntokun, 290–305 (Ikeja Lagos: Lantern Books, 1987), 290–94.

Convention, the Catholic Society of African Missions, and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary.[375] Even though these missions have their interest in the Yoruba society, their coming was often facilitated by the Saros who had converted to Christianity in Sierra Leone and wanted their new-found religion and the 'civilisation' of the white man to replace existing cultural practices.[376] In 1842, the Methodist pastor Thomas Birch Freeman (1809-1890) and the CMS's Henry Townsend (1815–1886) established the first stations of their churches at Badagry. Later in 1846, the CMS set up its first mission in Abeokuta where a significant number of Saro were resident. Henry Townsend and the renowned Yoruba clergyman, Ajayi Crowther (1809–1891) led the Abeokuta mission.[377] Born in Osogun in present-day Oyo, Ajayi was a freed slave at Sierra Leone where he converted to Christianity. He was one of the most influential figures in the Christianization of Yorubaland and other parts of Nigeria and was ordained the first African Bishop of the CMS.[378]

Up to the close of the nineteenth century, as demonstrated by Peel, these missionaries failed to appeal to most Yoruba, and it is doubtful if the word "conversion" could be applied to the few who identified with the religion.[379] Most of the converts at inception were slaves or former slaves and their offspring.[380] On the other hand, many chiefs who patronised the missionaries did so for political and economic reasons. A good example was the Egba. According to Emmanuel Ayandele, the Egba requested the presence of the missionaries because they expected military help from the British government, having been surrounded by enemies which included the Ibadan in the north, the Ijẹbu in the south and east and the Dahomey in the west.[381] Also, in Ijaiye, which was ravaged by the Ibadan warriors in 1862, the fiery ruler, *Aarẹ* Kurunmi (d. 1861), invited the missionaries to boost his reputation and draw traders to his capital. The Anglican missionary, Mr Mann, who was at the capital, reported that Kurumi forbade his people and children from attending their church.[382]

---

[375] Modupe Oduyoye, *The Planting of Christianity in Yorubaland 1842-1888* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1969); Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891*.

[376] R. S. Smith, "Ijaiye, the Western Palatinate of the Yoruba," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2, no. 3 (1962): 335.

[377] Ibid.

[378] See Andrew F. Walls, "The Legacy of Samuel Ajayi Crowther," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 16, no. 1 (1992).

[379] Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, 242.

[380] Emmanuel A. Ayandele, *African Historical Studies* (London, N.J.: Frank Cass, 1979), 234.

[381] Ibid., 61.

[382] Smith, "Ijaiye, the Western Palatinate of the Yoruba": 337–8.

There are many reasons why the missionaries failed. Among these was the insistence of the missionaries that people abandon their beliefs and deities before they could be welcomed into the Christian faith, of which the Traditionalists did not see the need to do so.[383] A Baptist missionary, Thomas Jefferson Bowen (1814 - 1875), learned from the Egba who had invited him that "To preach against their executive gods is more than you dare to do. It would be the height of sacrilege, rebellion, and of anarchy and the whole fury of the heathen soul would explode like gunpowder."[384] This was unlike Islam which only required saying the *Shahāda* and accommodated local cultural practices. Apart from challenging the deities of the Yoruba, the Christian missionaries also criticized such practices as polygamy and slavery which was an established socio-economic institution in the nineteenth century.[385] For instance, the CMS, an avowed critique of slavery, insisted that the practice was responsible for such "evils" as wars, polygamy and lack of industrial growth. As Toyin Falola argues, the opposition of the CMS to slavery was part of the early efforts of the missionaries to facilitate the conversion of the Yoruba which, however, only achieved a minimum of success.[386]

Over time, the missionaries had many programmes and strategies which enabled them to improve on their competence to engage Islam and devotees of ancestral deities. This was instrumental in the gradual conversion of many Yoruba including Muslims to Christianity. In their engagement with Islam, some Christian proselytizers learnt Arabic and translated the Qur'an[387] and *Ifá* verses into Yoruba.[388] Emmanuel Moses Lijadu (1862-1926), an evangelist and author born at Ake, Abeokuta was a major figure among them. He published some works on Yoruba oral literature and on the history of Abeokuta titled "Fragments of Egba National History," in the *Egba Government Gazette* (an organ of the local administration of Abeokuta) in 1904-1905.[389] Another notable effort of Lijadu was his ethnographic work on the *Ifá*. Writing his foreword to the study, Bishop C. Phillips of the CMS emphasised the importance of this

---

[383] Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, 152–86.

[384] Quoted in Ayandele, *African Historical Studies*, 257.

[385] See Toyin Falola, "Missionaries and Domestic Slavery in Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Religious History* 14, no. 2 (1986). Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2007), 52–83.

[386] Falola, "Missionaries and Domestic Slavery in Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century": 192.

[387] Abdul K. H. Solihu and Abdulganiy A. Abdulhameed, "Christian Translations of the Qur'an into Yoruba and their Historical Background," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 26, no. 4 (2015).

[388] E. M. Lijadu, *Ifa: Imọlẹ Rè Ti Iṣe Ipilẹ̀ Ìsin Ni Ilẹ Yoruba* (Exeter: James Townsend & Sons, 1923); Adélékè Adéẹ̀kọ́, "'Writing' and 'Reference' in Ifá Divination Chants," *Oral Tradition* 25, no. 2 (2010).

[389] Robin Law, "Early Yoruba Historiography," *History in Africa* 3 (1976): 71.

missionary effort that illustrates the aim of the missionaries in their encounter with the Muslims and devotees of the *Òrìṣà*:

> *Bí a kò bá rí ìdí ibi tí agbára ọ̀tá gbé wà, a kò lè ṣẹgun wọn. Bí àwa Kristian kò bá mọ ìdí ìsìn àwọn Kèfèrí àti àwọn Ìmàlè, a kì yóò lè gbé ìhìnrere Kristi síwájú wọn lí ọ̀nà tí yóò fi ká wọn lára.*[390]

> If we do not locate the source of our enemies' strength, we cannot defeat them. If we Christians do not fathom the foundation of pagan and Islamic devotion, we will not be able to present Christ's gospel to them in its most appealing form.[391]

The CMS agent, Ajayi Crowther, supported this effort by encouraging other missionaries to use the Bible to expose the 'vanity' and 'folly' of 'idolaters.'[392] His support found expression in the attempts of few clergymen who published some texts about Islam which included the Yoruba translated version of the Qur'an. Reverend (later Canon) Michael Samuel Cole was the first to make the attempt in 1906. A former Principal of Abeokuta Grammar School and graduate of Fourah Bay College in Freetown, he was appointed the first African Vicar of the Christ Church Cathedral of Lagos in 1920.[393] Despite discrepancies in the translation of the Qur'an by men like Cole, according to A. K. H. Solihu and A. K. Abdulhameed, Crowther employed the translation to present a comparative analysis of the Bible and Qur'an when he was invited by the emir of Ilorin, Aliyu dan Shita (d. 1891), in 1872.[394] He also recommended to other missionaries that the Qur'an's testimony to certain Christian doctrines and historical figures were grounds to "wage our good warfare in support of the great Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which the Koran flatly denies."[395] The missionaries produced other texts in Arabic and Yoruba such as *Awọn Imale* (The Muslims) and *Itan Mọmọdu* (The Story of Muhammad). In all, Crowther based the importance of these efforts on his own experience when he was defeated in an argument by a Muslim in Sierra Leone in 1832.[396] This comparative religious discourse has continued to be a feature of Christian-Muslim encounter in Yorubaland as Yoruba Muslims began to react in a similar fashion.

---

[390] E M Lijadu, *Ifa*, 4.

[391] Adéẹ̀kọ́, "'Writing' and 'Reference' in Ifá Divination Chants": 383.

[392] Samuel A. Crowther, *Experiences with Heathens and Mohammedans in West Africa* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1892), 28.

[393] Solihu and Abdulhameed, "Christian Translations of the Qur'an into Yoruba and their Historical Background": 472.

[394] Ibid., 471–72.

[395] Crowther, *Experiences with Heathens and Mohammedans in West Africa*, 29.

[396] Ibid., 28.

The strategies devised by the Christian missionaries only give a perspective to the reason why many Yoruba converted to Christianity. The colonization of Yorubaland by the British forces also played a key role in their conversion. The superiority of the British was proved many times with the use of gunboat to deal with kingdoms involved in the slave trade in the nineteenth century. The British also took control of coastal trade and contributed to ending the Yoruba civil war towards the end of the nineteenth century.[397] Sulayman Nyang has suggested that the impact of Europeans' material culture through colonization was overwhelming because the way Africans saw them confounded and challenged local beliefs and technologies.[398] This argument is part of the discourse by scholars like Victor Mudimbe who argue that the missionary project is closely connected to the colonization of Africa. Mudimbe posits that "the more carefully one studies the history of missions in Africa, the more difficult it becomes not to identify it with cultural propaganda, patriotic motivations, and commercial interests."[399] While this argument is important, Peel's thesis on the role of local conditions in the process of religious conversion among the Yoruba is also useful. A major part of this process saw many Yorubas gradually approaching the Christian missionaries to help them deal with perennial problems which had taken them to both *babalawo* and *alfa* such as the need for protection from enemies, healing and fertility, all of which were summed up in worldly well-being called *alafia*.[400] The CMS missionaries, for instance, responded to the problems of ill-health and disease with medicines (*oogun*) in their dispensaries and local herbs, regarded as charms by many Yorubas. Apart from their medical support, the colonial system further created opportunities in which the Christian missionaries helped the Yoruba to benefit through the establishment of schools. In the next section, I will discuss this colonial system and the opportunities it created for the Yoruba, and how the missionaries supported them with schools.

3.4.1 **The effects of colonization**

The colonization of Yorubaland, and Nigeria, began with the bombardment of Lagos by the British naval forces in 1851. This followed the directive of John Beecroft (1790-1854), the Consul for the Bights of Biafra, aimed at ending the slave trade by Kosoko, the Ọba of Lagos.[401] The decade after the attack was a period of turmoil that involved dynastic disputes which

---

[397] O. Ikime, *The Fall of Nigeria: The British Conquest* (London: Heinemann, 1977).
[398] Nyang, "Religion and Social Change in Contemporary Africa".
[399] Victor Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge,* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 2010), 58.
[400] Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, 1–26.
[401] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 95; Antony G. Hopkins, "Property Rights and Empire Building: Britain's Annexation of Lagos, 1861," *The Journal of Economic History* 40, no. 4 (1980): 779–80.

affected the stability of Lagos and its commercial activities. In 1861, amidst the French interest in the territory, the British annexed Lagos as a colony following a series of bargaining and persuasions that made Ọba Dosunmu[402] (c.1823-1885) cede his territories.[403] From Lagos, the British gradually brought other Yoruba territories under its colonial empire. As part of this conquest, the British forces intervened in the civil war between Ibadan and the alliance of the Ekiti, Ijesa, Ife, Egba and Ijebu as a peacemaker by obtaining a peace deal which involved free movement of trade in 1886. The peace treaty allowed them to occupy Ijebu which had remained hostile to neighbouring traders in 1892. In the following year, many Yoruba states such as Ibadan avoided the Ijebu encounter and signed a treaty of protection which brought them into the expanded Colony and Protectorate of Lagos. However, the newly reconstituted Oyo resisted the British offer, and, like the Ijebu, the resistance broke down and Oyo was brought under colonial control on November 12, 1894.[404]

The subjugation of Yorubaland by the British forces was part of the international economic interest of Britain in the nineteenth century.[405] In Africa, the way and manner the colonial interest was promoted created varying degrees of opportunities and difficult situations for many people. For the Yoruba, the subjugation reduced the influence of their traditional political institutions as new centres of power like the Governor, Resident, and District Commissioners were established. The District Commissioners could depose an erring Ọba with little or no consultation, as it happened to *Akarigbo* Oyebajo (1891-1915) of Ijebu-Remo who was removed over accusations of judicial misconduct by H. F. Duncombe in 1915.[406] However, while the colonial administrative system affected the positions of existing institutions of power, it also enhanced the chances of people of varying social status such as migrants and slaves. A major example was the Hausa constabulary force which was employed to maintain public order in Lagos following its annexation.[407] There was also the Legislative Council (1886-1913), an advisory body that was initially set up to serve the Colony of Lagos and later the Lagos Protectorate. Although the opinions of the British officials were predominant in the council, it

---

[402] Pronounced as 'Docemo' by the British.

[403] Hopkins, "Property Rights and Empire Building": 780; Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 95; W. D. McIntyre, "Commander Glover and the Colony of Lagos, 1861–73," *The Journal of African History* 4, no. 1 (1963): 60–1.

[404] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 95.

[405] David Meredith, "The British Government and Colonial Economic Policy, 1919-39," *The Economic History Review* 28, no. 3 (1975): 485.

[406] Tunde Oduwobi, "Deposed Rulers Under the Colonial Regime in Nigeria," *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 43, no. 171 (2003): 554–7.

[407] Etannibi E. O. Alemika, "Colonialism, State and Policing in Nigeria," *Crime, Law and Social Change* 20, no. 3 (1993): 190.

nevertheless encouraged the representation of Africans which included chiefs, traders and missionaries in governance, and it allowed them to communicate their grievances on socio-economic and political matters to the government.[408]

As the colonial government consolidated its hold on power, the administrative system together with the socio-economic infrastructures needed to exploit the resources of the colony were expanded. New transport infrastructures like the railways, roads and seaports were developed to aid the faster movement of people and trade within and outside the Yoruba territory.[409] Public institutions such as the West African Court of Appeal (WACA) (est. 1867),[410] the Public Works Department (PWD) (est. 1897), the Post Office (from 1852),[411] the Railway Department, the Maritime Department[412] and the Lagos Colonial Hospital (est. 1893)[413] were also established to facilitate the colonial project. Beyond serving the British officials, the newly created infrastructures and institutions enabled the employment of people who worked as clerks, secretaries, tax officers, labourers and interpreters in various settings. More importantly, it encouraged the emergence of different professionals such as civil engineers, journalists, medical doctors and lawyers. However, the emergence of these professions was not only facilitated by government establishments, the arrival of European firms and business agents also played a key role in their emergence. Among these firms were the United African Company (UAC), G. B. Oliphant, John Holt & Co., and A. G. Leventis which traded in commodities like cocoa and palm produce and employed many indigenous people as staff and buying agents in many parts of Yorubaland by the 1920s.[414]

---

[408] Tekena N. Tamuno, "The Role of the Legislative Council in the Administration of Lagos, 1886-1913," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4, no. 4 (1969): 556–63.

[409] See Oladipo O. Olubomehin, "Road Transportation as Lifeline of the Economy in Western Nigeria, 1920 to 1952," *African Journal of History and Culture* 4, no. 3 (2012); Olufemi Omosini, "Railway Projects and British Attitude Towards the Development of West Africa, 1872-1903," *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* 5, no. 4 (1971); Ayodeji Olukoju, "The Port of Lagos, 1850–1929: The Rise of West Africa'S Leading Seaport," in *Atlantic Ports and the First Globalisation, c. 1850-1930*, ed. Miguel Suárez Bosa, 112–29, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[410] Johnson O. Aremu, "Administration of British West African Colonies and the Furtherance of Nigeria-Gold Coast Relations, 1885-1960," *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies* 1, no. 4 (2015): 58.

[411] Oluwatoyin O. Obinyan, "The Influence of Email Use on Generation and Postage of Mails by NIPOST in Southwest Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria," *Inter. Journal of Digital Library Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2011): 20.

[412] Ayodeji Olukoju, "The Port of Lagos, 1850–1929" in *Atlantic Ports and the First Globalisation, c. 1850-1930*, 119–20.

[413] Spencer H. Brown, "A Tool of Empire: The British Medical Establishment in Lagos, 1861-1905," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 37, no. 2 (2004): 314.

[414] Ayodeji Olukoju, "Elder Dempster and the Shipping Trade of Nigeria During the First World War," *The Journal of African History* 33, no. 2 (1992); Jumoke F. Oloidi, "External Trade in Cocoa and Palm Produce in Colonial Ekiti of Western Nigeria," *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research* 2, no. 3 (2014).

The Saros and the Agudas were largely conspicuous in this colonial political economy. While some Yoruba viewed them with contempt (being former slaves), their professions allowed their social statuses to be enhanced in many communities. Among them were the three Saros, Nathaniel King (1847-1884) and Orisadipe Obasa (1863-1940)[415] who were both medical doctors and James Johnson (1836–1917), a CMS agent who was linked to the Department of Education in Sierra Leone and Nigeria.[416] Some of them like João da Rocha (d. 1891) were also big business owners with transnational ties across the Atlantic.[417] Many of these returnees were trained in the elementary schools and colleges established by the Christian missionaries in Sierra Leone and Nigeria and, a few of them acquired higher education in England.

Besides these Saros and Agudas, some individuals had little or no literacy skills but were prominent figures in the colonial political economy. This category was comprised of the chiefs and Obas in the native authorities and courts spread across different colonial administrative divisions of Yorubaland by the mid-1930s.[418] However, the literacy of the Saros and the Agudas ensured their advantage over others in many areas. For instancne, those who lacked literacy skills had to rely on interpreters, clerks, translators and letter-writers (most of whom were the Saros and the Agudas) in their dealings with Europeans. Their reliance on these go-betweens draws attention to an aspect of the dynamics of power and socio-economic relations in the colonial system. Benjamin Lawrance *et al*. note that these go-betweens helped to blur the colonial dichotomies (such as 'civilised' and 'uncivilised,' white and black), and they symbolised the key link to power, authority and knowledge between the coloniser and the colonised which made them the linchpins of colonial rule despite having little official authority.[419] Also, through their services, these employees used their privileged positions to enhance their own political power, social status and wealth.[420]

For many Yoruba in the second half of the nineteenth century, the increasing status and influence of the Saros and Agudas in the emerging colonial political economy were evident. Thus, when the Christian missionaries among these returnees began to advocate the importance

---

[415] Adeola Adeloye, "Some Early Nigerian Doctors and Their Contribution to Modern Medicine in West Africa," *Medical History* 18, no. 3 (1974): 277–9.

[416] Ayandele, *African Historical Studies*, 137.

[417] Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*, 125–26.

[418] Olufemi Vaughan, "Chieftaincy Politics and Communal Identity in Western Nigeria, 1893-1951," *The Journal of African History* 44, no. 2 (2003): 285–301.

[419] Benjamin N. Lawrance, Emily L. Osborn and Richard L. Roberts, eds., *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 4.

[420] Ibid.

of Western education, many Yoruba were keen to enrol their children. James Johnson, an agent of the CMS and a member of the Legislative Council, was one of the key voices in this period. Johnson was a champion of "literacy" which he considered to be "indispensable to Africans if they were to achieve and claim equality with the other races of mankind."[421] As a member of the Legislative Council, Johnson also persuaded other members to take the education of their children seriously and he encouraged the Colonial Office to pay more attention to the development of education when he visited Britain between 1873 and 1909.[422] However, while Johnson's argument can be considered as part of the rationales that inspired many Yoruba to attend the missions' schools, I argue that the political and socio-economic opportunities that were created due to colonization were the key factors that informed their decisions. In the next section, I will demonstrate how the missionaries promoted these schools to facilitate the Christianization of Yorubaland.

3.4.2 The role of Western education in Christianization

The introduction of Western education was a key factor in the process of conversion of many Yoruba to Christianity. As the ability to speak the English language and do some arithmetic were necessary skills needed to work in the colonial system, the Christian missionaries' educational enterprise became useful for many Yorubas. The missionaries provided schools not only to train people how to read and write, and study the Bible, but also in order to encourage them to adopt Western values. This training was central to Christianization because it involved learning to read and write from the Bible to ensure that the pupils receive Biblical instruction and establish the instructions in their hearts.[423] Therefore, becoming a Christian, symbolised by baptism and changing of names, was the criterion for admission into these schools.[424] In many communities, the missionaries made the role of the schools in religious change clear to the people as pointed out by Father Wauters, a Catholic missionary in Ondo and Ekiti divisions: "We knew the best way to make conversions in pagan countries was to open schools. Practically all pagan boys ask to be baptized. So, when the district of Ekiti-Ondo was opened (in 1916) we started schools even before there was any church or mission house."[425] There was also Johnson of the CMS who envisioned a Christianised philosophy of

---

[421] Ayandele, *African Historical Studies*, 139.
[422] Ibid., 140.
[423] Ibid., 77.
[424] Alhaji Muritadha Awal, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 21, 2016, Bariga Lagos.
[425] David B. Abernethy, *The Political Dilemma of Popular Education: An African Case* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1969), 39.

education which, according to Ayandele, emphasised "Christian ethics, the Christian absolutes of justice, goodness, humanity of man to man, love and other virtues."[426] He also conceived a philosophy of education, which in Ayandele's words, is "higher than the ethics and virtues that could be fostered by Islam and African indigenous religion."[427]

On a broader perspective, Western education was part of the programmes which the missionaries aimed to use to achieve social change and the 'civilisation' of Africa. This objective was linked to the idea of Christianity and economic development advocated by some members of parliament and anti-slavery movements in Britain from the eighteenth century. One of the British parliamentarians who epitomised this was Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton (1786–1845), a key figure in the slavery abolitionist movements. Buxton argued in his idea of civilization in Africa that:

> Let missionaries and school masters, plough and spade, go together and agriculture will flourish, the avenues to legitimate commerce will be opened, confidence between man and man will be inspired, whilst civilization will advance as the natural effect, and Christianity operate as the proximate cause, of this happy change.[428]

To achieve this objective, vocational training in skills such as carpentry, bricklaying and agriculture were also introduced by the missionaries in the schools that were established at Abeokuta and Badagry.[429] In line with this religious-motivated civilising mission, Thomas Jefferson Bowen (1814-1875), the pioneer Baptist missionary in Yorubaland, was of the view that 'civilisation' cannot be achieved unless people have the Bible and could read it (and other literature) and follow its instructions in everyday life as he noted here:

> Our designs and hopes in regard to Africa, are not simply to bring as many individuals as possible to the knowledge of Christ. We desire to establish the Gospel in the hearts and minds and social life of the people, so that truth and righteousness may remain and flourish among them, without the instrumentality of foreign missionaries. This cannot be done without civilisation. To establish the Gospel among any people, they must have Bibles, and therefore must have the art to make them or the money to buy them. They must read the Bible, and this implies instruction.[430]

---

[426] Ayandele, *African Historical Studies*, 140.

[427] Ibid., 140–41.

[428] Thomas F. Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, with the assistance of George E. Metcalfe, 2nd (London: John Murray, 1840) cited in G.O.M. Tasie, *Christian Missionary Enterprise in the Niger Delta, 1864-1918* (Brill, 1978); see also Church Missionary Society, *The Church Missionary Record* v. 13 (Seeleys, Hatchard, Nisbet, Simpkin, Marshall, 1842), https://books.google.de/books?id=wMEPAAAAIAAJ, 245.

[429] A. B. Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, Rev. ed. (Ibadan: NPS Educational, 1995), 94.

[430] T. J. Bowen, *Central Africa: Adventures and Missionary Labors in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa, from 1849 to 1856* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969).

One of the words used to convey this notion of 'civilisation' to the Yoruba was *Ọlaju*. As Peel argues, *Ọlaju* is "regularly used by the Yoruba to characterise modern social change in general terms."[431] *Ọlaju* is also implied in other Yoruba expressions such as *idagbasoke* (growing up)*, igbega* (upliftment) and *ilọsiwaju* (going forward), all of which suggest 'progress' and 'development.' Regarding my argument in Chapter Two, these various concepts help us to understand how the Yoruba make sense of the social change around them and what they regarded as modernity during the nineteenth century.

Literarily, *Ọlaju* is from the word *Ilaju* which means 'open eye.' To 'open eye' to something is to know and have knowledge of it. This could be knowledge of the people or the phenomena outside one's town, external trade and of the spiritual world. Peel contends that having knowledge, understood as *Ọlaju*, is known to exist at two levels in Yorubaland. The first is at a "vulgar" level which implies common knowledge about the everyday world, and the second is the esoteric "deep" level regarded as *imọ ijinlẹ*. Unlike the former, those who possess deep knowledge are in a position of power over others. The majority of the people in this category are *Ifá* priests and Ọbas. The example of the priests and Ọbas illustrates that *Ọlaju* was also perceived relationally in terms of power and knowledge.[432] However, from the nineteenth century, it became closely linked with Western education and the idea of 'civilisation' and, 'community development.' Western education was considered to confer a form of power, understood as 'knowledge of the white man' (*Ọlaju imọ Oyinbo*) and 'knowledge of books' (*Ọlaju imọ iwe*) on those who possessed it. To be educated was as equally seen as *igbega* for an individual as it was a facilitator for community development.[433] Based on this notion of *Ọlaju,* Peel's argument about the object of "conversion" of the Christian missionaries in Yorubaland is very germane. He notes that the missionaries did not only to seek a religious change but also the adoption of a whole complex of values with education playing "a key role to personal and communal advancement, progress and prosperity."[434]

For many Yoruba Muslims, this concept of *Ọlaju* was a big challenge. Before the Christian missionaries arrived, they had considered being Muslims to confer *Ọlaju* on them because the bearers of Islam among them were associated with esoteric power. The symbolic pilgrimage to Mecca and the fanfare exhibited during Muslim festivals by the *alfas* and the Muslim chiefs were also understood as forms of enlightenment. However, the agents of the Christian missions

---

[431] Peel, "Olaju": 141.
[432] Ibid..
[433] Ibid., 148–51.
[434] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orisa-religion*, 2.

promoted their ideals of *Ọlaju,* often with damning stereotypes, that challenged those of the Muslims and inspired the conversion of many Muslims to Christianity. M. O. Abdul-Rahman, Chief Imam of the University of Ibadan Central Mosque painted a picture of this campaign and its effects on Yoruba Muslims in his Friday prayer sermon which I attended on November 2016. His message was a response to a Christian who attended a programme at the university and claimed that many Yoruba Muslims were lucky to be Muslims because they were born into Muslim families. Abdul-Rahman, however, rejected this argument and noted that being Muslim was due to the sacrifice of their parents who objected to the Christian missions' definition of *Ọlaju.* As he noted:

> …Our own fathers made the sacrifice. But their own [Christian] fathers did not make such sacrifice. When the white man brought his religion, *our own forefathers decided that they would uphold their religion. This made them poor among their peers*. But their [Christian] fathers were attracted by what the white man brought. *They wanted to wear tie. They wanted to collect salary…*In those days, *those who followed the white man were the people of Ọlaju*. Our fathers later challenged them and told people that '*there was wealth in the Qur'an* too (*Ola n be ninu kewu*). But they [the Christians] also said something, or have you forgotten? That they said, 'a lazy person was the one who followed the Muslim clerics' (*Ole ni tele alfa*) … 'laziness caught up with him, he ran to the *madrasa'* (*Ole ba ti, obo le kewu*). These are the things they said to confront our fathers. Those are the things our fathers paid for to remain in Islam today.[435]

This statement showed that there were many Muslims who converted to Christianity through the missions' schools, although a few of them remained Muslims. But the majority refused to attend these schools. This was confirmed in Johnson's report to the Secretary of CMS in 1875 that "The Muhammadans (sic) show no desire for the education that may be had at our schools."[436] Certainly, those who attended the schools became professionals, gained employment in colonial services and acquired a European way of life. In this process, they joined the new class of 'educated elite' as opposed to the 'traditional elite' (the chiefs and *ọbas*). Taking insights from Kristin Mann's categorisation in colonial Lagos, the educated elite are men and women at the top of the growing population of educated Africans who were "professionals (doctors, lawyers, ministers, headmasters, surveyors and engineers), first-class clerks or above in the colonial service, and educated import-export merchants."[437] Among them

---

[435] M. O. Abdul-Rahman, "Khutubah: Friday Sermon," (University of Ibadan Central Mosque, Ibadan, November 11, 2016). Emphasis in italics are mine.

[436] James Johnson to Secretary, CMS 1875 cited in Noibi, *Yoruba Muslim Youth and Christian-Sponsored Education*, 13.

[437] Kristin Mann, "The Dangers of Dependence: Christian Marriage Among Elite Women in Lagos Colony, 1880-1915," *Journal of African History* 24 (1983): 39.

were a few Afro-Brazilian Muslims who went through the mission schools such as Mohammad Shitta Bey (merchant), Muhammad Lawal Basil Agusto (lawyer) and Jibril Martin (lawyer). People in such occupations as newspaper publishing were not in the category of the three above, but they belong to the elite class. Outside of this social class, there was a significant number of Muslims who did not attend the Western schools and were not socially or economically well-off compared to the elite. These were the drivers, tailors, bricklayers, goldsmiths, petty traders and farmers.[438]

As Abdul-Rahman noted, the emergence of these educated elite created some provocative stereotypes against Muslims. While the educated elite were associated with *Ọlaju*, many Muslims were stereotyped as lazy people for refusing to attend schools.[439] Beyond the implied laziness, this stereotype was also used to differentiate the value of education offered by the missions' schools from the *madrasas*. The former was seen to equip with skills for employment in the colonial system, while the latter did not. The other major issue raised by Abdul-Rahman was that many Muslims became poor for refusing to be trained for wage labour. While I do not agree with his theory, it cannot be denied that some people might be poor due to their lack of education which could have given them access to profitable jobs. In many cases, lack of Western education also limited the chances of Muslims to occupy positions in the formal economic and political sectors of Western Nigeria by the 1950s. This was a major concern for the Yoruba Muslim in the period leading to the 1953 constitutional conference held in London as part of Nigeria's decolonization process. It happened that the government delegates expected to represent the Western Region under the political party, Action Group (AG), at the conference were predominantly Christian. Having noted the religious affiliation of these delegates, the Muslims under the umbrella of the Muslim Welfare Association of Nigeria protested to the Secretary of State for the Colonies over their lack of representation despite being the largest religious group. Although they acknowledged that the backwardness of Muslims' Western educational attainment was responsible for this, they nevertheless called on the Secretary to help in addressing their underrepresentation in the government of the Western Region.[440]

Below I will discuss how the response of the Yoruba Muslims to these challenges changed their own practices and understanding of Islam. However, up to the 1950s, their response was

---

[438] Noibi, *Yoruba Muslim Youth and Christian-Sponsored Education*, 17.
[439] These stereotypes are still common today. Other stereotypes in this period were recorded by Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 142.
[440] *Daily Success,* "Let Us Go: Muslims Want a Place in the London Confab,", June 12, 1953.

not enough to check the number of people converting to Christianity, and this was reflected in the population by religion. By the 1850s, Muslims claimed an outright majority, but the 1952 population census showed that Muslims had only a slightly higher figure (43.3 per cent) to the Christian (38 per cent) population.[441]

3.5 **Engaging Christianity and colonialism**

In their engagement with the Christian missions and the colonial system, Yoruba Muslims debated and fought on several issues which centred on Islam and the colonial policies. One of the issues that featured in their arguments was the levy on pipe-borne water introduced in Lagos by the colonial government in 1916. The arguments on this levy once more pitted the Lemomu party and the Jamat party mentioned earlier. While the Chief lmam had encouraged the Muslims to pay the levy because the water would benefit every Lagosian, the Jamat, who on this occasion were backed by the Ọba of Lagos, Esugbayi Eleko (1901-1925, 193l-1932), were of the view that the levy was equivalent to paying tax and that the water would only benefit the Europeans.[442] For supporting the water levy, the Imam was denounced as an agent of colonial rule. The other key subjects in the debates of the Muslims revolved around Western education and the European way of life which I will discuss in the next two sub-sections.

3.5.1 **'Islam enjoins one to pursue knowledge'**[443]

The opposition to Western education reflected in the arguments of many *alfas* who belong to the movement called Zumratul-Mu'meena (also called *makondoro*). The movement was led by Alfa Bamidele from Ilorin and, today, it has spread to different parts of Yorubaland through his students and *madrasas*. As Sakariyau Aliyu noted, members of this movement were of the view that Western education was not useful for Muslims because it was less concerned about life after death. They also saw it as a 'useless' propagation of *yehudi* (Jew) and *nasara* (Christian) doctrine which placed more emphasis on material values and gains: "how to turn ten to a hundred, a hundred to a thousand."[444] There were also some *alfas* from Ile Gbagba in Ilorin who, according to Aliyu, argued that Western education was a project meant to further the rule of "Christian colonial government" over Muslims. Aliyu referred to a popular *wákà*

---

[441] Insa Nolte et al., "Research Note: Exploring Survey Data for Historical and Anthropological Research: Muslim–Christian Relations in South-West Nigeria," *African Affairs* 115, no. 460 (2016); Ostien, "Percentages by Religion of the 1952 and 1963 Populations of Nigeria's Present 36 States".

[442] H. O. Danmole, "The Crisis of the Lagos Muslim Community, 1915-1947" in *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*, 292–93.

[443] A quote from my respondent, Alhaji Sherrifdeen Adegoke, who I have cited earlier.

[444] Sakariyau A. Aliyu, "Transmission of Learning in Modern Ilorin: A History of Islamic Education, 1897-2012," (PhD Thesis, Leiden University), 130–31.

(poem) which they used to criticise some *alfa* who worked for the Native Authority as judges of Sharia courts and allowed their children to attend mission schools: "*Baba nre kọtu, ọmọ nkọwe, ọmọ ina di meji* (the father goes to court, the son is learning in school, now, the two are hell-bound."[445]

It was clear that the reactions of these *alfas* went beyond mere opposition to Western education and colonial rule. For the most part, they were also reacting to the loss of privilege and patronage of their clients, especially the traditional elite, whom the British subdued. The British colonial system affected the status and wealth of many chiefs and *ọba*s which trickled down to them since the government took control of collecting and allocating revenues. The *alfas* were also sympathetic to the cause of many *ọbas* who were dethroned by the colonial government such as Kosoko in Lagos, and some of them were jailed for protesting this action.[446] Thus, the reasons for their argument on correct Islamic practice were also shaped by their concerns for power and resources.

Despite the criticism of the *alfas*, many Muslims saw the value of education but feared conversion to Christianity. The interest in Western education was particularly felt by Muslims in the Lagos Colony where political and economic activities were most active particularly from 1861. It is important to note that Lagos was the administrative centre of the colony government between 1861 and 1906. When the British established the Southern Protectorate in 1906, Lagos also remained its capital up to 1914. It became the capital of the newly founded Nigeria in 1914 and remained so until 1991. The headquarters of many colonial enterprises including banks and factories were also in Lagos. By the time of the colonial conquest, its seaport (and later an airport) connected Nigerians to other parts of the world and helped the country to maintain its global exchange of commerce and information. As the centre of colonial life, the economic and political opportunities in Lagos were therefore obvious to its Yoruba Muslim residents by the mid-nineteenth century.

The governor of Lagos, Sir Alfred Moloney (1848-1913), whose interest in education had grown towards the end of the nineteenth century, was worried about the small numbers of enrolments of Muslims in schools. In 1892, he met with leaders of the Lagos Muslim community to discuss their apathy towards Western education and discovered that Muslims considered it a form of apostasy to abandon their *madrasa*s for the missions' schools.[447] The

---

[445] Ibid., 57.
[446] Ibid., 53–59; Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 159–60.
[447] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 166.

Muslims also complained that the missions were being used to convert their children to Christianity. Despite his intervention, Moloney's effort was not enough to make the Muslims change their minds, as some elders were reported to continue their criticism of the missions' schools.[448] Moloney's successor, Sir Gilbert Thomas Carter (1884-1927), however, continued to engage the Muslims. Following their meetings, Carter engaged the service of Edward Blyden[449] in 1895 who met the Muslims and convinced them of the importance of Western education. This effort led to a decision by the government to establish a separate Muslim school that would combine Islamic studies with Western education.

While they engaged the colonial government, the Lagos Muslims wrote the Sultan of Turkey in 1894 for clarification on the position of Western education in Islam.[450] Through his representative, Abdullah Quillam,[451] who visited Lagos in 1895, the Sultan pleaded with the Lagos Muslims to accept Western education. Quillam was a British Muslim convert and solicitor who performed the opening ceremony of the grand Shitta-Bey Mosque in Lagos in 1895. During the ceremony, he also advised the Lagos Muslims not to emulate the Muslims in India who stayed away from public school because their religion was not taught but to embrace it to access government employment.[452] His advice was taken by several Muslims following Blyden's efforts that led to the establishment of schools designated as "Government Muslim School." The first of these schools opened in Lagos in 1896, followed by Epe in 1898, and Badagry in 1899.[453] By seeking the opinion of the Turkish Sultan, the Lagos Muslims did not necessarily show they were subservient to Turkey on the interpretation of correct Islamic practice. Rather, I consider their action to be part of many Muslims' efforts to ascertain that their practice was consistent within the global Muslim context. Therefore, it seems plausible to me to accept Gbadamosi's view that many Yoruba Muslims attended the government schools because it was clear to them that Muslims elsewhere were acquiring Western education without affecting their religious conviction.[454]

---

[448] Gbadamosi, "The Establishment of Western Education among Muslims in Nigeria, 1896-1926": 106.

[449] He was born in the West Indies but joined the free black immigrants from the United States to settle in Sierra Leone. An educator and writer, his sympathy for the cause of Muslims facilitated his employment by the colonial government to encourage Muslims in Lagos to embrace Western education.

[450] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 167.

[451] Brent D. Singleton, ""That Ye May Know Each Other": Late Victorian Interactions Between British and West African Muslims," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 29, no. 3 (2009).

[452] Ibid., 6.

[453] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 168–73.

[454] Ibid., 168.

The establishment of the Muslim schools was welcomed by several Yoruba Muslims. Those who resided outside Lagos, Badagry and Epe also began to advocate for such schools in their towns. This inspired the initiatives of the educated Muslim elite to continue with the establishment of Muslim schools in Yorubaland. Among these elite were Basil Augusto and Jibril Martin, who in 1916 introduced the Indian Ahmadiyya Movement to Lagos. In this period, the movement had been promoting Western education in other colonial Muslim societies as part of its goals to modernise Islam.[455]

There are three accounts on how the Ahmadiyya was introduced to Lagos and all of them are linked to the magazine of the movement, the *Islamic Review*.[456] The most widely known account was that of Odunbaku Oguntola Sapara (1861-1935), a Saro Christian medical practitioner who visited London in 1914 and returned with copies of the magazine. The magazine was said to be given to him by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din (1870-1932), an Ahmadi who started its publication in 1913 under the Working Muslim Mission which he had established the same year in London. Kamal-ud-Din was a member of the *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at-e-Islam* (Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam), a separatist faction based in Lahore, Pakistan. Based on its website, the magazine had a chequered history with different titles and, at least, three series. The first series was between 1913 and 1948, the second from 1949 to 1971, and the third (produced by the Lahore faction) from 1980 to 1989.[457] During this period, it published articles that taught different aspects of Islam (such as fasting and pilgrimage) and reported the history and current experiences of Muslims around the world.[458] Upon his return to Lagos, Sapara gave this magazine to the Muslim Literary Society which had been formed by Augusto and other Muslim elite to promote Islamic knowledge. Augusto and members of this society, therefore, established contact with the Ahmadiyya through the magazine and joined the movement with

---

[455] See Humphrey J. Fisher, *Ahmadiyyah: A Study in Contemporary Islam on the West African Coast* (Oxford: OUP, 1963).

[456] The first account suggests that the literature was discovered in 1913 by a schoolteacher named Hamid who contacted the Ahmadiyya and organised the first group of Ahmadis in Lagos. The second account traced the meeting of the first set of Ahmadis to 1914 after one Alhaji Ali Fahm came across the literature in Egypt on his business trip. See Oluranti Afowowe, "The Advent of Ahmadiyya Movement in Lagos State: Islamic Group as Agent of Social Rejuvenation in Nigeria," in *Actors and Institutions in the Development of Islam in Lagos State: Essays in Honour of Alhaji Femi Okunnu*, ed. Siyan Oyeweso and M. O. Raheemson, 117–26 (Ibadan: Matrixcy Books Ltd, 2013), 117–18.

[457] "The Working Muslim Mission, England, 1913-1960s: *The Islamic Review* Archive,", http://www.wokingmuslim.org/work/islamic-review/index.htm (accessed May 10, 2019); "The Islamic Review (1913–1971; 1980–1989) (Official Magazine of the Woking Muslim Mission, UK),", http://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/islamicreview/islamicreview.shtml (accessed December 8, 2017).

[458] "The Working Muslim Mission, England, 1913-1960s".

the signing of its "oath of allegiance" (*bayʿah*) in 1916.[459] No doubt, Ahmadiyya's support for Western education appealed to many Yoruba Muslims who joined the movement. Thus, in 1922, with the support of these Muslims, the movement established its first school named Talimul Islam Ahmadiyya Primary School at Elegbata in Lagos.[460] I wish to point out that while the Lahore branch of the Ahmadiyya was the one contacted by Agusto, it was the Qadiani branch that the Muslims in Lagos registered with. One of the major differences between the two branches centred on the status of Ghulam Ahmad. The Lahore faction saw him as a *mujāhid* (One who strives in the cause of Allah), while the other group, *Ahmadiyya Sadr Anjuman* (Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission) in Qadian, regarded him as a prophet,[461] a claim that made other Muslims declared them a heretical sect, which I will show in the next chapter.

In addition to the Ahmadiyya initiative, a few numbers of the elite who had close ties with Muslim scholars in Ilorin and Ibadan also discussed ways to promote Western education. Largely a product of the Government Muslim school and with links to the Saros, Reichmuth narrates that the concept of Islam among these elite tended towards the Arab countries more than the Ahmadiyya.[462] Yet, like the Ahmadis, they also connected the acquisition of Western education to the understanding and promotion of good Muslim practices. A very influential figure among them was Boonyamin Gbajabiamila. In November 1923, he was at a meeting with his friends where they discussed how to "ensure the advancement of the Muslim community"[463] through the promotion of religious consciousness in everyday life. One of their objectives at the meeting was to raise money for their regular open-air lectures (held at Alawiye house, Balogun Lagos). While the spokesperson of the meeting had focused on raising money for the lectures in order to enhance their religious consciousness, Gbajabiamila, on the contrary, held a different view. Gbajabiamila spoke about the lack of knowledge and "true spirit" of Islam particularly among Muslim children and recommended that a school along western lines was needed to teach them, and, in the long run, ensure the development of their communities. For him, it was "by this means alone can Islam be better studied and understood. As lack of proper knowledge of the essence of Islam and failure to grasp its true spirit and correct

---

[459] Oluranti Afowowe, "The Advent of Ahmadiyya Movement in Lagos State" in *Actors and Institutions in the Development of Islam in Lagos State*, 117–18.

[460] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 371.

[461] Ibid., 371–72; Sara Katz, "Islamic Prestige, Piety and Debate in Early Lagosian Newspapers, 1920s–40s," *Islamic Africa* 10, 1-2 (2019): 33–4.

[462] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 372.

[463] Boonyamin K. Gbajabiamila, Report for the Years, 1923-1973," (The Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, 1974), 1–4.

teachings have been the greatest cause of the backwardness of Muslims in all the walks of life."[464] With this assumption, he proposed the establishment of an organisation whose primary goal would be the education of Muslim children. His recommendation was accepted by his friends and they formed the Young Ansar-Ud-deen Society (later Ansar-Ud-Deen Society) in 1923.[465] From inception, the society pursued a vigorous educational campaign. Part of this campaign was the opening of its first primary school at Alakoro in Lagos in 1931 which by 1955 had increased to 80 primary schools outside Lagos.[466]

The argument by Gbajabiamila that Islam can be understood through a Western form of education should be taken seriously in the understanding of religious change among Yoruba Muslims, because, in a broad sense, his argument suggests that Western education, which is an aspect of social change, is directly related to religious change which I noted in Chapter Two. To illustrate, one of my respondents, Alhaji Ladejo, explained how this form of education was linked to the knowledge of Islam and religious change by Gbajabiamila and other educated Muslims in this period.

> …these educated Muslims would be enlightened and would have read things in *book*. So, they can compare the kind of Islam practised by Muslims here with the ones practised in the Arab world better…Minor things that the Muslims were conservative about, the western educated ones will explain it better for the people and this will allow the youths to remain steadfast in the religion.[467]

Alhaji Ladejo referred to "book" in this statement and not the Qur'an (further discussion on this is in Chapter Seven). I understand this book to mean the English/Yoruba text which could be in the form of journals, pamphlets, and magazines. It could also be English, or Yoruba translated texts of Arabic. The example of *The Islamic Review* shows that such texts were in circulation in colonial Lagos. Since the language in these "books" was not taught in the *madrasas*, the Western school system became the logical solution in this period. Apart from this, Alhaji Ladejo also pointed out that the "educated Muslims" can learn about the practices of Muslims in other parts of the world, allowing them to evaluate their own practices within the global Muslim context, through such texts.[468]

---

[464] Ibid.
[465] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 374.
[466] Ibid., 381–84.
[467] Alhaji Ladejo, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 20, 2016, Surulere Lagos.
[468] Ibid.

In addition to the Ahmadiyya and Ansar-Ud-Deen iniatives, more Muslim schools that combined Islamic and Western subjects were established by other Muslim organisations such as the Nawair-Ud-Deen Society (est. 1934) and Zumratul-Islamiyya (est. 1926). Like the Ahmadiyya and Ansar-Ud-deen, these organizations also contextualised Western education within Islamic discourses that recommended the search for knowledge for Muslims. As narrated by my respondent below, these organisations believed that such knowledge was not limited to Islam, and they argued that the contribution of Muslim scholars to such fields as mathematics, astronomy, philosophy and geography was an indication that Islam was not opposed to scientific or Western knowledge.

> The importance of education is that Islam states that education begins from one's birth and terminates when one dies…Back then, China was the farthest of the known world and Islam enjoins one to pursue knowledge even if it is that far. That is why it is automatic for every Muslim to pursue education, not only Islamic education but also all fields of education.[469]

This argument by my respondent suggests to me that the acquisition of Islamic education together with Western education was considered a correct Muslim practice by many Yoruba Muslim elite by the late-nineteenth century. The argument also shows that Yoruba Muslims' discourse was neither limited to the subject of Islam nor confined to their social context (as shown in their contact with Ottoman caliph). Furthermore, it sheds light on how they interpreted the acquisition of knowledge in the light of their present condition. And, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the correct practice in Islam is always interpreted by Muslims in relation to their prevailing historical conditions.

I wish to emphasise again that both Islamic and Western education caused a remarkable change to the identities of Yoruba Muslims and their understanding of Islam in a colonial society defined by the social changes regarded as *Ọlaju*. However, being educated in Western schools was not the only way they expressed their *Ọlaju;* they also engaged in other practices and activities that were regarded as aspects of enlightenment, even though they were contested by many *alfas*. The many aspects of this enlightenment and the critiques they inspired are the focus of the following section.

3.5.2 'To look more modern'[470]

From the nineteenth century, the colonization and Christianization of Yorubaland facilitated the emergence of different ways of life. The social changes that were caused by both processes

---

[469] Sherrifdeen Adegoke, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[470] I credit this title to Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 104.

came with the introduction of aspects of culture like dance parties, cinemas, newspapers, tea parties, picnics, western dress, sports, and new forms of association. These cultural aspects, many of which were associated with Victorian England, were largely promoted by the educated elite of the Saros and Aguda extraction.[471] With their growing popularity and consumption in the society, they became subjects of discourses of several *alfas* as many Yoruba Muslims began to follow the trend. To illustrate this, clothes like knickers, shirts and trousers that were a fascination for many young Muslims were considered by the *alfas* to be un-islamic. One of the arguments of the *alfas* was that these clothes were unsuitable for prayers in the mosques. They also claimed that wearing them implies borrowing from the culture of the Jews and Christians which, according to them, the Qur'an forbids.[472] But this notion of Islam was equally contested by the Muslim elite. The elite could contest it, as Alhaji Ladejo narrated below, because of their knowledge of the ways of life of Muslims in other parts of the world, which the *alfas* might not have, that showed such dress was not prohibited for Muslims.

> …back then when they mentioned Egypt, Dubai, the *alfas* had not been there because they only read and heard about them. These are Muslim countries and the educated Muslims had been there and they saw that all the western clothes condemned at home were being worn by them. Even the Imams there were wearing it, and, so, western dress did not violate the creeds of Islam. That is how the educated Muslims got their own idea.[473]

By comparing their social experiences with those of other Muslims and connecting with their practices, these Western educated Muslims helped to shape an understanding of Islam that differs from those of the established *alfas.* The Ahmadiyya movement was one of the leading groups that challenged these *alfas* in the colonial period.[474] Its formal English dress, a double-breasted suit with a red fez, was an attraction for many Yoruba Muslims.[475] However, these 'English dressed' Muslims were also later criticised by the more nationalist Muslims who considered them capable of eroding indigenous cultures. Largely educated in Western schools, these nationalist-minded Muslims were of the view that Islam was not against the local dress.[476]

---

[471] J. M. Echeruo, *Victorian Lagos: Aspects of Nineteenth Century Lagos Life* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers Inc., 1978); COMCOL, Lagos Musical Society, 3290, NAI.
[472] Alhaji Ladejo, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[473] Ibid.
[474] Alhaji Muritadha Awal, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[475] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orişa-religion*, 158.
[476] Ryan, *Imale*, 206–7.

One of my respondents, Dawud Noibi (b. 1934),[477] whose dress illustrates this view, argues that wearing it is an affirmation of being a Muslim as a Yoruba rather than a Westerner.

> It is an assertion of the fact that: I don't have to be, I don't have to appear like a non-Muslim or a Westerner. I really want to be what I am. Partially, it is an assertion of your belief in your culture. But it also has to do with an assertion of being a Muslim.[478]

In addition to the dress, public tea parties also emerged among the Yoruba Muslims. This began with the Muslims in Lagos gathering in various centres to celebrate the end of Ramadan in March 1895. Gbadamosi argues that this was part of the growing concern among them that Islam could be made 'to look more modern,' by adopting western habits which they understood to be compatible with Islam.[479]

There were also new forms of association that illustrate this Yoruba Muslim modernity. The associations, many of which depart from the concerns of the indigenous ones, were in such areas as recreation, sports, religion, occupation, education, community developments and politics that the colonial society enabled.[480] They include the Order of Forester which some Europeans, Saros and Aguda joined in 1891 in Lagos,[481] the nationalist-oriented Egbe Omo-Oduduwa (Association of Oduduwa Descendants) established in 1947,[482] and the Lagos Market Women Association (LMWA) founded around the mid-1920s to promote the interests of women traders. There was also the Church Young Men's Christian Association (est. c.1888), based at Breadfruit Church in Lagos. This association appeared to aim at promoting Christian belief, but it also engaged in debates on subjects like "History" and "European Marriage Custom."[483] While many Muslims joined the non-religious associations in this period, the Muslims also had exclusive ones for themselves. Of major interest was the fashionable male club called *Ẹgbẹ Killa* (Killa Society), named after Abdullah Quillam following his visit in 1895. The society promoted mutual-help and modern ways of celebrating Muslim festivals which spread from Lagos to other communities in Badagry, Abeokuta, Epe, Ijebu-Ode, Oyo

---

[477] A Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, he taught at the University of Ibadan from 1973 to 1996 and was the Chief Imam of the University's Central Mosque until 1990.

[478] D. O. S. Noibi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, February 9, 2017, Ibadan.

[479] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 104.

[480] The specific dates when most of these associations were established are not known. For those reported in the newspapers, see Sawada, *The Educated Elite and Associational Life in Early Lagos Newspapers*, 98–108; Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 53.

[481] Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 53.

[482] S. O. Arifalo, *The Egbe Omo Oduduwa: A Study in Ethnic and Cultural Nationalism (1945-1965)* (Akure, Nigeria: Stebak Books, 2001).

[483] Sawada, *The Educated Elite and Associational Life in Early Lagos Newspapers*, 104.

and Ogbomoso.[484] Another example was the sporting Muslim Cricket Club founded in 1907 and led by Karimu Kotun (b. 1881), a cotton merchant.[485] I wish to note that the few movements mentioned earlier, Ahmadiyya movement, the Young Ansar-Ud-Deen and the Muslim Literary Society, are included in these colonial Muslim associations.[486] Likewise, the MSSN, which is the focus of this study, is also part of these broader forms of colonial associational life.

The emergence of Muslims associational life facilitated several changes in the Yoruba Muslims religious expression which were noticed in such areas as the style of interpretation of Islamic texts, the mode of transmission of Islamic knowledge and gender relations. The Ahmadiyya movement was one of the agents that contributed to these changes. The movement contested social practices such as the traditional form of showing respect and the non-use of coffins in funeral services, common among the Christian elite.[487] Another popular figure who promoted these new ways of being Muslim was Agusto. Although the ideals of the Ahmadiyya contributed to shaping his own thoughts, he led other members away from the Qadian faction to form another movement, the Jama'at-ul-Islamiyya Society on March 1, 1924.[488] Through his new society, he challenged the use of only Arabic in the weekly *Jumat* (Friday) sermon which was the practice of the *alfas* and encouraged the use of the Yoruba and English languages to make it possible for Muslims to understand the religion better. For this, a large section of the Lagos Muslim community brought him to court to restrain the practice, but the case was decided in his favour.[489] There was also Mustafa Kasunmu Ekemode (1899-1972), Chief Imam and Missioner of the Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, who studied in the Western school as well as the *madrasa* and had a professional career in firms which included the United Africa Company (UAC) and Patterson, Zochonis & Co.[490] He was a prominent voice in the debate on the prohibition of women praying in the mosques, and he also supported their visibility in public religious discourse. In the media, he gave weekly sermons on the radio as part of the growing mediatisation of religion which started with the use of the newspaper (introduced by

---

[484] Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, 104–5.

[485] COMCOL 1, Muslim Cricket Club, 2531, NAI; Peter J. Yearwood, *Nigeria and the Death of Liberal England: Palm Nuts and Prime Ministers, 1914-1916,* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 149.

[486] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 370. Sarah Katz has also studied how the Ahmadiyya and other Muslims debated the Yoruba Muslim practices in this colonial period. See Katz, "Islamic Prestige, Piety and Debate in Early Lagosian Newspapers, 1920s–40s".

[487] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 371.

[488] Remi Britto and Bolaji Olaniran, "The Establishment and Leadership of Jamatul-Islamiyya of Nigeria in Lagos," in *Actors and Institutions in the Development of Islam in Lagos State: Essays in Honour of Alhaji Femi Okunnu*, eds. Siyan Oyeweso and M. O. Raheemson, 127–35 (Ibadan: Matrixcy Books Ltd, 2013), 129.

[489] Aliu B. Fafunwa, "Jama-at-Islamiyya of Nigeria: 60th Anniversary Celebration," (1984), 8.

[490] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 374–5.

the Christian mission in 1859),[491] and radio service established by the colonial government in Lagos in 1935.[492]

From all the sections above, I have demonstrated the process of Islamization and the new forms of religious change among the Yoruba Muslims up to the period of colonization. I consider the formation of the MSSN in 1954 as a continuation of this religious change, which illustrate new expressions of Islam among the Western educated Yoruba Muslims. However, unlike the founders of other associations, those who established the MSSN were students in educational institutions. Be that as it may, little is still known about the experiences of these students in Yorubaland up to 1960, and this has not been helped by the inadequate studies on the social history of childhood and teenage life in Nigeria. A recurring theme in the few studies which focused on "children"[493] is that they are part of the social problems which developed in colonial Nigeria. Among these studies is Abosede George's work showing that a significant number of girls became peddlers to support their parents in the economy of Lagos.[494] There are also studies by Laurent Fourchard[495] and Simon Heap[496] that show that many children became involved in crimes in Lagos and Ibadan following the socio-economic changes in these cities. But the history of children in the colonial period goes beyond these problems. As Saheed Aderinto argues, children were also at the centre of the idea of progress, civilisation, modernity and social stability of the colonial state.[497] This idea was promoted through legislation that

---

[491] B. Akobi, "The Ansar-Ud-Deen Missionary Impact: From Imam Mustapha Kasumu Ekemode to Sheikh Abdur-Rahman Olanrewaju Ahmad," in *Actors and Institutions in the Development of Islam in Lagos State: Essays in Honour of Alhaji Femi Okunnu*, eds. Siyan Oyeweso and M. O. Raheemson, 162–71 (Ibadan: Matrixcy Books Ltd, 2013), 165; Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 374–5.

[492] The colonial government in Lagos started radio broadcasting called the Rediffusion Broadcasting System (RBS) in 1935 together with the British Broadcasting Service (BBC). While the radio served as the "ears and eyes" of both the British government and the BBC in the colony, it was also used to give information on economic and socio-political developments. Following agitation for political independence, the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) was established in 1957. In 1959, the Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) also came into being. Over time, religious services also began to be broadcasted through television. For the history of this media, see Charles C. Umeh, "The Advent and Growth of Television Broadcasting in Nigeria: Its Political and Educational Overtones," *Africa Media Review* 3, no. 2 (1989); Olalekan G. Akashoro, Onjefu Okidu and Mikaila Ajaga, "Ideological Implications of Broadcasting Practice in Nigeria: From Pre and Post-Independence Regulation to Deregulation," *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* 15, no. 2 (2013): 44–7.

[493] Though a contested term, a child was identified by the British administrators as a boy or girl under seventeen. See Saheed Aderinto, "Researching Colonial Childhoods: Images and Representations of Children in Nigerian Newspaper Press, 1925-1950," *History in Africa* 39 (2012): 246.

[494] Abosede George, "Within Salvation: Girl Hawkers and the Colonial State in Development Era Lagos," *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 3 (2011): 837.

[495] Laurent Fourchard, "Lagos and the Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria, 1920-1960," *The Journal of African History* 47, no. 1 (2006): 115.

[496] Simon Heap, "'Jaguda Boys': Pickpocketing in Ibadan, 1930-60," *Urban History* 24, no. 3 (1997): 324.

[497] Aderinto, "Researching Colonial Childhoods": 241.

defined their social status, British-styled child-rearing practices, and Western education.[498] That said, I argue that the experiences of Muslim children (who I will mostly refer to as 'students') can provide another perspective to the broader history of children's life in precolonial and colonial Yorubaland. The experiences of these Muslims are important to help us know their religious lives within the processes of Islamization, Christianization and colonization. In the section below, I refer to these experiences, though sketchy, based on the context of Muslim-Christian encounter (discussed in the above sections) and from the life of a few Muslims who I interacted with.

3.6 The Muslim students' experience

The social background of Muslim students up to the end of colonial rule was not uniform throughout Yorubaland, and they appeared to be related to the varying socio-economic statuses of their parents.[499] Generally, these students tended to identify with Islam, but what led to their identification with the religion varied. As I have illustrated earlier, they include predestination and conversion. By the 1950s, when a significant number of Yoruba had become Muslims, the predominant factor was the identity of their Muslim parents.[500] To illustrate this point, most of the Muslims I interacted with during fieldwork told me that they are Muslims by birth because their parents are Muslims.

The learning experiences of these students also differ from one another. Many of them learnt about Islam from the daily practices of their parents while those from the families of *alfas* had more advantage of being trained in *madrasas* and through instructions at home.[501] This led to a disparity in the knowledge of Islam among these students. But there were other avenues for learning about their religion. During the fasting month of Ramadan, for instance, the *alfas* usually held public lectures, a practice which has continued in the postcolonial era. Since most of the earlier *alfas* were non-Yoruba (and Yoruba was not reduced to writing for a broader audience), it cannot be ascertained how much of an impact those sermons made on the practices of young Muslims.

The problem of language was apparent in the *madrasas* that served as knowledge transmission centres. By the late nineteenth century, some *alfas* addressed this problem by reducing the

---

[498] Ibid., 242–52.
[499] Noibi, *Yoruba Muslim Youth and Christian-Sponsored Education*, 17.
[500] Bolaji Akewukewe, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 5, 2016, Obalende Lagos.
[501] Alhaji Ladejo, interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Bolaji Akewukewe, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

Yoruba language to Arabic texts called *Ajami*. An example of these texts, which also developed in many African Muslim societies, is attributed to an Ilorin preacher and poet, Badamasi bin Musa Agbaji (d. c. 1891).[502] The problem of language was also addressed by the Muslim elite like Agusto who formed two study groups, the Muslim Literary Society and the Juvenile Muslim Society, to facilitate the transmission of Islamic knowledge before the Ahmadiyya movement arrived in Lagos.[503]

The number of *madrasas* in this period is not known. Probably due to the language barrier, many of those who attended them did not proceed beyond learning a few chapters of the Qur'an needed to perform regular *ṣalāt*. Many did not proceed because they could not raise the money for *wolimọ* (Arabic, *walīmah* referring to banquet), which was usually requested by the *alfa* before their students proceeded to the next stage of study.[504] This was one of the practices contested by the Ahmadiyya and Ansar-Ud-Deen from the 1920s.[505] It is also worth noting that many students could not proceed to the next stage of study because it involved travelling over a long distance to *madrasas* called *Ilm* (knowledge) school, which expose students to the translation of Qur'anic texts. As a matter of fact, they considered such education only to be useful for those who wanted to become *alfa*.[506]

However, some students made efforts to study Arabic on their own using transliterated texts. This was the experience of Noibi, referred to earlier, who as a teenager could not complete his education at the *madrasa*. Worried by his inability to read the Qur'an, as he narrated below, he started by learning short *sūras* (chapters) of the Qur'an through transliterated texts. Later, he interacted with Ahmadis who recommended the texts which he used to improve his knowledge of Arabic.

> I had to pick up a book published in India which tries to help people who could read English to be able to learn the Qur'an. And, then I read these books and later bought this book: *Qoidat Al-Bagdadiyyat* – which teaches you *Alif*,

---

[502] Amidu Sanni, "New Knowledge, Old Medium: The Yoruba *Ajami* of Southwestern Nigeria in the Factory of Learning," (Paper at Boston University, USA, November 20, 2017), 8; Amidu Sanni, "The West African Manuscript Heritage: Challenges of the Digital Revolution in a Research Economy," in *African Studies in the Digital Age: Disconnect?*, eds. Terry Barringer and Marion Wallace, 128–47 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 131.

[503] Katz, "Islamic Prestige, Piety and Debate in Early Lagosian Newspapers, 1920s–40s": 48–9; Muhsin A. Balogun, "Islam in Lagos: Its Growth and Development," in *Actors and Institutions in the Development of Islam in Lagos State: Essays in Honour of Alhaji Femi Okunnu*, eds. Siyan Oyeweso and M. O. Raheemson, 24–40 (Ibadan: Matrixcy Books Ltd, 2013), 32–33.

[504] Alhaji Muritadha Awal, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[505] Alhaji Ladejo, interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Katz, "Islamic Prestige, Piety and Debate in Early Lagosian Newspapers, 1920s–40s": 66.

[506] Aliyu, *Transmission of learning in modern Ilorin*, 79.

> *Ba*, *Ta*, *Tha* ... Because of my background, having studied English grammar, it was easy to learn Arabic through such books written in English.[507]

To improve his skills, Noibi often practised with migrant traders from Niger Republic and Chad who spoke Arabic. He later published a text, *Learn to read the Qur'an in Arabic Text,* in 1959 for young Muslims who wish to follow his own method of education.[508]

With their enrolment into the Western schools, the educational experience of many Muslim students also became adjusted. Many attended the schools in the morning and *madrasa* in the afternoon, a situation which many of them found strenuous.[509] But, many students did not attend the schools. Those in this category stayed away from schools for many reasons, which include the fear of conversion to Christianity, the request by their parents to help them on the farms or in markets and the non-availability of schools in their communities.[510] Also, many students showed no interest in the Western school at all, and some were held back by different stereotypes they had about the schools.[511] The problem of stereotypes was mentioned by Henry Carr (1863 – 1945), Resident of the Colony of Lagos, when he participated at the inauguration of the Ahmadiyya primary school on Dec. 11, 1922. He noted that he had suggested to Shitta Bey about forty years before to establish a Muslim school, but he declined believing that "it would make their children thieves and liars as Christian boys."[512]

Largely from the diverse experiences of these students, we also have another useful perspective to the understanding of Yoruba Muslim society up to the colonial period. These experiences point attention to several issues that led to the formation of MSSN in 1954, and therefore, will be the point of departure into the history of the Society in the next chapter. The history of MSSN in the next chapter will come after discussing the colonial and postcolonial Nigeria in order to appreciate some of the objectives and activities of MSSN and why they changed over time.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I showed that the Yoruba society in which the MSSN emerged is largely diverse in terms of people, culture, economy and political institutions. The society has experienced a wide range of changes which are shaped by the processes of Islamization, Christianization and

---

[507] D. O. S. Noibi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[508] Ibid.
[509] Noibi, *Yoruba Muslim Youth and Christian-Sponsored Education*, 14–15.
[510] Ibid., 15.
[511] Abdus-Salam Mikhail, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[512] Fisher, *Ahmadiyyah*, 172–73.

colonization. For the Yoruba Muslims, the change included Islamization which accelerated in the nineteenth century and was shaped by the effects of Christianization and imposition of colonial rule. This ensured that their religious change involved the adoption of Muslim traditions, on the one hand, and non-Muslim traditions, on the other hand. The identities of Yoruba Muslims which exemplifies this form of change are a function of multiple historical experiences and how these experiences are interpreted within the traditions of Islam. In the early period, there was an accommodation of indigenous cultural practices by many Yoruba Muslims while the era of colonial rule witnessed the adoption of western ideals. As I noted in the argument of Asad in Chapter Two, the concept of Islam and how Muslims defined orthodoxy are linked to different social contexts. Consequently, the notion of Islam and what it meant to be Muslim among the Yoruba Muslims in the past must also be understood from their historical context.

I also demonstrated in this chapter that the encounter which shaped the religious change of Yoruba Muslims did not proceed along a unilinear path, whereby they were only in a conflictual relationship with the Christian missions. On the contrary, the encounter involves both Muslims and Christians embracing Western education, converting to each other's religion, borrowing from one another, seeking the same socio-economic and political opportunities, and fashioning their identities in line with the changing world. This confirms Soares' argument that the Muslim-Christian encounter in Africa is complex and multidimensional. The impact of the British colonization is also revealed in the religious change of Yoruba Muslims. The colonial government built a political-economic structure to foster its own interests. However, the structure also served the interests of its subjects in different ways. For instance, while the colonial economy made the training of many Muslims in Western schools inevitable, which affected attendance in the *madrasas*, it also encouraged the thinking among the Muslim elite that better knowledge of Islam would be transmitted in the western-oriented schools than the *madrasas*. This made the colonial regime an important factor in the understanding of religious change in Yoruba society from the mid-nineteenth century to the end of colonial rule and the postcolonial era.

<div align="center">Chapter Four</div>

A Muslim Student Movement in Nigeria: MSSN and the Promotion of Islam, 1954- 1990

> MSSN is both a spiritual and a social revolution which quietly crept into the Nigerian society at the very right time that a revolution was direly in need for Muslim youths. If Islam enjoys a hitherto denied official recognition in Nigeria today, it is mostly due to that miraculous revolution. (Femi Abass, 2014).[513]

4.1 **Introduction**

The brief remark above was made by a Yoruba Muslim columnist on the occasion marking the sixty-second anniversary of the MSSN. His view reflects the understanding of many Muslims in Nigeria that the history of MSSN was like a revolution which caused some changes in Nigerian society. This revolution began with a few students, actually teenagers, who wanted to promote their religion in the largely Christian managed school system in Lagos and helped themselves to deal with the social changes caused by colonization. My argument in this chapter is that the MSSN was established for Muslim students to promote a set of objectives that address their encounter in the Western schools as well as the colonial system. As I will show later, the objectives were promoted in many ways that pit them against Christianity on the one hand and ensured the preservation of the identity of Muslim students, on the other hand. Many aspects of the objectives aimed to promote Muslim students' sociality, intellectual development, mutual support, religious education and linkage with other students in Nigeria and abroad. However, the propagation of these objectives did not follow a linear trajectory as the Society dealt with controversies ranging from the opposition of the creed of its Ahmadi members to the critique of the established authorities about Muslim students' pedagogy of religious education in Western school and the debates about practices like singing. Besides, the objectives and activities of the Society gradually shifted between 1954 and 1990, which reflects its transformation into a reform movement. But the shift only had an impact on a few members, unlike the period after the 1990s. In this chapter, I will discuss the encounter of these students in schools and how they established the MSSN. I will also discuss the objectives and practices of the Society, the factors that shaped them and how they were propagated up to 1990. Another

---

[513] Femi Abass, "62 Years Ago," *The Nation*, April 8, 2016, http://thenationonlineng.net/62-years-ago (accessed February 8, 2017).

aim of this chapter is to give empirical evidence of the notions of Islam as a discursive tradition, Christian-Muslim encounter and religious change which I refer to in Chapter Two.

In this chapter (and in the following chapters), I establish that the history of MSSN is at the intersection of political and social transformations in colonial and postcolonial Nigeria. Looking at the trajectory of the MSSN between these two eras is underscored by the fact that these periods are shaped by a varying degree of contradictions and continuities in economic and socio-political structures which had considerable effects on the processes of religious change and Muslim-Christian encounters in Nigeria. Moreover, the experience of Yoruba Muslims from 1914 when Nigeria came into being cannot be isolated from those of other Muslims in the country. By implication, the history of MSSN since the colonial era is also connected to other Muslims in Nigeria. Therefore, to understand the MSSN from 1954, I will first discuss the structure and historical factors that shaped colonial and postcolonial Nigeria and how they affect religious change, Muslim-Christian encounter and socio-economic changes in the country. In view of the fact that a detailed analysis is too broad to be undertaken here, I will only provide a summary of my main points on issues such as the system of rule between in the colonial and postcolonial Nigeria, ethno-religious conflicts, social change, and economic crises which I consider having an impact on some objectives of the MSSN, how the objectives were promoted and why they changed from 1954.

The encounters of Yoruba Muslim students in their schools and how they formed the MSSN are discussed in the second section. This section also discusses the kind of visions and orientations which the students had for the Society in the mid-1950s. In addition, it describes the Society's objectives and the orientation behind them. The section also refers to some of the Society's orientations to Islam that were shaped by the attitude of the colonial government and politics of decolonization in the 1950s. In the third section, the chapter points to the activities of the Society and practices of its members in its first decade in order to show how the Society's objectives are promoted and their impact. The fourth section focuses on the Society's objective of 'Islamic brotherhood' that was promoted through transnational Islamic movements from the mid-1960s and the effects of this transnationalisation on the Ahmadis (both in Nigeria and the MSSN) and on the MSSN's constitutional review. Importantly, this section also highlights the transformation of MSSN to a movement with new orientations concerning postcolonial Nigeria, Islamic reform and the conditions of Muslims in other parts of the world. In the fifth section, the chapter focuses on other developments in the MSSN that illustrate the promotion of its objectives. Specifically, it sheds light on the Society's reform, the effort to promote

Western education among Muslims in Nigeria, the confrontation with the government, and the introduction of new ideas like music and publication of journals. Also, the section refers to some of the controversies that arise in response to the Society's promotion of these objectives, for instance, the critique of MSSN preachers by the *alfas* and the MSSN's clash with the Oyo state government. The sixth section discusses the understanding of Islam as a way of life that developed among Muslim students, while the concluding section reflects on the chapter. In different parts of the sections, I draw on many studies, which include the works of Peel, Nile Green, and Saba Mahmood, that relate to the empirical process I discussed.

4.2 **Muslims in Nigeria between the colonial and postcolonial eras**

Following their conquest of the territories that now make up Nigeria by the early twentieth century, the British administrators were concerned about how to maintain stability in these territories, especially where they encountered stiff resistance.[514] The need for stability became even more urgent as the administrators had to cope with inadequate personnel and financing from Britain. In dealing with these challenges, they amalgamated people of diverse ethnic and religious groups and created Nigeria in 1914.[515] As I have noted in Chapter Two about the ambivalent colonial state-making process, the British officers also introduced varying administrative structures, under the policy of Indirect Rule, that were in many cases patterned along ill-informed knowledge of existing socio-political institutions and beset with contradictions all over Nigeria. Though a controversial concept, Indirect Rule refers to a form of government in which the coloniser rules through what he claims to be the indigenous political system of the colonised.[516] There are many studies on the process of amalgamation of Nigeria, the Indirect Rule policy and their problems, [517] but they are not my concern in this chapter. My concern is rather on this system of rule and how it shaped Muslims experiences in this region of the British empire.

---

[514] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 106–9.

[515] Jeremiah I. Dibua, *Modernization and the Crisis of Development in Africa: The Nigerian Experience* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 54–61.

[516] A. E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891-1929* (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 4–6.

[517] See Z. O. Apata, "Lugard and the Creation of Provincial Administration in Northern Nigeria, 1900-1918," *African Study Monographs* 11, no. 3 (1990): 143; Richard Olaniyan, ed., *The Amalgamation and Its Enemies: An Interpretive History of Modern Nigeria* (Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2003); Obaro Ikime, "Reconsidering Indirect Rule: The Nigerian Example," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4, no. 3 (1968); Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs*; J. A. Atanda, *The New Ọyọ Empire: Indirect Rule and Change in Western Nigeria, 1894-1934*, (New York: Humanities Press, 1973).

In Northern Nigeria, the British colonial officers met a state-centred form of Islam with a caliphate at Sokoto and regional emirates established after the jihad of Usman dan Fodio (1754-1817) in the 1800s and were convinced that the system had worked well. Frederick Lugard (1858-1945), who led the conquest of Sokoto, had promised not to interfere with this system of governance but he decentralised it to keep the regional emirs and the newly designated 'Sultan' at Sokoto under different Native Authorities that were components of its Indirect Rule.[518] The colonial government also established courts where British laws were applied. This began with the 1863 Ordinance 3 that led to the establishment of the Supreme Court in Lagos. The country also had three courts after the 1914 amalgamation, namely, the Supreme Court, the Provincial Courts and the Native Courts.[519] In addition to these courts, the administration of Islamic laws was reviewed and subjected to the colonial legal system. Thus, while the British officers retained the existing *Alkali* courts, they ensured that certain laws regarded as 'obnoxious' were discontinued, for instance, the cutting off of a hand for stealing.[520] However, there was no uniformity in the practices of these courts. In most parts of Northern Nigeria, for instance, these courts only dealt with cases from Muslims. But in the Ilorin emirate where a significant number of Yoruba of diverse religious groups resided, it also heard cases from Christians and Traditionalists.[521]

To fight off resistant movements, the British administrators gave support to one Islamic group over others. They recognised the Qadiriyya brothers which the emirs belonged to as "good Muslims" while groups like the Mahdists and the Tijaniyya brotherhood were regarded as "bad Muslims." This discriminatory categorization is part of the attitude of the British officers to identify groups who supported colonial rule and those who are opposed to it.[522] Unlike the Mahdists who took up arms against the British, the emirs accepted the colonial rule and were considered as allies, especially after the emirs helped to stop the Mahdists revolt in the early 1900s.[523] Meanwhile, the Tijaniyya brothers were perceived as a threat due to various reasons

---

[518] Jonathan Reynolds, "Good and Bad Muslims: Islam and Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34, no. 3 (2001): 604–5; H. O. Danmole, "Religion and Politics in Colonial Northern Nigeria: The Case of Ilorin Emirate," *The Journal of Religious History* 16, no. 2 (1990): 144–5.

[519] Gbadebo A. Olagunju, "Historical Development of Nigeria's Legal System from Colonialism to Present," in *General Studies: Book of Readings*, ed. Dapo F. Asaju, 306–13 (Lagos: Lagos State Univ. Press, 2006), 312.

[520] Danmole, "Religion and Politics in Colonial Northern Nigeria": 144.

[521] H. O. Danmole, "The Alkali Court in Ilorin Emirate During Colonial Rule," *Transafrican Journal of History* 18 (1989): 173.

[522] Reynolds, "Good and Bad Muslims: Islam and Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria": 601–2.

[523] R. A. Adelẹyẹ, "Mahdist Triumph and British Revenge in Northern Nigeria: Satiru 1906," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 6, no. 2 (1972): 193-214.

such as their 'devout' religious practices and the concern that they spread 'superstitious beliefs' and encouraged anti-colonial revolt, an assessment based on the reports of French colonial officers in other parts of West Africa.[524]

Another policy of the British administrators in Northern Nigeria focused on regulating the activities of Christian missions to protect Islam and other cultural practices. Several conditions were laid down for the opening of schools which caused a delay in the introduction of Western education in the region compared to the South. The missionaries were also barred from compelling anyone to attend church.[525] But while this policy was meant to protect the religious traditions of the Muslims, the crisis it created became obvious by the 1950s. The most debilitating effect was the wide gap it created among people with Western education between the North and the South. This resulted in a rise of employment of the Western educated Christian Southerners in the bureaucracies of the North.[526]

British colonial rule showed a different pattern in Southern Nigeria. Having successfully implemented Indirect Rule in the North, the British administrators tried to adapt it in the South, including the Eastern and Western Regions. However, it failed in the Eastern Region and it only achieved relative success in the Western Region.[527] The British officers also created a judicial system in the South whose source of law was different from the North. For instance, while the Native Courts administered the Sharia in the North, 'native' laws and customs were used in the Southern courts.[528] In Yorubaland, where a significant number of Muslims lived, the Sharia, which had been applied individually, was placed under the customary laws, thereby denying the Yoruba Muslims a separate legal system. Many Yoruba Muslims reacted to this on many occasions by petitioning the government to have Sharia. Earlier in 1894, the Lagos Muslims had asked the governor to allow the use of Islamic law in practices such as inheritance, marriage and naming ceremonies.[529] Another demand was made in 1948 by the Muslim Congress of Nigeria, a group founded in 1948 by Muhammad al-Amin Kudaisi at Ijebu Ode.[530]

---

[524] Ibid., 608–17.

[525] Danmole, "Religion and Politics in Colonial Northern Nigeria": 149; Andrew E. Barnes, "'Evangelization Where It Is Not Wanted': Colonial Administrators and Missionaries in Northern Nigeria During the First Third of the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 25, no. 4 (1995): 415–36.

[526] Barnes, "Evangelization Where It Is Not Wanted": 436–8.

[527] See Ikime, "Reconsidering Indirect Rule"; Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs*; Atanda, *The New Ọyọ Empire*.

[528] Ikime, "Reconsidering Indirect Rule": 434.

[529] Amidu Sanni, "The Shari'ah Conundrum in Nigeria and the Zamfara Model: The Role of Nigerian Muslim Youth in the Historical Context," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 27, no. 1 (2007): 119; Abdul-Fatah 'K. Makinde, "The Entanglement of Sharia Application in South-Western Nigeria," *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* 10, no. 5 (2017): 84.

[530] Sanni, "The Shari'ah Conundrum in Nigeria and the Zamfara Model": 119; Makinde, "The Entanglement of Sharia Application in South-Western Nigeria": 84.

Apart from the legal system, the colonial administrators in the South, unlike in the North, encouraged Western education among the Muslims in Yorubaland, which I demonstrated in the previous chapter.

With these contrasting attitudes and political structures, the British administrators built a colony that was embedded in contradictions and ethno-religious problems from the North to the South. The effects of these contradictions were the cultural nationalism and political tensions which began to emerge from the decolonization process of Nigeria in the mid-1940s. This found expression in the "northernization" policy of the Premier of Northern Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello (1910-1966), from 1954 which aimed to reduce the fear of 'domination' by Southern Nigerian groups.[531] Through his Northern People's Congress (NPC) party, formed in 1949, all Southerners in the public service sector of the region were replaced with Northerners or non-Nigerian expatriates between 1955 and 1961.[532] The aim of this policy was not limited to the North. B. J. Dudley has suggested that it was also projected by Bello to ensure that Northerners take control of the country.[533] Apart from Bello, the other major political parties in the Eastern and Western Regions also pushed cultural agendas with strong campaigns to rule the country and prevent the domination of the North, even though the huge demographic and geographical size of the North became a major challenge for them. In the Eastern Region, the rallying point was Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's (1904-1996) National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), formed in 1944, while the Western Region had the Action Group (AG), founded in 1951 and led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo (1909-1987).[534]

The regional politics of these three main parties continued up to the first decade of the post-independence era and it resulted in a series of violent conflicts across Nigeria which included military coup d'états that led to the assassination of high-ranking soldiers and political leaders such as Ahmadu Bello. These crises also culminated in a civil war from 1967 to 1970, following the attempt of the military government to prevent the secession of the Eastern Region from Nigeria.[535] To illustrate that the war was understood beyond politics, many analysts, which included Christian propagandists, were of the view that the fight was between the "Muslim

---

[531] Richard L. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation*, Reprint (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004), 327; Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 150.

[532] B. J. Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria*, Reprint (New York: Routledge, 2012), 220–21.

[533] Ibid., 220.

[534] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 148–54.

[535] Ibid., 165–78.

north" and the "Christian south."[536] On the contrary, many studies suggest that the war was the result of many problems which included corruption, nepotism, ethnic politics, failure of leadership and the inability of the post-colonial state to provide basic human needs and ensure an equitable share of resources among the diverse Nigerian groups.[537] The ruling elites have tried to address these problems through a wide range of policies such as state creation, quota system and establishment of unity schools,[538] but they remained salient in the politics of the country more than forty years after the civil war. As will be illustrated in this chapter, one of the central objectives of the MSSN aims to address this Nigeria's identity crisis, albeit in a way that also challenges the constitution of the nation-state itself.

Post-independence Nigeria also witnessed the emergence of new religious movements and actors who not only antagonised themselves but also the new nation-state. A prominent figure in these movements was the Grand Qadi of the Northern Region of Nigeria, Shaykh Abubakar Gumi (1922-1992) who inspired the formation of the Yan Izala, mentioned in Chapter One. Gumi was an ally of Ahmadu Bello and a supporter of his pan-Islamic community (Usmaniya)[539] in Northern Nigeria. Following Bello's death, Gumi promoted the scriptural tradition of Islam and was very critical of all Sufi brotherhoods.[540] In addition to actors like Gumi, there were also regional and national religious organisations which united people of the same faith to advocate their interests in religious and political matters. The Kaduna based *Jama'at Nasril Islam* [(JNI) (Society for the Victory of Islam)], created by Bello in 1962 as part of his pan-Islamic community, is a major example of such organisations. The JNI attracted Western educated elite, and, according to Kane, it was part of Bello's ambition to shift the region's spiritual centre of power from Sokoto to his Kaduna base.[541] Although it also aimed to unite Muslims in Southern Nigeria, especially the Yoruba Muslims, JNI had little appeal beyond Northern Nigeria. Instead, two parallel organizations to the JNI were formed in

---

[536] Nicholas I. Omenka, "Blaming the Gods: Christian Religious Propaganda in the Nigeria-Biafra War," *Journal of African History* 51 (2010): 367.

[537] Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnicity and Development in Nigeria*, Reprint (Aldershot: Avebury, 1996); Garba, Abdul-Ganiyu and Garba, Kassey P., "The Nigerian Civil War: Causes and the Aftermath," in *Post-Conflict Economies in Africa*, eds. Augustin K. Fosu and Paul Collier, 91–108 (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Bolanle Awe, "Conflict and Divergence: Government and Society in Nigeria," *African Studies Review* 422, no. 3 (1999); Siyan Oyeweso, *Perspectives on the Nigerian Civil War*, (Lagos: OAP Publications, 1992).

[538] Terhemba Wuam, "Nigeria Since 1960: A Comparative Study in Nation-Building and Development," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 21 (2012): 107–9; Rotimi T. Suberu, "The Struggle for New States in Nigeria, 1976–1990," *African Affairs* 90, no. 361 (1991).

[539] The objective of *Usmaniya* was to blur the division among various Sufi brothers and other Islamic groups.

[540] Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria*, 82–85.

[541] Ibid., 152–53.

Yorubaland: the League of Imams and Alfas (LIA) in 1962 and the Western State Joint Muslim Organisation (WESJOMO) in 1972.[542] But the Muslims who largely occupied the two regions, soon discovered that they needed to move beyond their political divide and speak with one voice on inter/national issues. For this purpose, they formed the Nigeria Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) in 1973.[543] The pioneering president of the MSSN, Lateef Adegbite, was largely involved in the formation and management of this organisation.[544] Three years after this Muslim initiative, the Nigerian Christian communities responded with the establishment of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in 1976. Over the years, the two organisations have faced each other over issues such as the 'secularity' of Nigeria and the introduction of Sharia in many Northern states in 1999. While the CAN has defended the so-called 'secularity' of Nigeria, the NSCIA has faulted the claim with the assumption that the public institutions of the country were created by a British government with Christian doctrinal ethos.[545] The rise of these religious movements is an expression of new forms of religious mobilisation which Clarke and Linden refer to in post-independence Nigeria.[546] Unlike the colonial government which restricted religious movements that were perceived as a threat, the emergence of these organisations further unveils the attempt to contest the legitimacy of that government which is represented by the postcolonial state. As will be shown later, the MSSN also became a critic of this postcolonial state.

Beyond politics and religion, there has been a steady transformation of Nigeria's economy and social life since 1960. The major sectors of the nation's economy such as education, banking, manufacturing, international trade, transportation, entertainment and telecommunications have expanded over this period.[547] This expansion has also led to the creation of more job opportunities and capital in the economy, and it has impacted on changes in the lifestyle of many people. In many ways, religion has been affected by some of the factors responsible for this change. An example is the use of electronic media by a variety of Christian and Muslim

---

[542]In 1976, WESJOMO became National Joint Muslim Organization (NAJOMO). See Oloyede, "Islam in Nigeria": 12–3; Saheed A. Rufai, "The Muslim Minority of Southwestern Nigeria: WESTJOMO and the Challenge of Speaking with One Voice," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 31, no. 2 (2011): 285–6.

[543] Adedayo, *Abdul-Lateef Adegbite*, 140–48.

[544] Another Yoruba Muslim who identifies with the MSSN, Prof. Ishaq Oloyede, is the current Secretary-General of NSCIA after the death of Adegbite in 2012.

[545] Falola, *Violence in Nigeria*, 103–14; Albert Anyia, "Muslim Organisation and the Mobilisations for Sharia Law in Northern Nigeria: The JNI and the NSCIA," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 52, no. 1 (2017).

[546] Clarke and Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria*, 40–41.

[547] O. Teriba and M. O. Kayode, eds., *Industrial Development in Nigeria: Patterns, Problems and Prospects* (Ibadan: Univ. of Ibadan Press, 1977); Tom Forrest, *The Advance of African Capital: The Growth of Nigerian Private Enterprise* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994).

actors to broadcast religious sermons and songs to a wider audience.[548] The use of the internet and social media has also given rise to new forms of Islamic education among Yoruba Muslims and in the MSSN, confirming Rosalind Hackett and Benjamin Soares observation on how Muslims religious practices have been transformed by the media in modern Africa.[549]

The social transformation of Nigeria is, however, not devoid of economic crises at various times especially in the 1980s. Today, the country is faced with critical socio-economic problems that include inadequate power supply, unemployment, poverty, cyber-crimes, kidnapping and maternal mortality.[550] With the failure of the government to address these crises effectively, some non-governmental organisations and religious movements have intervened in many communities. There are Pentecostal churches like the Living Faith Church (est. 1983) and the Deeper Life Bible Church (est. 1973) that provide spiritual services and operate business enterprises such as schools, conference centres and hospitals.[551] Islamic movements such as Nasrul-lahi-li Fathi Society of Nigeria (NASFAT) also play a key role in the welfare of members through ventures like the Thrift and Cooperative Society, Tafsan Beverages, and Tafsan Tours and Travels Ltd.[552] As will be shown in Chapter Seven, the MSSN is also helping its members to deal with Nigeria's socio-economic crises, for instance through vocational training that is tailored to reducing unemployment. A number of scholars including Gerrie Haar and Stephen Ellis, Abdoulaye Sounaye, and Olujide Gbadegesin have suggested that while religious organisations have attracted members due to these activities, their involvement is also

---

[548] Ukah Asonzeh, "Seeing Is More Than Believing: Posters and Proselytization in Nigeria," in *Proselytization Revisited: Rights Talk, Free Markets and Culture Wars*, ed. Rosalind I. J. Hackett, 167–98 (New York: Routledge, 2014), 168–69; Brian Larkin, "Binary Islam: Media and Religious Movements in Nigeria," in *New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa*, ed. Rosalind I. J. Hackett and Benjamin F. Soares, 63–81 (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015); Rosalind I. J. Hackett and Benjamin F. Soares, "Introduction: New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa," in *New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa*, eds. Rosalind I. J. Hackett and Benjamin F. Soares, 1–16 (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015).

[549] Rosalind I. J. Hackett and Benjamin F. Soares, "Introduction: New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa," in *New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa*, ed. Rosalind I. J. Hackett and Benjamin F. Soares, 1–16 (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015), 1–2.

[550] See Julius O. Ihonvbere, "Economic Crisis, Structural Adjustment and Social Crisis in Nigeria," *World Development* 21, no. 1 (1993); Adebayo O. Olukoshi, "Economy and Politics in the Nigerian Transition," *African Journal of Political Science* 5, no. 2 (2000): 5–20; Iro Aghedo, "Sowing Peace, Reaping Violence: Understanding the Resurgence of Kidnapping in Post-Amnesty Niger Delta, Nigeria," *Insight on Africa* 7, no. 2 (2015).

[551] Asonzeh Ukah, "African Christianities: Features, Promises and Problems,", Arbeitspapiere/Working Papers 79 (Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, 2007), 11–18.

[552] Lateef M. Adetona, "NASFAT: A Modern Prayer Group and Its Contributions to the Propagation of Islam in Lagos," *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization* 2, no. 2 (2012): 106.

a key contribution to nation-building and the development of post-colonial African societies.[553] In the following sections, I will show the history of Yoruba Muslim students who established the MSSN and how they link up with other Muslim students in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Through this, I will illustrate the entanglement of MSSN history in the political development and social transformation of colonial and postcolonial Nigeria and the world of Islam.

4.3 **Encounter in schools**

In the 1950s, the leading Muslim organisations in Yorubaland such as the Ahmadiyya and Ansar-Ud-Deen had established primary and secondary schools in several communities. But the schools were not enough to accommodate the population of Muslim children.[554] As a result, Muslims continued to send their children either to government schools, predominantly managed by Christians or to the Christian mission schools. In many of these schools, the students encountered a system of education that raised concerns about their own religious identities. One of the practices in these schools was to participate in the Assembly session where they sang Christian hymns and read lessons from the Bible.[555] The Assembly is a gathering of students in primary and secondary schools usually in the morning before classes begin. It is used to pray, sing and give information about the school. By the 1950s, every student was required to learn a few hymns for this session, a practice which has continued in many public and private schools to date. The schools' curriculum also had Christian studies in which Muslims were required to take. In addition, students were required to attend Church service in most of the mission and public schools.

As part of their social activities in school, Muslim students also participated in programmes organised by the popular religious associations, the Students Christian Movement (SCM) and the Scripture Union (SU). The SCM had been introduced in the 1930s by a few Nigerian students who embraced the movement during their studies in Britain. The first was Francis Akanu Ibiam (1906-1995) who studied medicine in Scotland and later served as the governor of the former Eastern Region of Nigeria from 1960 to 1966. In 1937, he started SCM classes

---

[553] Gerrie T. Haar and Stephen Ellis, "The Role of Religion in Development: Towards a New Relationship Between the European Union and Africa," *The European Journal of Development Research* 18, no. 3 (2006); Olujide Gbadegesin, "New Religious Movements and the Politics of Nation Building," in *Religion in Politics: Secularism and National Integration in Modern Nigeria*, ed. Julius Adekunle, 275–94 (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2009); Abdoulaye Sounaye, "Doing Development the Islamic Way in Contemporary Niger," *Bulletin de l'APAD*, no. 33 (2011).

[554] Prof. Saidat and Prof. Fathi Mabadeje, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[555] Jibril Oyekan, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 21, 2016, Ikoyi Lagos.

in secondary schools and among a few evangelists and teachers located around Abiriba, Eastern Nigeria.[556] There was also Theophilus Ejiwumi who studied at the University College, London. Upon his return in 1940, he taught at Yaba Higher College where he introduced the SCM to students at the college, and later, in junior secondary schools.[557] The other association, the SU, was founded in England in 1867 to organise special services for children who could not participate in adult church services. It was introduced in Nigeria by Rev. Charles Henry Vidal Gollmer (b. 1854), a member of the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) in the Yoruba Mission field in 1884. The activities of the SU almost collapsed in the 1940s before it was resuscitated in secondary schools by British teachers in the 1950s.[558] Both the SCM and the SU, which later moved to the universities, engaged students in activities like Bible study, sports, vacation camps and conferences.[559]

In addition to the activities of these associations, mission and government schools offered students the opportunity to represent them in sports like cricket and football. By the 1920s, these sports had become part of ways the British administrators and Christian missions promoted new identities, leisure, and modernization of Nigeria.[560] Olusegun Obasa has argued that they were key aspects of the colonial education and leisure of the administrators which disciplined the minds of Nigerians toward the social life envisioned by the colonial officials and missionaries.[561] Like education, they also appear to many Yoruba as an aspect of *Olaju* which they wanted to be identified with. Since there were few Muslim schools at the time, many Muslim children were attracted to the Christian mission schools by these sports, and in the process, they became Christians because changing their religion was often required in order to enrol in such schools and to participate in the sports. Saidat Mabadeje (née Anibaba), a student of Queen's College Lagos at the time, narrated the story of one of these young Muslims to me:

> …we had somebody who converted to Christianity because he was a good footballer…And he told me, he wanted to be on the football team, and the

---

[556] Ojo, "The Contextual Significance of the Charismatic Movements in Independent Nigeria": 176–7.

[557] Modupe Oduyoye, ed., *Fifty Years of SCM in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1990), 7–8.

[558] Ojo, "The Contextual Significance of the Charismatic Movements in Independent Nigeria": 177; Dachi Maduako et al., *Flame of Fire: The Story of Scripture Union, Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Scripture Union Press & Books Ltd., 2005), http://sunigeria.org/documents/scriptureunionhistory.pdf (accessed May 27, 2017).

[559] Oduyoye, *Fifty Years of SCM in Nigeria*; Maduako et al., *Flame of Fire*.

[560] Olusegun Obasa, "Sports and the Modernity of Leisure in Nigeria: Stadium Space and the Symbolisms of Expressions, 1930-1980," (PhD thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, May 2015), 21–32.

[561] Ibid., 18–19.

only condition was if he would change his religion. It was a Christian school and they asked if he would change his religion and he said he would. [562]

While they learned more about Christianity, Muslim students in these schools were less informed about their own religion. This was partly due to the challenges and style of learning of the *madrasa* system discussed in the previous chapter. This is not to suggest that they knew nothing about Islam, but there was a general perception among them that what they knew was not enough,[563] and therefore, they considered Muslims who became Christians to be "weak-in-faith students."[564] On the other hand, most of these schools did not have an Islamic curriculum, and there were no teachers for it in the government schools that were willing to allow it. Clearly, this is part of the consequences of not embracing Western education earlier by many Yoruba Muslims who could have developed the competence to teach the subject. With no opportunity to learn their own religion, Muslim students were thus required to receive lessons on Christianity and attend Church as part of the school activities. In many schools, this was also believed to keep them busy. Such was the case of students at a government school located around Ibadan who complained that they were forced to attend church in 1963. Alhaji Muritadha Awal, who later became a cleric in Lagos, intervened on behalf of these students. He explained to me that:

> The school authority then said the reason behind this action was because the Muslim students cannot even recite Arabic. They do not pray, and the school cannot allow them to be idle and playing while others are worshipping at school…that was why the Muslims were being compelled to go to church.[565]

He confirmed that this case was reported to the governor of Western Region who granted the Muslim group established by him and his friends, *Junudu Lahi L'Islamiyyah*, permission to teach Muslim students in such schools. This story is interesting because it shows that many Muslim students in various parts of Yorubaland made efforts to address their encounter in the schools. However, the efforts of some students in Lagos appear to have been the most profound. Among them were leading members of their school clubs such as Saidat Mabadeje, the Secretary of the Queen's College Literary and Debating Society. There was also Lateef Adegbite,[566] a member of various King's College games who was also making a significant impression in the Literary and Debating Society circle in Lagos,[567] and Rahman Sahid (b.

---

[562] Prof. Saidat and Prof. Fathi Mabadeje, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[563] Prof. Saidat and Prof. Fathi Mabadeje, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[564] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".
[565] Alhaji Muritadha Awal, interview by Adeyemi Balogun
[566] Adedayo, *Abdul-Lateef Adegbite*, 12–35.
[567] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

c.1936),[568] the Chairman of the Literary and Debating Society in Lagos. Others were prefects, officers and members of the Red Cross and the SCM in their schools. The leadership positions of Muslim students in these clubs suggests that the schools recognised their intellectual ability rather than their religious affiliation. More importantly, it gives the impression that the schools were also involved in the peaceful management of Christian-Muslim encounter in Yoruba society.

Rather than participating in the SCM and the SU, these students considered having a similar platform to learn about their religion and preserve their identity. They thought that the number of Muslims who were attracted to Christianity could be reduced if they knew about Islam and if they were engaged in activities with fellow Muslims through a similar platform.[569] By the 1950s, Muslim organisations like the Ansar-Ud-Deen and the Ahmadiyya had social activities that promote religious education and interaction among Muslims. In particular, the Ansar-Ud-deen organised Adult Education classes which included *tafsīr* (exegesis) and Arabic lessons in various branches such as Alakoro, the site of its first school.[570] However, students like Adegbite believed that they were more concerned with issues relating to adults. In cases where these organisations had programmes for students in their schools, he also thought that Muslims in non-Muslim schools might be excluded.[571] An exclusive and single platform for all Muslim students was therefore expected to bridge this gap.

The Lagos students also thought that the platform could be used to challenge their school authorities to grant freedom to practice their religion such as performing the *ṣalāt* and fasting in Ramadan (for students in boarding schools). But they were concerned that this might not be possible if they acted alone as individuals. The platform they envisaged was therefore also to "enable them to agitate for their rights and defend those rights for their common interest."[572] Also, they considered the platform would give Muslim students a sense of pride in their religion. The perception that many of these students did not have pride in their religion seemed to emerge from the concern that they did not openly identify as Muslims in school.[573] Although some students who belong to this category were required to bear Christian names, still many were understood to think that Christians had attractive programmes and more 'civilised' in

---

[568] He later became a Judge of the Lagos High Court.
[569] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".
[570] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 377–80.
[571] Adedayo, *Abdul-Lateef Adegbite*, 133–35.
[572] Abass, "62 years ago".
[573] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 5.

manners, and thus, would not want to be seen as Muslims.[574] This is part of what Peel referred to as the "double sense of inferiority" among the Yoruba Muslims,[575] although I disagree with his generalisation of this phenomenon (see Chapter Seven). A platform for Muslim students was therefore expected to offer them similar programmes as the SCM and the SU and instil pride in them as Muslims.

For students like Saidat, this platform was also important for them in order to encourage interaction among Muslim males and females, thereby stopping those who were friends with Christians and got married to them through such interaction. As it was the social expectation among many Yoruba for a woman to practise the religion of her husband, such that Muslims normally convert to Christianity, they reckoned that the platform would facilitate marriages between Muslim men and women. While I consider this ideal to challenge the normative notion of Yoruba religious tolerance, Saidat was of the view that:

> …it wasn't an epidemic, but it was something we felt, and we wanted to prevent that kind of thing happening. We wanted the Muslim young men and Muslim young women to meet and interact, and ultimately, they would get married.[576]

Based on these concerns, I consider the desire to have this platform not only as a response to the encounter the Muslim students had in the Christian managed schools but also the need to address other challenges that faced Yoruba Muslims such as 'poor' knowledge of Islam among young Muslims and a shortage of teachers to teach Islamic studies in schools. On the one hand, this response involved conflict and opposition to Christian practices in schools, and on the other hand, it involved borrowing from these practices. However, the borrowing was from fellow Muslims and not directly from the structure and programmes of the SCM nor the SU, as will be shown below.

Formation of the MSS: By mid-1953, the students who thought about a platform for Muslim students had contact and exchanges in various places especially in mosques and during the schools' club events in Lagos.[577] In some of the meetings, Adegbite discussed the idea of a platform for Muslim students with his friends but did not come up with a framework. This was until Tajudeen Aromashodu, from the Methodist Boys High School, informed them about a

---

[574] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".
[575] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 141.
[576] Prof. Saidat and Prof. Fathi Mabadeje, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[577] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

group called the Muslim Students Society in Burma (now Myanmar).[578] By 1954, Aromashodu discovered the group in an edition of the Ahmadi magazine, *The Islamic Review,* which he usually read with his friends.[579] He later exchanged correspondence with the MSS in Burma to become an affiliate member in Lagos and was followed by five of his friends which included Sahid. The documents containing the constitution and activities of the society were sent to these members. By March 1954 when they wanted to inaugurate the Lagos branch, Sahid convinced them about having the Society as an independent body in Nigeria rather than being affiliated to the MSS in Burma. He suggested that the problems of the Burmese students were different from their own, thus implying that the implementation of the Society's objectives could face some challenges in Nigeria. Aromashodu explained this to the MSS in Burma and their wish was granted. With the assistance of some Muslim teachers, they revised the constitution of the society to fit into their own experience and it was used as a framework to form the Nigerian MSS at Ansar-Ud-Deen School Hall Alakoro Lagos in 1954. The inaugural meeting had about forty students from seven secondary schools in Lagos, including King's College; Queen's College; Methodist Boys High School; CMS Grammar School, Bariga; Ahmadiyya College (now Anwarul Islam Model College), Agege; Methodist Girls High School, Yaba; and Baptist Academy, Obanikoro.[580]

Notwithstanding the revision made in Lagos, their activities were not very different from those of the MSS in Burma. Evidence about this link is in Moshe Yegar's study, *The Muslims of Burma.*[581] Yegar shows that the MSS in Burma organised national conferences, sporting activities, debating circles and picnics in order to promote social interaction like the SCM and the SU. It also published journals and encouraged mutual support among Muslim students. Thus, rather than the SCM and the SU, it was the example of the Burmese MSS that shaped the structure and programmes that provided Muslim sociability for Yoruba Muslim students from 1954.

One could argue that the correspondence between students in Lagos and Burma is an indication of the extent of transnational exchanges that occurred within the global Muslim world during the colonial period and how young Yoruba Muslims became involved in these exchanges. With

---

[578] Adedayo, *Abdul-Lateef Adegbite*, 133.
[579] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria"
[580] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria"; Abass, "62 years ago".
[581] Moshe Yegar, "The Muslims of Burma: A Study of a Minority Group," (MA thesis, University of Heidelberg, 1972), 53–55.

reference to the discussion on the link between colonial rule and religious change in Chapter Two, the British empire played a central role in mediating these exchanges by aiding the transnationalisation of a formally restricted organisation in Burma. Nile Green's *Terrains of Exchange* illustrates this phenomenon better.[582] His study shows that formally local forms of organisation and relationship can developed over time and expanded into the world's religious market. This expansion, according to Green, requires multiple participants who are involved in various forms of exchanges across different spaces and facilitating religious production.[583] This appears in the case of MSS where the British Empire whose colonial activities and infrastructures helped to facilitate the expansion of the MSS in Burma and the links between various actors which include Muslims and Christians located across Burma, England and Nigeria. As will be shown later, this transnational dimension of religious production continued to be part of the history of MSS in the post-independence era.

4.4 The objectives of the MSS

In the MSS constitution, the students had visions and objectives which reflected imaginations of how to be Muslims in a non-Muslim environment and how to engage non-Muslims within their social context. They adopted the motto "Peace, Love and Comradeship"[584] to express these visions and the kind of orientation they wanted to promote about their movement. Saidat was of the view that the motto suggested that the aim of the Society at inception was "not overly religious" compared to its "radical" character in later years.[585] Even though it supports the desire for social interaction which the students wanted, Saidat's view should also be understood within the socio-historical context of Yoruba Muslim students, discussed in Chapter Three, and in generational differences on what is understood as "overly religious." The point of view of many students I interacted with suggests that generational differences have shaped the understanding of the objectives of the MSSN. The students actually considered the MSSN activities as avenues to meet new friends, chat and play while they were growing up until they became adults and understood them as ways to learn about Islam and shape their lives as better Muslims.[586]

---

[582] Nile Green, *Terrains of Exchange: Religious Economies of Global Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[583] Ibid., 13–15.

[584] The word 'Community' is used in some documents.

[585] Prof. Saidat and Prof. Fathi Mabadeje, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[586] Hassan Jelila (Pseudonym); Hammed Rashida (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 16, 2017, Akoka, Lagos.

The idea of 'Peace' in the motto is understood by many members of the Society to reflect the meaning of Islam as a "peaceful religion."[587] But, according to Adegbite, the pioneer members were also concerned about the political tension of the late colonial period leading towards Nigeria's independence. Therefore, they made it known that the MSS was a 'peaceful' association of Muslim youths and it was non-partisan,[588] although the history of the Society does not confirm that it was politically neutral. Since its formation was connected to the Ahmadiyya Movement, this vision of peace could also have been influenced by Ahmadiyya's idea of loyalty and the harmonious relationship between Muslims and the British colonial government, as Humphrey Fisher noted.[589] Based on their relationship, it is possible that MSS' emphasis on 'Love' was also influenced by the Ahmadiyya's motto of "Love for all, hatred for none."[590] Aleah Connley suggests that this is one of the teachings of the Ahmadiyya to encourage Muslims "to accept the oppressive attitudes and actions of others, to forgive intolerance and to move beyond these experiences."[591]

The notion of 'Comradeship,' according to Adegbite, was chosen because the Society wanted to promote among its members "that feeling of solidarity which is the mark of the religion of Islam."[592] This became symbolised in the epithets "brother" and "sister" used by members as a prefix to their names to further create what he considered "the genuine feeling of brotherhood."[593] However, what is implied in these epithets among many Yoruba slightly differ from this, as they are mostly used to show deference between junior and senior persons usually the adolescents and the unmarried men and women. What is more is that the idea of brotherhood was also expected to help deal with the problem created by the ethnic identity crisis and discrimination which not only haunted many parts of Yorubaland but also Nigeria as noted above. In this regard, Muslim brotherhood was considered by the Society to ensure "equal treatment which presupposes respect for the other man."[594]

---

[587] K. K. Oloso, "The Concept of the MSS of Nigeria's Motto: Faith, Brotherhood and Peace," *Al-Ilmu* 8, no. 2 (1978): 7–9.

[588] Lateef O. Adegbite in *The Muezzin*, 7.

[589] Fisher, *Ahmadiyyah*, 98–99.

[590] Aleah Connley, "Understanding the Oppressed: A Study of the Ahmadiyah and Their Strategies for Overcoming Adversity in Contemporary Indonesia," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 35, no. 1 (2016): 40.

[591] Ibid.

[592] Lateef O. Adegbite in *The Muezzin*, 6.

[593] Ibid.

[594] Ibid., 7.

Comradeship was further seen as a vision to bridge the gap caused by the division among different Muslim groups in Yorubaland to which their parents belonged and between those attending Muslim and non-Muslim schools. This idea was reflected in the first objective of the Society, "To bring into close union the Muslim students of different educational institutions."[595] Apart from promoting interaction, the MSS also considered unity among Muslim students as an instrument to combat the challenges facing Muslims in Yoruba society. Adegbite not only promoted this idea within the MSS, he also expressed disappointment in the lack of unity among Muslims towards the propagation of Islam and their challenges in Nigeria.

> I would want to see Muslim more united…all must join hands towards the propagation of Allah's chosen religion. I was not particularly happy about lack of unity among Muslims. The solution to the problem lies not on the MSS alone but all Islamic organisations and individuals.[596]

The emphasis on unity was also defined in religious terms. For the Society, Islam is one religion and Muslim students, irrespective of the groups they belong to outside the schools, should see themselves as one community.[597] This idea became the basis of the idea of 'One Muslim community' in the school system in Yorubaland and other parts of Nigeria. Until the 1980s, this idea ensured that Muslim students did not identify as distinct members of their organisations outside the schools, such as Ansar-Ud-deen and Ahmadiyya, but as one group. After promoting this idea in the MSS, as mentioned earlier, Adegbite facilitated the formation of an all Muslim organzations in Yorubaland named Western State Joint Muslim Organisation (WESJOMO) in 1972, and in Nigeria with the establishment of the NSCIA in 1973.

The second objective of the MSS was "To encourage the studies of the Holy Qur'an and Arabic Language"[598] in its envisioned Muslim students' community. Given the unavailability of their own religious education in most of their schools at the time, this objective was expected to increase their knowledge of Islam and to make up for the lack of Islamic curricula. Indeed, by encouraging the study of Islamic texts in the Western school system, the MSS attempted to further move away from the method of learning under the *alfa* in a *madrasa*, a vision close to the organisations that preceded the Society such as Ansar-Ud-Deen and Ahmadiyya. Yet, this objective is quite phenomenal in the understanding of the encounter between Yoruba Muslims and Christians because it represents an attempt to transmit Islamic education even in Christian

---

[595] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".
[596] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 13.
[597] Ibrahim Uthman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, February 17, 2017, UI, Ibadan.
[598] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

schools. While this ensured that the transmission of knowledge of both religions takes place in shared spaces, it also gives rise to competing religious orientations within these spaces.

The third objective of the Society was "To promote the social, moral, religions (sic) and intellectual standards of Muslim Students."[599] With this, the Society aimed to ensure that social interaction among Muslim students conforms to Islamic values such as separation between boys and girls. According to Fathi Mabadeje, who became President of the MSS in 1962, the Society's concern was also to ensure that Muslim students understood Islamic morals early on "what Islam teach us about how to live well, how to be good citizens, how to dress appropriately." For him, the MSS was worried about the fashion in the society particularly the Christians who wear "*bounfo* (mini gown)"[600] and wanted the Muslim students to despise such lifestyle.

In addition, Muslim students were expected to understand how to perform the daily *ṣalāt* (prayer), ablutions and fast during Ramadan. With regards to intellectual standards, the aim was to ensure that Muslim students perform better in school. The Society also aimed to encourage more Muslim children to enrol for Western education and learn the basic skills for modern professional life. I regard this third objective as a reflection of the MSS aim to encourage ethical formation among Muslim students. Drawing insights from Saba Mahmood work,[601] I used ethical formation to refer to the process by which certain virtues and practices are learned and embodied by an agent. Mahmood focuses on this kind of ethical formation among Muslim women in Egypt and how it is linked to the politics of public life. But her study only sheds light on the religious virtues that are embodied. The case of the MSS, in contrast, illustrates that Muslims' ethical formation is also aimed at personifying the non-religious aspect of life, and, it confirms the argument in many studies on the multiple and complex representations of being Muslims.[602]

The fourth objective of the Society was "To watch, discuss and safeguard the interests and rights of the Muslims (sic) Students."[603] This objective shows that bringing Muslim students

---

[599] Ibid.

[600] Prof. Saidat and Prof. Fathi Mabadeje, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[601] Saba Mahmood, "Ethical Formation and Politics of Individual Autonomy in Contemporary Egypt," *Social Research* 70, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 837–41, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40971643.

[602] Soares and Osella, "Islam, Politics, Anthropology": s9-11; Salwa Ismail, "Islamism, Re-Islamization and the Fashioning of Muslim Selves: Refiguring the Public Sphere," *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 4, no. 1 (2007): 11; Samuli Schielke, "Being Good in Ramadan: Ambivalence, Fragmentation, and the Moral Self in the Lives of Young Egyptians," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15 (2009): s24-6.

[603] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

together as one was not only considered an end, it was also seen as means to confront their challenges. The MSS was to be a Muslim community with one voice and the capability to fight for their religious rights in schools. To inspire them, Mr. A. T. Lawal, a journalist and schoolteacher who was Chairman at its inaugural meeting urged "all members of the young Society to see themselves as pioneer Muslim revolutionaries who must never waver in the face of any obstacle and who must love each other more than their blood relation."[604] The formation of the MSS thus appears as a collective action in which Muslim students mobilised to engage the school system on issues regarding their religion. Their action was geared towards preserving their Islamic identity and, at the same time, making this identity public and challenging the dominant religious practices in their schools. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will show how the Society progressed over time and how its various objectives and understanding of Islam were advanced.

4.5 'Foundation Decade': the MSS from 1954 to 1964

The ten years after the inauguration of the MSS is considered by Adegbite as the "Foundation Decade," while Afis Oladosu, an ex-national leader of the MSSN, referred to it as the "Era of Inauguration, Proclamation and Expansion."[605] This decade clearly shows the early activities of the Society and practices of members in relation to students encounter in schools as well as the experiences of Yoruba Muslims and their coreligionists in other parts of Nigeria. It is also a period that depict how the Society initially put its vision and objectives into action and portrayed itself. The period began with laying the foundation of the Society which was done amid doubts and caution. Many non-Muslim students doubted the capability of the leaders of the Society for organisation and thought that the MSS would soon flounder.[606] As students in secondary school, the pioneer members were also cautious about dealing with their school authorities.[607] But they had to make the Society work. This began with the appointment of executive members for the Society; Lateef Adegbite was appointed as President, Rahman Sahid as Secretary, and Saidat Mabadeje as Assistant Secretary.[608] These executives represented Lagos and its environs as activities of the Society were only restricted to this region at inception.

---

[604] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 5.
[605] Oladosu, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria at 60".
[606] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".
[607] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 5.
[608] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

A major task for them was to encourage Muslim students to join the Society. This was done by identifying them based on their names and networks of friendships. Certainly, this was a challenge for the leaders of the Society because many Muslim students did not identify with their Muslim names in schools. Many were also afraid to identify with the new Society because their school authorities kept a close watch on those displaying the "new Islamic urge."[609] But they gradually overcame this difficulty. One of the factors that helped them was the leading position and academic achievement of many of these pioneer members in their school clubs, which provided inspiration and connections to many students. The cultural and social capital[610] of Adegbite and his team were thus instrumental in this period. While some Christians doubted their success, they also had friends among them who helped to identify Muslim students and encouraged them to join the MSS.[611] The support of these Christian friends is another example of Christian-Muslim encounter which shows how members of both faiths supported one another despite their differences.

Towards the end of the 1950s, members of the MSS increased to other major cities in Yorubaland which included Ikorodu, Abeokuta, Ibadan, Ilesha, Ijebu-Ode, and Ede.[612] The growth was largely supported by the parents of the students, the Muslim elite and leadership of the Yoruba Muslim community, as well as other prominent Muslims from Northern Nigeria. Among them was Saidat's father who helped to design the logo of the Society.[613] In 1955, when the Society had a national conference in Lagos to mark its first anniversary, its members were hosted by the Ọba of Lagos who identified with the Ahmadiyya, Musendiku Adeniji Adele II (1893 - 1964). The Ọba's endorsement helped to boost the image and acceptance of the Society in Lagos. This reflected in his support for the campaign named "Operation join the MSS" employed to encourage parents to allow their children join the Society on this occasion. It may be worth mentioning that the backing of the Ọba and the campaign at this anniversary were significant in the early history of the MSS because they were linked to the political experience of Lagos Muslims. The event coincided with the period of intense solidarity of Muslim indigenes of Lagos following the huge population of Christians, including Igbos, who had migrated into the city by the 1950s. To challenge this Christian population, members of the

---

[609] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 5.

[610] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson, 241–58 (Westport Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986).

[611] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

[612] Oladosu, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria at 60".

[613] Prof. Saidat and Prof. Fathi Mabadeje, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

Ansar-Ud-deen, Ahmadiyya, and Jama'at-ul-Islamiyya aligned with the Awolowo led AG which had adopted Ọba Adele's Area Council (est. 1949) in 1951, and, from 1953, they began to dominate Lagos politics.[614] Thus, apart from boosting the image of the MSS, the support of the Ọba and other Muslim leaders also helped to reinforce the solidarity of the Muslims in the city.

The second anniversary of MSS held at Ijebu-Ode in 1956 showed a remarkable increase in its members. The support of influential Muslims outside Lagos also expanded at the time of this anniversary. The event witnessed the attendance of students from technical colleges and the former University College, Ibadan (later University of Ibadan-UI). Despite the large turn-out, Alhaji Mahdi Otubu a prominent chief in Ijebu-Ode was responsible for their feeding and accommodation. Another Muslim leader and businessman in Ilesha, Alhaji R. A. Smith, gave financial and technical support to the Society at its third national conference held in the city in 1957.[615] The support of these Muslim leaders was symbolised in their appointment as patrons of the Society. Another influential supporter was Saburi Biobaku (1918-2001), a professor of History and uncle to Adegbite who later became the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos. There was also Alhaji Inuwa Wada (1917-2015) a parliamentarian and Federal Minister of Works, and Alhaja Humuani Alaga[616] (1897- 1993) a businesswoman and Otun Iyalode[617] of Ibadan.[618] In addition to the patrons' support, members of the MSS also supported the development of the Society with their own money. An amount of one shilling was contributed by each member monthly which was used to cover the cost of running the Society. The Society also relied on donations collected during festivals and proceeds from the exhibition of articles mounted during its social activities.

In 1956, the MSS' national conferences attracted students from Northern Nigeria, with two in attendance at the Ijebu-Ode event. The 1957 conference at Ilesha, however, had many students

---

[614] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 385–6; Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, 84.

[615] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 6.

[616] Although she had no Western education, she was a wealthy woman who led many protests for Women's Rights through the National Council of Women's Society (NCWS) which she cofounded in 1959. She was a member of Isabatudeen Women's Society that established the first Muslim girls' school, with a population of 30 girls, in Ibadan called Isabatudeen Girls Grammar School in 1964. See Mutiat T. Kareem-Ojo, "International Trade and Women Merchants at Gbagi Textile Market, Ibadan," *Journal of Global Initiatives: Policy, Pedagogy, Perspective* 3, no. 2 (2008): 182–3; Ishaq O. Oloyede, "The Council of Muslim Youth Organizations of Oyo State in Nigeria: Origins and Objectives," *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs. Journal* 8, no. 2 (1987): 378.

[617] The right-hand mother to the women's head called *Iyalode* (mother of the women).

[618] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

from government schools and colleges in the North such as the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Zaria.[619] The attendance of these students gave the Society a national outlook and it led to a change in its leadership structure. In the new structure, Adegbite vacated his position in Lagos and became its first national president. Other national officers were Shuaib Oloritun, Vice-President; Saidat Mabadeje, Second Vice-President; and Rahman Sahid, Secretary.[620] As more post-secondary school students joined the Society and its pioneer members got admitted into the university, the activity of the Society began to be coordinated from tertiary institutions. The University of Ibadan (UI) became the leading institution in this regard because of its status as the first university in Nigeria. This began in 1957 when members of the Society were admitted to the university. Over the years, Ibadan also overtook Lagos as the administrative headquarters of the Society. This was boosted by the huge support which the Society got from several individuals such as Alhaja Alaga and Alhaji Isa Yagboyaju (1933-2012) in Ibadan. The latter was a a businessman and chairman, NSCIA Oyo-Osun states.[621] In the next section, I discuss how the activities of the Society were established in the schools.

4.5.1 **Establishing Muslim practices in 'Christian-run' schools**

The activities of the Society were few in this period, and they often depended on the activism of its members and the willingness of the authorities in different schools to accommodate them. With more members, the Society could challenge Christian activities to establish its own. This began at King's College where the Society complained to the school authority about compelling Muslim students to participate in "Congregational Practice," a weekly song rehearsal held on Thursdays. The school authority considered the complaints and removed the attendance requirement for Muslims. Following this victory, the students moved towards challenging the daily conduct of morning Assembly with songs and readings from the Bible. As prefects were usually tasked with this responsibility, the initiative came from a Muslim prefect who was to read the text on a Friday. He informed other members of the Society in advance that he was going to read a text from the Qur'an rather than the Bible, which he did after he requested permission to do so that morning. Jibril Oyekan, who was a student in the College at the time, regarded his action as "something of a revolution" in the school.[622] While

---

[619] Ibid.

[620] Oladosu, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria at 60".

[621] Dhikrullah A. Yagboyaju, "Alhaji Yisa Olasunkanmi Akanni Yagboyaju and the Development of Nigerian Muslim Youths: An Insider's Perspective," in *Eminent Muslims in Osun State: Essays in Honour of HRM Oba Raufu Olayiwola Olawale Adedeji II, Akinrun of Ikirun*, ed. Siyan Oyeweso, 44–52 (Abuja: Megapress, 2012), 47–48.

[622] Jibril Oyekan, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

the government later issued directives to encourage religious tolerance regarding assembly practice, Muslim students in many schools were encouraged by King's College to challenge their schools to conduct assemblies on Fridays with Islamic texts and prayers. This became the practice in many public schools to date.[623]

In schools where negotiation with the authorities was successful, the MSS also organised Muslim students to perform the daily *ṣalāt*, fast in the month of Ramadan and participate in the *laylat al-qadr* (night of destiny/power) session of that month. The Society also arranged picnics to celebrate Muslim festivals such as *ʿĪd al-fiṭr* at the end of Ramadan and *mawlid al-nabī* (birthday of the Prophet Muhammad).[624] At the end of school sessions, the Society conducted prayer sessions, especially for school leavers.[625] Generally, the Society organised lectures and symposia to teach members on Islam up to the late 1950s and beyond this period. The lectures began to be held at Ansar-Ud-Deen school hall twice in a month for three years before the Society spread to other parts of Yorubaland where more lecture centres were created.[626] The major topics were on how to perform the *ṣalāt*, ablution, fasting and ritual purity. The lectures usually began with memorisation and translation of Qur'anic verses. Providing support through extramural classes for those preparing for exams was another activity of the Society. In many of its programmes, the Society also had "Brain Trust."[627] This is an intellectually stimulating game in which participants representing different schools pick an issue and discuss it within a given time. The topics chosen for the game included both religious and non-religious subjects.

4.5.2 **Diversity in lectures and opinions**

Controversial issues in the Yoruba Muslim community such as the relationship between Western education and Islam were among the subjects of MSS lectures and symposia in this early period.[628] At a forum organised in September of 1954, for instance, Alhaji Babatunde Ismail Jose (1925-2008), a well-known journalist in Nigeria with the *Daily Times,* gave a lecture on "Muslim Education in Nigeria." The attention of the Society also focused on the challenges of many Yoruba Muslims such as their inability to afford the Western schools. Members of the Society debated on this issue during a general meeting held on October 3,

---

[623] Ibid.
[624] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 5.
[625] Oladosu, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria at 60".
[626] Rufai, "Da'wah in the Face of Christian Persecution": 80; Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 5.
[627] Rufai, "Da'wah in the Face of Christian Persecution": 79–80.
[628] Ibid., 79.

1954.[629] In some of the symposia, the leaders of various Muslim organizations in Yorubaland were also invited as guest lecturers. Among them were Mustapha Ekemode of Ansar-Ud-Deen, Basil Agusto of Jama'atul-Islamiyya and Yusau Popoola Oyesile Shodeinde (d. 1991) of Ahmadiyya.[630] These clerics also focused on different debates on Islamic practice and ʿaqīda (creed) in the Yoruba Muslim communities such as the position of the hands during ṣalāt and gender relations among young Muslims. What is known about the arguments made during these lectures is sketchy. But, given that the clerics invited to these lectures were promoters of the new understanding of Islam common among the Western educated Muslims in the colonial period, one can argue that such knowledge also flowed into the MSS and helped to shape the religious practices and identities of the students.

Occasionally, the discussants at the MSS symposia were non-Muslims. Among them was M. A. Dike (1917-1983), who later became a professor of History and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan. At a symposium held on August 6, 1954, Dike engaged members of the Society on the topic: "Role of Muslim Youths."[631] Allowing all kinds of scholars with different backgrounds and ʿaqīda laid the foundation of a tradition within the MSS that welcomes diversity of opinions on Islam. Ibrahim Uthman, who became the president of the MSSN (B-Zone) in 1994, narrated to me that this diversity represented "the glorious days of MSS."[632]

> …anytime we want to discuss on the position of Islam on singing and dancing… this is what we do; we invited the missioner of YOUMBAS (Young Muslim Brothers and Sisters) to come with their position. Because then, YOUMBAS started the idea of Islamic Musical group in Nigeria. We invite those from the other side, and *we allow members to decide where they would be.* So anytime we were discussing issues like Jesus Christ coming back; is he dead? Is Ghulam Ahmad a prophet? We invite Ahmadi scholars…We invite those of the view that what the Ahmadi hold on to is wrong to come and give their position. And throughout, I can say two decades in MSS, there was no crisis and things were working.[633]

The diversity of opinions ensured that the MSS was not tilted to one Islamic authority or ʿaqīda. Although members participated in general activities of the Society, they had the freedom to choose their position on Islam. Building on its idea of one Islamic community, members also tolerated the ʿaqīda which contradicted their own. From 1954, the MSSN continued to foster this open discussion, and it was sustained with a flexible membership criterion that allows any Muslim student to join and leave at their discretion. As will be demonstrated later, it is this

---

[629] Ibid.
[630] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 5.
[631] Oladosu, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria at 60".
[632] Ibrahim Uthman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[633] Ibid. italics mine

openness that allowed the inflow of varying notions of what it means to be Muslims into the Society.

4.5.3 **The MSS in political circles**

The first decade of the MSS also laid the foundation of its visibility in political circles. Although little is known about the nature of its involvement, its relationship with political actors and the state was obvious. This relationship emphasised the need for the MSS to be neutral in political circles rather than identifying with a specific political party or actor. This was achieved with the appointment of patrons who represented all major political parties in Nigeria.[634] They included Ahmadu Bello of the Northern People's Congress (NPC), Alhaji Dauda Soroye Adegbenro (1909-1975) of the Action Group (AG), Alhaji Adegoke Adelabu (1915-1958) of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and Alhaji Aminu Kano (1920-1983) of the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU). These political figures supported the MSS in many of its programmes. An example was Adelabu in Ibadan whose vehicle was used on many occasions for its activities. The executives of the Society were also scheduled to break their Ramadan fast at his residence when he died in 1958.[635]

Association with these political figures was further symbolised by MSS' participation in official government functions relating to the Muslim world. Through Alhaji Adegbenro who was an associate of Chief Awolowo, Adegbite and Adeniran were both invited to a luncheon in honour of the Pakistani and Sudanese Presidents in 1958. This was considered within the MSS as one of the ways it communicated with the government on national issues.[636] The participation of MSS representatives at this luncheon can be linked to the political history of Yoruba Muslims, showing another dimension of their growing solidarity with the political elite in the region. Apart from this, the Society's association with the political elite also appeared to shape the process through which many Muslim students negotiated for power and resources in Nigeria. The relationship between them enhanced the emergence of members including Adegbite into political administrative positions such as commissioners and ministers later in life. In turn, these political elite used the MSSN platform to campaign for votes during elections.[637]

---

[634] Lateef O. Adegbite in *The Muezzin*, 7.
[635] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 6.
[636] Ibid.
[637] Aboo Aamir Al-Atharee (Ishaaq AbdirRaheem), "What Happened to MSSN: An Historical Overview,", http://simplysalafiyyah.com/what-happened-to-MSSN.html (accessed February 5, 2018).

4.5.4 **The Muslim students' life**

The participation of Muslim students in lectures and other MSS' programmes represented a major practice in their social and religious lives. While little is known about the effects of these programmes in the first decade of the Society, the stories of some pioneer members suggest that everyday life as Muslims and knowledge of Islam of the majority were not 'radically' transformed in this period. Oyekan, for instance, believed that his understanding of Islam was developed later when he had the opportunity to study in the United Kingdom (UK) with other Muslims from across the world in the 1960s:

> My Islamic activities as a student, I believe, got a push at Imperial College because there we had Muslims from all over the world… And, it was right there in London, really, that I can say I fully discovered Islam and became involved in the opportunities to increase one's knowledge.[638]

To an extent, the experience of students like Dawud Noibi, referred to in Chapter Three, suggests that many students may have struggled to transform what they had learnt about Islamic tradition into daily practice if they had access to such knowledge. Narrating his own experience in 1964 when he discovered that it was wrong for Muslims to prostrate for people, a sign of greeting in Yorubaland for males, Noibi explained that he could only make up his mind to put this knowledge into practise after a prolonged struggle in his mind. This was because "the older generation saw that it was rude to even say such a thing, let alone you refusing to prostrate before elders." [639] Based on this experience, I consider what it means to be a better Muslim among students in this period was not only dependent on the Islamic tradition but also on what was socially approved of based on local practices.

Many Muslim students in the MSS were also engaged in a socially approved popular culture considered to be aspects of *Olaju* linked to the Christians. Among these were picnics and dance parties used to celebrate birthdays, Christmas and other events. However, Noibi explained that Muslims who attended such parties might be conscious of not taking alcohol:

> …if you do not attend any social parties or let me say… *there is a consciousness you want to show that you are civilized*… and the only way by which you can do that is to attend parties and do what they do there. And what I'm not sure of is whether they would drink. I don't think they would drink. But attending dance parties…Organizing, like the Christians do, to mark the ʿĪd for example. Or at the end of the year, MSS of this institution wants to mark the end of the year, they would attend a party… Attending picnics was

---

[638] Jibril Oyekan, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[639] D. O. S. Noibi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

> also part of it. *Attending picnic was a way of expressing that consciousness, that we are not uncivilized.*[640]

Many Muslim students also wore modest dress in this period. As the Mabadejes' suggested above regarding females, 'bounfo' dress was discouraged. But what was considered modest dress for females, according to them, was "not necessarily covering their heads or covering their faces."[641] Like the females, the dress of the male students also varied. The pictorial record of the Society below shows they wore *agbada* (loose-fitting garment), shirts, suits, and trousers reaching their ankles.[642]

Fig. 1: Yoruba Muslim students in the 1950s. **Source**: MSSN UNILAG, *Ash-Shabaab (The Youth) Pen*, 2004.

4.6 **National Brotherhood and global Islamic movements, 1964-1974**

In the period between 1964 and 1974, the MSS strengthened the promotion of its various objectives and connected with Muslim students in Northern Nigeria and other parts of the world. In this regard, it held two national conferences, in Zaria in 1965, and Kano in 1966, and established branches in many post-secondary schools to achieve its vision of Muslim brotherhood. Some branches were also established in Mid-Western states including Benin, Auchi and Asaba. With its national outlook, the administrative structure of the Society was

---

[640] Ibid. italics mine
[641] Prof. Saidat and Prof. Fathi Mabadeje, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[642] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

reviewed at the 1966 Kano conference. In the reviewed constitution, Lagos remained an independent unit, while the former Western Region was divided into three: West Area Unit A, West Area Unit B and West Area Unit C. The Northern region was also divided into three: Near-North Area Unit, Far-North Area Unit and Bauchi-Yola-Adamawa Area Unit. The last was the Mid-West Area Unit. These units were further divided into A-Zone representing the North and B-Zone representing the South (Southeast and Southwest).[643] With this division, the National President of the Society began to be rotated between the two zones.

A major figure in the history of the MSSN in this period was a former member of the Ahmadiyya named Abdul-Razak Afolabi Solaja (1933-2012). He was a student activist who served as President of the Students' Union of UI in 1962 and the National Union of Nigerian Students (NUNS) in 1963.[644] After his appointment as the National President of the MSSN in 1966, he became involved in promoting the various objectives of the MSSN beyond Yorubaland. Among these objectives was the importance of Western education to Muslims which he emphasised at the Kano conference of the Society. In his address at this conference titled 'Jihad against Ignorance,' he considered Muslims in Nigeria as lagging in the "scheme of things" despite being the largest population. Therefore, he urged them to use all their resources to fight ignorance and to produce qualified Muslims in Nigeria's public service.[645] By making such a statement in Kano, Solaja made a strong point against the colonial policy that prevented the expansion of Western education in Northern Nigeria. His address was also a challenge to many Muslims in the region who were unwilling to embrace the Western schools.

Building on the argument of Adegbite, Solaja also advocated for the unity of Muslim students in the South and the North which he considered was needed in order to confront the challenge posed by Christianity. He saw the unity between them to be proven in the Qur'anic injunctions that all Muslims are brethren.[646] This national campaign shows the desire by Yoruba Muslim students to identify with fellow Muslims in the country. It also demonstrates an attempt to make the objectives of the Society a national cause among Muslims and mobilise students in various parts of Nigeria to support this cause.

---

[643] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 7.
[644] Kudirat B. Alebiosu, "The Life and Work of a Nigerian Muslim Activist: Alhaji AbdurRazzaq Afolabi Solaja," (BA essay, University of Ilorin, June 1986), 13-16.
[645] Ibid., 23–25.
[646] Alebiosu, *The Life and Work of a Nigerian Muslim Activist*, 23–25.

Another contribution made by Solaja was the introduction of the Islamic Vacation Course (IVC) which was first organised for some students in 1965. He probably got the idea of this IVC from the SCM and the SU who engaged Christian students in this activity because he was also said to have encouraged young Muslims to borrow the proselytization method of songs from Christians.[647] The idea might also be from the transnational Muslim movements, discussed below, that the MSSN joined in this period. The MSSN played a key role in the emergence of these movements and study camp was one of the activities which began to be used for *daʿwa* by them. The IVC, which I will discuss in Chapter Seven, was included in the MSSN reviewed constitution of 1966 and it became an annual national programme for all members.

Under Solaja, the MSSN took the idea of the Muslim students' brotherhood outside Nigeria and connected with the visions of some Islamic revivalist movements in the Muslim world. This began in 1966 with 'The International Seminar of Islam and Society in Modern Time' held at UI.[648] The seminar was co-organised by the MSSN and the Extra-Mural Studies department of the university and it had delegates from such countries as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Egypt, Sudan, Ghana and the Gambia. There were also goodwill messages sent from Indonesia, India, the US and the UK. The seminar was supported with donations from the MSSN patrons in Nigeria and participating countries.[649] A major outcome of the seminar was the adoption of a motion to form the International Islamic Youth Organisation (IIYO).

The Ibadan conference gave some insights into the objectives which the MSSN aimed to articulate with this international brotherhood. Of major interest was to challenge the international colonial system in Muslim societies through a common organisation. The organisation also aimed to provide support for Muslims who might be a minority group in their societies. In his address at the conference, Solaja pointed out that;

> In a world where Islam is faced with attacks from various bodies and phenomena, we quickly realised what a great advantage it would be for Muslims and particularly Muslim students to keep close together in order to achieve self-realisation, a thing which Muslims lack today. We also realised that self-realisation will lead to self-reassertion and once we can reassert ourselves, we shall practically recall the golden era of bygone tears (sic) when Muslims dictated the pace of world civilisation. The time has come when such efforts at self-realisation and self-reassertion should be coordinated throughout the world so that, among other things, those Muslims living in

---

[647] Ibid., 31.
[648] Ibid., 28.
[649] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 10.

> non-Muslims areas where Islam has been denigrated and Muslims are being hired into other religions may gain inspiration from their Muslim brothers who are placed in more privileged position.[650]

He added at the seminar held at Omdurman Islamic University, Sudan in 1967,[651] where the idea of this movement was further developed, that "The time has indeed come when Muslims all over the world should adopt a more missionary outlook for the propagation of Islam among non-Muslims and the strengthening of Islamic faith among Muslims."[652] The students from Europe and North America who could not attend the Ibadan seminar were present in Sudan. This seminar produced a committee that facilitated the transformation of the IIYO into the International Islamic Federation of Students Organisation (IIFSO). The new organisation was inaugurated at its headquarters in Kuwait in 1968[653] while its inaugural conference was held in Aachen, Germany, in 1969.[654] How the MSSN linked up with this movement and other Muslims involved its formation abroad remains sketchy, but it is possible that this was through the Nigerian students abroad which included the Yoruba Muslims. The connection between Oyekan and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), described below, points to this assumption.

Existing literature suggests that the emergence of IIFSO can be traced to student members of the Muslim Brotherhood who facilitated the expansion of the movement in the years after World War II.[655] These students, among other members of the Brotherhood, had fled their countries from various parts of the Middle East to Europe and North America due to the hostility of their governments, and they planned to reorganise themselves in the West before returning to their countries to promote their ideals of Islamic states. However, a few of them began to reconsider their return home by the 1970s. Lorenzo Vidino noted that one of the key factors responsible for this was the rising population of Muslims in the West who wished to fulfil their spiritual obligations and required guidance on how to be Muslim in non-Muslim societies.[656] In Germany, some Syrian students of the Brotherhood at the Technical University,

---

[650] Alebiosu, *The Life and Work of a Nigerian Muslim Activist*, 29.

[651] There is another document which suggests that the year was 1968. Azhar Niaz, "International Islamic Federation of Student Organisation," 2014. http://islamicus.org/international-islamic-federation-of-student-organizations/ (accessed December 23, 2017), 1.

[652] Alebiosu, *The Life and Work of a Nigerian Muslim Activist*, 29–30.

[653] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 10.

[654] Altalib, *Training Guide for Islamic Workers*.

[655] Zeyno Baran, *Citizen Islam: The Future of Muslim Integration in the West* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 95; Edwin Bakker and Roel Meijer, "Introduction," in *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*, eds. Edwin Bakker and Roel Meijer, 1–23 (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 2.

[656] Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2010), 31–32.

Aachen, began the construction of the Bilal mosque for this purpose in the 1960s.[657] A document from the website of IIFSO written by Azhar Niaz confirms that the inaugural conference of IIFSO was held at this mosque in June 1969.[658]

Some US-based Iraqi students also played a key role in the formation of IIFSO. The most prominent were Ahmed Tontonji (b. 1941), Hisham Altalib (b. 1940) and Jamal Barzinji (1939-2015).[659] Before founding IIFSO, Tontonji and Barzinji had created the Muslim Students Association (MSA) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Campaign in 1963. Several years later, this association had about 600 branches in universities that spread across the US and Canada.[660] Niaz further claims that these students sought to create an Islamic movement that integrates the best of the Islamic world and the West.[661] They also aimed to have "an umbrella organization that could help in the organised promotion of concepts such as the unity of Islamic thought, the universality of the Islamic movement, and the consolidation of a mature Muslim leadership."[662] For this purpose, IIFSO produced many Islamic texts in about eighty different languages that were made available to students across the world. Among these texts were the works of Abul A'la Mawdudi, Hassan al-Banna and Sayid Qutb.[663] In 1981, Barzinji and Totonji, as well as the MSSN, were involved in the establishment of another organisation called the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) located in the state of Virginia in the US which has been concerned with the project titled 'Islamization of Knowledge.'[664]

It is interesting to observe that the thoughts of these students' movement were noticed in the international seminars organised by the MSSN from the late 1960s. In 1968, for instance, the MSSN collaborated with the JNI in Northern Nigeria to host the 'Muslim Education in Modern Age' seminar in Kaduna where it reviewed the curriculum of Western-oriented school systems. The MSSN at the seminar bemoaned the neglect of Islamic sciences and their contribution to world civilisation in this school system. It also pointed out that Islam had been misunderstood and misinterpreted because emphasis had been placed on the ritual aspect of the religion. Delegates at the seminar, therefore, advocated the need for policies and methods to guide

[657] Guido Steinberg, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Germany," in *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Organization and Policies of a Global Islamist Movement*, ed. Barry Rubin, 149–60 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 151.
[658] Azhar Niaz, "International Islamic Federation of Student Organisation", 2.
[659] Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, 35.
[660] Baran, *Citizen Islam*, 96.
[661] Azhar Niaz, "International Islamic Federation of Student Organisation", 2.
[662] Ibid., 1.
[663] Ibid., 2–3.
[664] Baran, *Citizen Islam*, 97–98; "MSS at a Glance," (MSSN, 2009), 6.

Islamic education that would allow Muslim students to develop a spiritual life and contribute to societal growth.[665]

It should also be mentioned that in 1972, Totonji and Barzinji as well as the MSSN[666] were involved in the establishment of another transnational organisation, the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), founded in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Between 1972 and 1975, Ibrahim Sulaiman served as a representative of the organisation with an office in Kano, while Oyekan became its second representative from 1975 to 1982 with an office in Lagos.[667] The aim of these students, according to Zeyno Baran, was to facilitate the link between the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia and the Muslim Brotherhood to promote their notions of Islam around the world.[668] A study by Cemil Aydin suggests that WAMY was also part of King Faisal bin Abdulaziz's (1906-1975) domestic and international reforms that sought to position Saudi Arabia at the centre of the Muslim world during the Cold War.[669] In contrast to the pan-Arab and Third World solidarity promoted in this era by Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970) of Egypt, Faisal pursued a Muslim world solidarity that invested in economic development, women's education and the abolition of slavery at home. At the same time, he provided support or inspiration for the establishment of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and humanitarian assistance abroad. Of major interests were the Muslim World League (MWL) (est. 1962) and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) (est.1969).[670] While these organisations targeted the leaders of their member countries, the formation of the WAMY was aimed at strengthening fraternal relationships among the Muslim youths. In the same vein, it was used by the Saudi Arabian government to promote international humanitarian assistance in Muslim societies through several means, such as education,[671] donation of Islamic literature and the organisation of study camps and conferences.[672]

Beyond the desire for Islamic brotherhood, the MSSN geographical expansion beyond Lagos and its relationship with these transnational Muslim movements had significant effects on the understanding of Islam among its members. Most importantly, it led to the transformation of

---

[665] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 10–11.

[666] "MSS at a Glance", 6.

[667] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 11; 'Tunde M. Salau, "The World Assembly of Muslim Youth, 1972-1987: A Performance Evaluation," (BA Essay, University of Ilorin, 1988), 21–22.

[668] Baran, *Citizen Islam*, 97.

[669] Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, 175.

[670] Ibid.

[671] Some of these schools are in Lagos and Ogun states.

[672] Jonathan Benthall, "The Rise and Decline of Saudi Overseas Humanitarian Charities,", Occasional Paper 20 (Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University in Qatar, 2018), 27–28. For the activities of WAMY, see the website http://www.islam-infocus.com/Wamy.html

the MSSN into a reform movement. It also caused a change in the relationship among members of the Society. The changes, which are discussed below, reflected in the objectives to be promoted by the Society from the late 1960s, relationship with the state and the religious identity of the Ahmadiyya movement.

4.6.1 **Constitutional review and change**

There was a minor review in the constitution of the MSSN in 1960.[673] However, while little is known about the details of this review, later constitutional reviews showed that the motto of the Society was changed twice by the 1970s. From the initial "Peace, Love and Comradeship" to "Peace, Faith and Brotherhood" and eventually to the *Kalima* (utterance) regarded as the word of *purity*: *ilāha illā Allāh wa-Muḥammad rasūl Allāh* (There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His messenger).[674] This sequence of change to the *Kalima* is what Peel considers telling the story of "development of a more defined and consciously orthodox Muslim identity."[675] I understand his use of "orthodoxy" here to refer to beliefs and practices that relate exclusively to prophetic traditions based on the Qur'an and the Hadith. However, I would like to point out that the change towards prophetic traditions should not be understood to mean that these students and Yoruba Muslims, in general, were not aware of them before this period. Yet, it is the consciousness for these traditions that the MSSN emphasises in its definition of a good Muslim, which I will discuss in the next chapter. I also argue that the change to the *Kalima* is a key indicator of the transformation of the MSSN into a movement with another orientation of Islam. As Loimeier argued, the terminology which an Islamic movement uses is a signal to a change in either its religious orientation, political agenda, or difference from other movements.[676] The confrontation between the MSSN and the Oyo state, to be discussed later, is an example of the effects of this shift.

Despite the change, what is known about the impact of its new orientation on everyday practices of Muslim students remains sketchy. Aisha Lemu (1940-2019), who noticed changes among Muslim students in Nigeria between 1966 and 1976 made a few generalisations which suggest that the development of an orthodox Muslim identity made little impact on everyday practice. Aisha was a British-born author and religious educator who converted to Islam in

---

[673] Alebiosu, *The Life and Work of a Nigerian Muslim Activist*, 26.
[674] "MSS at a Glance", 7; Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 3. In one of the pamphlets of the Society, it is also written and translated as *La illah Ila Allah, Muhammadu Rasulullah* (There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad, SAW, is His messenger). See "MSS at a Glance", 7.
[675] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orișa-religion*, 159.
[676] Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 19–20.

1961. She was married to a Nigerian who was the former Grand Qadi of the Niger State Sharia Court of Appeal, Shaykh Ahmad Lemu, whom she met in the UK. Together with Oyekan, Aisha was involved in the project of the Islamization of knowledge and training of Muslim youths through the Islamic Education Trust (IET) established in 1969 in Niger State. Although she did not refer to Yorubaland, her observation is worth considering because the MSSN had become a national movement in this period and she was also involved in the MSSN as a teacher.

> If I look back to the first decade that I spent in Nigeria, from 1966 to 1976, I was struck by the high level of tolerance on the part of the Muslims…Students in school were still generally being taught their religion by traditional *mallams* [teachers]. Islam meant how to perform prayers, the rules of fasting, memorization of the Qur'an and so on.[677]

A member of the Board of Trustees of the MSSN and one of its early members, Nurudeen Oladapo Alao,[678] made some remarks at the thirtieth anniversary of the Society in 1984 which further suggested that the development of a conscious orthodox Muslim identity in the MSSN did not translate into everyday practice for the majority. According to him, the Society had the challenge of producing "good Muslims" in the 1980s despite the large number of students who identified with the Society and participated in the range of activities employed to facilitate this.

> A lot of progress has been made at the national level of MSS now. A variety of enlightenment programmes are now available for the benefit of the members. People are becoming aware of the excellence and beauty of Islam. But the problem now is how to cope with what had also increased. *You have to be extra-courageous to be a good Muslim today. The task of making people good Muslim has become difficult. And so, there are more nominal Muslims in our Society.*[679]

Even though it was difficult to observe in everyday practice, orthodox Muslim ideas were reflected in the revised objectives of the Society in the mid-1980s. The key ideas in the first constitution were assumed in the reviewed constitution, but the constitution showed more commitment to the fundamentals of Islam and the global Muslim community which included the use of Sharia and faith in Allah. The objectives were:

i. To bring Muslims throughout Nigeria into closer union and inculcate in them the true Islamic spirit of brotherhood and absolute faith in ALLAH as the only basis for the achievement of peace among mankind.

ii. To establish an Islamic Ummah governed by the principles and rules of the SHARIAH.

---

[677] Aisha B. Lemu, *Laxity, Moderation and Extremism in Islam: Advice to Young Muslims on the Path to Peaceful Coexistence in Accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah*, Reprint (Minna, Nigeria: Islamic Education Trust, 2010), 4.

[678] A Professor of Geography at the University of Lagos where he also became a Vice-Chancellor in 1988.

[679] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 13. Emphasis in italics mine

iii. To encourage the study of the Glorious Qur'an as a Holy Book and the Arabic language as the Lingua franca of the Islamic World.

iv. To promote the general welfare of Muslims and safeguard their interests and rights in any community.

v. To constitute a strong force for the propagation and strengthening of Islam in Nigeria and throughout the world.[680]

At least three objectives in this constitution deserve serious attention. The first is the commitment to establish a Muslim community that is ruled by Sharia, which suggests to me that the Society is opposed to the postcolonial nation-state and its legal system. It should be mentioned that the MSSN's call for Sharia cannot be said to be mainly influenced by its association with transnational Islamic movements since many Yoruba Muslims had requested its implementation from the nineteenth century. Moreover, students in Northern Nigeria were familiar with the Sharia since it was being administered in some courts in the region. However, the MSSN's emphasis on its introduction for all Muslims in Nigeria can be considered as part of its new orientation by the mid-1970s. The inclusion of Sharia in the objectives of the Society is thus another sign of the shift in its ideas of Islam between the colonial and post-colonial eras. It shows that while the policies and attitude of the colonial government to resistant movements played a role in the definition of its first constitution that emphasised "peace" and "love," this new objective appears that the Society is opposed to that system of rule.

The second objective that is worthy of attention is the promotion of Arabic as the lingua franca of Muslims. In this regard, I do not intend to imply that the Society is opposed to English, but the emphasis on the language is an effort to acquire an Arabic identity as part of what it means to be Muslim. The third objective centres on propagating Islam in Nigeria and throughout the world, and it suggests that the Society ceases to consider itself as a Yoruba or Nigerian Muslim affair but a global movement, which is evidenced in its membership of the IIFSO and the WAMY. It also indicates that the activities of the Society are not limited to educational institutions in Nigeria. In general, even though these new objectives point to a shift in the orientation of the MSSN, a broad change in practices for the majority was a gradual process, and it was constrained by what was socially and culturally accepted in Yoruba society. However, the separation between the MSSN and its Ahmadi members was an obvious change that showed another orientation of many Yoruba Muslim students on what it means to be Muslim in the 1970s.

---

[680] Ibid., 3.

4.6.2 The Ahmadiyya question in the 1970s

Before the identities of Ahmadis became an issue in the MSSN, many Yoruba Muslims such as Agusto had left the movement in 1924. By 1939, the Ahmadis in Nigeria further split into two, reflecting the division between the Qadian and Lahore factions over the status of Ghulam Ahmad.[681] As mentioned in Chapter Three, the Lahore faction saw him as a *mujāhid* while the Qadianis regarded him as a prophet and *Mahdī* (the guided one). However, many Muslims considered the claim to contradict Prophet Muhammad's position as *khātam al-nabīyīn* (seal of the prophets).[682] In the MSSN, students like Solaja belonged to the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam who saw Ghulam Ahmad as a *mujāhid*. At the 1968 Sudan conference, he learnt about the extent of the debate on Ghulam Ahmad's claim from other delegates and was later involved in the cause that challenged the Muslim identity of the Ahmadis in 1971. [683] In one of his critiques, he made a distinction between 'Muslims' and the 'Ahmadis'[684] The Ahmadis, according to him, were those who owe allegiance to their headquarters in Qadiani, believe in the prophethood of Ghulam Ahmad, a reincarnate of Jesus Christ and one who attained the same spiritual peak as Prophet Ibrahim and would not pray behind other Muslims because they are considered inferior to them. However, he differentiated the position of his own faction by pointing out that "I was brought up in the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam where these cardinal 'Ahmadi' dogmas have not been preached for over forty years."[685]

Concerned that his own faction had retained the name 'Ahmadiyya' despite their opposing claims, he convinced members of the Ahmadiyya Movement to cut their link with anything under that label. Severing this link, for him, was necessary to avoid any problem which the Ahmadiyya might face in the Muslim world.

> It owes no allegiance at all to the 'Mission.' But if unlike the Late Alhaji L. B. Agusto the 'Movement' chooses to retain the link with Ghulam Ahmad, then any current that swept away Ghulam Ahmad must necessarily sweep away the 'Movement.'[686]

---

[681] See H.A.B. Fasinro, *Ahmadiyya Achievements and Conflicts: As I See It* (Lagos: Irede Printers, 1995); Katz, "Islamic Prestige, Piety and Debate in Early Lagosian Newspapers, 1920s–40s": 33–4. Ismail A. B. Balogun, *Islam Versus Ahmadiyya in Nigeria* (Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1977), 2–3.

[682] Adil H. Khan, *From Sufism to Ahmadiyya: A Muslim Minority Movement in South Asia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 7–8; Balogun, *Islam versus Ahmadiyya in Nigeria*, 3.

[683] Alebiosu, *The Life and Work of a Nigerian Muslim Activist*, 33.

[684] Ibid., 34.

[685] Ibid., 34–35.

[686] Ibid., 34 Emphases in quotation marks are mine.

In 1974, the Ahmadiyya Movement in Nigeria separated from the Ahmadiyya and changed its name to Anwarul-Islam Movement Nigeria. This was followed by many Yoruba Muslims who also renounced their membership in the Ahmadiyya. This development came after the adoption of a resolution by members of the Muslim World League (MWL) in 1970 which declared the Ahmadis as non-Muslims but belonging to a subversive sect in Islam.[687] In 1973, as Solaja envisaged, Saudi Arabia banned the Ahmadis from performing the *hajj* and took steps to stop the issuance of visas to them. The resolution of the League was adopted in Nigeria by the NSCIA and the JNI on March 9, 1974. The NSCIA later developed regulations that ensured that Muslims in Nigeria intending to perform the pilgrimage had to obtain a certificate from local Imams stipulating that they were not Ahmadis, despite the protests of the Ahmadis at the Saudi Arabian embassy in Lagos that year.[688]

The Ahmadis in the MSSN were generally affected by this *takfīr,* a declaration that another Muslim is a non-believer. Whereas in 1969, over half of the Society's sixteen area chairmen were Ahmadis,[689] none of them could hold a leadership position after the *takfīr*. Unlike before, Ahmadi scholars began to be prevented from giving lectures in MSSN programmes. They were also criticised by many Muslim scholars who renounced their membership of the movement. Among them was Ismail Balogun, a professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at UI, who wrote polemical essays in newspapers and argued emphatically that "for all intent and purpose, Ahmadiyya is not Islam."[690] Balogun's critique was influential in shaping the position of many students toward the Ahmadiyya because he was one of the scholars who engaged them in MSSN programmes and the university. The critique of the Ahmadis continued in the MSSN until 1983 when one of its members, M.O. Tola Kareem, led an initiative among his colleagues to break away from the MSSN and establish the Ahmadi Muslim Students' Association (AMSA) as an alternative group for their members in 1984.[691]

---

[687] Beck, "The Rupture between the Muhammadiyah and the Ahmadiyya": 215.

[688] Roman Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 158–61; Balogun, *Islam versus Ahmadiyya in Nigeria*, vii-iii.

[689] Clarke and Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria*, 50.

[690] Balogun, *Islam versus Ahmadiyya in Nigeria*, x; Ismail A. B. Balogun, "Why Did I Renounce Ahmadiyyah?," http://irshad.org/brochures/renounce.php (accessed December 27, 2017).

[691] Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Nigeria, "Ahmadi Muslim Students' Association (AMSA),", https://islaminafrica.wordpress.com/category/ahmadiyya/ahmadiyya-muslim-jamaat-nigeria/ (accessed December 26, 2017).

One of the points that struck me in the Ahmadiyya crisis relates to the issues raised by Solaja which illustrate what attracted many Yoruba Muslims to the movement and what they defined as a Muslim. As he pointed out,

> If you ask any member of the Ahmadiyya movement why he is an Ahmadi, his answer will invariably be first, that he considers it to be the best *organised Muslim group*. His emphasis will be on the *neatness of their ceremonies especially along the pattern of Western civilisation*. In the Movement, you are thought (sic) that Islam is a very simple religion that focuses your attention on one God. To us in the Ahmadiyya Movement, he is the myadid[692] (sic) of the present Muslim countries, no more no less.[693]

This suggests that apart from sharing a similar notion of Islam and practices with other Muslim groups, many Yoruba Muslims considered the Ahmadiyya as an enlightened Muslim group than others, and to be an Ahmadis for them was to be a better Muslim. In the context where Christianity was linked with western culture as markers of *Ọlaju*, the Ahmadiyya became an alternative expression of that idea for them. However, as Peel suggested, the *takfīr* against the Ahmadiyya gave way to another conception of a better Muslim that was more in tune with wider currents in the global Muslim community in this period.[694] Therefore, what it means to be a good Muslim in the MSSN in this period involves doing away with the Ahmadis.

Curiously enough, almost all my respondents did not regard the Ahmadiyya incidence as part of what challenged the MSSN notion of one Muslim community. While the silence could mean that they consider the Ahmadiyya incident as a problem between 'Muslims' and 'non-Muslims,' the interaction between the MSSN and the Ahmadi students since that time further reveal an ambivalent conception of a 'Muslim' between them. Since there was a *takfīr* against the Ahmadis, the expectation was that they would have the freedom to pull out of the MSSN and have separate programmes for their members. To the contrary, the MSSN and the Muslim community in many tertiary institutions have resisted this attempt. On many occasions, AMSA programmes were disrupted at UI while their request to build a mosque of their own was rejected at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Osun (OAU) and in other schools. But some institutions allowed the Ahmadis to operate as AMSA and I found them in some MSSN programmes at UI during my fieldwork. To understand this ambivalent relationship better, one of the arguments of the MSSN against the AMSA assumes that all Muslims in the school are one community who should not hold a separate programme different from it. However, this

---

[692] This is supposed to be spelt *mujāhid*, one who brings renewal.
[693] Alebiosu, *The Life and Work of a Nigerian Muslim Activist*, 35. Emphasis in italics mine.
[694] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orișa-religion*, 158.

argument implicitly meant that the Ahmadis are regarded as Muslims by the MSSN.[695] Another MSSN argument assumes that they are a subversive group which suggests that Muslims can discourage them from operating, as recommended in the *takfīr* of the Muslim World League. But, in all, it seems to me that the silence and ambivalent relationship between the Ahmadis and the MSSN is an illustration one of the difficulties in constructing who is a 'Muslim' in Nigeria and the Muslim world more generally.

4.7 *Progressive era or Jāhiliyya*?:[696] the MSSN from 1974 to 1990

This period in the MSSN coincided with what most of my respondents framed in terms like 'golden era,'[697] 'glorious years'[698] and 'era of progress or success.'[699] They mostly used these terms to differentiate the experiences of the Society in the period after 1990. But some aspects of the experiences were criticised by others, as discussed in the next chapter, suggesting that they were not correct Islamic practices. Thus, I use 'Progressive or *jāhiliyya*' to emphasise that the history of the MSSN in this period is contested by members. In addition to the IVC, which I will discuss in Chapter Seven, this period was dominated by experiences which related to *daʿwa* in the Yoruba Muslim community, agitation for Sharia, active engagement with the school system and government, use of music for *daʿwa*, journal and magazine publications, and the understanding of Islam as a way of life. These aspects of the history of MSSN are taken up below.

4.7.1 The "Crusade"

During the annual conference of the Society in 1974, Adegbite argued that after two decades, the MSSN had justified its existence for creating a sense of belonging and letting Muslim students know more about their religion. Therefore, he encouraged the Society to move into the next decade, 1974-1984, with a "Crusade."[700] By this time, he had a doctorate in Law from the University of London, taught at the University of Lagos and held a political appointment as the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice of the former Western State. Like many of his colleagues, whom the Society began to refer to as *babas* (fathers),[701] he continued to inspire members of the MSSN and participate in major programmes of the Society which he

---

[695] Ibrahim Uthman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[696] A concept used to mean 'Age of Ignorance' by many Muslims, when people engaged in what is considered un-Islamic.

[697] M. O. Abdul-Rahman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 22, 2016, UI, Ibadan.

[698] Ibrahim Uthman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[699] Oladosu, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria at 60".

[700] Lateef O. Adegbite in *The Muezzin,* 7.

[701] Some of them are members of the Board of Trustee of MSSN.

considered part of his "organisational work for Islam."[702] His idea of a crusade in 1974 was not to embark on a war with the Christians or the Traditionalists, but a strong campaign for socio-cultural change and educational development among Muslims. As part of this campaign, he urged every member of the Society to "see himself as a crusader; ready to infiltrate every Muslim community so as to rid that community of ignorance and other social ills." [703] Given the level of their own educational experience, Adegbite encouraged members of the Society to see themselves as "privileged citizens" with "superior modern knowledge" that could be used to help elder members "organise themselves on modern lines extolling the benefits of unity and discouraging wasteful tendencies."[704]

The crusade on education was made against the backdrop of Nigeria's Second National Development Plan (1970/74) which provided for a Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy. He was therefore concerned that many Muslims might not take advantage of this opportunity because, for him, they were too nonchalant. When he made this statement, he was aware of the preponderant number of Christians in Nigeria's socio-economic and political sectors, but he did not think that Muslims should "operate a religious apartheid." [705] For him, Muslims should be ready to face the reality and secure their "due share from the general pool" [706] based on merit rather than "quota" distribution. The quota system had been introduced at the end of Nigeria's civil war to ensure equal distribution of Nigerians into public institutions due to inequalities in population and educational attainments in various parts of the country.[707] It was also used in admission to government schools. This policy developed into the Federal Character principle which has been included in the Nigerian constitution since 1979. The principle stipulates that public service appointments should reflect the ethnic, geographic and religious diversity of Nigeria.[708] But while these policies are aimed at ethnic balancing and sharing of resources equitably, they have largely been criticised by academics for promoting "discrimination" and giving room for "representation" at the expense of "merit."[709] Adegbite's argument could also be understood from this perspective. To encourage Muslims to compete on merit, he urged the

---

[702] Lateef O. Adegbite in *The Muezzin*, 8.

[703] Ibid., 7.

[704] Ibid.

[705] Ibid.

[706] Ibid.

[707] Abdul-Raufu Mustapha, "Institutionalising Ethnic Representation: How Effective Is the Federal Character Commission in Nigeria?,", *CRISE Working Paper 43* (Oxford: Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE), June 2007), 8.

[708] Ladipo Adamolekun, John Erero and Basil Oshionebo, ""Federal Character" And Management of the Federal Civil Service and the Military," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 21, no. 4 (1991): 75.

[709] Ibid; Mustapha, "Institutionalising Ethnic Representation", 17.

MSSN to "join both official and private groups in explaining the aims and objectives of the UPE, bringing out its long-term benefits to Muslim children."[710] He also implored the Society to assist Muslim children preparing for entrance exams to various schools through coaching. Probably because of his own experience and involvement in government, he also advised members of the Society to proceed on further studies after their first degrees because he considered that the Nigeria of the future would belong to the highly qualified.

The MSSN campaign for socio-cultural change was carried out in many ways and was supported by a number of its influential patrons. Among them was Alhaji Yagboyaju who donated buses to many Area Units of the Society in the 1980s in order to facilitate the campaign and other activities.[711] One of the ways in which the campaign was carried out in the early 1980s was through the weekly Open-Air Service, which featured mostly sermons, for its Area Units in the rural areas in Oyo, Ogun and Lagos. The local Imams and *alfas* were often invited to listen to these sermons. The topics of sermons in these localities ranged from 'Presenting Islam and its Beauties,' and 'Calling for Moral Improvements among Muslims,' to 'Comparing Islam with other religions.'[712] During *mawlid* celebrations, the Society also addressed Muslims on issues like marriage, funerals, and naming ceremonies.[713] However, some of the arguments in these lectures appeared to have signalled the start of a confrontation between the student preachers and the established *alfas*. In these lectures, for instance, the student preachers criticised many practices among the Yoruba Muslims which include the collection of money during naming ceremonies by the *alfas*. Although the MSSN also collected donations during its own programmes referred to as 'Appeal Fund,' the money was used for the Society's activities in contrast to the *alfas* who might use them for their own upkeep. The other practice which the MSSN criticised related to what a respondent regarded as a 'wrong' *ʿaqīda* that was promoted by many *alfas*. According to this respondent, the *alfas'* "belief" at the time was that mixing traditional practices with Islam did not impugn on being Muslim. Even though he considered this claim to be wrong, he did not see why the MSSN preachers should have made the practices of the *alfas* their concern. Using his Ikire hometown as an example, he narrated that:

---

[710] Lateef O. Adegbite in *The Muezzin*, 8.

[711] Yagboyaju, "Alhaji Yisa Olasunkanmi Akanni Yagboyaju and the Development of Nigerian Muslim Youths": 47–48.

[712] Jimoh A. Salami, "Modes of Da'wah in Some Selected Towns in Yorubaland," (BA Essay, University of Ilorin, 1985), 77.

[713] Ibid., 78.

> One of their priorities back then was to correct the corrupted ʿaqīda [creed] that was prevalent among the people of the Area Council back then. What was not clear to the people, they would be made to understand… But back then, if they had focused on the youth, you know the philosophy of "Catch them young." But back then the focus was on the *alfas* instead of concentrating on the youth.[714]

Many *alfas* engaged the student preachers on such issues. Through their engagements, the *alfas* discovered that these students had little or no learning experience in the *madrasa* to understand Arabic texts and exegesis of the Qur'an, which they considered to be a prerequisite to speak with authority. Even though, as will be shown in the next chapter, some of these students actually studied in *madrasas*, the *alfas* still derisively referred to them as confusionists with the terms; *afiwekewu* (literally, one who learns Arabic/Qur'an in English texts/western school)[715] and *awon alakatakiti a f'iwekewu* (radicals who learn Arabic/Qur'an in English texts/western school).[716] This stereotype feeds into the criticism of a renowned cleric in Yorubaland, Shaykh Adam Al-Ilory (1917-1992), who claimed that Islam cannot be fully understood without the Arabic language. Shaykh Al-Ilory was the founder of one of the famous *madrasas* in Yorubaland which appropriated western school pedagogies called the Institute of Arabic and Islamic Training Centre, Markaz (est. 1952), located in Lagos. Although he encouraged his students to pursue Western education, he considered the use of English to teach Islam in Western schools as part of the colonialist agenda to detach Islam from its official Arabic language.[717]

To encourage the educational development of Muslims in the 1970s, the MSSN organised extramural classes for students in secondary schools and those in tertiary institutions. After exams, it assisted the qualified candidates to lobby for admission into tertiary institutions. The Society also established a school in Ibadan called the Halal Nursery and Primary School in 1987.[718] Over the years, more schools were established in various parts of Yorubaland such as At-Tawheed Nursery and Primary School and the At-Tawheed Model College, Ekiti established in 2000.[719] In many cases, the establishment of these schools was the initiative of the members rather than the MSSN as an organisation.

---

[714] Olaoye Rashid (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun, March 14, 2017, Ikirun, Osun.

[715] Yusuf Olayinka, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 28, 2016, Ogunmakin Town, Lagos-Ibadan Road.

[716] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 2016 - March 2017, UI, Ibadan.

[717] Adam Al-Ilory, *Adinu Anasi'A*, 3rd (Lagos, Nigeria: Motibaatu Sakofa Al-Islamiyya, 1978), 11–13.

[718] Ashiat A. Shafiu, "The Contribution of MSS to Educational Development of Nigeria: A Case Study of Halal Nursery and Primary School, Ibadan," (BA Essay, University of Ilorin, 1994).

[719] Bello, *Muslim Students Society of Nigeria and Development of Islam in Ekiti State, 1954-2014*, 152–74.

To illustrate the achievement of the Society in this educational campaign, many of my respondents told me that the stimulus to their education up to the university level was due to their membership of the MSSN which they identified with through relatives and friends. One of them was Abideen Olaiya. At the time his compeers were enrolled in schools, his father preferred the *madrasa,* and therefore, did not allow him to go to school due to fear of conversion to Christianity. He later enrolled in school because his parents were convinced by the UPE scheme and by many Muslims who had gone through the school system without becoming Christians. After his secondary education, a minimum required to get employed in many organisations at the time, Olaiya declined an offer of appointment in Lagos against his parents wish because he was encouraged by members of the MSSN to further his studies at The Polytechnic Ibadan.[720] He later had a doctorate degree, became a lecturer in the university and contested in elections for a federal parliamentary seat for Oyo State in 2007.[721] Many respondents like him told me that they are grateful to the MSSN for encouraging them to be educated in Western schools without affecting their Muslim identities,[722] and I consider their stories as testimonies of how Nigeria's post-independence policy on education, which is part of the National Development Plan, has changed the social status of many Western educated Yoruba Muslims. More importantly, they show the impact of social factors on the process of religious change of many Yoruba students.

4.7.2 **"To belong to MSSN is to be feared by those in power"**

But beyond promoting the development plan of government, the MSSN relationship with the state was also tense between the mid-1970s and the early 1980s, which informed the statement by Oladosu[723] used as a title of this sub-section. The tension between the MSSN and the government was first reflected in the national debates over the proposal to establish a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal and Sharia Courts in regions like Yorubaland in 1976.[724] The proposed courts were in line with the military government's plan to fashion a new constitution for Nigeria as part of the post-war reconstruction and transition to a new system of government following the collapse of the colonial parliamentary government in 1967. While the government's plan was aimed at promoting the religious diversity of Nigerians in the proposed constitution, the

---

[720] Abideen Olaiya, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 29, 2016, IVC, Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.
[721] He also contested in the 2019 governorship election in the state.
[722] For instance, Shakirulah Adedoja, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 10, 2016, Oke-Ado, Ibadan; Abdus-Salam Mikhail, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[723] Oladosu, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria at 60".
[724] Makinde, "The Entanglement of Sharia Application in South-Western Nigeria": 86–7.

debates over the Sharia courts, as Clarke and Linden argue, became part of the long-standing questions between Muslims and Christians over religious freedom in schools, the ethos of Nigeria's constitution, judiciary and legislature, and the symbolic matters like religious holidays and the structure of the working week.[725] The MSSN also contributed to this debate. In the North, the branch of the Society at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria called for the decolonization of Nigeria's constitution which it argued was based on the English Common Law. In Yorubaland, the MSSN worked with its leaders such as Chief Moshood Kashimawo Abiola (1937-1998),[726] Dawud Noibi and Lateef Adegbite through the organisation called NAJOMO (from WESJOMO, mentioned earlier) to request the establishment of Sharia Courts for Muslims in Lagos, Oyo, and Ondo states.[727] For Adegbite, the introduction of these Courts was not only a matter of religious freedom and pluralism of Nigeria, but also about the right of Muslims to be administered under divine laws.[728] Although the government's proposal for the Sharia Courts was rejected following stiff opposition from Christians as well as a few Muslims, the MSSN continued to agitate for it in 1984 and 1999.[729] The failure to allow the establishment of the Sharia courts in the late 1970s gave rise to more concerns especially among Yoruba Muslims that the government has always been unfair to them in relation to Christians and Muslims in the North. These concerns, therefore, contributed to the public reaction of the MSSN to other issues of Christian-Muslim encounters in educational institutions from the late 1970s.

Unlike the colonial experience, the incidence of requesting Muslims to change their names to Christian names had reduced in this period, but other challenges like the shortage of Muslim teachers, reading Bible and singing songs of praise at the Assembly continued. The MSSN's grievance in this period was strong because it considered some actions of government and school authorities as "oppressive" to Muslim students. They included allegations of deliberate refusal to recruit Islamic Studies teachers, distribution of free Bibles to secondary schools with public funds and the upgrade of Christian mission schools to colleges of education; whereas, Islamic studies were not allowed to be taught in these colleges. These allegations were made

---

[725] Clarke and Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria*, 80–81.

[726] An accountant by profession and a businessman, he was the presumed winner of the June 12, 1993 presidential election in Nigeria. He was arrested by the military government and died in detention in 1998. See Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 226–27.

[727] Makinde, "The Entanglement of Sharia Application in South-Western Nigeria": 87–90.

[728] Clarke and Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria*, 83.

[729] While the Sharia implementation was successful in many parts of Northern Nigeria after 1999, the request for its implementation continued to be opposed in Yorubaland.

worse by Christian leaders who were believed to support such actions.[730] It should be pointed out that the MSSN's desire for Islamic studies was not limited to primary and secondary schools, it was also expressed by Muslim students undergoing studies like Law in various universities by the 1980s.[731]

At different international seminars supported by IIFSO and WAMY in the 1970s, MSSN expressed concerns on the need to promote Islamic Studies in the Western schools that discouraged it.[732] These concerns were very strong in Oyo state which had a significant number of Muslims.[733] In 1979, the MSSN in the state had an opportunity to engage the government on these concerns. This came after Abdur-Raheem Adebayo Shittu,[734] its former president at the University of Ife (now OAU), was said to have been ridiculed and called "a religious fanatic"[735] at the Oyo State House of Assembly over his suggestion that the state provides for the training of Islamic Studies teachers through a crash programme.[736] The MSSN considered Shittu's failure to convince the government as part of the official bias against Muslims in the state. This got the sympathy of its National President, Kamil Oloso, and Muslim lecturers at the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, UI. Before then, these lecturers had informal discussions with colleagues outside the university on how to unite Muslim youth organisations in the state for their common interests. The failure of Shittu to convince members of the State's Assembly, therefore, provided them with an opportunity to put this into action. Together with the MSSN, they formed the Council of Muslim Youth Organisations of Oyo State (COMYO) at the university on March 30, 1980. Although COMYO's activism was mostly restricted to Oyo state at inception, it had the sympathy of Muslims in other states. It later became a national

---

[730] L. O. Abass, "The Role of Muslim Organisations of Oyo State in Policy Implementation of Islamic Religious Studies," *ALFKIR* 19 (2006): 135–42.

[731] *Daily Times,* "Include Islamic Law in Our Programme: Moslem Law Students Plead,", February 4, 1985. For a study of the protests in many parts of Nigeria in this period, see Rosalind I. J. Hackett, "Conflict in the Classroom: Educational Institutions as Sites of Religious Tolerance/Intolerance in Nigeria," *BYU Law Review*, no. 2 (1999).

[732] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 11.

[733] In addition to Oyo, the Muslims in Lagos also clashed with the state government in 1982 when it banned Friday prayers in the school. The Muslims saw this as part of the government's plan to deny them their religious rights and appease the Christians. The allegation that the government planned to appease the Christian arose because it was headed by a Muslim in the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). See Hackett, "Conflict in the Classroom": 544–5.

[734] A barrister at Law, he was elected into the Oyo State parliament in 1979. He is the author of several works on Muslims' daily prayers and religious comparison. Between 2015 and 2019, he served as Nigeria's federal Minister of Communications.

[735] Ishaq O. Oloyede, "The Council of Muslim Youth Organisations (COMYO) in Oyo State," *Islamic Studies* 26, no. 1 (1987): 85.

[736] Abass, "The Role of Muslim Organisations of Oyo State in Policy Implementation of Islamic Religious Studies": 135.

organisation called the National Council of Muslim Youth Organizations (NACOMYO) with the support of WAMY at a youth camp held in Ilorin in 1987.[737]

Among the objectives of COMYO was "Resisting, in collaboration with the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria, any religious oppression in educational institution in the State."[738] This objective was pushed in many ways which included writing protest letters and addressing press conferences. In addition, COMYO lobbied the government through Muslim leaders and organisations like the League of Imams and Alfas (LIA). The LIA gave unflinching support to COMYO, articulated in a letter to the governor of the state, Bola Ige (1930-2001). In the letter, the LIA expressed disappointment that the government had stifled religious freedom enshrined in Nigeria's constitution by allowing Muslim pupils to be taught Christian religious doctrines while it failed to provide for teachers of Islamic studies.[739] There was also a direct confrontation at a stormy meeting in 1981 where Oloso and Bola Ige insulted each other. The insult was over their mode of dressing, but it became a fall-out of that crisis.[740] The MSSN and SU activities were later suspended in the schools by the government in Oyo state as a result of the controversy. However, rather than stopping its activities, the ban goaded the MSSN to embark on another campaign with COMYO which focused on alleged government's pro-Christian bias in political appointments in the state. Using handbills and 'abusive songs,' they mobilised the support of Muslims in the state against the re-election of Ige in the 1983 governorship election. As it turned out, Ige lost that election, and members of the Society who participated in the campaign considered their efforts to have paid off by his loss.[741]

In 1985, the MSSN was involved in another confrontation at UI over a cathedral cross which stood some yards away in front of its newly built central mosque. The confrontation, which took several months, was used to open issues of alleged marginalisation of Muslims in the university staffing and student admission. Following series of protests and press releases, the matter was resolved after a compromise was reached to erect a concrete screen nearer the mosque. Owing to the activism of the Society in this period, Oladosu suggests that "to belong to the MSS was to be feared by those in power."[742] I consider this statement to draw attention

---

[737] Abdul-Fatah Kola Makinde and Philip Ostein, "The Independent Sharia Panel of Lagos State," *Emory International Law Review* 25 (2011): 924.

[738] Oloyede, "The Council of Muslim Youth Organisations (COMYO) in Oyo State": 85.

[739] For the debates around this, see Clarke and Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria*, 180–87.

[740] According to Peel, "Ige insultingly called Oloso an *ọmọ-ale* (bastard) for wearing a long Arab gown; to this Oloso smartly retorted, "Who is more of a bastard?" pointing out, to the cheers of his followers, that Ige was wearing a smart French suit." See Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 161.

[741] M. O. Abdul-Rahman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[742] Oladosu, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria at 60".

to understanding the MSSN's shift from its initial emphasis on relating 'peacefully' with the state by the 1980s. The confrontation between the Society and the government on different issues such as the use of the *ḥijāb* from this period thus illustrates another way in which the relationship between many Islamic movements and the states in Africa has shifted from the colonial to post-colonial state.

4.7.3 **New ideas and trends**

But beyond their clash with the government, the MSSN continued to adopt new ideas, that were growing since the colonial era, which defined the modern social and cultural life of many Yoruba in post-independence Nigeria. The use of music as a *da'wa* method, discussed below, is one of the activities that defined this new trend in the MSSN.[743] There were occasions when short dramas were also staged during the Society's programmes.[744] As part of the new trend, the Society also began the publication of magazines and journals such as the *Muezzin*, *Al-Ilm* and *Mifta Ul-Ilm* used by members to discuss Islamic ethics, *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), Hadith and social issues relating to marriage, education and local culture. The contributors to these publications were not only students but also senior academicians such as T.G.O. Gbadamosi, I.A.B. Balogun, Musa Abdul, as well as professionals like Alhaja Lateefat Okunnu (b. 1939)[745] and Justice Abdul-Kadir Orire (b. 1934, first grand Kadi of Kwara).[746] These publications were also supported by the MSSN patrons such as Alhaji Isa Yagboyaju and Azeez Alao Arisekola (1945-2014) who often advertised their businesses in them.

Besides these publications, many students engaged in comparative religious discourse and had access to texts produced by the South African Muslim public speaker of Indian descent, Ahmed Deedat (1918- 2005). Deedat's polemical debates (in texts, videos and audiocassettes) have inspired several Muslims in their engagement with Christians in Africa.[747] However, while many Yoruba Muslim clerics were averse to participating in those debates, the MSSN encouraged the debates among its members. According to Taofeeq Yekin (an academic at UI, appointed National President of the MSSN in 2018) who got some texts from Deedat, the

---

[743] Ibid.

[744] Sidikat A. Oluwatoki, "Muslim Organisations in Ekiti-Central Local Government of Ondo State," (BA Essay, University of Ilorin, 1984), 38.

[745] She was a pioneer member of MSSN and a founding member of the all-Nigerian Muslim women organisation, the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) formed in 1985.

[746] See *Al-Ilmu (Knowledge): Journal of the MSSN* from 1975 to 1985.

[747] Studies which refer to this include David Westerlund, "Ahmed Deedat's Theology of Religion: Apologetics Through Polemics," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, no. 3 (2003) and Jon Abbink, "Religion in Public Spaces: Emerging Muslim-Christian Polemics in Ethiopia," *African Affairs* 110, no. 439 (2011): 266.

discourse is necessary to teach Muslim students how to talk in the language of other religious faiths in the Yoruba social context.[748] In the mid-1970s, the use of music for *da'wa* was also considered part of this necessity.

4.7.3.1 **Music as *daʿwa*: sing-song**

The use of music for *da'wa* in the MSSN is connected to the upsurge of Christian gospel music in Yorubaland in the 1970s. By the end of colonial rule, the Christian missions, including the African churches, in Yorubaland had choirs who not only performed in their churches and schools but also during occasions like the Christmas. The choirs' genres of music were a mix of biblical verses and indigenous words accompanied by western and local musical instruments. From the 1960s, this music began to be professionalised as many choristers left the church, though they often remained members, to perform in the public domain for commercial purposes.[749] Among them were Prince S. A. Adeosun of Christ Apostolic Church Yaba, Rev. T. M. Ilesanmi's choir of St. Peter's and Paul's Catholic Church Ibadan, the Ibadan based Bola Are and Deborah Fasoyin led Good Women Choir of the Christ Apostolic Church.[750]

Some young Muslims who noticed that these songs had become an attraction for many Muslims argued that listening to these songs was un-Islamic.[751] They also believed that these songs were inspiring many young ladies to attend churches.[752] In 1974, these Muslims formed a musical group in Ibadan called the Young Muslim Brothers and Sisters (YOUMBAS) to produce alternative songs for Muslims.[753] This was followed by the emergence of other groups such as the Jihad Muslim Brothers and Sister of Nigeria (JMBROSIS).[754] As these musical groups were associated with the MSSN, because some of their members attended MSSN programmes, a thinking developed in the MSSN that songs could also be adopted in the Society to promote *da'wa*. This thinking ushered in the era famously referred to as 'Sing-Song' in the MSSN. It is worth noting that apart from the MSSN, there were other organizations such as the Ansar-Ud-Deen who also supported and promoted the use of songs for *da'wa* in this period.[755]

---

[748] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[749] 'Femi Adedeji, "Classification of Nigerian Gospel Music Styles," *Nigerian Music Review*, no. 5 (2004): 63–4.

[750] Ibid., 65–66.

[751] Aliyu, *Transmission of learning in modern Ilorin*, 289.

[752] Sherrifdeen Adegoke, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[753] Salami, *Modes of Da'wah in some Selected Towns in Yorubaland*, 82.

[754] Little is still known about the date of its formation and founders.

[755] Sherrifdeen Adegoke, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

Wahab Falowo, who was then an Imam and President of the MSSN Ilorin Area Council at the University of Ilorin, was probably the first to lead the sing-song era. In 1979, he produced an album funded by the Society titled, *Ẹ ye pe Musulumi L'onimọle* (Don't call Muslims *Imale*).[756] Given that *imale* had been linked to the Yoruba Muslims, the title of this album would seem to be an expression of their desire to be associated with "orthodox sunni" Islam as Peel claims.[757] However, the lyrics of the album largely describe the Yoruba Muslims response to the stereotype of their fellow Christians and Traditionalists about them and Islam in general. By the late 1970s, many non-Muslim Yoruba had derisively deconstructed 'imale,' literally in Yoruba, to mean 'difficult/hard knowledge' and 'people with aggressive religion.'[758] Owing to this misinterpretation, Alhaji Yagboyaju, an influential patron of MSSN in Oyo, was said to have persuaded the branches in Oyo and Kwara to begin a campaign against this stereotype. He also advised them to use a song, to which he also contributed, for this campaign to make it effective.[759] Thus, Falowo's song not only aimed to entertain Muslims, it also aimed to correct the wrong impression about *imale* and their religious identities. Falowo also produced other albums for the Society and later formed his own band, *Sawtul-Hikma al-Islamiyya* (The Voice of Islamic Wisdom).[760] Other members of the Society joined this trend, among who were Abdullah Akinbode's Voice of Islamic Ummah and Wasiu Sidiq's Voice of Islamic Charity.[761]

While the songs were considered a necessity for *da'wa*, its economic advantage was perhaps a major factor that further sustained it. The singers were said to have produced the albums for the MSSN with no financial rewards. Instead, money accrued from the sale of the albums went into the purse of MSSN.[762] As many of my respondents told me, this was part of the understanding in Islam that the work of *da'wa* should not be done for personal gains.[763] Funds also came through music and dance competitions organised by the Society in such programmes as Jihad Week and IVC. Musical groups were formed in different schools who participated in this competition. Abdullah Akinbode, whom many Yoruba Muslims considered to have

---

[756] Abdur-Rahman Taiwo, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 10, 2016, Challenge, Ibadan.

[757] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orişa-religion*, 169–70.

[758] *Imale* is stereotypically broken down into two syllables: *imọ lile* (difficult knowledge) by many non-Muslim Yoruba to suggest that Arabic is difficult to learn. They also claim that Muslims generally are aggressive in character because they follow a religion that is hard to understand.

[759] Abdul-Wahab Falowo, interview by Olatunji Yusuf Hassan, Lagos.

[760] Mariam O. Jimoh, "Music as an Efficient Tool for Promoting Moral Teaching in Islam: Abdul-Wahab Falowo's Songs as a Case Study," (BA Essay, University of Ilorin, 2015), 25.

[761] Adeola Balogun, "I Took a Second Wife to Avert Impending Scandal: Wasiu-Sidiq,", http://www.nairaland.com/273114/took-second-wife-avert-impending (accessed January 2, 2018).

[762] Imam Eti-Osa LG Mosque, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 14, 2017, Eti-Osa, Lagos.

[763] Alhaji Ladejo, interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Imam Eti-Osa LG Mosque, interview by Adeyemi Balogun,

attracted a large followership from the mid-1990s to NASFAT through his songs,[764] was one of the lead vocalists of MSSN Lagos Area Unit song group. In fact, the sing-song became the major attraction for most students and their guests who danced and appreciated them with money. But while money was given to the performers, according to my respondent who was a business chairman in this period, most of it still went to the MSSN purse.[765]

By the mid-1980s, there was a strong debate in the MSSN regarding singing and dancing in Islam.[766] Indeed, such debate was not new to the Yoruba Muslims. Since the 1920s, Muslim groups like the Ahmadiyya and Ansar-Ud-Deen had contested both singing and dancing,[767] but many Yoruba Muslims continued to engage in them. The mid-1980s debate, however, appeared to challenge the initial assumptions that sustained the practice for many Muslims. In the MSSN, some members argued that singing was a correct practice in Islam and there were those who claimed that it was not a correct practice. The argument of this second group was upheld and the sing-song was formally ruled out in the MSSN by 1990. This debate is part of the reform in the MSSN which is facilitated by many factors that are discussed in the next chapter. However, while the concern was on correct practice, stopping the song had many effects on the Society from the 1990s. One major effect was the reduction of people who were attracted to the MSSN because of music and those who appreciated singing groups with money, which also meant less funding for the Society.[768] It also led to breaking away of singing groups and members who were not convinced by the argument that singing was not permissible in Islam. Among them were Abdullah Akinbode and Wasiu Sidiq. While Sidiq continued to sing, Akinbode could not continue after he became a "Chief Missioner" in NASFAT by 2000.[769] He established another prayer group *Jamaa'tu Ahli Llahi* (Household of Allah) when he resigned from NASFAT in 2017.[770]

4.7.4 "Islam as a way of life"

Compared to her first decade in Nigeria, Lemu argued that there was a dramatic change in the practices of Muslim students in Nigeria from 1976. She noticed that many of them began to get their knowledge of Islam from a variety of sources which included books in English,

---

[764] Imam Eti-Osa LG Mosque, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[765] Ibid.

[766] "Singing, Drumming and Dancing as means of propagating Islam." *Nigerian Herald*, December 19, 1982

[767] Katz, "Islamic Prestige, Piety and Debate in Early Lagosian Newspapers, 1920s–40s": 68.

[768] Imam Eti-Osa LG Mosque, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[769] Adeola Balogun, "I Took a Second Wife to avert Impending Scandal".

[770] Kunle Shobo, "NASFAT Former Chief Missioner, Abdullahi Akinbode, Opens New Islamic Enterprise, Jamaa'Tu Ahli Llahi - Blackbox Nigeria,", http://blackboxnigeria.com/2017/06/18/nasfat-former-chief-missioner-abdullahi-akinbode-opens-new-islamic-enterprise-jamaatu-ahli-llahi/ (accessed January 2, 2018).

magazines, newspaper articles, as well as teachers who gave both informed and less informed sermons on radio and television. Gradually, they also became less tolerant and less trusting of non-Muslims. Most importantly, they had a change in their understanding "that Islam is not just prayers, fasting and memorization of the Qur'an. They have a much broader idea of the implication of *Islam as a way of life*, together with its social, economic and political teachings."[771]

While I agree that there was a new understanding of Islam as a way of life in the MSSN, I consider this knowledge to be reflected in the everyday practices of only a few members. The wholescale adoption of the *sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (discussed in the next chapter), which was central to this meaning of Islam was seldomly practised by most members. A pointer to this argument is from the personal experience of Habibah Oladosu, a lecturer at UI who became a member of the MSSN in 1985. She described the outlook of members of the Society during the IVC of that year thus,

> When I joined the MSS, I joined the MSSN in 1985, my first IVC was in 1985. When I got to the IVC, I saw Islam then, I saw the sincerity in people. *Then clothing was not emphasized. Keeping of beard was not emphasized. Jumping trousers was not emphasized. The most important thing then was how do you project yourself as a Muslim.* When you are doing that, it must be based on sincerity that everything you do must be directed to Allah, and Allah alone. There shouldn't be hero worship, no lip service.[772]

One may assume that not having access to Islamic literature (which played a key role in the reform in the Society, as will be shown in the next chapter) might have informed the decision of many students not to adopt the *sunna*. However, I would link their decision to the understanding of the Islamic practices among the majority of Yoruba Muslims. I remember even in the late 1980s that the majority of *alfas* usually differentiated between what was considered voluntary and involuntary practices in Islam. The majority of *sunna* practices were defined as voluntary and not doing them, according to these *alfas*, did not make a Muslim less good or less complete in faith. Based on this orientation to Islam, those who emphasised some aspects of *sunna* in their social life such as the Alfa Bamidele led Zumratul-Mumeen were derisively called names like *alaṣeju* (who do more than is required) by many Yoruba Muslims. In addition to condemning Western education, which I referred to in Chapter Three, women in this group wear the elaborate veil that covered them from head to toe called *burqa'* (also referred to as *purdah* in Yorubaland), while men keep their beards and wore turbans. A similar

---

[771] Lemu, *Laxity, Moderation and Extremism in Islam*, 5. Emphasis in italics mine
[772] Habibah Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 28, 2016, UI, Ibadan. Italics mine

group was the Tabligh Jama'at who faced criticism on its practice of travelling for several days away from home on *da'wa*.

It is worth mentioning that while most *alfas* were not strictly against embracing this notion of *sunna*, they considered them unsuited to Yorubaland. Thus, up to the early 1980s, the general view in the MSSN, according to Oladosu, was also "that there was no chance for the propagation of foreign dawah methodologies and opinions which were considered not suitable for a terrain such as ours."[773] Based on this experience, I argue that what is understood as Islam as a way of life by many students does not necessarily mean adopting every practice that is considered Islamic as a compass for everyday life without subjecting them to a debate based on their compatibility within the local context.

Because of this understanding in the MSSN, most female students could only put on the scarf that was common among Yoruba Muslim women; a piece of fabric of different colours loosely wrapped over the head and chest. The majority could not wear the *ḥijāb* up to 1990 except for a few like Sururah Bello (nee Waheed) at OAU, Ife.[774] Noibi, who left UI as Imam in this period also noted that:

> I recall that before I left Nigeria for Britain in 1990, I can hardly remember that there was a single student who was a female wearing *ḥijāb*. They were very few in the University of Ibadan and we had to actually struggled to get some professors and lecturers to allow the few who would wear *simple ḥijāb* to attend the classes.[775]

Furthermore, local socio-cultural practices could not be divorced from the practices of many Muslim students in this period. According to some of my respondents, many students relied on charms from the *alfa* or *Ifá* priest for personal protection and success in exams rather than prayers from Qur'anic texts.[776] Courtship before marriage, a practice which was later discouraged, was also common among members of the Society, and, it was common for many female students to be impregnated before marriage, as this was the social expectation from many in-laws to test their fertility.[777] Before such marriage, many parents also consulted either the *alfa* or *Ifá* priests for guidance.[778] Even if this consultation was contested later, engaging in it was not considered to make a person less Muslim by many Yoruba Muslims, and I consider

---

[773] Oladosu, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria at 60".
[774] M.A Durosinmi, "OAU Professor Durosinmi Writes on Muslim Students in Hijab,",
   http://www.nairaland.com/4249440/oau-professor-durosinmi-writes-muslim (accessed January 3, 2018).
[775] D. O. S. Noibi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[776] Zafaran Omotope Adeniyi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 12, 2017, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun.
[777] Ibid.
[778] Mushafau Alaran, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 24, 2016, Abeokuta.

it to be part of their pragmatic consideration which continued from their engagement with the *Òrìṣà*. As Peel has pointed out, this pragmatism was based on "the thought that because there were many powerful *Òrìṣà*, it was imprudent to neglect any of them"[779] for human and societal good.

A telling example of the huge influence of local culture on Muslim students' practices between the 1970s and 1980s was that of Adegbite, who was a charismatic figure in the MSSN. He was appointed and installed as the *Seriki* of Egbaland in 1979, one of the highest-ranked traditional titles of the Egba Kingdom.[780] Probably because such titles require Traditional rites and practices, he was criticised by several Muslims including NACOMYO who considered his acceptance of the title as being at variance with being Muslim. Although he was later appointed as the *Baba Adini* of Egbaland in 1997, Oba Oyebade Lipede (1971-2005) the Egba monarch who bestowed him with the *Seriki* title defended him that year suggesting how he combined being Muslim and remaining a Traditionalist: "Dr. Adebite has remained a devout Muslim, a loyalist, traditionalist and a man of pleasant manner."[781] Even though what is known about Adegbite's role as Seriki is insufficient, his acceptance of the title suggests to me that he did not see the position to affect his identity as a Muslim.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter shows the history of the MSSN by focusing on its idea of Islam and the objectives on which it was established in 1954. Furthermore, it reveals how the ideas and objectives of the Society were propagated up to 1990. It demonstrated that between 1954 and 1990, the Society's idea of Islam emphasised love, peace, unity of Muslims, brother/sisterhood and Islamic moral values, and they were tied to different objectives which included promoting Islamic education, encouraging the development of Western education among Muslims, fighting for the rights of Muslim students, providing a platform for social interaction and protecting the religious identity of Muslim students. The understanding of Islam in the Society as well as its objectives were propagated through the organisation of public lectures, vacation camps, the publication of journals, linking with Muslims across Nigeria and other parts of the world, and challenging authorities in the schools and government. Such practices like drama and songs were also incorporated into the Society for *da'wa*. But there were changes in this

---

[779] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 131–35.

[780] Bashir Adefaka, "The Position of Islam on Terrorism: Lateef Adegbite," *Vanguard*, January 29, 2010, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2010/01/the-position-of-islam-on-terrorism-lateef-adegbite/ (accessed January 5, 2018).

[781] Rufai, "Emergent Issues in Heterodox Islam among the Yoruba of Nigeria": 131.

understanding of Islam, although the impact of the change on everyday practices was limited to a few students. The most obvious was the constitutional reviews and the knowledge that Ahmadis among them were not to be considered 'Muslim.' There was also an understanding that Islam was a comprehensive way of life and that singing was not a good Muslim practice.

The historical conditions in which the MSSN evolved played a role in its conception of Islam and the objectives it sought to achieve. They also shaped how the Society's objectives were publicised and why they change. An example was the MSSN's campaign to support the education of young Muslims as part of Nigeria's development plan in the 1970s. Besides, new notions of Islam (e.g. from 'peace' and 'love' to emphasis on the *kalima* and Sharia) were also adopted by the Society as Nigeria transitioned from colonial rule to an independent state. Even though the shift to these notions of Islam did not cause a fundamental transformation in the lives of the students, it nevertheless signalled the metamorphosis of the MSSN to a reform movement. Both the formulation of the Society's initial objectives and their shift between the colonial and postcolonial eras confirm Asad's argument on the role of different historical conditions in the varying conception of Islam and ways of being Muslim.

This chapter also draw attention to the MSSN's connection with new transnational Muslim movements: IIFSO, WAMY, and the Muslim Brotherhood. The history of MSSN between the 1960s and 1970s gives an insight into why these movements have developed and how they are challenging the legacies of colonialism which include the state in Africa. A number of actors in Nigeria are helping to promote the visions and ideals of these movements. While there have been suspicions and stereotypes about the aims of these movements in many parts of the world,[782] they have nevertheless inspired new definitions and alternative ways of being Muslim in countries like Nigeria. In the next chapter, I will discuss the impact of MSSN's association with these transnational movements on its own reform and the further transformation of the Society to a *sunna*-minded movement.

Furthermore, I suggested in this chapter that the promotion of MSSN's objectives in Yoruba society showed many continuities with the colonial practices and discourse of Islam of the Yoruba Muslim elite up to the 1980s. The continuity happened because the MSSN pioneer members as well as Muslims who schooled in the colonial period and about the second decade of decolonization maintained their relationship with the Society of which the story of Adegbite is an example. Also, the established authorities in such organizations as the Ansar-Ud-Deen

---

[782] Edwin Bakker and Roel Meijer, "Introduction" in *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*, 1–23.

continued to be associated with the activities of the Society as teachers. Consequently, how the MSSN promoted its objectives in Yoruba society up to the 1980s appeared to be a little departure from the notions of Islam of the Muslim elite in the region. The emphasis on Western education, rejection of the Ahmadis and the introduction of music as a form of *da'wa* are examples that point to the nexus. However, the epistemological link on Islam between them is not given. As it happened by the late 1980s, the MSSN began to question and rethink certain notions of Islam in Yoruba society with a significant effect on the history of the Society from the late 1980s which is not only on how it promoted its objectives afterwards but also on the religious life of members. What aspects of these notions were contested? Why were they contested? And, what was the effect of the contestation on the MSSN as a movement and its members? These are part of the questions I try to answer in my discussion of MSSN's reform and organizational crisis in the following chapter.

Chapter Five

**Between New Epistemological Perspectives and Competing Reform Orientations:
MSSN's Reform, Organizational Crisis and Division, 1980 – 2005**

> Before our own generation, the MSSN was known for 'sing-song',
> merrymaking, birthday parties and so on, but today everybody knows that
> when you are looking for Islamic thoughts from the original source (the
> Qurʾan and the *Sunna*), you'll get it from the MSSN. Even when you have
> springs of it in other organizations, it is the product of MSSN doing those
> bits. So MSSN led battle for Islamic re-awakening in Nigeria and
> invariably in Africa too (Mas'ud Bello, National Secretary of MSSN,
> 2004).[783]

5.1 **Introduction**

From about the mid-1980s, there was a 'gradual but radical' attempt to reform the MSSN
practices and encourage all members to imbibe what is considered the *sunna*. This involved
critical debates on 'correct' practices in Islam and *da'wa* methods. Closely connected to this
reform was a marked division in the Society on questions that relate to its identity as a
youth/student movement, organisational control and its transformation beyond a 'school'
movement. This led to fragmentation and schism as several groups left the Society from the
mid-1990s and contested the idea of Islam and practices on which the Society was established
as well as its power structure. I argue in this chapter that the reform in the 1980s was inspired
by historical factors and epistemological change that were connected to the MSSN in Nigeria
and the Yoruba Muslim communities and that these developments contributed to the
transformation of the MSSN to a reform movement and its fragmentation in the mid-1990s. As
I will demonstrate in this chapter, the reform did not happen at once and it was not imposed on
the members of the Society. On the contrary, it took shape gradually through discourses on the
traditions of Islam and non-Muslims. It also involved a conscious effort to promote religious
change and define what is a good Muslim in modern times.

In the first section of this chapter, I analyse the various aspects of this process of reform,
particularly the main actors and their *da'wa* activities. I also draw attention to the role of
transnational Islamic movements mentioned in Chapter Four and the impact of the Iranian
revolution in 1979. An aspect of my argument in this section is that the reform in the MSSN
was the outcome of debates among various actors which included students who studied abroad

---

[783] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

and in Nigeria. To illustrate this further, I will draw attention to these debates in relation to the concepts of knowledge referred to as *àgbọ́yé* (Yoruba, understanding) and *ḥujja* (Arabic, 'proof/evidence') that developed from the interaction of these actors. Furthermore, I will explain why the emphasis on these concepts motivated members of MSSN to follow the *sunna*. Also, I will highlight what members of the Society referred to as *sunna* in relation to the contemporary social changes regarded as modernity.

In the second section, I employ Asad's conceptualisation of Islam as a discursive tradition to illustrate the process and key elements in the discourses that shaped reform in the MSSN. This section also analyses the two main factions that emerged in the MSSN on these discourses, "The Jama'at" and "The Mainstream." I will also shed light on the practices and beliefs that were contested and defined as correct in Islam and how the two factions in the Society shaped the discourse. This analysis will be continued in the third section by showing that while the discourse in the MSSN focused on the traditions of Islam, it also included basic issues that relate to the transition of members from educational institutions to public life. In addition, it includes debate on the identity of MSSN as a youth/student movement. I analyse this debate on youth/student by drawing upon and contributing to the literature on the concept of 'youth.'

In the fourth section, I argue that the discourse that enabled reform in the MSSN does not only centre on asserting authoritative viewpoints about the traditions of Islam as Asad points out. A look beyond the discourse also reveals an actual contest for power and control of the MSSN as an organisation, and I draw attention to this in the section on 'tension and division.' On this point about power, I draw attention to the key actors in the contest such as Abdul-Fatai Thanni and Taofeek Abdul-Azeez and the plot to take control of the Society in the mid-1990s which involved "The Jama'at" and "The Mainstream" factions. In this section, I also note that by 1995, the tension created by the plot led to the breaking away of The Jama'at (which became the TMC) and other factions from the MSSN. By 2005, two other factions also left the Society due to the contest for power and differences in the interpretation of Islam. To understand these break-away factions, I give an overview of their interpretations of Islam and their activities (i.e. TMC, Dawah Front, Lagos Brothers, *Laa Jama'ah,* TIMSAN). Beyond an overview of these new movements and the crisis that led to their formation, I intend to give an empirical evidence to my argument in Chapter Two about "reintepretation" and "schism" as forms of religious change.

In the concluding section, I reflect on the reform and crisis in the MSSN and how my argument departs from Peel's notion of religious change among Yoruba Muslims. Also, I wish to note that the history of the MSSN in this chapter is a continuation of how post-colonial Nigeria shaped religious change and encounters which I discussed in Chapter Four. Various examples such as Nigeria's educational policy that give rise to graduates of *madrasas* in the MSSN and what is defined as the *sunna* concerning modernity are given to illustrate this point.

5.1 Aspects of Islamic reform in the MSSN

The radical reform in the MSSN from the 1980s was a process that began before this period. Loimeier's study has drawn attention to the fact that historical conditions in a particular context are central to the emergence of an Islamic reform movement.[784] I found this to be true in the case of the MSSN as focusing on the Yoruba Muslim society and specific actors demonstrate that there were historical factors and epistemological change that shaped the reform in the MSSN. The historical factors include the emergence and influence of Muslim graduates (who studied both abroad and in the local *madrasas*) and their *da'wa* activities, while epistemological change focuses on the theory of reform which is framed around two key concepts of knowledge: *ḥujja*, and *agboye*. I refer to these historical factors and epistemological shift as the 'aspects' of reform in the MSSN to show that the reform was neither shaped by one single process nor fixed to a point in time. With respect to my argument in Chapter Two on religious change, the reform involved many factors which are entangled into one another such as the actors that facilitated the it and their activities as well as the historical conditions that aided the the process. The reform also showed different forms such as the reinterpretation of existing practice (e.g. *sunna*). Both the process and forms are, indeed, crucial to understanding the Islamic reform in the MSSN and how it was achieved from the 1980s. I begin by showing the process and forms with the case of returnee graduates and their propagation of Islam through study groups among Muslim students.

5.1.1 Returnee graduates, study groups and *da'wa*

Before the British colonial administrators conceded, after several agitations, to establish a tertiary institution in Nigeria in 1948,[785] many young Nigerians had been attending universities in the UK or the US. In contrast to the colleges such as Yaba Higher College founded in 1932

---

[784] Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 23.
[785] Ade Fajana, "Colonial Control and Education: The Development of Higher Education in Nigeria, 1900-1950," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 6, no. 3 (1972): 336–9.

in which they presumed to train Africans for mid-level administrative positions,[786] the scholarship abroad was regarded as the 'golden fleece,' a symbol of authority and honour that guaranteed them a higher status in professional life.[787] From the late 1950s, several Muslim students who had been associated with the MSSN joined those who sought their scholarship in the UK and the US as well as Egypt, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. In addition to their studies, they were exposed to various Islamic teachings and movements. On their return, they established study groups and organisations which they employed for *da'wa* activities that were often connected to those abroad. These study groups attracted the participation of Muslims in many communities, including members of MSSN, in the learning of Islamic texts. Over time, through the members of MSSN in these study groups, new interpretations of Islam found their way into the MSSN. In many communities, the returnees were well respected not only because of their knowledge of Islam but also due to their exposure outside the country. Thus, I refer to them as the men of *Ọlaju* in the Yoruba Muslim communities. These returnee graduates are many, but I will focus on four who were frequently mentioned by my respondents and who had a significant impact on the history of the Society.

Jibril Oyekan was a leading example among these returnees. He completed his bachelor's and graduate degrees at the Imperial College London in the 1960s with a doctorate in Chemical Engineering. As I noted in Chapter Four, he considered London to be the place where he "fully discovered Islam."[788] This is because of the cosmopolitan nature of the university which allowed him to meet Muslim students from different parts of the world including Arabs, Indians, Pakistanis and Turks. The university had a mosque and an association for Muslims, the Imperial College Islamic Society (ISOC), which he later headed. The ISOC had a study group where members memorised the Qur'an and engaged Islamic texts in seminars. In addition to these texts, Oyekan also attended lectures organised by the London Islamic Circle outside the university. The information about those who formed this circle is scant, but according to Oyekan, the circle had Muslims of many nationalities who met every Saturday at

---

[786] See F. O. Ogunlade, "Education and Politics in Colonial Nigeria: The Case of King's College, Lagos (1906-1911)," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 7, no. 2 (1974).

[787] Adebayo Oyebade, "A Retrospect on Colonial Nigeria," in *The Foundations of Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Toyin Falola*, ed. Adebayo Oyebade, 15–26 (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003); Ojiaku, Mazi Okoro and Ulansky, Gene, "Early Nigerian Response to American Education," *Phylon* 33, no. 4 (1972): 380–3.

[788] Jibril Oyekan, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

the Islamic Cultural Centre. The Centre, which was granted to migrant Muslims in 1944, also had a mosque before the building of the London Central Mosque, at Regent's Park by 1976.[789]

As a representative of ISOC, Oyekan contributed to the formation of the Federation of Students Islamic Societies in the UK and Ireland (FOSIS) in 1963. Like the vision set for the MSSN, the FOSIS was aimed at uniting all Muslim students' organisations in the UK and Ireland. Oyekan first served as Secretary of FOSIS and later as President. He was also the chairman of FOSIS' monthly journal, *The Muslim*, for some years. The platform provided by FOSIS further allowed Oyekan to interact with prominent Islamist thinkers in the Muslim world such as Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi (1903-1979), a Pakistani and author of several Islamic texts.[790] He also had exchanges with Muhammad Asad (1900-1992) who gave lectures at programmes organised by the FOSIS. Muhammad Asad was born Leopold Weiss but adopted the Muslim name after converting to Islam. He authored the English translated Qur'anic text, *The Message of the Qur'an*.[791] By 1970, on his return to Nigeria, Oyekan introduced a weekly study circle, Qur'anic Study Group*,* at the University of Lagos (UNILAG). According to him, the group focused on intensive study of the fundamentals of Islam in the Qur'an and the *sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad. A number of students in the MSSN participated in this circle, and he considered them to have "transmitted the spirit" of what they had learnt to the Society when they became leaders.[792] As I noted in the previous chapter, Oyekan also played a role in the establishment of WAMY as a regional representative in Lagos. In his professional life, he served in many ministries of the government in Nigeria as a director such as the Ministry of Industries and the Department of Petroleum Resources and was later appointed a member of the Board of Trustees of the MSSN.

There was also the Islamic Study Group of Nigeria (ISGON) used by many Muslim elites to study the Qur'an and the Hadith. Up to the early 2000s, the group often addressed the public on social issues such as alcoholism. Akande Abdul-Kareem Hussein, a pioneer member of the MSSN who studied in the United States, was a major figure in this group between the 1970s and 1990s. He became a professor in the field of biochemistry and taught in Nigeria and at a

---

[789] For a history of the mosque, see A. L. Tibawi, "History of the London Central Mosque and the Islamic Cultural Centre, 1910-1980," *Die Welt des Islams* 21, 1/4 (1981).

[790] See Roy Jackson, *Mawlana Mawdudi and Political Islam: Authority and the Islamic State* (London: Routledge, 2011).

[791] See Zahid M. Amir, "First Wind of Islamic Revivalism After World War II: Muhammad Asad (1900-92) and International Islamic Colloquium, 1957-58," *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies*, no. 8 (2015).

[792] Jibril Oyekan, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

university in Sudan.[793] One of the students that participated in this study group was Ibrahim Uthman, the B-Zone MSSN President in 1994. He was an active member of ISGON between the 1970s and 1980s, although he also identified with other Muslim organisations in this period. At ISGON, he was inspired by Hussein's method of teaching, because according to him, Hussein would discuss what he and other colleagues had learnt at the end of each meeting with them one after the other. This method of learning as well as his exposure to various Islamic texts during the meetings ensured that he was well-informed about Islam and could engage many Islamic texts when he eventually became a committed member of the MSSN.[794]

Dawud Noibi, mentioned in previous chapters, was another returnee MSSN graduate. From a young age, Noibi had a "burning desire" to know about Islam and speak Arabic. Thus, in 1965, he enrolled in the Arabic and Islamic Studies programme at Cairo University, Egypt and declined an offer to study English. By 1972, he completed his graduate studies in the same field at the American University in Cairo. While at Cairo, he facilitated the formation of an MSSN branch in the university together with other Nigerian students. His knowledge of Arabic was enhanced when he had a temporary appointment as a broadcaster and translator of Yoruba-Arabic-English language on the Egyptian Radio (also known as Radio Cairo) for the Nigerian community in Cairo between 1966-1972. Before this time, he had worked with Imam Ekemode of Ansar-Ud-Deen at the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation as a discussant. As I noted in Chapter Four, he lectured at the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies of the University of Ibadan (UI) where he was appointed a professor. He also served as Imam of the UI Muslim community up to 1990.[795] Through his weekly Friday sermons and Ramadan lectures, he engaged the Muslim community, including students on issues such as the Sharia and the importance of unity among Muslims in Nigeria. He was also invited to MSSN programmes for lectures, and Uthman considered him to have inspired many students, especially those who thought it was impossible to do a proper exegesis of Islamic texts in English.[796]

The other major figure was Abdul-Fatah Thanni (b. 1939). In 1969, after completing his elementary education at Ansar-Ud-Deen Primary School and Qur'anic studies at a *madrasa* in Lagos, he travelled to Kuwait to further his education. He studied at a teacher training institute in Kuwait and received a bachelor's degree in Accounting and Economics at the University of Kuwait. Within this period, he had a special coaching on Islamic education and was exposed

---

[793] Ibrahim Adegbola, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, July 27, 2017, communication on Facebook.
[794] Ibrahim Uthman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[795] D. O. S. Noibi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[796] Ibrahim Uthman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

to several texts of Islamic scholars. After his education, he worked for almost a decade in Kuwait. He was first employed by the Kuwait Finance House, a bank established in 1977 to operate according to Islamic law. He also worked at an American school called Al-Bayan as a business manager before his return to Nigeria in 1982. In 1984, he was appointed a representative of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of Kuwait for Nigeria and West Africa, a position he held until 1990. The ministry supervises charitable institutions which assist Muslims in many parts of the world in such areas as education, Qur'anic study centres, and refugee crises.[797] By 1990, Thanni decided to dedicate himself fully to *da'wa*.[798] For most of my respondents, Thanni is assumed to be the most influential figure in the radical reform and crisis in MSSN from the mid-1980s, which sets him apart from other returnees. Unlike others, he broke the barriers of societal approval against the expression of what is referred to as "pristine Islam" in the Society.[799] His project of reform was promoted in many ways which included establishing a *da'wa* group called the Islamic Centre of Nigeria (ICN) in the 1980s. The Centre produced sermons on audio cassettes and engaged many young Muslims in weekly study circles in places such as Lagos and Ibadan.[800] Later, I will discuss how he contributed to the reforms and the crisis in the MSSN.

There were other returnees from countries such as Sudan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia in the 1980s who taught Islam based on those considered *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* (or Salafis). One could argue that the Salafi orientation might not be new to the MSSN in this period. Lauzière has argued that even though it was restricted in meaning, the Salafi orientation in Islam had existed prior to the twentieth century. While it only reflected a theological position in the past, today it has been expanded to represent the broader examples of some predecessors as well as theology, laws, and etiquette.[801] With the assumption that the Salafi interpretation of Islam had gained currency from the twentieth century, it is possible to argue that some Yoruba Muslims were already familiar with it by the time the MSSN was established in 1954. Thurston's study on Salafism in Northern Nigeria has drawn attention to another root of this interpretation of Islam in

---

[797] Mara A. Leichtman, "Kuwaiti Humanitarianism: The History and Expansion of Kuwait'S Foreign Assistance Policies,", *Policy Brief* 11 (Virginia: School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, August 2017), 11; Holger Weiss, "Zakat and the Question of Social Welfare: An Introductory Essay on Islamic Economics and Its Implications for Social Welfare," in *Social Welfare in Muslim Societies in Africa*, ed. Holger Weiss, 7–38 (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2002), 24.

[798] Shaykh Abdul-Fatah Muhammad Thanni, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 22, 2018, Lagos; The Muslim Congress, "Interview with Sheikh Abdul Fatah Thanni: YouTube,", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNxTecOxHD8 (accessed January 8, 2018).

[799] Abdur-Raheem Luqman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 16, 2016, YABATECH, Lagos.

[800] Ibid.

[801] Lauzière, "The Construction of Salafiyya": 384.

Yorubaland. His study refers to two Yoruba Muslims who studied in Saudi Arabia's Islamic University of Medina which introduced the Salafi canon to Muslim students in different parts of the world.[802] There was Iysa Ade Bello (b. 1949) who obtained an LL.B. in Islamic Law in 1976 at the Islamic University of Medina and later a PhD at the University of Toronto in 1986. He was WAMY's African representative between 1986 and 1993, but Thurston doubted his Salafi credentials based on what he regarded as the Salafi canons. There was also Abdurrasheed Hadiyyatullah, who attended the university in the 1960s. Unlike Bello, Hadiyyatullah continued to be linked to Saudi Arabia. He established the Sharia College of Nigeria in Iwo, Osun State in 1988. In 1999, the college was renamed Sheikh Abdul-Azeez bin Abdullahi bin Baaz Sharia College, a renowned Salafi scholar, to commemorate his death.[803] Thurston further showed that while the Islamic University's attempt to recruit students began in the 1960s, it was not until the 1980s that their recruiting became successful in Northern Nigeria through its global outreach tours (*dawr̄at*). Nigerians ranked as the highest number of students who attended the university between 1982 and 1997, having 245 teachers and 8,146 students of all nationalities which ranged from Senegal to Great Britain to Sri Lanka.[804]

My Salafi respondents also told me that many of their teachers studied in Saudi Arabia and countries such as Yemen and Sudan. On their return, they established *madrasas* and mosques where they introduced Salafism to many students. [805] Among these learning centres are the Madrasa at-Tawheed As-Salafiyyah, Ede; Centre for Ahlus-Sunnah Wal-Jamaa'ah, Osogbo; Mahdul Umar bn Khattab, Orile-Iganmu Lagos; and Daarus-Salafiyyah, Ibadan.[806] But some students were introduced to Salafism in Northern Nigeria. Among them was Abubakar Afis, who told me he embraced the *sunna* at a mosque in Kaduna in 1995.[807] He later studied Mass Communication at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Kaduna and Law at OAU in Osun. He began to teach at one of the Salafi *madrasas* in Osun after his law programme. The history of Afis illustrates that Salafism was introduced to the MSSN by many students who attended Salafi learning centres outside school. Moreover, the MSSN also facilitated its introduction by inviting many returnee Salafis to its programmes. But in addition to these returnees, as noted

---

[802] Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria*, 88–90.
[803] "Shariah College of Nigeria,", http://www.shariahcollege.com/Home (accessed March 5, 2018).
[804] Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria*, 89.
[805] Abubakar Afis (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 11, 2016, Ilesa Osun.
[806] SimplySalafiyyah, "Preaching the Creed and Methodology of the Salaf to Africa and the World,", http://simplysalafiyyah.com/ (accessed March 6, 2018); "Daarus-Salafiyyah, Ibadan, Nigeria,", https://www.facebook.com/pg/Daarus-Salafiyyah-Ibadan-Nigeria-553996631378744/photos/?ref=page_internal (accessed March 6, 2018).
[807] Abubakar Afis (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

below, the MSSN also had graduates from local *madrasas* who contributed to the reform in the Society.

5.1.2 **Graduates from local *madrasas***

When it was founded in 1954, the MSSN was made up of students attending Christian missions' schools and public schools. Generally, many of these students were considered to know less about their religion than the *madrasa* graduates.[808] Through the years, the Society gradually witnessed a rise in the number of students that were knowledgeable in Qur'anic education. The arrival of these students, which brought a new pattern to the membership of the Society, was facilitated by two related factors. The first was due to parents who insisted that their children must have Qur'anic education at least up to *'idadiyyah*[809] level while they were enrolled in Western schools.[810] In this category of students, there were those who completed the *'idadiyyah* level before enrolling in Western schools, those who attended the Western and Qur'anic schools at the same time, and those who attended the *madrasa* after completing secondary schools before proceeding to tertiary institutions. The second factor is connected to the reform of many *madrasas* which integrated Western school pedagogy into their mode of learning. This began with the *madrasa* of Shaykh Kamalud-deen Al-Adaby (1905–2005) in the early 1940s.[811] The reforms of these *madrasas* were further enhanced by a change in Nigeria's education system which allowed their graduates to obtain a certificate and diploma, and later degrees, in tertiary institutions. This began with the provision of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the West African School Certificate (WASC) examinations from the late 1950s[812] and the establishment of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at UI which started a certificate programme in 1963/1964.[813] The educational experience of many of my respondents fit into either of these two contexts, among whom were Afis Oladosu, Abideen Olaiya, M. O. Abdul-Rahman, Ibrahim Uthman and Taofeeq Yekini.

---

[808] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

[809] The contemporary *madrasas* in Yorubaland mostly operates on three levels corresponding to the modern school system in Nigeria: *Ibtida'iyyah* (elementary), *'idadiyyah* (intermediate) and *thānawiyyah* (secondary). At the *'idadiyyah* level students learn such subjects as *tafsīr* (exegesis), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and Hadith. See Akeem A. Oladiti, "The Growth and Development of Modern Arabic Schools in Ibadan, 1945-2000," *Historical Research* Letter 12 (2014): 27; Aliyu, Transmission of Learning in Modern Ilorin, 33.

[810] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[811] Aliyu, *Transmission of learning in modern Ilorin*, 113–40.

[812] Abdul-Ganiy A.-S. Oladosu, "Fluctuations in the Fortune of Arabic Education in Nigeria," (115th Inaugural Lecture, University of Ilorin, Thursday September 27, 2012), 20.

[813] Ishaq Oloyede, "Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigerian Universities: Trends, Development and Challenges," (Paper presented at the University of Ibadan 50th anniversary of Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2012), 11–15.

Because of the emphasis on non-discrimination and brotherhood in the Society, the MSSN accommodated these students with positions of authority once they showed their interest and commitment. They were appointed to leadership positions such as Imam and *Amir* (known as President in the MSSN). They were also tasked with teaching Qur'an memorization, doing *tafsīr* or leading *adhkār* ('remembering' God). The *adhkār* includes the recitation of the names of God or texts from the Qur'an which are understood as an invocation and a form of worship. Through the Qur'an memorization, *tafsīr* and *adhkār*, these graduate students helped to shape the practices and opinions of members regarding Islam. They engaged in discourses, which many of my respondents told me were mostly in line with the goals and objectives of the Society. For this reason, I am of the view that their participation also contributed to knowledge production in the MSSN. As one of my respondents narrated to me, they were involved in discourses on Islam that were introduced to the Society by the returnees.[814] This suggests that the reform in the MSSN was not an imposed project from foreign graduates but a product of discourses between them and the graduates from local *madrasas*.

I wish to point out that the emergence of both returnees and graduates from local *madrasas* created some mentor-student groupings in which members were attached to different mentors like Noibi, Hussein, Oyekan and Thanni. The executives of MSSN all-over Yorubaland and other parts of the country also identify with different mentors in their respective communities. Owing to their relationship, these executives helped to invite their mentors to give lectures at MSSN programmes. The influence of such figures as Noibi and Thanni grew in the Society as a result of this. Gradually, their influence also began to compete with the clerics of the existing Muslim organisations in Yorubaland such as the Ansar-Ud-Deen and Ahmadiyya who had been invited to the MSSN from inception. However, until much later, this openness to a variety of scholars was not a major problem because the Society enjoined different opinions about Islam. In addition to the contributions made by these new Muslim figures, the contributions of many transnational Islamist movements were also key to the reform process.

5.1.3 Transnational Islamic movements

As I noted in Chapter Four, members of MSSN participated in international conferences organised by IIFSO and WAMY in the 1960s and 1970s in many parts of the world. Nigeria also hosted four international conferences in the same period at Ibadan (1966), Kaduna (1968),

---

[814] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

Ibadan (1975) and Lagos (1979).[815] Up to 2000, these conferences continued to be organised every two or three years depending on resources.[816] The example of Solaja, discussed in Chapter Four, who found out about the claim of prophethood of the Ahmadiyya Movement's founder in one of these conferences showed that they exposed participants to new information and knowledge which made an impact on religious reform.

Providing access to Islamic literature was another major contribution of these movements to the reform in MSSN. Through these movements, many Muslim students were exposed to texts referred to as the "IIFSO series"[817] produced by many Islamist thinkers. These include Hammudah Abdal-Ati's *Islam in Focus,*[818] Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi's *Let us be Muslims,*[819] Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones,*[820] and WAMY's *Islam in Concept.*[821] The students also had access to texts of early theologians and books of Hadith such as *Fiqh Us-sunnah,*[822] *Sahih Al-Bukhari,*[823] *Sahih Muslim*[824] and *Ihya' 'Ulum Al-Deen.*[825] The access to these texts and other MSSN programmes contributed to the development of Islamic knowledge of many students. As narrated to me by Zafaran Adeniyi, a leader in MSSN in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the lessons from the texts also facilitated strong commitments of students towards Islam and the development of "better Muslim" in the Society.[826]

The effect of the 1979 Iranian revolution was also relevant in this change. In many parts of the world, the revolution contributed to the rise of 'political Islam'[827] and the instability in Middle-East/global politics.[828] The revolution was followed by a strategic attempt to seek international support for the new state in many African countries such as Nigeria, and students belonged to

---

[815] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 15.

[816] Afis Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[817] Zafaran Omotope Adeniyi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[818] Hammudah Abdal-Ati, *Islam in Focus*, 2nd ed. 16 of International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (Indianapolis, Ind.: American Trust Publications, 1980, ©1975); WAMY studies on Islam.

[819] Sayyid A. A.'l. Mawdudi, *Let Us Be Muslims* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1985).

[820] Sayyid Quṭb, *Milestones* (Salimiah, Kuwait, Chicago, IL: International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, 2003, First ed. 1964).

[821] World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), *Islam in Concept* (Kuwait City: Dar Al Watan Publishing, 1980).

[822] As-Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh Us-Sunnah,* 5 in 1 (Indiana: American Trust Publications, 1991).

[823] Muḥammad i. I. Bukhārī and Muhammad M. Khan, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī: The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Riyadh-Saudi Arabia: Darussalam Pub. & Distr., 1997).

[824] Muslim a.-Ḥ. al-Qushayrī et al., *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: English Translation of Sahîh Muslim* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007).

[825] Imam M. Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm Al-Dīn*, al-Ṭabʿah 1, 10 vols. (Jiddah: Dār al-Minhāj lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzīʿ, 2011).

[826] Zafaran Omotope Adeniyi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[827] Shireen T. Hunter, "Iran and the Spread of Revolutionary Islam," *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (2007).

[828] Nikki R. Keddie, *Iran and the Muslim World: Resistance and Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 118–26.

some of the target groups for this international support.[829] Indeed, the success of the revolution was not lost on many Muslim students who wished for an Islamic state in Nigeria. Some officers of the Society who were inspired by the revolution actually contacted the Iranian government in this period through its Cultural Attaché at the Iranian embassy in Lagos.[830] They collected texts, magazines and journals from the embassy in which the ideals of the new Islamic state and other Muslims' concerns were discussed. A major example was the monthly periodical *Mahjuba* (The Covered woman) which discussed the model character of Muslim women, the family, and the Islamic legal positions on women's rights and duties within the community. The magazine was said to have introduced some members of the Society to pictures of women in *ḥijāb* and *niqāb,*[831] even though the wives of the *alfas* belonging to the Bamidele movement had been using a similar veil called 'purdah' by many Yoruba Muslims before then.

But, in spite of being inspired by the revolution, the relationship between Iran and the MSSN was short-lived. This was because the Society was cautioned by some enlightened returnees and local scholars on the difference between the Iranian Shi'i Islam and the Saudi Arabian Sunni orientation which the majority of Muslims in Nigeria identified with.[832] With this knowledge, Dhikirullah O. Hassan, a member of the Society narrated that "We severed our relationship with the Iranian embassy when we started realising that what we were being called towards was the Shia ideology as opposed to the *Ahlu-Sunna* which is the background of our Islamic practice."[833] It is also possible that the MSSN's decision to cut ties with Iran was influenced by Saudi Arabia's inspired international youth movement, WAMY, of which the MSSN was a member. As a major promoter of the Sunni creed, Saudi Arabia used such organizations as WAMY to compete for influence against Shiism in many Muslim societies. It is also worth noting that while most members of the MSSN considered the success of the Iranian revolution as an inspiration, which convinced them that Islam was also practicable as a political system, they objected to the strategy of the revolutionists. According to Hassan, we realised "the fact that the way of revolution could not be fitting in into (sic) Nigerian political reality in establishing our goal."[834] I understand the use of "Nigerian political reality" to mean

---

[829] Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria*, 78–79.

[830] Muhammadu-Thani, *The Impacts of Hassan's Writings on the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria*, 74.

[831] Zafaran Omotope Adeniyi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[832] Abdur-Raheem Luqman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[833] Quoted in Muhammadu-Thani, *The Impacts of Hassan's Writings on the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria*, 74.

[834] Ibid.

its diversity especially in terms of ethnicity and religious groups. Almost a decade before the Iranian revolution, Nigeria's civil war, as I noted in Chapter Four, had demonstrated how deep the problems of ethno-religious identities were for the country. Given these various concerns, the MSSN began to discourage members from reading literature from Iran. During my fieldwork, one of my respondents showed me samples of this literature but cautioned me against reading them.

The National Vice-President of the MSSN (International Affairs), Ibrahim El-Zakzaky and other students in Northern Nigeria, however, gave support to the Shi'a Muslim government in Iran. Some Iranian diplomats and clerics were reported to have introduced Khomeini's teaching to members of the MSSN in the region. In line with the teaching, El-Zakzaky also supported a Muslim state ideology against the western-inspired nation-state and led a protest against Nigeria's constitution in Zaria in 1980. He later established a Shi'a Muslim movement in Northern Nigeria called the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) in 1980 to demonstrate his support for the Iranian-style state system.[835] Over the years, the Nigerian government has been concerned about the security threat posed by this movement. El-Zakzaky has thus been arrested and detained by security operatives because of his activities which are considered to violate state laws. Apart from the North, some Yoruba Muslims have also identified as Shi'ites, among who is Mr. Muftau Zakariya. Between 2018 and July 2019, Zakariya led the protest in Abuja and Lagos to call for the release El-Zakzaky who was detained by the government in 2015 after members of his movement clashed with security forces in Kaduna.[836] Even though there are no reliable figures on the Shi'ites in Nigeria, these members have increased in population since 1980.[837]

Rather than the Iranian model, the MSSN embraced the ideals of the Muslim Brotherhood in the writings of Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb and Abul A'la Mawdudi's *Jamaat-i-Islami* (Islamic Society).[838] While these three figures had their point of divergence, they share similar worldviews on the comprehensiveness of Islam as a way of life for state and society. They also held the Qur'an, *sunna* and Sharia as foundations of pious Muslim life and considered being

---

[835] Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria*, 78-9, 95-7; Abdul-Raufu Mustapha and Mukthar U. Bunza, "Contemporary Islamic Sects and Groups in Northern Nigeria" in *Sects and Social Disorder*, 70–74.

[836] Kingsley Omonobi et al., "How DCP, 7 Others Died as Shi'ites Protest Turns Bloody in Abuja," *Vanguard*, July 23, 2019, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/07/how-dcp-7-others-died-as-shiites-protest-turns-bloody-in-abuja/ (accessed July 27, 2019).

[837] Hakeem Onapajo, "State Repression and Religious Conflict: The Perils of the State Clampdown on the Shi'a Minority in Nigeria," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 37, no. 1 (2017): 82–6.

[838] Muhammadu-Thani, *The Impacts of Hassan's Writings on the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria*, 47–51.

faithful to the establishment of God's sovereignty would bring success, power and eternal reward to Muslims.[839] These thoughts inspired many members of the MSSN who began to mould their lives according to them. The training and range of activities for developing a pious life espoused by Al-Bana and Mawdudi also made an impact on the reforms of the MSSN activities.[840] A major aspect of this was Mawdudi's focus on 'knowledge' of Islam which he considered the first step in building *Iman* (faith) and being Muslim.[841] As I will demonstrate in Chapter Seven, acquiring Islamic knowledge became one of the key aspects of the MSSN reform.

The Muslim Brotherhood, as I noted in Chapter Two, is considered to have a political agenda to establish an Islamic state, but its members are divided on either taking a revolutionary approach or a progressive one.[842] Qutb's radical thought favours the former and it has been understood by many, especially the media, to be the starting point for many radical groups.[843] The MSSN follows the second approach, which involves a gradualist moral reform with no plan to take power by violence. Oladosu, who had a view of 'religious movement' in terms of power, was thus quick to point out to me that the MSSN had no vision of establishing a state because it was not the vision of the Society:

> The root is the Muslim students in the schools; from primary to secondary to tertiary institutions. That was the vision that led to the founding of the Society. But once it becomes a movement, it would be for those who want to establish a state. Those who want to move Islam – in theory – to the practice in all its ramification. Essentially, the establishment of an Islamic state like you have in the Arab world. But we know that once that is done, the foundation would be lost.[844]

The major factors that made the MSSN adopt evolutionary reforms are not very clear. But one way of looking at this is to consider Oladosu's position in this period that the MSSN was not given to foreign *da'wa* and opinions that were not suitable for the local context[845] or the 'Nigerian political reality.' I also look at the MSSN decision as a product of self-reflection and

---

[839] Michel Hoebink, "Thinking About Renewal in Islam: Towards a History of Islamic Ideas on Modernization and Secularization," *Arabica* 46, no. 1 (1999): 42–4; John Calvert, "Wayward Son: The Muslim Brotherhood's Reception of Sayyid Qutb," in *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*, ed. Edwin Bakker and Roel Meijer, 249–71 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 249–63.

[840] Muhammadu-Thani, *The Impacts of Hassan's Writings on the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria*, 75–76.

[841] Mawdudi, *Let us be Muslims*, 47–51.

[842] John Calvert, "Wayward Son" in *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*, 250–63; John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, 3rd ed. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 138.

[843] Hoebink, "Thinking about Renewal in Islam": 51–3; James Toth, *Sayyid Qutb: The Life and Legacy of a Radical Islamic Intellectual* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 1–4.

[844] Afis Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[845] Oladosu, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria at 60".

negotiation on Islamic practices in which many Muslims are engaged. Within the Islamic tradition, as noted by Asad, many Muslims do not act upon what they read in Islamic texts without reinterpreting them in relation to their social context.[846] As the MSSN example suggests, their actions are often determined by the experience and context they find themselves in. The ideals of Al-Banna and Mawdudi on education, science and technology among others, which are produced in the West, may also have appealed to many students in Yorubaland. Although they both advocated for the Islamization of Western values and technology,[847] I understand their emphasis on this form of Islamization as resonating with Yoruba Muslims' interest in education, *ọlaju* and the ability to compete with Christians. It was, therefore, these ideals that further shaped their understanding of Islam on how to negotiate and live as better Muslims in the post-colonial context. As Otayek and Soares have suggested in the notion of *islam mondain*, this form of negotiation is common among many Muslims in the modern world that is largely influenced by neoliberal policies.[848]

In sum, I argue that these three developments in the MSSN: the arrival of Muslim graduates from abroad, graduates from local *madrasas* and the MSSN link to transnational Islamic movements, all contributed to the reform and crisis in the Society. However, they do not adequately explain all the factors that shaped members' attitudes towards the idea of reform and being better Muslims. As I will discuss below, the request for *ḥujja*[849] (proof) was also crucial in this reform.

5.1.4 'Factically *Ḥujja'*

I wish to note that only one of my respondents used the expression, "factically *ḥujja*."[850] But I assumed it was a popular expression in the past because I interacted with many others who used similar anglicized expressions such as "sunnatic," "unsunnatic," "ḥijābites," "niqābites" and "mechanical a<u>dh</u>kār." These concepts may be understood on the one hand as part of 'Muslim popular culture,' involving the blending of Arabic or Islamic ideas with other elements of popular cultures. On the other hand, I consider them to be products of the learning experience of Muslims who engaged in Western thought in the 'secular' school system. Owing to this engagement, members of the MSSN often discussed Islamic issues from that perspective

---

[846] Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*.

[847] Eran Lerman, "Mawdudi's Concept of Islam," *Middle Eastern Studies* 17, no. 4 (1981): 497–8; Mitchell, *The Society for the Muslim Brothers*, 283–89.

[848] Otayek and Soares, *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*, 17–19.

[849] *Ḥujja* is spelt as *Ujja* or *Hujja* in the documents I used.

[850] Abdur-Raheem Luqman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

by referring to Western scholars who confirmed their discourse. The use of these expressions is related to what Peel referred to in the case of the NASFAT's jargon such as, "marketing our product" and "showcasing itself" to describe its activities. But Peel could not tell where these expressions had been borrowed, from the world of business, media or through Pentecostal born-again Christianity.[851] Although I do not argue that borrowings did not happen, I wish to suggest that Peel's inability to explain this is due to the failure to recognise the key influence of Western education in shaping their thoughts and expressions. There are many Yoruba Muslims who read novels and motivational books and those who attend leadership and entrepreneurship courses often organised by the MSSN, and it is inconceivable to assume that the knowledge gained from them would not impact on their thoughts. Moreover, their Western educational engagements are not the only influence that shaped their thoughts, they also employed the broader Yoruba culture, especially by using proverbs and *ewi* (poems) to explain Islamic issues. Sara Katz's recent article draws attention to the fact that by the 1920s, Yoruba Muslim journalists had been using this technique to translate Qur'anic verses and concepts for a broader audience who read their newspapers.[852] While this technique continued to be noticed in the sermons of Yoruba Muslim clerics, discussing Islam based on either the Western thoughts or the Yoruba worldview is actually part of the key issues which the concept of *ḥujja* sought to address in the MSSN by the early 1980s.

On *ḥujja*, I build on the definition of Gardet and Hodgson[853] who suggest that *ḥujja* means both proof and presentation of proof. It is a Qur'anic term that is applied to an argument that is false and an argument that is true. It is close to the word *dalīl* in the sense of "proof," as well as "*burhān*" in the sense of "argument." However, *dalīl* suggests "indication" or "guide" that leads to certainty while *ḥujja* suggests a final argument that beckons no reply. Also, while *burhān* suggests clear evidence of an incontestable proof and the correct reasoning that produced it, the meaning of *ḥujja* as a contrary argument remained unchanged. The notion of "dialectical proof" is thus suggested by Gardet and Hodgson as the translation of the primary meaning of *ḥujja*.

---

[851] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orișa-religion*, 188.

[852] Katz, "Islamic Prestige, Piety and Debate in Early Lagosian Newspapers, 1920s–40s": 58–9.

[853] Gardet, L and Hodgson, M.G.S, "Ḥudjdja," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. Bearman, P. Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, 2nd ed., http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0297 (accessed January 15, 2018).

Studies by Noah Salomon and Seesemann suggest that the emphasis on *proof* is at the core of the discourses of reformist thinkers and their projects in Muslim Africa.[854] For these reformers, any practice and belief in Islam that has no evidence in the Qur'an and Hadith is an unlawful innovation. Noah Salomon's study of post-independence Sudan shows that *dalīl* is used by a Salafi inspired group known as Ansar al-Sunna to contest the practices of Sufi brothers. However, while it is usually assumed that only the Islamic reform movements participated in the episteme of evidence, Salomon insists that the Sufis also make requests for it, even though they also consider the establishment of truth to be in the domain of secrecy (*sirr*) or what is elusive.[855]

Little is known about how the idea of *ḥujja* developed in the MSSN. A magazine of the MSSN UNILAG branch suggests that it was in the era of reform in the Society which began in 1979[856] and coincided with Iran's revolution year. One of my respondents also suggests that it was probably through the returnee graduates who participated in the MSSN programmes.[857] What is important to note is that the request for *ḥujja* marked the beginning of an era in the MSSN in which members questioned almost everything they were told on Islam, from the 'most established' to those that were 'taken for granted' in everyday religious life. As Taofeeq Yekin described it:

> There was an era in MSSN, whatever you say, they would say 'your *ḥujja* please' – that is, what's your evidence. Even if it's a normal thing. If you say … let's go and pray. It's time for *ṣalāt.* And they would say, 'your evidence please?' Then you would say that Allah says that He has commanded that prayers should be offered and at its appropriate time. Then they would say evidence accepted, let's go… Things like that… even established things, they would ask you, where is your proof?[858]

The establishment of proof of any position from the 1980s was through argument, questioning and citation of authoritative texts that supported the position or invalidated it. According to Luqman Abdur-Raheem,[859] a former member of the MSSN at Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) Ife, the argumentations were also less conflictual. Furthermore, students were not

---

[854] See Noah Salomon, "Evidence, Secrets, Truth: Debating Islamic Knowledge in Contemporary Sudan," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 81, no. 3 (2013); Rüdiger Seesemann, "Epistemology or Ideology? Toward a Relational Perspective on Islamic Knowledge in Africa," *Journal of Africana Religions* 6, no. 2 (2018): 241–7.

[855] Salomon, "Evidence, Secrets, Truth": 831–5.

[856] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

[857] Abdur-Raheem Luqman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[858] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[859] He teaches at the Yaba College of Technology (Nigeria's first higher educational institution established in 1947), and he is the President of The Muslim Congress (TMC).

obliged to accept another person's opinion in line with the openness of the Society to diversity. But as I will discuss later, this was not always the case as Abdur-Raheem suggested here:

> …that was the era of *factically ḥujja*. Do you have *ḥujja* for what you are saying. The prophet did this, what is your evidence? And those who are used to evidence, they will quote Muslim, quote Bukhari [i.e. books of Hadith cited above] and so on and so forth… When somebody gives a lecture, some people would challenge him or her…But it was a healthy rivalry then. So nobody would force anybody. But those of us who are onlookers, we would see facts and figures and you would be able to decide which side of the fence you want to be. So that was the era.[860]

The concept of *ḥujja* challenged the practices of many students that were considered to rely on the heritage of parents and the position of the established *alfas* and Imams in Yorubaland. Mahfuz Alabidun, an MSSN Amir at Lagos State University (LASU), drew my attention to this phenomenon using his own experience. He told me that before he could challenge it, he engaged in Sufism because that was what he had learnt from his father who is an *alfa* who, in turn, had learnt it from his parents.[861] The concept of *ḥujja* also challenged the practice of many students who discussed Islam without any authorised Islamic text. This concerned those who referred to Western philosophical texts. Abdul-Fattah Abdul-Majeed who was a former national leader of the MSSN was quoted as saying this phenomenon was a major problem in the Society up to the early 1980s.

> …..I remember even in the early '80s at the University of Lagos, people would come to deliver lectures/sermon and they will be quoting from Williams Shakespeare, it was as bad as that.[862]

By questioning their inherited practices and 'un-authorised' arguments, the idea of *ḥujja* thus encouraged many members to develop their knowledge of Islam in Islamic texts. Because the idea saddled them with the burden of proof of their own practices and sayings, it allowed them to become more conscious of what they would say, and they were prepared to be challenged if they must say it. As Yekin explained to me, the era "really got people informed. Because you would not say anything until you are really sure of your footing. So, because you would expect it, you would be prepared."[863] Yekin further suggested that people may learn about the proof of an Islamic point sub-consciously through regular study of the Qur'an and other Islamic texts, rather than actual preparation or research when they want to discuss it. The consciousness for

---

[860] Abdur-Raheem Luqman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[861] Mahfuz Alabidun, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, March 12, 2017, LASU Mosque, Ojo Lagos.
[862] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".
[863] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

proof thus encouraged many students to be attentive to various points in the texts which they employed in different arguments and occasions as Yekin narrated here:

> So the *ḥujja* era was a fantastic one…in fact by the time that you are even listening to the Qur'an, you won't even know that you are even noting certain things. Somebody will just say something and then you would say, Yes, it's in the Qur'an. In chapter so so, I can't remember what verse it is. It's so so chapter...because the *ḥujja* thing has gone into your sub-conscious. You don't even know when you are even holding on to certain points, probably for use of reference in the future.[864]

The concept of *ḥujja* is also linked to how good or bad a practice or belief is evaluated. Abd' Razaq Abdus Salaam, a former leader of MSSN in Lagos pointed out that this was done by explaining the importance of *ḥujja* and other authoritative Islamic texts to members which allowed them to question what is correct and incorrect in their own practices. He explained that "we guide them to question what is sinful. By the time we introduced people to the concept of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and also to the concept of *Ujja*, then they begin to ask questions 'Are these things I indulge in right?'"[865]

Given their consciousness to the concept, I consider *ḥujja* as a key element in the idea of a good Muslim that was developing at the time because it attempts to separate what is the 'truth' or 'correct' from what is not in Islam. However, *ḥujja* was not enough to bring about reform in the practices of many students. From the testimonies of many respondents, this also depends on the *àgbọ́yé* of prophetic *sunna*.

5.1.5 *Àgbọ́yé*, *Sunna* and Islamic reform

Àgbọ́yé is a Yoruba term which means "understanding." It could also mean "sufficient knowledge." This term derives from two words: *àgbọ́* (to hear/listen/know) and (*o*)*yé* (well/enough/adequately). The word *oyé* could also stand on its own to mean "understanding." With regards to religion, *àgbọ́yé* could be used with another word rendered as *àgbọ́yé ẹsin*, "understanding of religion" the same way we can talk of *àgbọ́yé ọrọ* "understanding of words." The meaning of *àgbọ́yé* and how it is used in the Yoruba language is not different from English usage. The argument of Gbajabiamila in 1923 on the importance of Western education for Muslims (in Chapter Three) suggests that having an 'understanding' of Islam has been linked with what it means to be a good Muslim among Yoruba Muslims before the establishment of MSSN. Today, it is still common to find many *alfas* in Yorubaland who argue that *understanding* of Islam is crucial to be a 'proper' Muslim.

---

[864] Ibid.
[865] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

Given the number of students who studied under the *alfas* and those who attended Western-oriented schools where Islamic knowledge is taught, this argument also feeds back into the construction of *àgbọ́yé* and its linkage to what being a good Muslim suggest in the MSSN. On the other hand, the idea of *àgbọ́yé* in MSSN reform also appears to draw insights from Mawdudi's thesis in which he argues that "knowledge" plays a key role in becoming "true Muslims in the true sense of the word."[866] In his 1938 Punjab (Pakistan) addresses to some villagers, Mawdudi argued that a person cannot become a Muslim because he is born into Islam especially through family, which for him is the assumption of many Muslims. Also, a person cannot become a Muslim by name and through verbal testimony (which is the *shahāda*, considered by many Muslims to signify conversion into Islam) without deliberately accepting what is taught by the Prophet Muhammad. Thus, to be a Muslim is based on that prophetic knowledge as he explains here:

> Islam, therefore, consists, firstly, of knowledge and, secondly, of putting that knowledge into practice. A man can be white and have no knowledge; because he is born white, he will remain so…But no man becomes truly a Muslim without knowing the meaning of Islam, because he becomes a Muslim not through birth but through knowledge. Unless you come to know the basic and necessary teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, how can you believe in him, have faith in him, and how can you act according to what he taught? And if you do not have faith in him, knowingly and consciously, as fully as you can, how can you become true Muslims?[867]

Mawdudi further argues that knowing the prophetic teachings is a guide for Muslims in their relationship with God. He cautioned against ignorance which is capable of leading Muslims astray and emphasises the importance of knowledge as the "absolute necessity" that determines whether Muslims "are true Muslims and remain true Muslims."[868] However, he did not expect every Muslim to become a scholar, but he encouraged them to devote an hour a day to acquire the knowledge of Islam.

Mawdudi's thought resonates in the testimony of Oladosu. He pointed out that "the whole idea about Islam is predicated upon knowledge, not on ignorance," and that "to be Muslim is to live a practical life of the Qur'an which under normal circumstances should be predicated on knowledge."[869] But unlike Mawdudi, Oladosu did not consider a Muslim without "knowledge" as a "bad Muslim" or "less-Muslim" because the definition of who is a "good Muslim" is

---

[866] Mawdudi, *Let us be Muslims*, 48.
[867] Ibid., 49-50
[868] Ibid., 51.
[869] Afis Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

subjective. For him, it is also not possible to assume that a Muslim is a 'bad Muslim' if s/he is alive because such a person can still repent in future before his or her death. In the same vein, Oladosu argued that a Muslim that is assumed to be a 'good Muslim' may also do something that negates Islam in the future which will make him/her a 'bad Muslim.' This argument, which is common in the sermons of many *alfas* in Yorubaland that I know, is one of the ways a Muslim is constructed among Yoruba Muslims. Furthermore, Oladosu is of the view that there are Muslims who have "knowledge" of Islam but whose practices are not consistent with the foundational texts of Islam, and for him, such Muslims are those labelled by the media as 'terrorists.' With this position, he categorised the idea of a Muslim into three:

> The first groups are those who are practising Islam just because others are doing it. The second are those that are practising Islam based on their intellectual knowledge. They know that for them to practise Islam completely, they have to situate and establish it on a certain intellectual foundation. The third groups are those whose actions negate what you presume to be the textual foundation of the religion. And you find these [groups] in the current crises in the world: ISIS, AL-SHABAB in the eastern part of Africa and then since 2009, the Boko Haram in Nigeria.[870]

This categorisation may be understood in relation to the different ways in which Islamic texts are interpreted by many Muslims, which I will discuss later. Having said that, despite the different conceptualisations between Mawdudi and Oladosu, what I consider to be useful is their emphasis on "knowledge" of Islam as a crucial factor in being a good Muslim. This emphasis on "knowledge" is conspicuous in a magazine produced by the UNILAG branch of the MSSN to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Society. The magazine refers to a period, the "Era of Intellectual Development (1979-90s)," to analyse and describe the reform in the Society, rather than *tajdid* (renewal) or *islah* (purification) mentioned in Chapter Two. I am not suggesting that the idea of *tajdid* or *islah* is not implied in this period, but the word "intellectual" which includes the idea of "knowledge" and "understanding" was used to signify this process. The era is seen to be marked by the establishment of the theory of evidence based only on the Qurʾan and the *sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad.[871] Also, the magazine notes that,

> The period is marked by the *knowledge* and *intellectualism*, which later brought about the *strict adherence* to the Qurʾan and Sunnah. Brothers, especially those in Universities, became enthusiastic to search for knowledge " ... they profusely read Islamic literatures especially those authored by Imam

---

[870] Ibid.
[871] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

> Abul A'la Maududi, Sayd Qutb and Hassan Al-Bana". Since then, intellectual prowess has become the lots of the members of the society(sic).[872]

This search for knowledge was considered to have taken place in order "to cope with the prevailing trend within the Society, as the religion of Al-Islam itself is based on knowledge and comprehension of the Deen."[873] It is further assumed that as a result of acquiring knowledge, "the consciousness of Islam, as the only legacy was *awakened* in people; thus they became more sincere and ready to practice the religion to the letter."[874] Some of the terms used in these quotes show clearly that the notion of reform in the MSSN is framed in relation to their Arabic concepts. For instance, in the indented quote above, the use of "strict adherence to the Qur'an and *sunna*" suggests an effort to reform Islam (in line with prophetic traditions) referred to as *tajdid*. The other quote in this paragraph refers to "awakened" which implies revitalisation regarded as *sahwa*.[875] In all, these various terms imply that the MSSN reform was understood in different ways. And, in these multiple notions of the term, the roles of *ḥujja* based on the Qur'an and Hadith and the "understanding" of these texts were salient, as noted here:

> Before this period, people's orientation to Islam was based on heritage from parents, though some basic tenets of the Islamic faith like *Ṣalāt*, *Ṣawm* (fasting) and few others were adhered to. Majority of the members could not *understand* and have not handled on the sayings of the Prophet (SAW) called Hadith, it was a dry desert where almost everybody dreaded going… The situation at the period was very unimaginable. Rather suddenly, the lost property of the' Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria was found. Though, it didn't matter where it came from, as long as it was useful. But unlike ever before, it was found through *better understanding* of the Qurʾan and the Sunnah[876] of the holy prophet.[877]

A pertinent question here is how does "knowledge" or "understanding" relates to Islamic orthodoxy in the MSSN's sense and how do this relationship shapes reform? My assumption is that understanding is not only about knowing something, it also includes knowing it differently or having a different interpretation of that knowledge. As many academics in the social sciences and humanities are aware, there could be different interpretations of the same

---

[872] Ibid.

[873] Ibid.

[874] Ibid.emphasis mine.

[875] Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 18.

[876] 'Hadith' and 'Sunna' are used interchangeably in this memoir, although they are different in one respect. Hadith is a report, usually in form of text, about the deeds and sayings (referred to as sunna) of Prophet Muhammad. However, while many reformists exclusively use *sunna* in relation to the Prophet, the early history of Islam show that it is an expansive concept in use before him. See Rudolph T. Ware, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 12–13. For a detailed analysis, see Adis Duderija, "Evolution in the Concept of Sunnah During the First Four Generations of Muslims in Relation to the Development of the Concept of an Authentic Ḥadīth as Based on Recent Western Scholarship," *Arab Law Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (2012).

[877] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria". Emphasis in italics mine

phenomena such as 'identity' and 'religion.' This assumption allows me to argue that the knowledge of Islam in the teachings of the Prophet was already in the MSSN but was understood differently. It is possible that some issues in Islam might not have been known, but it is a mistaken notion to think that the thoughts of Mawdudi and other Islamists introduced members of the MSSN to the knowledge of Islam or the teachings of the Prophet. Thus, when members of the MSSN say they had a "better understanding of Qur'an and Sunna," I take this to mean that they had a different interpretation of these texts which inspired the desire to live according to their new interpretations. This 'reinterpretation' as well as 'elaboration' of existing tradition are forms of religious change according to Eller.[878] As a factor of religious change, they can lead to the introduction of novel ideas in lived practices and the discontinuities of others as I will show in the next section. We can understand the impact of reinterpretation by looking at how prophetic *sunna* was understood as a way of life among many Yoruba Muslims before and during the MSSN reform, which I noted in Chapter Four. While in the past, the majority of the MSSN members also considered adhering strictly to prophetic *sunna* as less mandatory or some aspects of it as not suitable in their social context, a different understanding of Islam thus encouraged a relentless desire to follow the new notion of *sunna* from the 1980s.

Of course, the development of a different understanding of Islam is not peculiar to the social experience of Yoruba Muslim students because it is one of the core factors responsible for change and diversity of Islam and how it is lived in many Muslim societies. Soares' study of Muslims in a West African town of Mali has clearly highlighted this, referring to how Muslims changed from one Sufi affiliation to another. He showed that the French colonial policy, in a bid to maintain order and prevent a pan-Islamic movement, shaped new ways of being Muslim for many Sufi orders from their past. However, they became affiliated with another Sufi tradition following the emergence of the charismatic Tijaniyya Sufi Shaykh Ahmad Hamallah who challenged the Sufi establishment favoured by the colonialist.[879] Janson's study of the Tabligh Jama'at in Gambia also illustrated that while there were Muslims who identify as Sufi, seen as less orthodox, and those who identify as reformist, considered as radicals, the Tabligh Jama'at do not identify with either of them, even though the Tabligh Jama'at is also regarded as a reformist movement.[880] In addition, Uthman in his study of the crisis caused by Muslims in Northern Nigeria, contends that differences in understanding Islamic texts between Muslims

---

[878] Eller, Introducing Anthropology of Religion, 151.
[879] Soares, *Islam and the Prayer Economy*, 51–71.
[880] Janson, *Islam, Youth, and Modernity in The Gambia*, 10.

in Yorubaland and Muslims in Northern Nigeria is why some Islamic reform movements have taken a violent turn in the latter and not because of cultural differences, geographical factors or socio-economic strain as many studies[881] suggest.[882] This argument is part of the thinking of many Yoruba Muslim elite that they are more engaged in "intellectual jihad" to promote Islamic reforms than taking a violent approach.

With the insistence on *ḥujja* and the impact of *àgbọ́yé*, the MSSN gradually adopted what is regarded as the prophetic *sunna* to be the basis of its practices and the way of life of members. Because of this, embodying the *sunna* became another major experience in which many members of the Society situated the idea of reform and good Muslim practice. Although he was criticising the MSSN in his blog, the role of *sunna* and 'understanding' in this reform and the Islamist thought that contributed to shaping it was noted by Aboo Aamir Al-Atharee, (a former leader in the MSSN who later identified with Salafism) in his short history of the MSSN.

> The Muslim Students' Society [of Nigeria], MSS[N], was founded in 1954 basically to cater for the religious needs of the young Muslim boys and girls in some Lagos grammar schools and colleges. When it started it was all singing and dancing. The beginning of the group was therefore upon a shoddy foundation, perhaps a foundation informed by the level of the Islamic *understanding of the time. Calling people to the Kitaab [Qurʾan] and Sunnah at the time was no doubt a mirage*. The way the fathers were so were the children…
>
> Thus, there came a phase when some *breeze of the Sunnah came upon the MSSN, that was in the 90's*. Books such as 'The Milestones', 'Let us Be Muslims,' 'Return of the Pharaohs', 'What Does My Being A Muslim Mean?,' etc., were those works that served as the intellectual cum Sunnah foundations of the group. Thus, it would not be farfetched what sort of Sunnah was in vogue then. To those who do not know, those books were written by the arrowheads of the Ikhwaanee [The Muslim Brotherhood] Thought Founders, Sayyid Qutb, et al (sic).[883]

Until much later when the Society introduced an Islamic Affairs Board which moderates different Islamic opinions, embodying the *sunna* was 'not necessarily compelled' on members (but it was understood by some members to be compelled). Rather, it evolved from that consciousness to *ḥujja.* This consciousness is important to understanding the transformation of

---

[881] For instance Kateřina Rudincová, "Desiccation of Lake Chad as a Cause of Security Instability in the Sahel Region," *GeoScape* 11, no. 2 (2017); Adesoji, "The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria"; James O. David, "The Root Causes of Terrorism: An Appraisal of the Socio-Economic Determinants of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria," (MA thesis, School of Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2013).

[882] Ibrahim O. Uthman, "Muslim-Christian Encounter in Nigeria and Yoruba Muslim Educational Jihad," in *Fractured Spectrum: Perspectives on Christian-Muslim encounters in Nigeria*, ed. Akintunde E. Akinade, 85–93 (New York: Peter Lang, 2012).

[883] Al-Atharee, Aboo Aamir (Ishaaq AbdirRaheem), "What Happened to MSSN" Emphasis mine.

MSSN into a reform movement by the late 1980s. As Yekin pointed out, the consciousness reveals that while the Society was requesting evidence on every aspect of Muslim practices and beliefs, it was also emphasising the need to reform or revive these practices and beliefs.

> …when you are asking for *ḥujja*, you are saying you are going back to the *sunna*, you are going back to the basis. And so, it was actually that attitude that led MSSN wholesomely…to the *sunna*. When you have to ask for evidence for everything, you are definitely going back to the fundamental. To the very basis and there is no basis in Islam other than the Qur'an and the *sunna* because everything would lead us to what the Prophet did or did not do.[884]

But I do not consider the consciousness for *ḥujja* and the idea of *sunna* as a simple blueprint for reform or action in the MSSN reform. Rather the reform was also produced by discourses and contests regarding what is correct and incorrect in prophetic traditions and local Yoruba Muslim practices. The major topics in these debates and how the debates played out are discussed in the next section.

Though the wide-scale adoption of prophetic *sunna* by many Muslims is considered in many studies to reflect what is considered the 'modernisation of Islam' or 'modern Islam,' I wish to point out that most of my respondents did not use the word "modern Islam" to describe this social experience. Rather, they discussed this change using at least these three expressions: *ḥujja, àgbọ́yé ẹsin* and going back to the *sunna*. Although little is known about the discourses and major actors in the period of reform, I did not find any document where the idea of the 'modernisation of Islam' was used to describe the reform. And, where the word 'modern' is used, it is considered a construction by other people including Western scholars. While discussing the crisis in the MSSN in this period, for instance, Zafaran Adeniyi referred to it as what "is liberally tagged in the word of Western writers of Islam as the struggle between the 'modernist' and the 'traditionalist' among the Muslims." [885] One can take another example from the broader Yoruba society. Largely, it is common among non-Muslims to refer to Muslim women who dressed modestly without the veil as *sọji alhaja* (lit. wake-up Alhaja, referring to an enlightened female Muslim). Men who do not identify with *sunna* practices such as having a beard are also called *sọji alfa* (lit. wake-up cleric, referring to an enlightened male Muslim). These discriminatory expressions usually put off the *sunna*-minded students from identifying with the term 'modernity.'

---

[884] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[885] QuotedMuhammadu-Thani, *The Impacts of Hassan's Writings on the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria*, 81.

Not using 'modern Islam' may also be connected to their thinking that 'modernity' describes the culture of the West, the 'secular' and industrial world which they understood to be different from the Islamic world. As an illustration, Habibah Oladosu pointed out to me that 'modernity' may be regarded as a major factor that determines how a good Muslim is recognised from a bad one. Because, according to her, "if you don't align with modernity, with what is going on then you are a bad Muslim. Then, at times, if you want to sell out your Islam, you want to compromise your Islam for modernity then you become a good Muslim."[886] Given this understanding in the MSSN, I consider the notion of modernisation of/modern Islam is inadequate to describe the reform in the Society.

5.2 **Debating** *Sunna*

I employ Asad's concept of Islam as a discursive tradition to understand and analyse the discourse and contest which led the MSSN to adopt *sunna* as a way of life. Concerning his argument noted in Chapter Two, Asad contends that discourse involves arguments which seek to establish orthodoxy and orthopraxy, and it is possible to understand it by focusing on the discursive process which includes the definition of orthodoxy, the style of reasoning, and the historical and material contexts.[887] Due to the paucity of data, little is known about the discursive process in the MSSN in this period. However, the aspects of Islamic reform, discussed above, provide useful information on how this process was shaped. I wish to point out that the "notion of Islam" which I discussed in the next chapter is also part of this discursive process. A look at the process revealed that there were many actors involved in the discourse, especially those mentioned above. The discursive process also involved an attempt to define orthodoxy which focused on what is 'fundamental' and 'non-fundamental' aspects of Islam. While for many years, there was little or no sharp division in the MSSN, the arguments on the 'fundamental' and 'non-fundamental' aspects of the religion however suggest that there was a divergence of opinions in the Society.

My use of 'fundamental' builds on the definition of my respondents. According to Noibi, what is 'fundamental' in Islam is "all the originals and all the authentic teachings." [888] He also explained that being a fundamentalist is not the same as "fanaticism" but going back to the

---

[886] Habibah Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[887] O. Anjum, "Islam as a Discursive Tradition: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 3 (2007): 662; Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 15–17.

[888] D. O. S. Noibi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

foundational principles and practices of Islam.[889] For example, many Muslims considered acts like the *ṣalāt* (prayer) and fasting in Ramadan to be fundamental in Islam.[890] But there are several aspects of these acts that are considered less fundamental but rewardable. For instance, while performing the daily *ṣalāt* is regarded as a fundamental act, not performing *tarāwīḥ* (supplicatory prayer in Ramadan) is not.[891] Many Yoruba Muslim clerics have debated the *sunna* along this line of reasoning. Abdul-Ganiy Raji, a leader and member of the MSSN since 1979, gave an example of standing during urination which was criticised by some members of the Society who considered squatting as the correct position in *sunna*. Raji considered this as an aspect of Islam that is not fundamental and worthy of disagreement compared to *ṣalāt*.[892]

In the early 1980s, the MSSN was largely polarised on the definition of what is fundamental in the prophetic *sunna*. Like Raji pointed out, there were arguments over whether practices like veiling, having a beard and wearing trousers that are above the ankle, should be regarded as fundamental aspects of *sunna* or not.[893] The Society resolved these contending issues through public debates in many of its programmes such as the IVC and the National Higher Institution Convention of Muslim Students (NHICOMS). In 1999, the Society organised one of such debates at the IVC held at Sango-Ota between those who considered that the use of face cover (*niqāb*) for women was compulsory and those who argued otherwise. As narrated by Asimiyu Rasheed in his study, "Proofs and arguments on the issue were produced by both parties. At the end of the dialogue, certain resolutions were reached and both parties involved honoured the view of each other."[894] The proofs of each party were accepted by the Society,[895] and it resolved not to deny whoever wanted to wear the face cover, but it was not compulsory for anyone to wear it.[896] The dialogue and resolution of the MSSN on the *niqāb* illustrate how the discursive tradition was connected to the formation of moral self and knowledge production.

Besides public debates, many in the Society also produced texts which they used to articulate their points. A major example was Uthman's *The Ḥijāb of the Muslim Woman and a Call to Every Reformer* which posited that the type of veil worn by the wives of the Prophet was not

---

[889] Ibid.

[890] Schielke, "Being Good in Ramadan": S26-7; Niloofar Haeri, "The Private Performance of Salat Prayers: Repetition, Time, and Meaning," *Anthropological Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (2013): 9.

[891] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 87.

[892] Abgul-Ganiy Raji, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 26, 2017, IVC, Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.

[893] Muhammadu-Thani, *The Impacts of Hassan's Writings on the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria*, 80.

[894] Asimiyu, *Conflicts among the Members of MSSN in Tertiary Institutions in Southwestern Nigeria*, 39.

[895] Ibid., 51.

[896] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

compulsory for other women.[897] Some students expressed their views on other issues in the magazines of the Society such as *Al-Ilm* (knowledge). But unlike Uthman's text which focused on debates about the veil, the discourse of these students sought to promote the Islamic traditions in various institutions of Nigeria. In 1985, for instance, an editorial opinion of *Al-Ilm* contested what it regarded as the "Euro-Christian" tradition of Nigeria's constitution and its failure to deal with the problems of corruption and poverty in the country. It, therefore, called for the implementation of Sharia as a system of law that would ensure that social justice is embedded in Nigeria's constitution.[898] Another student, Kunle Sanni (a leader in the MSSN at Ilorin who later became the national coordinator of NACOMYO), used the magazine to denounce public schools in Yorubaland for failing to promote the teaching of Islamic education. He also gave a damning remark about Muslim teachers who, as he claimed, were attracted to western lifestyles and failed to encourage their students to dress modestly and live a moral life.[899]

The discourse of reform in the MSSN also involved arguments on two styles of interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith. These styles may be linked to two approaches towards the interpretation of the Qur'an by many Muslims, although this dichotomous view is problematic because there is no strict boundary between them.[900] The first, associated with exotericism, is a voluntarist approach which, as pointed out by Salomon, suggests that the knowledge of Qur'anic texts can be attained individually based on the assumption that "God and the Prophet have already acted in spreading knowledge and thus agency in attaining this knowledge is placed primarily in the hands of the Muslim individual."[901] This way of knowing, also referred to as scriptural tradition, is common among reform movements, as noted in Chapter Two. In contrast, the second approach, regarded as esoterism and linked to the Sufi tradition, assumes that religious knowledge is available to only a few specialists (often called shaykhs) who could transmit it to others in an "initiatic" manner as Louis Brenner suggests.[902] Brenner argues that this way of knowing involves a progressive transmission of knowledge (through different stages of *madrasa*) which in turn is expected to transform an individual gradually.[903] But

---

[897] Ibrahim O. Uthman, *The Ḥijāb of the Muslim Woman and a Call to Every Reformer* (Abeokuta: Islamic Conscious Group of Nigeria, 1997).

[898] *Al Ilm (The Knowledge), "*Futility of Man-Made Laws,", 1985, 5.

[899] Ishaq K. Sanni, "Modern Day Propagation," *Al Ilm (The Knowledge)*, 1985, 42–46.

[900] Louis Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power, and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 20; Salomon, "Evidence, Secrets, Truth": 821–2.

[901] Salomon, "Evidence, Secrets, Truth": 823.

[902] Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*, 18.

[903] See ibid., 19.

beyond this, as Salomon argues, there are a significant number of Sufi followers who contend that though an individual is expected to enter into a relationship of strict discipline with a learned shaykh to acquire knowledge, attaining the knowledge is nevertheless elusive because it is a "secret (*sirr*) that remains eternally secret to the common adept."[904]

In the MSSN of the 1980s, some young scholars argued that the Qur'an and Hadith have apparent meanings (exoteric) and that Muslim practices must purely reflect these meanings. Many insisted in contrast that the meanings of these texts were hidden and sacred (esoteric). On several occasions, those who considered this esoteric pattern of reasoning to be correct were baffled by their opponents for not being able to think deep about what they read and requested to know if certain practices could be subjected to exoteric interpretation. One of the questions in this regard, as Oladosu noted below, was whether using three fingers to eat, regarded as the practice of the Prophet, could apply to all kinds of food:

> Have you forgotten that sometimes in the past, we debated whether we must eat with three fingers or not? Whatever we read we were ready to follow. While some of us called for caution and introspection, while some of us wanted to know whether the Prophet could have drunk pap with three fingers, others were saying we must keep with the esoteric meanings of the text, not its exoteric imports.[905]

Despite the distinction usually made between the two styles of reasoning, it is doubtful whether every member of the MSSN adopted one over the other. Although the Society is assumed to favour the exoteric style today, there is usually a negotiation of which style to follow, depending on the Islamic practice and what is permitted in different circumstances for many members. This is part of my discussion in Chapter Six in which I show the extent to which the reform in the MSSN made an impact on actual practice.

When the debates on *sunna* started in the early 1980s, the emphasis on respecting the diversity of opinions and practices in the MSSN was sustained. However, by the late 1980s, this style of reasoning had been challenged by the emergence of two main factions. The first faction called The Jama'at (by the second faction) comprised of students who were inspired by the teachings of Thanni, while the second, referred to (itself) as The Mainstream, was made up of students with no identifiable teacher or leader.[906] Yet, from its name, this second faction appeared to

---

[904] Salomon, "Evidence, Secrets, Truth": 824.
[905] Oladosu, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria at 60".
[906] Taofiq Abdul-Azeez, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, June 19, 2018, University of Abuja, Abuja.

identify with the *babas* in the Society such as Adegbite and Oyekan, even though these *babas* might not demonstrate their biases for a faction in public.

Asad's argument on the context in which orthodoxy is established is important to understanding how these factions attempted to institutionalise correct practice. He posited that the context where "Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust correct practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace incorrect ones,"[907] is the place to find orthodoxy and not only in some doctrines in Islam. This attempt to establish orthodoxy was shown in the attitude of the two factions regarding the methodology of adopting the prophetic *sunna*. Unlike the Mainstream, The Jama'at was willing to see every member adopt prophetic *sunna* immediately and went on criticising those who failed to do so.[908] This found expression in one of the IVCs organised by the Society in which The Jama'at attempted to enforce the *sunna* with the campaign titled "no socks no paradise" for the female members.[909] The Mainstream was opposed to this approach and considered it to be less mindful of Muslims diversity and social experiences of students from home. It insisted that members should be allowed to adopt the *sunna* gradually through incremental socialisation and knowledge rather than compelling them to comply. A member of this faction drew my attention to the difference between them and The Jama'at this way:

> …one of those (sic) indicators of their…point of divergence…is *modus operandi*. MSS believes in people understanding things and willingly taking it up as Islamic principles. But they felt 'no, it is too slow.' It should just be, you know, wholesome change at once. And MSS says 'no.' Somebody who has been used to tight jeans from home. Who doesn't know about Islam, you just pick the person one day and say, start using *ḥijāb*. No, MSS would not do that. MSS would start enlightening the person, 'these are the ways of dressing of the Muslims, these are the implications of dressing…otherwise and things like that.'…[but] somebody who has been dressing in a particular way, to just switch to another mode of dressing, as human beings, it's not that easy. It takes a process of socialisation for you to make the person to adjust. But they want people to adjust as if *abracadabra*.[910]

The disagreement on methods between the two factions also draws attention to Asad's notion of 'power' and 'resistance.' As he argues, "the process of arguing, of using the force of reason, at once presupposes and responds to the fact of resistance. Power, and resistance, are thus intrinsic to the development and exercise of any traditional practice."[911] In this regard, the two

---

[907] Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 15.
[908] Habibah Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Adeniran Q. (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 23, 2016, UI, Ibadan.
[909] Oladosu, "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria at 60".
[910] Adeniran Q. (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[911] Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 16.

factions both animated power and resistance in their discourse and method of reform. And, none of them should be regarded as promoting the correct method. In contrast, their differing methods should be understood as representing the different ways in which they seek to regulate what they regarded as the correct belief and practice. Besides, as Asad argues, "Any representation of tradition is contestable. What shape that contestation takes, if it occurs, will be determined not only by the powers and knowledges each side deploys, but by the *collective life they aspire to*."[912] I take this "collective life they aspire to" to mean the subjects of debate. In the next section, I will draw attention to the practices that were contested in the Society by the two factions and the prophetic *sunna* they encouraged members to inculcate.

5.2.1 **Contested practices**

Several issues in the debate focused on the activities of MSSN, everyday practices of members and those of different Muslim organisations which they belonged to outside the schools. One major aspect of these debates centred on ritual practices such as the tradition of congregational *adhkār*, the use of *tasbīḥ* (rosary), and touching the face with hands after prayer. They also argued that Sufi practices like the *wird* (a litany of prayer) and pious motivated visits to holy places and saints called *ziyāra* were not correct practice in Islam. To confirm their acceptance of this argument, many of my respondents told me that they had changed from Sufism to *ahl al-sunna* (people of the examples of Prophet Muhammad) when they were shown the proof that Sufism was not part of Islam.[913] In place of these Sufi acts, the MSSN encouraged the regular reading of the Qur'an and *Al-Ma'thurat*, a collection of important Qur'anic verses and Hadiths in the form of a litany compiled by Hassan Al-Banna.[914] However, encouraging the use of *Al-Ma'thurat* contradicts what the Society promotes, because, given the Sufi background of Al-Banna (discussed in Chapter Two), the text only replaces the elements and not the whole form of what the Society regarded as Sufi tradition.

Apart from singing and dancing competitions, discussed in Chapter Four, the Society also discouraged the celebration of festivals like *mawlid al-nabī* and *Kayo-Kayo*. The former is used to mark the birthday of Prophet Muhammad. Although it is popular among the Sufi brothers, other Muslim groups in Yorubaland usually organised or participated in this festival. Before it was contested, the MSSN organised public lectures in different communities to mark this

---

[912] Ibid., 17. Emphasis in italics mine.
[913] Mahfuz Alabidun, interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Ibrahim Umar, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 20, 2016, YABATECH, Lagos; Abdur-Raheem Luqman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[914] Muhammadu-Thani, *The Impacts of Hassan's Writings on the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria*, 92–95.

occasion often with the attendance of the media who later broadcast the event.[915] Kayo-Kayo, on the other hand, is marked annually by Muslims in towns like Epe during the first month of the Islamic calendar known as *Yawm-al- āshurā*, the tenth day of Muḥarram. Muhsin Balogun points out in his study that Muslims in Epe used the event to commemorate their arrival in the town and the important role of a 'boat' as a means of transportation.[916] Apart from this festival, the MSSN also discouraged members from attending or organising elaborate funeral ceremonies which are still common among the Yoruba. The other contested practice was the style of dressing of the members. A typical example was the popular long, wide-sleeved flowing gown for men called *agbada*. Female members were also encouraged to embrace a variety of veils such as the *ḥijāb, niqāb* and *jilbāb* (outer garment) and abandon the use of scarves and dresses which were considered immodest. As part of this notion of modesty, the painting of nails, use of synthetic wigs and lipsticks were also discouraged among the female members.[917]

Local socio-cultural practices also came under criticism. Among these was the use of charms which many students were said to have collected from either their parents, *alfa* or *babalawo*. In this category, one could find those who graduated from local *madrasa* who used *tira* or *hantu* before joining the MSSN.[918] Many Yorubas refer to *tira* as a kind of amulet (Qur'anic verses which may be written on paper and tied with thread or wrapped in leather and carried on the body) while *hantu* is the water from Qur'anic verses written on slate and drunk for various therapeutical purposes which include blessing and protection from misfortune. In addition, the Society discouraged the use of certain Yoruba expressions which were regarded as *shirk*. One of these is *ori,* which means "head." The *ori* is believed by many Yorubas to be the bearer of a man's destiny and the essence of his personality which rules and guides him. It is thus considered as an *òrìṣà* (a personal god) in its own right.[919] Among many Yoruba, it is still common to say *ori lo yọ mi ni nu ewu* (my head saves me from calamity) and *ori lo ba mi ṣe* (my head assists me) when they talk about their social encounters in life. Rather than referring to the *ori*, the MSSN encouraged such expressions as *al-ḥamdu li-llāh* (praise belongs to God). Other socio-cultural practices like prostration (for males) and kneeling (for females)

---

[915] Salami, *Modes of Da'wah in some Selected Towns in Yorubaland*, 78.

[916] Muhsin A. Balogun, "Syncretic Beliefs and Practices Amongst Muslims in Lagos State Nigeria: With Special Reference to the Yoruba Speaking People of Epe," (PhD Thesis, Univ. of Birmingham, 2011), 181.

[917] Abdur-Raheem Luqman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[918] Zafaran Omotope Adeniyi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[919] Oladele A. Balogun, "The Concepts of Ori and Human Destiny in Traditional Yoruba Thought: A Soft-Deterministic Interpretation," *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 118-119.

to greet people were also criticised. While they are regarded as signs of respect and honour by many Yorubas, they are considered a form of *shirk* in the MSSN because, according to Yekin, the practice involved using parts of the human body which should be for the worship of God.[920] Rather than greeting in this manner, saying *As-Salaam-Alaikum,* (Peace be unto you), often with a handshake, is considered a better Muslim practice. Despite promoting these practices, there was no uniformity in the understanding of Islam and how it is lived in the Society. However, the issues involved in the discourse of Islam in the MSSN in this period are only one aspect of what polarised the Society. Other major issues that are connected to this division are the question of transition and control of the Society which pitted The Jama'at against The Mainstream. In the two next sections, I will discuss how these issues connected to the discourse on Islam of the two factions and why they contributed to the crisis and breakaway of many groups from the Society.

5.3 **"No graduation from MSS"**

The phrase, "no graduation from MSSN,"[921] developed in the 1980s as a campaign which appeared to be primarily related to the crisis of transition on the future of the MSSN and its members, as well as the identity of the Society as a student/youth movement. However, these subjects of transition and identity were also largely connected to many practices that were debated in the Society and the reasoning behind the debates of many actors. An aspect of the reasoning behind the debates of these actors involves taking over the organisational control of the Society to implement what they defined as good Muslim practices in the wider Yoruba society.

What gave rise to the campaign and debates that enabled it? It happened that after embracing the *sunna*, some students became concerned about how to sustain their new identities when they left school to pursue other life courses such as marriage and employment. Among them was Abideen Olaiya, mentioned in Chapter Five, who told me that he was particularly worried about the kind of job he would do without engaging in corruption because he had learnt about the exemplary leadership styles of the Prophet and his companions. This concern was important for him because of the problem of corruption in Nigeria's public establihsments, which had become prevalent under the Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) administration.[922] He later

---

[920] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[921] Zafaran Omotope Adeniyi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[922] Michael M. Ogbeidi, "Political Leadership and Corruption in Nigeria Since 1960: A Socio-Economic Analysis," *Journal of Nigeria Studies* 1, no. 2 (2012): 9.

decided to become an academic when he learnt that members of ASU (Academic Staff Union) of universities and the NBA (Nigerian Bar Association) were the major groups that could protest government policies on national issues without fear, unlike others who were said to have been bought by the government.[923] Many of his contemporaries in the leadership of MSSN also became academics, and many got employed in other industries or became entrepreneurs. But such employment did not guarantee that their *sunna* would be preserved in other aspects of life as the experiences of other members of the Society indicate. Samsideen Ayinla, who converted to Islam as a student and became an officer in MSSN in the early 2000s, narrated to me that most students were unable to sustain their *sunna* when they faced the "reality of life" beyond school as he illustrates here:

> When you are on campus now, you are told, your trousers should not go below your ankle, you must keep your beard. And you now get to the street to seek for a job. Reality has set in. He attends the first the interview, he was the only one looking odd. She goes to an interview and she sees she is the only one that her *ḥijāb* drags on the floor. Can you see that reality has set in?

> And those that go for interviews that are *alfas*, they would go and clean-shave. He would remove everything. His trousers, he would make it exceed his ankle. He would look smart. Reality has sets in. It was before reality set in that all those *fatwas* [opinions of expert Muslim jurists] that he has read in *Sohih Bukhari* that would be boiling in his head. …he would *sha* [still] be arguing. But… when he gets to the outside world, he would feel like, so this is how reality feels like, he would pity those that are still in the system that they know nothing yet (sic).[924]

In addition, Ayinla mentioned how one of his friends who had worked in an industry before he enrolled as graduate student would explain to members of the MSSN at UI that "The Prophet says, the prophet says, does not extend beyond the wall [of the school],"[925] and that they should rather focus on improving their academic skills in order to compete in the outside world. He gave the example of another friend who told him he had found it difficult to complete his daily *ṣalāt* after school. The friend in question thus imagined that "those hardline stances that we used to take, it's all because we had all the time in the world until reality sets in."[926]

To an extent, the inability of many students to remain dedicated to their *sunna* is understood to be caused by the lack of an effective platform like the MSSN for interaction after school. Although a platform was created for this purpose called the Central Branch, it was not

[923] Abideen Olaiya, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[924] Ayinla Samsideen (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 29, 2016, UI, Ibadan.
[925] Ibid.
[926] Ibid.

functional in many communities. Because of this, many students often went back to their parents' Muslim groups (such as Ansar-Ud-Deen) and those who found it difficult to fit into such settings would remain on their own. But wherever they found themselves, Ayinla opined that they found it difficult to sustain their *sunna*.[927]

The members of The Jama'at appeared to identify this as a major limitation of the Society in the late 1980s and began to consider establishing other organisation(s) that would fill the gap. Beyond filling this gap, this transitional plan was considered because they also discovered that it was difficult for them to come back to the MSSN after school and claim membership, and for them, the MSSN was established for "students" needs and not for life after school.[928] The break-away of many groups in the MSSN suggests that there were many of such transition plans. Soares' study on NASFAT refers to this in the testimony of Akinbode who noted that the organisation was founded in 1995 to meet "their own needs after leaving university."[929] Because the exit of groups like NASFAT caused less tension in the MSSN, little or no information is given on them by my respondents or in any documents. In contrast, the one that is mostly discussed, and which resulted in a deep organisational crisis appears to be the proposition by The Jama'at that the MSSN transition into a "movement."[930]

What is known about the main actors and their conceptualisation of this "movement" is sketchy. But the establishment of The Muslim Congress (TMC), to be discussed later, is considered by many to be the outcome of this proposal. The expected movement is seen in the mould of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), which has a structured system that incorporates families, students, the middle-class, professionals, and clerics with different departments and networks in many countries around the world.[931] Some students actually believed it would be an extention of the MB in Nigeria. Besides, it is understood to aim at helping Muslims to address their socio-economic needs and negotiate for power and resources in Nigeria.[932] Although there were members of the Society who opined that this kind of movement had some advantages, but they also had their objections to it. Largely because of the promoters' link with international Islamic movements, these members doubted the motives of the intended

---

[927] Ibid.
[928] Abdur-Raheem Luqman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[929] Benjamin Soares, "An Islamic Social Movement in Contemporary West Africa: NASFAT of Nigeria," in *Movers and Shakers: Social Movements in Africa*, ed. Stephen Ellis and Ineke van Kessel, 178–96, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009), 185.
[930] Taofiq Abdul-Azeez, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[931] See Mitchell, *The Society for the Muslim Brothers*, 163–84.
[932] Shaykh Abdul-Fatah Muhammad Thanni, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

movement. They also expressed concern that such a movement might not fit into the local socio-political context because its goal was to establish an Islamic state without considering local diversity. Besides, they considered the goal of the movement as a violation of the objectives of the MSSN tailored towards students' needs and that these students might be cut off once leaders of the movement achieved their own interest.[933] It was this transitional plan, among others, that further shaped the discourse on Islamic tradition between The Jama'at and The Mainstream. While the Jama'at wanted the MSSN to become a 'movement,' The Mainstream was opposed to it. The opposition to this plan found expression in the campaign, 'no graduation from MSSN,' and it was connected to the debate on Islam about the concept of a 'learner/student.' The debate on this concept questions the notion of the MSSN as an association for 'students' understood as 'youths' based on age category and it is important to understanding one of the definitions of a good Muslim in the MSSN from the 1980s. I analyse this debate below to contribute to the literature on the fluidity of the concept of youth.

5.3.1 **Between a student and a youth**

There are many studies which suggest that the concept of 'youth' is fluid and difficult to reduce to age category. Such framings as 'waithood' and 'youths in motion' have been employed in the discussion of this fluidity. "Waithood," according to Diane Singerman, "places young people in an adolescent, liminal world where they are neither children nor adults."[934] Singerman conceptualised this term to explore the economic challenges of young people who had to wait for many years to enter marital relations in the Middle East. Alcinda Honwana also employed this concept to demonstrate the similar challenges of young people in Africa waiting to make transition to major life courses such as jobs and marriage. For her, this waiting does not only imply an "involuntary delay in reaching adulthood"[935] but also compounding the meaning of youth. Also, seeking for a more nuanced way of conceptualising 'youth', Rebecca Colling *et al* focused on "youth in motion" which takes the notion of 'mobility,' referred to as movement between and within spaces[936] as default.[937] Mobility, according to Tim Creswell, is socially produced in three relational moments which include human movement from one place

---

[933] Afis Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[934] Diane Singerman, "The Economic Imperatives of Marriage: Emerging Practices and Identities Among Youth in the Middle East," *Middle East Youth Initiative Working Paper*, no. 6 (2007): 6.

[935] Alcinda M. Honwana, *The Time of Youth: Work, Social Change, and Politics in Africa*, 1st ed. (Sterling, Va.: Kumarian Press, 2012), 4.

[936] Claus J. Tully, "Youth in Motion: Communicative and Mobile. A commentary from the perspective of youth sociology," *YOUNG* 10, no. 1 (2002): 19.

[937] Rebecca Collins et al., "Youth in Motion: Spatialising Youth Movement(s) in the Social Sciences," *Children's Geographies* 11, no. 3 (2013): 370.

to another and how the human condition or feelings changes.[938] Given this fluidity, the concept of "Youth in motion" encourages us to move away from a static definition to a dynamic conception that illustrates how people occupy and move between different interlocking spaces. Based on these definitions, one may argue that the construction of 'youth' would become even more problematic if the concept of a 'student' which is often commonly used interchangeably with it is also taken into consideration. As I understand in the MSSN debates, both concepts are not the same, and at the same time, taxing to construct.

The MSSN debate on this concept is built on the theory of 'student' and the acquisition of knowledge in Islamic discourse. As many of my respondents told me, Islam enjoins all Muslims to acquire knowledge (both religious and non-religious) and they must seek this knowledge from childhood until the time of death. Based on this understanding of Islam, they argue that all Muslims are "learners or students for life."[939] This definition of a Muslim is regarded as the working definition of the MSSN as a 'student' Society, even so it contradicts the widespread assumption in Nigeria that the MSSN is a "youth" organisation. But, to illustrate that its identity as a 'student' group is not peculiar to the MSSN, Abdul-Ganiy Raji explained to me that the word 'student' which means *ṭālib* in Arabic is the same as the name of the Islamic movement in Afghanistan called Taliban (*Ṭālibān,* plural in Arabic).[940] It is worth noting that the Taliban was in government from the mid-1990s until 2001 when the US-led military coalition invaded Afghanistan.[941] At his opening address of the MSSN IVC in 2016, Abdul-Ganiy also referred to the MSSN as a "primary school" for those who considered themselves to be at that stage of learning about Islam. He explained that they could move on to a "secondary" Muslim organisation if they considered themselves to have more knowledge and to be above this stage of learning.[942] This argument, which was made in reference to other Muslim groups (which he did not mention), implies that the MSSN is a 'school' where 'students' are not only expected to acquire knowledge but to remain as learners throughout their lives.

---

[938] Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4–5.

[939] Ayinla Samsideen (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Afis Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Hakeem Adisa (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 16, 2016, Oja-Oba, Ibadan.

[940] Abgul-Ganiy Raji, interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Afis Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[941] See Juan Cole, "Pakistan and Afghanistan: Beyond the Taliban," *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 2 (2009): 233–44.

[942] Adeyemi Balogun, *Field Notes* (2017).

Furthermore, being a student for life is assumed to be a social reality by many members of the MSSN. According to Ayinla[943] and Oladosu[944] it is an existential reality because it assumes that people do not know everything, and if they assume that they know everything and stop learning then they will start retrogressing and become irrelevant in a world that is constantly changing. Moreover, they argue, some things learnt in the past are often forgotten and could be relearnt later in life. Oyekan also insisted that the concept of a 'student' can neither be reduced to an age category nor equated as 'youth,' because those in educational institutions are generally referred to as students and they are not defined by age at undergraduate or graduate levels since it is possible that a person could be in school at age forty, [945] defined as adults in Nigeria.[946] Thus, members of the MSSN are also defined by association with their place of study rather than their age. Although Oladosu considers the notion of 'student' to be problematic due to such social realities as age, he opines that being a student in the Islamic sense is useful to be a better Muslim. He illustrates this with the attitude of *Iblīs* (satan) in the Qur'an towards knowledge, suggesting that Muslims should not see themselves as such even if they are senior academics.

> That you would be a professor and you would still be a student of Islam, and for me, I see it positively because it prevents a Muslim from constructing himself the way Satan construct itself, that he knew everything. Once you say you have reached the shore of knowledge then be sure you have reached the abyss of ignorance. So, our inability to construct who the Muslim [student] is, is actually an opportunity.[947]

The campaign, 'no graduation from MSS' developed from this perspective of 'student' in the 1980s to promote a transition plan in the MSSN. The campaign was used to encourage members of the Society to join the MSSN Central Branch after university and it was built on the reconstruction of who is a 'student.' However, as Adeniyi narrated below, the definition challenged the initial image of a 'student' (understood as a youth based on age category) on which the Society was established.

> …around '80 – '88, because those who founded MSSN really, it was basically for students. Lateef Adegbite and some other people like that. So, they were secondary schools' students when they began it. But now, people now try to look at it beyond…they first change the meaning of students, they first change the concept of students that you are a student throughout your life, to make

---

[943] Ayinla Samsideen (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[944] Afis Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[945] Jibril Oyekan, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[946] Federal Ministry of Youth Development, "National Youth Policy,", 2nd ed. (Federal Ministry of Youth Development, 2009), 7.
[947] Afis Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

us relevant in MSS. So, having change that one, the second thing was that, if you now leave university, where will you go? That now gave birth to Central Branch. That "no graduation from the MSSN". Even if you are the president, if you are the governor, you are still in MSSN.[948]

The specific date in which this Central Branch was established cannot be ascertained. But it was mentioned in a 1984 document of the Society as a platform for "working-class Muslims or Muslim students in their *transitional period* from one educational level to another."[949] The working class is not defined either as graduates or non-graduates, but members of this branch at the time of my fieldwork included both. The Central Branches are in local government areas where members meet weekly to memorise and study the Qur'an, discuss MSSN affairs, and attend to each other's socio-economic needs. But some of them do not function effectively due to low attendance and the different social realities of members which include their work schedule.[950] Based on this existing structure, those who criticised the transition into a 'movement' do not see the need for it.

Interestingly, those who identified with The Jama'at did not dismiss the definition of Muslims as students for life, but they considered it only as a theoretical concept rather than being practical because it ignored the realities of the contemporary world. They based their argument on the thinking that people over fifty years old cannot acknowledge publicly that they are 'students' nor claim to be representatives of the MSSN without feeling embarrassed. Based on the primary objectives of the MSSN, they assumed that being a 'student' also to put limitations on what they could do in addressing the contemporary socio-economic challenges of Muslims. Therefore, they opined that many members do not associate with the MSSN after leaving the university because they do not regard themselves as 'students' in the sense of being a 'youth' or associated with a school.[951] Certainly, this argument is not limited to the Jama'at faction. Many students who identify with the Mainstream also shared this view, leading to a suspicion among them that the *babas* claiming to be members of the MSSN might be using the Society for personal gains and hegemonic control.

Rather than insisting on 'students for life,' The Jama'at appeared to support the transformation of the MSSN into a "movement" which would incorporate "non-students" as members. It also proposed a change to the constitution of the MSSN that allowed membership to extend to 'non-

---

[948] Zafaran Omotope Adeniyi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[949] Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*, 8. Emphasis mine.
[950] Ayinla Samsideen (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[951] Zafaran Omotope Adeniyi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Abdur-Raheem Luqman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

students' in the school system. This amendment, which was supported by both factions, provided for the appointments of these students into zonal and national administrative positions unlike in the past. More importantly, it strengthened the Central Branches as part of the structure of the Society and it encouraged greater involvement of graduate students and professionals in the affairs of the Society.[952] However, this constitutional review did not stop the disagreement between the two factions as each of them tried to ensure that the administrative officers of the Society were those who identified with their visions for the Society and interpretation of Islam. The contest over the leadership of the Society from the mid-1980s therefore ensued because of this. As will be demonstrated below, this contest was connected to the debate on Islam in the Society and it contributed to some altercations and fragmentation of the Society from the mid-1990s.

5.4 **Tension and division, 1994 – 2005**

From the two sections above, I have shown that reform and discourse are central to the transformation of MSSN to a reform movement. This transformation is an example of religious change. As pointed out in Chapter Two, religious change can also take the form of "schism" resulting from crisis in a religious organization. With such division, the breakaway groups may establish their own organizations often with little doctrinal differences from the main organization. In this section, I will show this process of schism in the MSSN by drawing attention to the cases of division, the major issues involved in the division, the main actors, the breakaway organisations and their main arguments on Islam. The rise of The Jama'at and its battle for the control of B-Zone MSSN was one of such cases of division. The battle, which almost led to a violence between the late 1980s and 2005, could be traced to the debates on *sunna* in the Society. Though there were many figures in the debates, the *da'wa* activities of Thanni were central to why the debates led to the organisational crisis of MSSN. As noted earlier, the notion that Thanni played a vital role in the debate calls attention to the differences in his activities in relation to other figures before him. Let us look at the role he played in the MSSN reform and schism.

5.4.1 **The factor of Abdul-Fatah Thanni**

Thanni's activities in the MSSN began in Lagos and his influence grew because of the contributions he made on several reforms in the Society. This started at the MSSN event organised at Baptist Academy school where he was invited to give a lecture in 1983. After the

---

[952] Taofiq Abdul-Azeez, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

lecture, he was requested to give an appraisal of the performance of a "sing-song" competition at the event. According to him, he knew that music was not a correct practice in Islam, but he reluctantly accepted the request in order not to embarrass the students. After the event, he convinced some students about the position of Islam on music, arguing that it was not a correct tradition in Islam.[953] As I discussed in Chapter Four, this argument was contested in the Society until the late 1980s when the "sing-song" was finally ruled out. Gradually, Thanni attracted many students whom he taught the *sunna* of the Prophet, and he was invited to many programmes in the MSSN where he gave sermons on how to achieve 'Islamic' discipline in everyday life.[954] Another major contribution he made was the introduction of Arabic learning to challenge the practice of religious education through Islamic texts in English (including the textbooks produced for schools) which he believed to be a weak point in the MSSN. For him, these texts were not enough for Muslims to understand the fundamental teachings of Islam because they promoted an Orientalist perception of Islam.[955] Thus, he offered to teach those who wanted to learn Arabic in order to have a better understanding of the religion.

For many of his teachings, Thanni invited students to study circles which many returnees organised outside the schools. The invitation to these circles was facilitated by students who were his mentees in the MSSN. However, unlike other returnees, Thanni's lectures became a concern due to the method of invitation and what was taught in those lectures. Many students were invited in the name of the MSSN, thereby thinking they were MSSN programmes. There was also an allegation of covert and selective invitations in which friends, often in the same room at halls of residence, may not have been aware that they were invited to the same lecture until they met at the venue. Adigun Saliu, who was among the invited students from UI between the late 1980s and 1990s, noted that he attended these lectures to learn about Islam, but he was not aware of any motive behind them.

> My experience… I think I was in 200level, we had some of our brothers, we were all together at the MSSN, but they were in the executives, we were not in the executive…it was in my 100level then…they would organize programmes outside of the campus, invite us, take us there. Sometimes some of *these programmes were held covertly. They didn't do anything either than to learn Islam*…that was all, *nothing extremist to most students at first*. So, we saw it more as spiritual development exercises for us, being novices in the scene… some others were viewing us with suspicion, we didn't know because

---

[953] Shaykh Abdul-Fatah Muhammad Thanni, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[954] Ibid.
[955] Ibid.

we were a novice and following these brothers to these programmes. We never knew what was going on.[956]

As Saliu suggested, some "extreme" religious lessons were taught in these lectures. These lessons, according to him, were against the objectives and positions of MSSN on Islam. However, Thanni did not see anything "extreme" in what he taught the students except the basic teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and how these teachings could be relevant in their lives. He contended that he introduced the students to the "comprehensiveness" of Islam which achieved a success as he noted here:

> all the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the comprehensiveness of the *dīn* [religion] is what I have introduced to them. So that every part of the personality of a Muslim is realized; and when you realize it, it would make you become unique. And that is what we got at the end of the day.[957]

Many students were attracted to Thanni and his lectures because of his erudition in speaking Arabic which he combines with English and Western scholarship.[958] Using his own experience, Abdur-Rahman Taiwo who is an executive in the MSSN, draws attention to how such people could influence students' consciousness for Islam and their quest for knowledge.[959] He narrated that what attracted him to the MSSN when he enrolled at the Polytechnic Ibadan were the academics he saw wearing suits and ties who came to the mosque to pray and read the Qur'anic text. Before then, his impression was that Western educated Muslims were not very serious about religion and would not mix with non-literates.

Perhaps, what also attracted many students to Thanni was the support they got from him. He was a philanthropist who supported the education of many students,[960] which could have been part of his responsibilities as a representative of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of Kuwait. This assistance would be significant for many students in the context of the chronic economic crisis in Nigeria between the 1980s and 1990s that was symbolised by huge job losses, the closing of industries and an increase in poverty. This was also the period when Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) were introduced in developing countries, like Nigeria, with failures, a phenomenon that was later referred to as 'the lost decades' of economic

---

[956] Adigun Saliu (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 8, 2016, Ondo, Nigeria.

[957] Shaykh Abdul-Fatah Muhammad Thanni, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[958] Ayinla Samsideen (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[959] Abdur-Rahman Taiwo, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[960] Abiodun Raheem (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 22, 2016, Ikeja, Lagos.

development.[961] In addition to his philanthropy, the thirst for knowledge and new experience as well as a zeal for the *da'wa* also caused many students to gravitate towards Thanni. Abiodun Raheem, who was an executive in the MSSN in this period, pointed out that "the brothers did not identify with him because of the money alone but also due to their zeal to proselytize the *da'wa* that they were used to. They were so eager to learn."[962] The students who identified with his teachings later pushed for reforms within the MSSN. Through their views on Islam and other activities, The Mainstream began to call these students The Jama'at to show that they had a different orientation towards Islam from their own.

From the late 1980s, The Jama'at began a struggle to take control of the MSSN B-Zone and Thanni was understood to support its bid either as part of an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood to Nigeria or a new movement in which he would be appointed as the *murshid* (one who gives right guidance).[963] Because of the conflicts that resulted from this power tussle, his activities became a concern for many pioneer members and patrons of the MSSN, such as Oyekan and Lateefat Okunnu,[964] who called for his ban in the Society by 1990.[965] While they wanted to help the Society sustained its identity and objectives, the reaction of these patrons was often looked upon by The Jama'at as an opposition to their new understanding of Islam. Thus, The Jama'at also painted their bid for power as an effort to assert their independence from the control of these patrons. In the ensuing power struggle, The Jama'at lost to The Mainstream and left the MSSN to form The Muslim Congress (TMC). Below, I give an overview of the power struggle and the formation of TMC.

5.4.2 **Struggle for power**

The Jama'at had a stronghold in Lagos where Thanni resided. Owing to this, the contest was framed as a battle between the MSSN Lagos Area Unit and other states in MSSN B-Zone. The contest started with the impeachment of Abdul-Akeem Abiola, the *amir* of the MSSN Lagos State Area Unit in the mid-1980s, although the main issue responsible for his impeachment remains unclear. In 1990, a major contest for the leadership of the MSSN B-Zone also occurred at the zonal conference held at Government College Ibadan to elect new executives. One of the main issues in this contest was surrounded by the appointment of a *shūrā* (consultative)

---

[961] Peter M. Lewis, "Economic Statism, Private Capital, and the Dilemmas of Accumulation in Nigeria," *World Development* 22, no. 3 (1994): 437; William Easterly, "The Lost Decades: Developing Countries' Stagnation in Spite of Policy Reform 1980-1998," *Journal of Economic Growth* 6, no. 2 (2001).
[962] Abiodun Raheem (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[963] Taofiq Abdul-Azeez, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[964] I have described her identity in Chapter Four.
[965] Shaykh Abdul-Fatah Muhammad Thanni, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

committee charged with the responsibility to elect new officers. The method of appointment provided for one representative from each state in the zone to be part of the committee, in addition to some former executives of the Society. However, there were concerns that this method did not take into consideration the disparity in the population of member states. These concerns were expressed by the MSSN Lagos Area Unit which had the largest number of members in the MSSN, a manifestation of the higher number of Muslims in Lagos compared to other parts of Yorubaland. Connected to this population disparity was that the state with the largest number of Muslim students contributed more funds (in terms of dues collected from members) to the Society, which again put Lagos at the forefront of other states. Consequently, the contest for the head of zonal officers was understood by some members of the Society to challenge the politics that favours one vote for each state without respecting the size and contributions of member states.[966] Nevertheless, this argument appears to be weak since there is no evidence that the appointment of these officers constituted a major problem before the 1980s. The struggle for power must, therefore, be situated within the debate on whether the Society should go beyond its orientation of a 'student'-centred movement.

More importantly, there is a need to understand the motives of the main actors in the contest for power. The contest for power at the 1990 conference was understood by many students to be part of this motive. At the conference, a series of meetings were held by the leaders of The Jama'at in a strong bid to ensure that their representative emerged as the Zonal President. The politicking between the two factions became raucous to the extent that the *babas* of the Society had to intervene, and it turned out that they were blackmailed for doing so, as their own interest and partisanship were questioned. The stormy conference eventually produced Taofiq Abdul-Azeez from Ogun State as the zonal *amir*, Basheer Agboola as IVC Organiser and Basheer Olanrewaju as Secretary.[967]

As the *amir*, Abdul-Azeez was one of the main figures at the centre of the struggle to take control of the MSSN B-zonal office. Today, a professor of English at the University of Abuja, Abdul-Azeez joined the MSSN at Anwarul-Islam High School in Iseyin in 1978. He had a few years of Islamic education at a *madrasa* in Kano where he grew up and studied under his uncle, Shaykh Abdul-Qadri, and a private teacher, Shaykh Moshood Akajewole (who became the Chief Imam of Ede). Abdul-Azeez mentors were Sufi brothers and he identified with their

---

[966] Zafaran Omotope Adeniyi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[967] Abideen Olaiya, "MSSN and Its Unending Crises," *Newspaper Online*, March 4, 2018, https://mynewspapersonline.blogspot.de/2017/03/mssn-and-its-unending-crises.html (accessed February 19, 2018).

practices and those of the Tabligh Jama'at for a long time before he abandoned them in line with the new understanding of the prophetic *sunna* in the MSSN. He was also a student activist at UI. Before the 1990 conference, he had been friends with some members of The Jama'at, but he was also sympathetic to the cause of The Mainstream. This is why his election was accepted by both factions because he was understood to be a bridge between them.[968]

However, because Abdul-Azeez's loyalty remained in doubt, several attempts were understood to be made by The Jama'at to discredit him and call for his removal. Among these was the allegation against him during the IVC held at Ayetoro in 1990 that he failed (as the *imam*) to lead the *ṣalāt ẓuhr* (prayer at noon) at the right time in which he was charged to the Sharia court. Though the jurisdiction of this court is limited to the IVC, its judgement is nonetheless binding. When the plot to discredit him failed, a bold attempt was made to adopt him into The Jama'at with a bid to convincing him to hand over his position to them. For this, he was invited by the representatives of The Jama'at to different meetings, one of which was held at Eruwa (Oyo State), to negotiate the terms of vacating his position and taking over the MSSN B-Zone. The identity of those he met at these meetings is less known, but Abdul-Azeez refused the many offers made to him by them. Rather than taking his position, he advised them to leave the MSSN and form another organisation in which they could implement the objectives they wanted to promote in the MSSN. To demonstrate his sympathy for The Jama'at's cause, he also vowed to leave the MSSN if they were willing to accept his proposal. This proposal, for him, was the only reason that would make him vacate his position as the *amir*. As this proposal was not immediately acceded to, he established his own authority in the Society and helped to ensure that the *amirs* who succeeded him did not identify with The Jama'at.[969]

But, Abdul-Azeez's support for The Mainstream was not without chaos over the control of the Society. By 1992 when his tenure was due, The Jama'at had extended its control from Lagos to Oyo and Ogun states to enhance its representation in the *shūrā*. But it suffered a setback when Oyo was lost again a few months before the zonal election, thus causing another round of intrigues and face-off between the two factions.[970] There was also a plan to disrupt the organisation of the annual IVC held at Abeokuta Grammar School in 1992 which was salvaged by one of the patrons of the Society, Chief M.K.O. Abiola. In 1993, there was also a move to take control of the MSSN UI Branch in which the *imams* in the halls of residence were forced

---

[968] Taofiq Abdul-Azeez, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[969] Ibid.
[970] Abideen Olaiya, "MSSN and its Unending Crises".

to step down. The move, which resulted in a physical fight, was stopped by the officers of the Society at its secretariat located at the central mosque. Efforts were also made to take control of the Osun Area Unit at OAU and the Edo Area Unit at the University of Benin (UNIBEN), while the Ondo Area Unit was held firm by those who identified with The Mainstream.[971]

The 1994 zonal conference held at the Iman Centre in Ibadan to elect new officers was probably the last intriguing encounter that ended the relationship of The Jama'at with The Mainstream. The *shūrā* at this conference announced Afis Oladosu as zonal *amir*, Abideen Olaiya as IVC Organiser, Abdul-Wahid Bamigbade as Secretary and Abdur-Rahman Balogun as Public Relations Officer (PRO) who were all rejected by The Jama'at. A representative of The Jama'at named Abdul-Jelil Raji opposed the appointment of these officers and contested Oladosu's embodiment of the *sunna* which was symbolised by his slouched cap. He insisted that the candidate of his faction, Kamil Zakariyah, must be appointed as the *amir*.[972] Two months after The Mainstream rejected this plea, The Jama'at announced the establishment of the TMC in Lagos with Abdul-Razaq Abdus-Salam as *amir*.[973]

Throughout this struggle, Thanni was sympathetic to the cause of The Jama'at because, for him, his mentees had a genuine interest to run the Society better. But he was disappointed that their objectives were misunderstood.[974] Following the inauguration of the TMC in 1994, these mentees made him their Grand Patron. In 2016, he was turbaned as one of the Imams of TMC.[975] Another patron of TMC was Alhaji Lanrewaju Moshood Adepoju, a popular Yoruba poet, broadcaster, social critic and president of a *sunna* group, Universal Muslim Brotherhood in Ibadan.[976] While the other key issues in the MSSN crises in the 1990s remain scanty, the objectives of the TMC and its activities seem to give insights into what The Jama'at wanted to achieve by taking the MSSN beyond a student-centred movement.

5.4.3 The Muslim Congress and other break-away groups

Apart from TMC, several Muslim organisations emerged in the 1990s that were directly or indirectly linked to the MSSN crisis. This includes NASFAT, Al-Mu'minaat, the Al Fatih-ul-

---

[971] MSSN Lagos Area Unit, WhatsApp communication to Adeyemi Balogun, February 27, 2017.
[972] Ibid.
[973] Ibid.
[974] Shaykh Abdul-Fatah Muhammad Thanni, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[975] The Muslim Congress, "The Imams of the Muslim Congress (TMC): 3 of 3,", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i616uAmrr_s (accessed February 24, 2018).
[976] See Oyeniyi Okunoye, "Lanrewaju Adepoju and the Making of Modern Yoruba Poetry," *Africa* 81, no. 2 (2011).

Qareeb Islamic Society of Nigeria, the Movement for Islamic Culture and Awareness (MICA), the Companion, Dawah Front of Nigeria, and Al-Usrah. NASFAT has become one of the largest Muslim organisations in Nigeria, but its emergence in 1995 is rarely discussed in the MSSN crisis as noted earlier. Some notable studies have been done on NASFAT including those of Soares,[977] Obadare,[978] Peel,[979] Ibrahim[980] and Adetona.[981] Soares contextualises the emergence, socio-economic and religious activities of NASFAT from the perspective of social movement theory, Adetona focuses on its contribution to *da'wa* in Lagos, while Peel, Obadare and Ibrahim compare NASFAT practices with Pentecostal Christianity. The founders of NASFAT, like Akinbode, are considered by many in the MSSN as those who had contrary views to the radical reforms in the Society. Practices like singing, dancing, and weekly group prayers which became widely used in NASFAT are regarded as points of disagreement between them and the MSSN. Like other groups who left the MSSN, this disagreement did not cause rancour because Akinbode and others were understood to have left on their own. This is unlike the TMC, a less-known but controversial movement among the supporters of MSSN.

On the reasons for establishing TMC in 1994, its website notes that Muslims in Nigeria "ravage the land empty of heart, forlorn of hope" because they do not have Islamic spirit "that gives life to dead faith." They were deprived "of security, land, personality, food and shelter, life and other things guaranteed them by Allah to lead an exemplary life of leaders and best of mankind." The TMC is thus seen as a response to give assistance to Muslims and help them "return to the position of honour and leadership."[982] This is quite similar to the narratives of many Islamic reform movements. The reform project of the Congress is also well articulated in its vision of playing a leading role to "guiding, influencing and setting agenda for societal reformation in line with Qur'an and Sunnah."[983] But, many aspects of its vision and objectives are quite similar to the MSSN such as the "restoration of Arabic as the language of Muslims." What appears to set the Congress apart from the MSSN is its focus on socio-economic needs

---

[977] Benjamin F. Soares, "An Islamic Social Movement in Contemporary West Africa" in *Movers and Shakers*.

[978] Ebenezer Obadare, "The Muslim Response to the Pentecostal Surge in Nigeria: Prayer and the Rise of Charismatic Islam," *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 2, no. 1 (2015).

[979] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orișa-religion*, 186–91.

[980] Murtala Ibrahim, "Sensational Piety: Practices of Mediation in Christ Embassy and NASFAT," (PhD Thesis, University of Utrecht, Netherland, 2017).

[981] Adetona, "NASFAT".

[982] The Muslim Congress, "About the Muslim Congress: Introduction,", http://tmcng.net/about/ (accessed February 23, 2018).

[983] Ibid.

of members which include providing social services and the establishment of economic frameworks in the larger society.[984]

Since 1994, TMC has received the support of prominent Muslims in Yorubaland including Adegbite and Aromashodu who commissioned some of its projects.[985] Its members include not only artisans and businessmen, but also academics, such as Abdur-Raheem and political administrators, such as Abdul-Hakeem Abdul-Lateef, the Lagos State Commissioner for Home Affairs (2015-2019). The majority of the members are men, and according to Abdur-Raheem, the decision to make it a male organisation was to avoid a situation in which members clashed among themselves over women, as witnessed in the MSSN before its founders left.[986] However, wives and daughters of Congress members belong to another organisation called Al-Mu'minaat (The Believing Women) Organisation formed in 1995. Al-Mu'minaat aims to propagate what it regarded as "pristine Islam," assist women through empowerment, health and education programmes, fight for the rights of Muslim women and support women in building an "Islamic family" life.[987] While TMC is understood by many students as operating like the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,[988] some aspects of its organisational structure does not differ from previous Muslims organisations in Yorubaland such as the Ansar-Ud-Deen. For instance, like these other organisations, the Congress has an *amir*, executive officers, a chief missioner and clerics. Apart from this, members of the Congress are also encouraged to marry among themselves as in the MSSN, and this is often done through a form of matchmaking.

The Congress' programmes include monthly supplicatory *adhkār* sessions, weekly Tazkiyyah (purification) lectures, an annual Islamic Training Programme (ITP) which is a practice carried over from the MSSN IVC, and Muharram Get-Together to mark the start of the Muslim calendar. Like many reformers, the Congress issues *fatāwā* (rulings) on several topics in Islam to guide members. To ensure that they consume Sharia-compliant products, the Congress also established a Halal Certification Authority to examine the process of production and ingredients of articles in the market. The Congress also encourages Islamic charitable pious

---

[984] The new constitution of the MSSN, whose date of review cannot be ascertained, emphasised similar socio-economic concerns. It notes that the MSSN's objectives will be "To participate actively in the establishment and promotion of good governance and responsible leadership at various levels of the larger society i) To lay a sound foundation for financial self-sufficiency to carry out its programmes and also promote the development of an economically vibrant Ummah that is self-reliant." See "MSS at a Glance", 7–9.

[985] Abdur-Raheem Luqman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[986] Ibid.

[987] Al-Mu'minaat, "About Us: Al-Mu'minaat (the Believing Women) Organization,", https://www.almuminaatng.org/about-us/ (accessed February 24, 2018).

[988] Al-Atharee, Aboo Aamir (Ishaaq AbdirRaheem), "What Is Haunting the Muslim Congress?,", http://simplysalafiyyah.com/what-is-haunting-tmc.html (accessed February 24, 2018).

duty through its Zakat and Sadaqat Foundation, and it supports entrepreneurial development for low-income Muslims through its Al-Barakah Microfinance Bank. The Congress also has a disaster humanitarian programme for victims of accidents, fires, explosions and floods through its Human Concern Foundation International (HCFI). In relation to the Nigerian state, the Congress addresses socio-economic and political issues such as corruption, fuel subsidies, and insecurity through press releases and conferences. Some members of TMC also established a Muslim school (which offers primary and secondary education) called Vanguards Academy at Ijebu-Ode, Ogun state. In future, the Congress plans to have a university. While little is known about the population of Congress members, it is estimated to have about three hundred centres in Nigeria spread across Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Kwara, Niger, Edo and Abuja, as well as the Republic of Benin.[989] Over the years, as it expands, TMC became the subject of criticism of many Muslim groups which include the Salafis and the MSSN. The Salafis are of the view that members of TMC have derailed from the path of the *sunna* because they have become lenient in many practices such as not emphasising the use of face veil.[990] But for members of the MSSN, TMC has not departed from the *sunna* but has merely discovered why it is difficult to train Muslims and adopt the *sunna* in this complex world.[991]

The Dawah Front of Nigeria is another major organisation that broke away from the MSSN. It was established by former MSSN members who upon its formation appointed Abdul-Azeez as its national missioner (or spiritual head). The establishment of Dawah Front shows that Abdul-Azeez and its facilitators also shared the idea of another Muslim organisation which is not for students. A pointer to this is the argument by the Dawah Front on why it was formed in 1996, as noted on its website: "The existing fora and media of interactions were considered inadequate to meet the dynamic but sophisticated needs of a certain category of Muslims."[992] For Abdul-Azeez, the establishment of the Dawah Front (and the TMC) also aimed at putting an end to the contest between The Jama'at and The Mainstream in 1994.[993] In contrast to the MSSN, the Dawah Front adopts the motto "Islam is Simple" as part of its vision to propagate "Islam as a simple, attractive and accessible way of life; and a mission to promote Islamic brotherhood."[994] Its activities include annual vacation camps called *Daura*, family seminars,

---

[989] The Muslim Congress, "About The Muslim Congress".
[990] Al-Atharee, Aboo Aamir (Ishaaq AbdirRaheem), "What is Haunting The Muslim Congress?".
[991] Adeniran Q. (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[992] Dawah Front of Nigeria, "About Us,", http://dawahfrontnigeria.com/welcome/about_us (accessed February 25, 2018).
[993] Taofiq Abdul-Azeez, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[994] Dawah Front of Nigeria, "About Us".

weekly *adhkār* and a monthly *tahajjud* (mid-night prayer) like the NASFAT. It has some medium scale enterprises like schools, and it supports members through facilities like a Health Savings Scheme, an Investment Window, and a Thrift and Loan scheme. The national secretariat of the Dawah Front is in Abeokuta, with branches in Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Port Harcourt and Abuja.

While the establishment of these organisations has added to the diversity of Islam in Yorubaland, their break-away from the MSSN on account of needing a transitional group dedicated to 'non-youth' often did not support this argument because they all have structures for young people. The only exception seems to be TMC, although its youth group is understood to be a faction in the MSSN. Also, many members of the break-away group have mended their relationship with those in the MSSN whom they clashed with in the 1990s, and they participate in each other's programmes. There is also no major difference in their practices with those in the MSSN such as dressing, except in colour. Thus, while I consider that the break-away of these organisations is related to the contests for power and the different understandings of Islam, their programmes and facilities for members suggest that the break-away is also influenced by the happenings in the global world of Islamic revival movements and local socio-economic strains which they wanted to address due to the failure of the state.

5.4.4 **Factions in the MSSN: the 'Lagos Brothers'**

The crisis that led to the formation of TMC also produced the faction called the "Lagos Brothers." The name of this faction refers to members of the MSSN representing Lagos State Area Unit. Though the group emerged amid the MSSN crisis, referring to them as 'Lagos brothers' could be linked to the stereotype of many Yorubas, and many groups in Nigeria, about those who live in Lagos. Lagosians, *araa Eko* (colleagues from Lagos), are considered 'modern' and less- 'traditional' in habits and taste. This seems like a positive description to outsiders, but it is also used derisively to suggest that they are 'un-African.' This notion has its root in the nineteenth century Victorian lifestyles of the western educated elite of Saro and Aguda origin, many of which were later adopted by other migrants to the city. The lifestyle of these elite found expression in their Christian values of marriage and the organisation of social activities like naming ceremonies and funerals.[995] Mann's study has illustrated that such marriage values as one man to one woman were contested by many Yoruba from the mid-nineteenth century colonial Lagos,[996] while those who promoted the Christian values see their

---

[995] Emmanuel A. Ayandele, *African Historical Studies*, Reprint (London: Frank Cass; Routledge, 2005), 150.
[996] Mann, "The Dangers of Dependence".

critics as backward in their ways of life. Through the years, many Lagosians have helped to sustain their perception about not being 'African' by referring to non-Lagosians as *araa oke* (colleagues from up-country) and *araa oko* (colleagues from the village/bush) suggesting that they are not people of *Ọlaju*. Lagosians also considered themselves to be 'unique' and 'progressive' compared to non-Lagosians. It is interesting that this perception of the other partly came up in the debates on Muslim practices and the factionalisation of the MSSN.

The Lagos Brothers are regarded as the mentees of Thanni (and sympathisers of TMC) by The Mainstream. This theory has been sustained since the MSSN Lagos Area Unit exited the MSSN B-Zone, firstly in 1999 and secondly in 2005. Despite exiting the MSSN B-Zone, the MSSN Lagos Area Unit remained within the national body of the Society. But there is a minority faction within the MSSN Lagos Area Unit that is unsympathetic to the vision of the state's leadership. This minority faction, therefore, returned to the MSSN B-Zone in 2006. [997] At present, the leader of the break-away faction is Saheed Ashafa, while Mas'ud Kolawole (referred to as Asqolani) heads the minority faction who remains in the B-Zone. In Lagos, Ashafa's faction heads sixteen local governments out of twenty while Kolawole controls the remaining four.[998] In the Mainstream MSSN, TMC is largely understood to be "controlling" and "sponsoring" Ashafa's faction. Furthermore, the reason for the exit of Ashafa's faction from the B-Zone is also regarded as part of TMC's aim to create a 'movement' that has a student body, a class of professionals, and clerics. These assumptions have fed on programmes organised by Ashafa's faction which were always attended by clerics from TMC including Thanni, the same way in which the MSSN members in Ashafa's faction attended the programmes organised by TMC.

However, the relationship between TMC and the Ashafa faction is more complex than what these assumptions reveal. Indeed, nearly all my respondents in Ashafa's faction did not deny their relationship with TMC, but they did not see the reason why they should not be linked to TMC because they recognised it as a *sunna* organisation which is related to the MSSN in orientation.[999] Importantly, they contend that those in TMC are their brothers in Islam, many of whom are actually family members. Thus, they argued, it is difficult to dissociate themselves from TMC.[1000] But what this relationship also suggests is that they have some problems with

---

[997] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[998] Ibid.
[999] Adesola Sodiq (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 29, 2017, Idiaraba Lagos.
[1000] Adekoya Abdur-Raheem, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

The Mainstream, which interestingly enough are what they regarded as the reasons for their exit from the MSSN B-Zone in 2005.

One of them, Razak Adebisi, narrated that they broke away because they disagreed on the methodology of *da'wa*, referring to how they wanted to apply some practices.[1001] An example of such practices was demonstrated by Abdul-Hakeem Opadijo (a former leader, singer, school teacher and poet in the MSSN) when I performed *ṣalāt ẓuhr* (prayer at noon) with him and his pupils at Ransome Kuti Memorial Grammar School, Yaba Lagos. After the prayer, Opadijo said some *adhkār* which we all recited aloud after him. When we finished, he told me that was the kind of practice which had divided them from those in the B-Zone. Those in the B-Zone, according to him, were opposed to saying the *adhkār* in congregation.[1002] Adebisi narrated to me that this was a problem because it opposed the *ḥujja* they had, which made them uncomfortable regardless of being the same Muslims.

> …I believe in my evidence. And we now come together in a circle and we are now reciting it. You know, you will not feel comfortable that you are doing some things that I don't support, and we call ourselves the same thing (sic).[1003]

The other practice he mentioned was the performance of *tahajjud* (midnight prayer) in congregation which he said those in The Mainstream opposed. Adebisi told me that the difference in their opinions generated several arguments that led to tagging them as 'Lagos Brothers.' Like himself, other members of his faction found this term very disturbing because it undermined their association with the Society and, at the same time, it gave them the justification for pulling out from the B-Zone.

> So instead of us focusing on Islam, it's always these arguments, bringing out arguments. The arguments now reach a particular level that I am now seeing it as banal. *Accusations now coming out that these are the Lagos Brothers. When they see you, they call you the Lagos Brothers.* That bond of actually seeing my Muslim brothers and sisters together, you know, that created a lot of issues which, to me, this development shows that things are coming in line together.[1004]

From the late 1990s, the 'Lagos Brothers' became a category that was used to represent many things such as 'rebellion' and 'incorrect practice' in the MSSN. The reference to the 'Lagos Brothers' on their attitudes to early marriage and the use of phones in various debates were examples of this. By way of illustration, the Society generally considered early marriage as an

---

[1001] Adebisi Razak (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun, February 9, 2017, Ifako Lagos.
[1002] Abdul-Hakeem Opadijo, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 31, 2017, Yaba Lagos.
[1003] Adebisi Razak (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1004] Ibid.

aspect of what it means to be a good Muslim in order to avoid *zina* (adultery). For the most part, the Lagos members did not disprove of early marriage, yet they were opposed to it for many reasons. This includes the high cost of living in Lagos, the need to graduate from school and have a job, and the concern that their parents would not approve of the marriage if they had no job. Unlike them, they considered early marriage would be easy for non-Lagos residents who lived in states where the cost of living was lower. Rather than considering their differences, Adebisi said that those in the B-Zone started taking 'Lagos Brothers' as examples in their lectures to describe Muslims who could buy expensive phones but could not afford to get married.[1005] Beyond the dispute that provoked the stereotype 'Lagos Brothers,' this kind of argumentation points attention to the current emphasis in the MSSN to guide members about modern lifestyles. However, even if the aim was to inspire change to a modest lifestyle, using such stereotypes inadvertently affected their in-group relationship. In general, beyond their different *da'wa* methods, there are no major differences in the programmes of Ashafa's faction and the B-Zone except in terms of organisation and conception of that programme.[1006] This suggest to me that their schism did not produce a radically different orientation to Islam and mode of sociality between the two factions.

5.4.5 **Laa Jama'ah: the Salafi challenge**

A Salafi-minded group, though diverse in membership, also emerged amid the MSSN crisis in the early 2000s. The faction is generally referred to as the 'Laa Jama'ah' (no congregations/groups) in the MSSN. This term describes one of its major critiques against the MSSN as well as other Muslim organisations in Yorubaland. Members of this faction are of the view that all Muslims are one community or group and that the idea of "communities," "organizations" or "groups" within the Muslim community such as the MSSN, Ansar-Ud-Deen, NASFAT, and TMC do not have evidence in Islam.[1007] A leader of the Salafi group in Ile-Ife, Kabir Ajadi, noted that many Muslims often misunderstood this argument when they criticised them. According to him,

---

[1005] Ibid.

[1006] Regarding their similarities, they both have programmes like the Islamic Vacation Course (IVC), Essay and Qur'an memorisation competition, leadership training and Sister's Circle. But the titles of some of these programmes have been reframed by the Ashafa's faction. A major example is the B-Zone's National Higher Institution Convention of Muslim Students (NHICOMS) which is known in Ashafa's faction as the Higher Institutions Convention of Muslim Students (HICOMS). For the B-Zone, see Abdul-Wakeel Olaleye, "Annual Conference Transitional: Recipe for Good Leadership," (MSSN, December 4-5, 2015), 5–7. For the Ashafa's faction, see MSSN Lagos State Area Unit, "Council of Higher Institutions,", https://www.mssnlagos.net/index.php/cohi (accessed July 5, 2019).

[1007] Abubakar Afis (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

> The word *Laa Jama'ah* is used to describe those people that castigate MSSN. Because what we usually say is that La Jamaa'at, which means that there is no forming of groups in Islam. But there should be a *group* and not *groups*. And that is what the Prophet told us. It is *Laa Jama'at* not *Laa Jamaa'at* [in plural]. So, at times, when people say it, you see that they are suffering from lack of Arabic knowledge. We described them as people without in-depth Arabic knowledge. So, they would now be telling people that we are saying there is no group, that when we want to observe *ṣalāt* we observe it individually.[1008]

Another major argument of the Salafis centred on Muslim participation in Western democratic politics and use of a constitution rather than the Qur'an and the Hadith. Ishaq AbdirRaheem, one of these Salafis, considered the MSSN involvement in politics as one of the practices that made it stray away from the *sunna*.[1009] Because the arguments of these Salafs were opposed to what the MSSN was promoting, the Society began to prevent clerics who identified with Salafism from attending its programmes.[1010] However, the ban was not enough to stop the number of students who identified as Salafis from the late 1990s.

Apart from the MSSN, the other Muslim organisations in Yorubaland, such as Ansar-Ud-Deen and TMC have been concerned about the Salafi claims. There have been lively debates between the clerics of these Muslim organisations and the Salafis on many of these claims during public lectures and on social media. The most widely circulated debates on social media in recent times have been between the Salafis and the TMC,[1011] on the one hand, and the Salafis and Shaykh Habeeb Al-Ilory,[1012] on the other hand. In one of the debates between Habeeb and the Salafis, Habeeb challenged the use of "Salaf" as an identity of Muslims and contested the emphasis on the face veil for women by the Salafis.[1013] The highly charged tones of these debates often stir security concerns in the society. In 2016, for instance, a renowned Iwo cleric, Shaykh Bilal Al-Asrau called for the prosecution of two Salafis named Rasheed Mustapha (a.k.a. Abu Ibeji) and Ustadh Yusuf (a.k.a. Abu Abdillah) on allegations of libel and threat to

---

[1008] Kabir Ajadi (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 12, 2016, Ile-Ife Osun.

[1009] Al-Atharee, Aboo Aamir (Ishaaq AbdirRaheem), "What Happened to MSSN".

[1010] Abideen Olaiya, "Dangerous Trend of Salafist Movement in Southwest, Nigeria," *iWitness*, November 28, 2016, https://www.iwitness.com.ng/dangerous-trend-of-salafist-movement-in-south-west-nigeria/ (accessed March 5, 2018).

[1011] Aboo Aamir Al-Atharee (Ishaaq AbdirRaheem), "What is Haunting The Muslim Congress?".

[1012] Son of Shaykh Adam Al-Ilory of The Institute of Arabic and Islamic Training Centre, Markaz, Lagos.

[1013] Sheikh Abeebullah Adam Al-Ilory, "Ailagboye Islam 2,", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ON4J5-TOVI8 (accessed March 2, 2018).

his life over the comments he made supporting democratic governance in Nigeria. The two Salafis were arrested and detained by the police afterwards.[1014]

Despite their widespread presence in the MSSN B-Zone, the Salafis only had a very stronghold in the MSSN Osun State Area Unit between the early 2000s and 2017.[1015] They took control of MSSN OAU Ife where many students were introduced to Salafi practices, many of which were not supported by the management of the university especially the use of *niqāb*. The Salafis in this university also abandoned the MSSN constitution and introduced Islamic Awareness Programmes (IAP) in place of Jihad Week which is common in other MSSN branches.[1016] Over time, these Salafi teachings became a concern at the university when some parents began to lodge complaints with the school authority about their daughters. This included students who abandoned their studies in Law (due to its focus on non-Muslim constitutions) for History and those who got married and impregnated without their parents' knowledge. One of these students abandoned her study in Medicine and migrated to Sudan together with a Salafi male friend.[1017] The complaints about these students fed into a widespread 'theory' in the university that the MSSN 'brothers' had "hypnotised" and "brainwashed" these sisters.[1018] Consequently, many parents began to caution their wards not to join the MSSN at OAU. Ajadi, a leader of the Salafis at the university when I visited in 2016, did not deny knowledge of such cases, but he contended that the 'brothers' involved were naïve and ignorant of their actions on the traditions of Islam.[1019]

The activities of the Salafis later led to a face-off between them and the Imam of the OAU-Ife central mosque, Abubakr Sanusi, a professor and consultant nephrologist, who dissociated himself from MSSN in the university.[1020] The face-off was followed by the decision of the school authority not to register the MSSN as an association in 2005, and afterwards, there were many attempts by the school authority to forcefully eject the executives from their secretariats

---

[1014] Voice of the Salaf, "Abu Ibeji and Abu Abdillah Sentenced,", https://voiceofthesalaf.com/2016/11/22/abu-ibeji-and-abu-abdillah-sentenced/ (accessed March 7, 2018); Kamoru Sodiq, "Abu Ibeji's Road to Prison," *iWitness*, December 2, 2016, https://www.iwitness.com.ng/abu-ibeji-road-to-prison/.

[1015] MSSN Lagos Area Unit, WhatsApp communication to Adeyemi Balogun; Olaiya, "Dangerous trend of Salafist movement in Southwest, Nigeria".

[1016] Kabir Ajadi (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1017] Abiodun Raheem (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1018] Aboo Amir Al-Atharee (Ishaaq AbdirRaheem), "OAU Campus and Myopia of the Aging Detractors,", http://simplysalafiyyah.com/oau-campus-and-myopia-of-the-aging-destractors.html (accessed March 7, 2018).

[1019] Kabir Ajadi (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1020] I attended many Friday prayer sessions from 2006 where he made this known.

at Obafemi Awolowo Hall (a.k.a Awo) mosque.[1021] In 2006, the MSSN B-Zone also issued a letter dissociating itself from the MSSN OAU-Ife.[1022] This continued until 2015 when some students, including Abideen Okunade and Akeem Idowu, challenged the Salafis by forming another MSSN branch that sought to reposition itself in line with the objectives of the MSSN. The new body which was headed by Idowu was constituted in 2016 and registered by the university management with the support of Imam Sanusi and the MSSN B-Zone. It operated from the university's central mosque while the Salafis held on to the halls of residence mosques. In 2016, the two factions clashed in the attempt to claim legitimacy in the university. The clash was later resolved in 2017 following the intervention of the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar and the secretary of the Muslim Ummah of South-West Nigeria (MUSWEN), Prof. Dawud Noibi.[1023]

This Salafi trend, which the MSSN presently considers as its biggest challenge to date, draws attention to the inconsistency found in the representation of Salafism on Islam, similar to what Thurston referred to in the case of Shaykh Gumi.[1024] Although the Salafis criticized the idea of groups which include the MSSN, they are, however, unwilling to dissociate themselves from the Society or its name, the MSSN. To illustrate this, Ajadi insisted that they are using this name because they are also 'Muslim students' which is implied in the name, 'MSSN.' He also noted that the name of the Society is needed for the annual renewal of their registration with the school authority.[1025] This inconsistency is part of the main critiques of the MSSN leaders such as Oladosu against the Salafi's claim that formation of groups among Muslims is an unlawful innovation. To be sure, Oladosu did not oppose this claim, but he contended that not forming it was at variance with modern reality especially in a colonial system whose government was concerned about the activities of religious movements. For him, the establishment of the MSSN was in line with that social reality.

> …the argument of La Jama'ah is that...there was nothing like an officially given name. Whereas there was no necessity for it. The society today is a modern one. Everything you have to do now, you have to be named for recognition, for many reasons. You can't just operate anonymously. You would need something from the government. Government would need to know what group it is dealing with. If you say you are doing certain thing, you are not going to name yourself, then you won't even achieve anything.

[1021] Kabir Ajadi (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1022] Abideen Okunade, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, February 27, 2017, OAU Mosque, Osun.

[1023] Favour Igbafen, "Sultan Mediates in OAU MSSN Crisis," *New Telegraph*, April 8, 2017, https://newtelegraphonline.com/2017/04/sultan-mediates-oau-mssn-crisis/ (accessed March 7, 2018).

[1024] Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria*, 72–89.

[1025] Kabir Ajadi (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

You understand? So, imagine in 1954, at the time, if Dr. Adegbite and others didn't give it Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria, how would they have demanded what they want. You would say you are a group of people, they would say who are you? It's a logical thing.[1026]

The Salafis critique of Muslims' participation in democratic politics also appears at odds with their practice. For instance, I learned from Ajadi that they have mostly sought the intervention of Adebayo Shittu (referred to in Chapter Five), a politician and Nigeria's Minister of Communication (2015-2019) in their clash with the OAU Muslim community. But before then, they were reported to have criticised the OAU Muslim community for honouring Shittu on his appointment in 2015 and allowing him to campaign for his governorship ambition.[1027] These inconsistencies appear as a form of survival strategy, yet I also consider it as part of the ambivalences in what it means to be a Muslim which Samuli Schielke talked about.[1028] In the next section, I will discuss the experience of Tijaniyya members of the MSSN who were also at the centre of the MSSN reforms and the Salafis debates.

5.4.6 TIMSAN: the Tijaniyya encounter

Sufi orders, especially the Tijaniyya, appear to have started in Yorubaland in the nineteenth century.[1029] As I noted in Chapter Two, Peel referred to some Tijaniyya *alfas* in Yorubaland who promoted the reformed sufism, but I wish to point out that their histories still need to be reconstructed. Among them was Shehu Usman[1030] Lanase (d. 1954) of Aremo quarter in Ibadan. He was understood to be a reformist and one of the clerics who clashed with the *Òrìṣà* devotees.[1031] Over time, he was criticised by many *alfas* for promoting practices such as the use of purdah for women. Another figure was Alhaji Shehu Ahmed of Bere quarter also in Ibadan who, for many years, was said to live at Kaolack and married to Niasse's daughter. He attracted many Muslims in the 1960s, but he was said to lose his credit among other *alfas*. One of the main factors responsible for this was his claim to be the *aṣẹda* (creator/one who can do and undo) which other *alfas* considered repulsive.[1032]

[1026] Afis Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1027] Jamiu Rabiu, "'Cold War' Between Buhari's Minister, OAU Muslim Community," *iWitness*, September 27, 2017, https://www.iwitness.com.ng/cold-war-between-buharis-minister-oau-muslim-community/.

[1028] Schielke, "Second Thoughts about the Anthropology of Islam, or How to make Sense of Grand Schemes in Everyday Life": 1–2.

[1029] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 178.

[1030] Written locally as Sunmonu

[1031] Emmanuel O. Oyelade, "The Lanase Movement of Nigeria," (MA Thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1970), 35–47.

[1032] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 179.

The turn towards the *sunna* by many students in the MSSN opened several debates and criticisms of Sufi practices such as the *wazīfa* (daily group recitation) and recitation of the litany called *ṣalāt al-fatih*. As I mentioned earlier, many of my respondents confirmed that they were members of the Tijaniyya brotherhood before they were introduced to Islamic texts and debates that invalidated Sufism. Abdur-Raheem who was one of these students narrated that the lectures delivered by many brothers at the OAU Ife during the era of *ḥujja* made him realise that sufism was an imported practice to the 'real Islam', and this encouraged him to abandon it for the *sunna* based on Qur'an and Hadith.[1033] On the other hand, many Tijaniyya students considered such lectures as a confrontation to their practices. They also believed that their critics were the ones who caused disunity in MSSN and a threat to their sense of belonging. Thus, they decided to create their own identity by establishing the Tijaniyya Muslim Students' Association of Nigeria (TIMSAN) by the late 1980s (the exact year remains unknown, but one of my respondents told me they had the first Tijaniyya leader named Giwa Adebayo in 1987 at UI).[1034] One of the leaders of TIMSAN, Sulaimon Odetayo, drew attention to this encounter during a leadership training seminar in 2013.

> We are here because of the necessity to have an identity which will bring us together. However, the MUSLIM STUDENTS SOCIETY OF NIGERIA (MSSN) has been initially created for the purpose of safeguarding the interest of every Muslim in the campus, and promoting peace unity and harmony, but fortunately and unfortunately, it was hijacked by some cabals with the intention of destructing Islam; These so called cabals introduced some provocative doctrines and ideology into the system of the MSSN to attain their own selfish interest and desire. The Muslim Students Tijanis were thereafter humiliated, segmented and basterdized (sic).[1035]

Despite establishing TIMSAN, many Tijaniyya students often participate in the MSSN programmes because they consider the Society is "for all Muslim students."[1036] However, both the continued criticism of their practices as well as the discouragement by Sufi clerics have kept many of them from participating. Aminat Ajibola, a member of TIMSAN who studied Psychology at UI, narrated to me that she boycotted MSSN because her Sufi shaykhs were subject to criticism in many of the lectures which she found difficult to tolerate.[1037] Misbaudeen

---

[1033] Abdur-Raheem Luqman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1034] Misbaudeen Babarinde, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 13, 2016, UI, Ibadan.
[1035] Muqoddam Odetayo Sulaiman, "The TIMSAN Message,", http://timsannational.blogspot.de/2014/10/the-timsan-message.html (accessed March 8, 2018).
[1036] Ajibola Aminat, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 13, 2016, UI, Ibadan.
[1037] Ibid.

Babarinde, another Tijaniyya student who studies Political Science at UI and who has also boycotted the MSSN, explained that Tijaniyya students were not welcomed in the MSSN.

Like the MSSN, Tijaniyya students' activities are allowed in many schools, and they have often had the support of many of the academic staff members. A notable example was Dawood Adekilekun Tijani (1942-2006), a Tijaniyya and Imam of the UI central mosque, who taught at the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the university. He supported the Tijaniyya students with accommodations outside the university. This might be due to the limited space in the halls of residence. At the same time, it was also meant to support their Sufi practices by ensuring that they move away from their critics who were mostly the Imams in the halls of residence mosques. Adekilekun also supported the use of the UI central mosque for their weekly *wazīfa*.[1038] His demise in 2006 however led to a change in how the Tijaniyya students were treated afterwards. From this period, they began to clash with some members of MSSN who contested their practices in this mosque. Aminat narrated one such disturbing encounters for her in 2008 when their *wazīfa* was disrupted and some of their members were beaten.

> In the mosque. I remember that day we were in the mosque and they said... 'Don't come to do *wazīfa* again? Don't come to do this… What is this? What is happening? And they said that if we come, we are going to be beaten. That day, everybody come (sic) and they started their problems, they started beating some brothers.[1039]

She referred to another incidence in 2010 when their celebration of the *Mawlid al-nabī* was disrupted and the guests were embarassed. The event was suspended as a result of this incident. Oladosu[1040] and Uthman[1041] who teach at the university confirmed that the Muslim community of the university intervened in many of such cases. Apart from the UI, cases of such encounters ensued in other MSSN branches such as the University of Ilorin in Kwara where the Tijaniyya students were attacked by some members of the MSSN in 2015.[1042] Also, at the OAU Ife, TIMSAN has been the subject of criticism by some members of MSSN.[1043] But as Aminat and Babarinde told me, they remained less perturbed by the various attacks on them because they were taught to be patient as Sufis. On the whole, the contests and clashes in the MSSN from the late 1980s show that schism in a religious organisation do not only produce contradictory orientations but also conflict among the actors involved in the organisation. As a form of

---

[1038] Misbaudeen Babarinde, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1039] Ajibola Aminat, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1040] Afis Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1041] Ibrahim Uthman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1042] Misbaudeen Babarinde, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1043] Balogun, *Field Notes*.

religious change, the example of MSSN and its splinter groups show that it can inspire and shape new forms of religiosity.

5.5 **Conclusion**

This chapter draws attention to the historical and epistemological developments that shaped Islamic reform and the organisational crises in the MSSN. The major historical factors include the return of foreign graduates, the emergence of graduates of the local *madrasas*, the link to transnational Islamic movements and greater access to Islamic texts. The epistemological development focuses on the emphasis on the concept of *ḥujja* and how Islam was understood differently from the past. The consciousness for *ḥujja* encouraged the MSSN to be concerned about reforming and reviving the past traditions of Islam and this consciousness played an extensive role in the transformation of the Society into a reform movement. This transformation led to the contestation of many ideals of Islam on which the MSSN was established. Broadly speaking, the concern for the *sunna* appear to be the major factor in this contest, however, the contest was also linked to the struggle for power and how to cope with life transition changes of Muslim students. One of the MSSN ideals that was challenged by this contestation was brother/sisterhood which was employed to promote equality and respect among members irrespective of their creeds outside the school. Before the 1980s, this was sustained because the Society did not oppose the practices of different Muslim groups to which its members belong. However, practising the *sunna* or identification with a creed became the yardstick for many members to measure who belonged to their ideal of brother/sisterhood. In the same vein, the idea of diversity within Islam was challenged as practices not based on what the Society considered the *sunna* began to be contested. Thus, the concept of one Muslim community on which the Society was built was also affected.

The historical and epistemological developments which I refer to in this chapter help us to understand the trajectory of Islamic reform in MSSN better than what Peel discussed in his study on religious change among Yoruba Muslims.[1044] Although Peel indicated that the reform was linked to the "contemporary currents in the wider world of Islam,"[1045] little insight was given on how this link took shape. Rather, he suggested that the *takfīr* against the Ahmadiyya movement gave way to a "more militant and assertive"[1046] conception of Muslim modernity which the MSSN represented. This study, however, moves beyond this narrow understanding

---

[1044] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 158–60.
[1045] Ibid., 158.
[1046] Ibid.

of Islamic reform and shows that multiple factors shaped the MSSN emphasis on the prophetic *sunna*.

Also, a close reading of Peel's discourse suggests that the adoption of orthodox Muslim identity in MSSN is representative of all Yoruba Muslims,[1047] although I am aware that he only used the MSSN as an example. His analysis appears to build on the evidence that many members and graduates of MSSN have been influential in shaping Islamic discourse in Yorubaland. But there is a danger in accepting this narrative of religious change because it does not show the diversity of Islam as a lived religion, not only among Yoruba Muslims, but also in the MSSN. As I showed in this chapter, there are various Muslim groups in Yorubaland (and in the MSSN) who debated as well as opposed many aspects of the *sunna* which defined Islamic reforms in the MSSN. Thus, while the history of MSSN (and other reformist movements that emerged from it such as TMC and Dawah Front) may not be enough to tell the whole story of religious change among Yoruba Muslims, it is sufficient to see it as one of the fundamental processes involved in this change. Indeed, the history of MSSN should also be understood within the context of the diversity of Islamic practices which continued to develop among them since the pre/colonial period.

The history of MSSN discussed in this chapter further shows that many Yoruba Muslim students are linked to the Islamic revival and reform movements that emerged in post-colonial Muslim societies in many parts of the world. The students were connected to these movements through different transnational organisations, literature and reformist thinkers. But they were neither passive followers of Islamic reform nor unreflective about the knowledge produced and circulated by these movements. They debated on what Islam is by reflecting on their own knowledge of the religion in relation to what they learnt from the transnational Islamic thinkers and movements. At the same time, they were mindful of their social context in this discourse. Their turn towards the *sunna* was thus a product of discourse and negotiation rather than blind imitation of practices that do not fit into their own social experience.

I also show in this chapter that the reform in MSSN led to a significant shift in the way the Society promoted its objectives from the 1950s. The new interpretation of *sunna* played a key role in this shift. Although many aspects of the Society's initial objectives have been sustained to date, the different interpretation of *sunna* has impacted on their reviews and how they are put into practise. Several debates shaping the extent to which the MSSN's reform is embodied

---

[1047] Ibid., 150–71.

have been put forward by many members concerning the new notion of *sunna*. As I will illustrate in the next chapter, while the promotion of the objectives of the Society is anchored on the *sunna*, the debates ensured that the impact of the reform on practise is not uniform.

Chapter Six

Diversity in Reform: Islam, MSSN and the Challenges of Ethical Practice, 1980-2014

6.1 **Introduction**

The reform that swept through the MSSN from the 1980s led to a change in the way Islam was understood and practised among Muslim students. Despite being ostensibly anchored on the prophetic *sunna,* this chapter argues that the reform neither produced a monolithic interpretation of Islam nor a uniform practice. To the contrary, it resulted in multiple and sometimes conflicting interpretations of the *sunna* as well as diversity in practice. On the one hand, certain interpretations of Islam within the MSSN, which included the notion that Muslims should maintain a "balanced position" on matters of religion and social life, the embodiment of Islamic knowledge in a "gradual" manner, the "flexibility of Islam" and "Islam's tolerance to cultural diversities," helped to shape this outcome. On the other hand, the multiple authorities which the students followed and the uncertain social realities that confronted them in Yorubaland, and Nigeria, such as Islamophobia and opposition to practices such as veiling, were also factors in the outcome. The first aim of this chapter is to discuss how those interpretations of Islam, multiple authorities and social realities shaped the processes of Islamic reform in the MSSN, and secondly, to show the diversity in the practices of the MSSN and its members. This is in response to the research question: what is the impact of Islamic reform on the understanding and practice of Islam in the MSSN? The argument of this chapter, which is situated in the literature on the multiplicity of Islam in Africa and religious diversity as a whole, is the focus of the next two sections. This includes a discussion of the notions of Islam in MSSN and the different realities that enabled them. The last three sections of the chapter look at the diversity of practices among Muslim students and within the MSSN. I wish to note that this chapter is meant to end in 2014, in line with the title of the thesis. However, because the impact of MSSN reform goes beyond this period, my empirical analyses have substantially centred on what continued to happen up to the time I conducted fieldwork and wrote this thesis.

In discussing diversity in MSSN, little attention is paid to the major factions within the Society, that is, the MSSN B-Zone, the Ashafa-led MSSN Lagos Area Unit and the Salafi-minded MSSN OAU Ife Branch. This is because, despite their differences, they all identify with the national body (MSSN) often through various networks of individuals who are either patrons or former members. As a matter of fact, some members of MSSN in Lagos and the OAU Ife (as

well as those who belong to the Sufi group, TIMSAN) are of the view that, despite the differences among them, their membership in the MSSN is automatic anywhere in Nigeria insofar as they are "Muslim students, and the Society is not owned by any individual or a particular group.[1048] Also, it is useful to note that while the practices of these factions are useful in showing us the diversity in the MSSN, it is also misleading to think that practices in each faction are uniform. Thus, this chapter does not explore the diversity in MSSN from the perspective of one faction but the Society as a whole.

6.2 **Diversity in Islam**

Muslims in the world are highly diverse in population, language, geographical location, social organisation, culture and economies.[1049] The diversity among them goes beyond simple dichotomies such as Shi'i/Sunni Muslims, folk/popular Islam, heterodox/orthodox and tolerant/intolerant Muslims.[1050] Although Muslims frequently refer to the common foundational texts, Qur'an and Hadith, and agree on many aspects of their creed, they also engage in debates and give multiple and conflicting positions on a wide range of social, religious, economic and political issues.[1051] They have different practices which might include those adopted or adapted from non-Muslims. In the 1980s, the controversies and diversity among Muslims were the thrust of anthropological studies, which I showed in Chapter Two, seeking to make sense of the variant forms of Islam and how it should be studied. The debates in these studies show that Muslims diversity can be understood through analytical frameworks that not only takes Islam as a discursive tradition but also recognise the ambivalences and inconsistencies in their practices.

Diversity among Muslims can take the form of the contentious 'syncretism,' which in many studies has been narrowly employed to describe the practices that are presumed to be a

---

[1048] Kabir Ajadi (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Ajibola Aminat, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1049] Varisco, *Islam Obscured*, 1–10; John T. Bowen, "On Scriptural Essentialism and Ritual Variation: Muslim Sacrifice in Sumatra and Morocco," *American Ethnologist* 19, no. 4 (1992): 656–7; "The World's Muslims", 7.

[1050] Dominique-Sila Khan, "Being One and Many Among the Others: Muslim Diversity in the Context of South Asian Religious Pluralism," in *Diversity and Pluralism in Islam: Historical and Contemporary Discourses amongst Muslims*, ed. Zulfikar A. Hirji, 43–60 (London, New York: I.B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010), 51.

[1051] See Hirji, *Diversity and Pluralism in Islam*; "The World's Muslims"; Leaman, *Controversies in Contemporary Islam*; Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History*, XVIII.

deviation from the 'authentic' religious practice.[1052] For instance, the idea of syncretism as a deviation from the "real Islam" is the main argument of Muhsin Balogun's thesis on the beliefs and practices of Muslims in Epe, a coastal Yoruba city in Lagos.[1053] However, as posited in Chapter Two, this notion of syncretism is problematic because it seeks to justify the 'purity' and 'rigidity' of every religion which is inconsistent with reality.[1054]

Muslims diversity also connects with the process of "religious assemblage." Janson refers to this process as the result of the mixture of two or more religious elements which remain open-ended.[1055] Closely related to this is the practise of "religious pluralism," which according to Soares is the existence of multiple religious traditions in one space or how an individual or group is involved in different religious practices.[1056] It is revealing that Janson and Soares' studies, which analysed the history and encounters between Christians, Muslims and Traditional religion devotees within the same framework, found various forms of hybridity and syncretism among practitioners of each religious group. Janson's study shows that a religious movement in Nigeria called CHRISLAM 'assembled' the practices of Christianity and Islam,[1057] while Soares' study illustrates that a controversial religious figure in Mali called Adama Yalcouyé engaged in the synthesis of the Christian, Islamic and Traditional Religions practices.[1058] Many Muslims in Yorubaland would contest that people who assembled different religious traditions or engaged in religious pluralism are not Muslims, yet this cannot be dismissed as the social reality of many of them. This has been revealed in a recent KEO[1059] quantitative survey by Insa Nolte, Clyde Ancarno and Rebecca Jones on Muslim-Christian relations in many Yoruba communities. Their findings show that even though a clear majority of Yoruba are Muslims and Christians, "56.1 percent of KEO survey respondents said that they

---

[1052] Shaw, Rosalind and Stewart, Charles, "Introduction: Problematizing Syncretism," in *Syncretism/anti-syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis*, ed. Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw, 1–24 (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 1–2.

[1053] Balogun, *Syncretic Beliefs and Practices amongst Muslims in Lagos State Nigeria*.

[1054] Paul C. Johnson, "Syncretism and Hybridization," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, 755–72 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 760–61; Dominique-Sila Khan, "Being one and many among the Others" in *Diversity and Pluralism in Islam*, 59; Shaw, Rosalind and Stewart, Charles, "Introduction" in *Syncretism/anti-syncretism*, 2.

[1055] Marloes Janson, "Unity Through Diversity: A Case of CHRISLAM in Lagos," *Africa* 86, no. 04 (2016): 660–6.

[1056] Benjamin F. Soares, "Reflections on Muslim-Christian Encounters in West Africa," *Africa* 86, no. 04 (2016): 673.

[1057] Janson, "Unity through Diversity": 660–6.

[1058] Soares, "Reflections on Muslim-Christian Encounters in West Africa": 688–90.

[1059] The project titled: Knowing Each Other (KEO), is available online. See https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/dasa/research/knowing/project.aspx (accessed 14/05/2019)

had a family tradition or custom (even if it was not one they practised themselves), while 19.3 per cent contribute money to family deities and 48.2 per cent use traditional medicine."[1060]

The processes of syncretisation, religious pluralism and assemblage can occur in different religious groups or individuals. This is true in the Yoruba religious field. Peel's study has shown in this field that many Christian groups have appropriated practices such as vigils from Muslims while some Muslim groups, particularly the popular NASFAT, have equally borrowed Pentecostal forms of prayer and organisation.[1061] Loimeier's study of Muslim societies in Africa demonstrates that diversity can also occur due to the need for people to position themselves differently in a changing world.[1062] His argument on this process is focused on the idea of "hybridity." However, I wish to depart from this conceptualisation because it suggests that one religious practice or entity is pure before it mixes to become a hybrid. Nonetheless, his argument on the diversity of Muslims in Africa deserves closer attention. He posits that diversity in Muslim societies is influenced by differences in the interpretation of Islamic texts and the impact of social change and globalisation which facilitated the spread of new knowledge, cultural ideas, fashion, and technology from the Western world. The diversity, therefore, developed through the translation of the Western mode of cultures into the Muslim context to make them digestible. Interestingly, as the actors involved in these translations are engaging modern cultures, they are also having dialogues with the traditions of Muslims in the past. In this way, their efforts involved embracing modernity while maintaining a distinctive Muslim identity. This mode of expression occurs at many levels: it could be in a given religious tradition like a Sufi order, between two or more Sufi groups, between Sufi groups and reformist movements or between different religions.[1063]

If the processes of syncretisation, religious pluralism and assemblage actually reveal a lot about the meaning of religious diversity among Muslims, Eva Spies has nevertheless encouraged us to take a step further and look at it from the perspective of "incommensurability" which acknowledges differences in religious forms and practices as well as questions the universal category regarded as "religion."[1064] This perspective is underscored by the fact that while the

---

[1060] Nolte, Ancarno and Jones, "Inter-religious Relations in Yorubaland, Nigeria": 36.
[1061] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orișa-religion*, 173–91; Ibrahim, *Sensational Piety*.
[1062] Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 11–12.
[1063] Ibid., 12–15.
[1064] Eva Spies, "Coping with Religious Diversity: Incommensurability and Other Perspectives." In *A Companion to the Anthropology of Religion*, Eds. Janice Boddy and Michael Lambek, (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley and Sons, Inc, 2013), 118-136.

notions of syncretisation, pluralism and assemblage assume that "religion" or religious groupings like Christianity and Islam are static entities that may be compared or in conflict with other traditions, incommensurability stresses that even though this comparison may occur, the "different traditions may not refer to the same frame of reference and are not, therefore, always comparable on the basis of a single standard."[1065] What this suggest, as Spies' fieldwork in Madagascar illustrates, is that one can engage in a "religious" tradition (e.g. Christianity) side by side with another "religious" tradition (e.g. traditional rites during burial) because the latter is not taken to be religious even though many Christians understood it as such. In Chapter Three, I gave a similar example of Yoruba Muslims who participated in festivals which they understood to be part of their cultural life. And, as will be shown later, the MSSN also promoted some aspects of indigenous culture, that are related to followers of Traditional Religion, but understood to be "non-religious."

Besides these existing frameworks, recent studies have been looking at how religious diversity is produced in Africa through a "relational" process.[1066] Spies and Seesemann argued in some of these studies that we should not limit our understanding of African religious diversity to the so-called "religion"; it is also useful "to study specific themes, social formations, practices, texts, or objects connected to a religious tradition and analyzing their relations to other activities, texts, objects, (religious) traditions, and so forth."[1067] As Spies contends, this perspective moves beyond the conception of religious diversity in terms of a difference with no standard way of measurement and the static conception of a religious tradition, object or practice. On the contrary, it encourages us to see diversity "as emerging and changing in and through continuous multiple processes of relating, and thus as being always multiple."[1068] A good example that reveal this diversity is the field of Islamic education in which, according to Spies and Seesemann, we encounter an interface of pedagogies, concepts and praxis that are based on various epistemologies and styles of learning, which are difficult to categorized as either Arab or African, traditional or reformist, local or global.[1069]

These various perspectives suggest that the diversity among Muslims is complex and multi-layered. They also indicate that Muslims' diversity is shaped by a range of factors in different

---

[1065] Ibid.,119.
[1066] Eva Spies, "Being in Relation: A Critical Appraisal of Religious Diversity and Mission Encounter in Madagascar," *Journal of Africana Religions*, 7, no. 1 (2019): 62-83; Eva Spies and Rüdiger Seesemann, "Pluralicity and Relationality: New Directions in African Studies," *Africa Today*, 63, no. 2 (2016):132-139.
[1067] Spies and Seesemann, "Pluralicity and Relationality": 136.
[1068] Spies, "Being in Relation": 65-6
[1069] Spies and Seesemann, "Pluralicity and Relationality": 137.

settings. Of major interest is their varying historical conditions which include cultures, political systems, social experiences and geographical settings. These historical conditions are not static in any given context as they continue to relate with other changing temporal phenomena beyond such context in a way that leads to multiple religious productions at different points in time. Another major factor is the varying translations of the foundational texts of Islam which are due to different social contexts. Combining two or more religious traditions or with non-religious traditions is also an aspect of their diversity. In addition, their diversity also results from the attempts by religious groups and individuals to reposition themselves from others. These various factors are noticed in what shapes the MSSN reforms in the way they were understood and promoted. To illustrate, since the 1980s, some 'ideals' which can also be called 'arguments' or 'interpretations' of Islam emerged in the debates that determine the process of reform in the Society. I refer to these 'ideals,' which I found in the testimonies of my respondents and records of the Society, as the 'notions of Islam' that reflect the MSSN interpretation of the *sunna* and reform. These notions of Islam were used to position the MSSN differently from its rivals and other Muslim groups, although these notions were also closely connected to the orientations of the rivals in question. Certainly, the debates around these notions of Islam suggest that they were not new to members of MSSN before the period of reform. If anything, the debates in this period confirmed the consciousness of the students about these notions and their style of reasoning. As will be discussed below, these notions of Islam were constructed and sustained based on different historical and social conditions in Yoruba society and the global world of Islam, and they confirm the argument that the diversity among Muslims is not only constituted by the processes of syncretism or assemblage but also due to the relationality of Islamic epistemologies as well as Islam's relation with other wider social phenomena.[1070]

6.3 **Notions of Islam in the MSSN reform**

The four notions of Islam in the MSSN reform include the argument that Muslims should maintain a "balanced position" on matters of religion and social life, the embodiment of Islamic knowledge in a "gradual" manner, the "flexibility of Islam" and Islam's tolerance to diversity and local cultural practices. These notions of Islam were mentioned by my respondents with reference to various Islamic texts. At the same time, they refer to a number of social realities in their discourses which draw attention to why they maintain these notions. Their discourses

---

[1070] Spies and Seesemann, "Pluralicity and Relationality": 136-7; Seesemann, "Epistemology or Ideology?": 253-8.

in this regard thus illustrate how they translate and interpret the texts in relation to the local context.

6.3.1 "Be balanced in everything"

The quote in the title of this section was used by a respondent to describe the notion of a "balanced position" as an ideal that is strongly emphasised by the MSSN.[1071] A former governor of Kano, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, who has identified with the MSSN since 1974 also referred to this in his 2014 address to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Society organised by its national headquarters in Abuja. He argued that the Society had kept the tradition of the "middle-ground" throughout its long history to avoid identifying with any sect. Even though he was talking from a different geographical context, Shekarau's reference to it demonstrates that the balanced position is an interpretation of Islam promoted by the MSSN in both Northern and Southern Nigeria.[1072]

According to Habibah Oladosu,[1073] the balanced position is based on the concept of *wasaṭiyya* in the Qurʾanic verse "Thus, have We made of you an *umma* [community] justly balanced that ye might be witnesses over the nations and the Apostle a witness over yourselves" (Q. 2:143).[1074] She is of the view that this verse enjoins Muslims to take a middle position so that "you are not too much of the extreme of the right and you are not too much of the extreme of the left."[1075] However, despite her reference to this text, the concept of *wasaṭiyya* is ambiguous both in theory and practice. We can look at this ambiguity from the meaning of the concept which is from the Arabic word *wasaṭ*, usually referred to as 'moderation.'[1076] It is often compared with the Aristotelian "golden mean," referring to "the intermediary point between two extremes of excess and lack."[1077] Based on his study of this concept, Kamali explains that *wasaṭiyya* can also be used interchangeably with the notions of "average," "core," "standard," "heart," and "non-aligned."[1078] His study further suggests that the concept goes beyond its religious referent to other aspects such as economics and politics. Also, *wasaṭiyya* is associated

---

[1071] Adesola Sodiq (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun

[1072] Ibrahim M. Shekarau, "MSSN at 60: Impact, Challenges & Prospects," in *MSSN: 60th Anniversary*, 20–21.

[1073] Habibah Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1074] *The Holy Qurʾān: English Translation by 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali*, 3rd ed. (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1937).

[1075] Habibah Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1076] Nuraan Davids, "Islam, Moderation, Radicalism, and Justly Balanced Communities," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 37, no. 3 (2017): 1.

[1077] John Rivera, "Finding Aristotle's Golden Mean: Social Justice and Academic Excellence," *Journal of Education* 186, no. 1 (2006): 79.

[1078] Mohammad H. Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam: The Qurʾānic Principle of Wasaṭiyyah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 9.

with the concept of the *umma* (community) used in the Qurʾanic text above. But the concept of *umma* is also open to question, even though it is commonly considered to refer to Muslims alone. Fredrick Denny argues that the word *umma* has been applied to many people, including non-Arabs, many years before the Prophet Muhammad and that it has developed from this general usage "toward a more exclusive one which is limited to the Muslim community"[1079] who lived in his time in Medina. Limiting the notion of *umma* to this Muslim community implies that *wasaṭiyya* only applies to Muslims as mentioned in the notion of a 'balanced community' above. Contrary to this view, Muhammad Arkoun argues that the concept also applies to non-Muslims.[1080]

Also, *wasaṭiyya* is seen as a "moral virtue" of an individual and a community. In this sense, Kamali argues that it is a "virtue that helps to develop social harmony and equilibrium in personal affairs, within the family and society and the much wider spectrum of human relations."[1081]Kamali points out that the concept does not convey a definite meaning on its own because it is transitive and can only be applied as a qualifier to another subject. Owing to this, there is usually an attempt "to ascertain what *wasaṭiyya* means in a relationship, for example, to the enforcement of penalties and in connection with religiosity, consumerism and finance, speech, lifestyle and so forth."[1082] The various ways in which the concept is interpreted is also revealed in the testimony of Afis Oladosu. He first explained it within the context of *àgbọ́yé* - understanding (discussed in Chapter Five) - and how Islam is practised. He gave the same analogy of three groups of Muslims, cited in Chapter Five, to explain this concept of moderation:

> we could have a Muslim by name; a Muslim who join others in practising Islam without necessarily knowing why they are practising Islam and without necessarily knowing why such is considered a fundamental in the religion…The second are those that are practising Islam based on their intellectual knowledge. They know that for them to practise Islam completely, they must situate and establish it on certain intellectual foundations. The third groups are those whose actions negate what you presume to be the textual foundations of the religion. And you find these groups in the current crises in the world: ISIS, AL-SHABAB in the eastern part of Africa and then since 2009, the Boko Haram in Nigeria.[1083]

[1079] Frederick M. Denny, "The Meaning of "Ummah" In the Qurʾān," *History of Religions* 15, no. 1 (1975): 36.
[1080] Mohammed Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers, Translated by R. D. Lee* (San Francisco, CA: Westview Press, 1994), 53.
[1081] Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam*, 1.
[1082] Ibid., 11.
[1083] Afis Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

From this analogy, he positioned the MSSN in the second group which portrays the Society as a group of Muslims who not only based their practices on Islamic texts but also as Muslims who reflect on these texts. His analogy also suggests that this second group comprises of Muslims whose interpretation of Islamic texts do not support anarchy and violence in the society. Also, Afis Oladosu used other contexts to interpret the concept of moderation and to draw attention to where the MSSN stands.

> The spectrum MSS occupies is that which seeks to evolve the *balance* between the worldly and the other-worldly…between the terrestrial and the celestial. While there is a stream to the extreme right and a stream to the extreme left, MSS sought to be at the *middle*. The necessity to evolve a *balance* is in line with the Qurʾanic text which…informed the emergence of the MSS or the constitution of the Society.[1084]

From his argument, taking a balanced position between the "worldly" and "other-worldly" suggests that while the MSSN is inclined to some form of mundane or secular affairs, it is also disposed to religious matters. Also, taking a middle position between the "extreme right" and the "extreme left," as he noted, implies the need to avoid two ends of a pole. Despite the many contexts used to explain this concept, it is interesting to note that the way and manner it is implemented by the members of MSSN is understood differently by many Yoruba. For instance, Shakirulah Adedoja, President MSSN Oyo Area Unit in 2016, illustrates what moderation means in the MSSN by pointing to the leg opening of his own trouser which was slightly raised above his ankle.[1085] He referred to the leg opening of a trouser that is raised far above this level, common among those who identified as Salafis and Tabligh Jama'at, as an indication of extremism. On the contrary, many people in Yorubaland, including Muslims, consider the MSSN as well as Salafis and Tabligh Jama'at as groups that exhibit extreme religious positions. One of them is Khabirat Balogun, a graduate student at UI, who narrated to me that she could not identify with the MSSN in school because everything the Society taught and encouraged such as the use of a veil was "too difficult" for her.[1086]

These different understandings illustrate another major controversy that is embedded in the concept of *wasaṭiyya*. Most importantly, it draws attention to the problematic distinction that is often made in the political and media discourses between Muslims who are 'moderates' (seen as non-extremists) and those who are 'radicals' (seen as the extremists).[1087] In differentiating

---

[1084] Ibid.
[1085] Shakirulah Adedoja, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1086] Adeyemi Balogun, *Field Notes* (2016).
[1087] Davids, "Islam, Moderation, Radicalism, and Justly Balanced Communities": 5–7.

between the two, Kamali argues that 'extremism' is always self-evident and easily identifiable because it tends to push away from the centre toward the outer edges. Yet, he pointed out that this needs to be properly understood in different contexts because one person's notion of moderation may be another person's idea of radicalism. Like moderation, "extremism also applies to the entire spectrum of values, good and bad, positive and negative."[1088] To this extent, referring to the MSSN as a 'radical' movement, as is understood by many in Yoruba society, may not necessarily be misplaced. It needs to be emphasised, nonetheless, that the ambiguity of the concept of *wasaṭiyya* is useful to the understanding of Muslims' diversities. Insofar as it is interpreted and applied differently by Muslims, it allows for the emanation of multiple expressions of what the concept means.

But why has the MSSN emphasised the balanced position in its ideal of reform? To understand this, I focus on the historical context of discourse in which my respondents explain the notion of *wasaṭiyya*. Building on Asad's argument, the historical conditions of Muslims' discourse is important because they "enable the production and maintenance of specific discursive traditions, or their transformation—and the efforts of practitioners to achieve coherence"[1089] with past traditions. In this sense, when Habiba Oladosu mentioned the concept of *wasaṭiyya*, she used it to demarcate the training she had received in the MSSN and what the MSSN promoted in the past from its 'new radical' tendencies. She explained that in the past, the MSSN accommodated every Muslim group, including the Sufi and Ahmadiyya, without condemning their different practices. She considers this accommodation to be based on the principle of *wasaṭiyya*. However, according to her, this form of accommodation has changed as many members of the Society have become intolerant of other Muslim groups. Still, she insists that she has not followed this 'radical' tendency because of her training, based on *wasaṭiyya*. From her testimony, it is possible to argue that one of the historical conditions that enabled the production and maintenance of her view on moderation is the emergence of the 'radical' elements in MSSN. Differentiating herself from these elements illustrate her ideal of reform, which is one that accommodates other Muslim groups who share different interpretations of Islam from her own.

Outside the MSSN, two major challenges many Yoruba Muslims faced in the past, helped to foster a balanced position in MSSN: how to be Muslim without rejecting the new *ọlaju* which their rival Yoruba Christians have accommodated; and how to be better Muslims without being

---

[1088] Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam*, 37.
[1089] Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 17.

criticised in the broader modern society. The first challenge relates to the negative attitudes which many Muslims have towards Christian missionaries, the post/colonial state system, Western education and the participation in politics. As discussed in Chapter Three, enrolling Muslims into Western schools was considered by many of them as a form of apostasy. Even though this has diminished significantly, such fear was expressed for many years by the Muslim group called Zumratul-Mu'meena. From 2004, opposition to Western education has also been strongly propagated by an offshoot of the Tabligh Jama'at movement in Ibadan known as "Karikasa" – a name referring to a locality in Lagos where it originated.[1090] Taking a balanced position thus appears as a critique of this opposition because it suggests that the concern for religion can be moderated with the concern for the non-religious aspect of life. The MSSN has therefore been using this argument to encourage Muslim students to be skilled in different areas of life, as one of its members reveals below.

> …what MSSN Lagos Area Unit has taught, which is what Islam has taught, is to *be balanced in everything* you do as a Muslim. That is what Allah told us, *not to be extremist about everything*. And, that is what Prophet Mohammad taught us, that you have to balance everything… Allah says, 'use what Allah has endowed you with in this world to get pleasure in the hereafter and despite that… don't forget your portion on this earth.' So, Allah is telling us 'you have to balance the two… as you are striving to get the hereafter, don't forget you are expected to be successful on this earth.' …as a Muslim, everywhere you find yourself there is an impact, and there is a role they expect you to play there. Even in politics, because Islam has left nothing untouched. Every aspect of human life except if the person has not discovered or does not know that aspect…that is why you see average member of the MSSN, they will always be an all-rounder. They can't say because I am studying medicine, I don't know what is going on in MSSN. You can be called at any time that you should come and discuss politics. And, you have to discuss politics as if you are a politician.[1091]

Apart from Muslim students, the MSSN is also encouraging this notion of balanced education to be integrated into Nigeria's educational policy. In 2012, its UNILAG Branch in Lagos invited the federal and state ministries of education to a seminar used to promote this form of education as shown in figure 2 below.

The second challenge is closer to the concern raised above by Habibah Oladosu. It is on the reactions of different segments of the Yoruba society towards Muslim practices that are deemed to be radical. There are Muslim parents who many university teachers such as Dawud Noibi and Taofeek Yekin confirmed to me had approached them to complain about the 'extreme'

[1090] Qasim O. Durojaye, "Karikasa Movement in Ibadanland," (MA Thesis, University of Ilorin, 2008), 18-56.
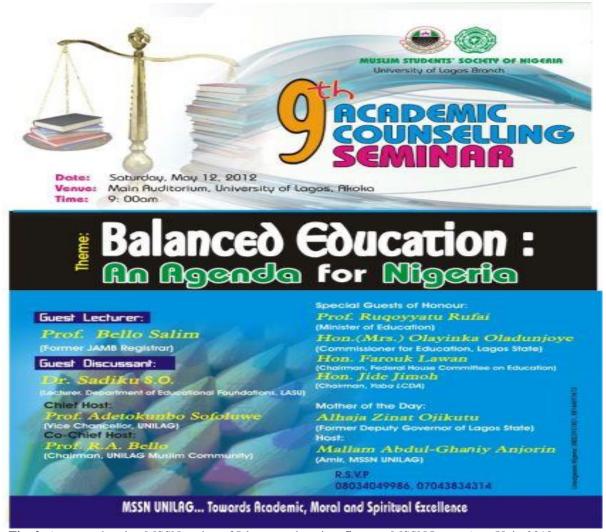[1091] Adesola Sodiq (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

Fig. 2. A poster showing MSSN notion of Islam on education. **Source**: MSSN Lagos Area Unit, 2018.

religiosity of their daughters and sons.[1092] The teachers referred to those who used the veil as well as male students who questioned their parents' ritual practices such as the use of the prayer beads, which is discussed later.[1093] Some female students also confirmed to me that they did not use the veil because their parents disapprove of it.[1094] The criticism of these parents is also shared by many *alfas*. One of them, Alhaji Sheriffdeen Adenuga who teaches at a local *madrasa*, noted that many *alfas* today are worried that Islamic movements like the MSSN are placing more emphasis on what is less fundamental in Islam, such as veiling, while they neglect the more important aspects of the religion. He suggests that what is important for Muslims is to purify their souls and be clear about the "intentions" of their actions because God is more interested in this form of piety than outward appearances.[1095] There is also Muhib Opeloye, an

---

[1092] D. O. S. Noibi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1093] D. O. S. Noibi, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1094] Hassan Jelila (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 14, 2017, Akoka Lagos.

[1095] Alhaji Sheriffdeen Adenuga, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, February 2, 2017, Ifako Lagos.

academic and a prominent member of the Muslim community in Osun state, who criticised the adoption of veiling in place of the popular local dress. He maintains that "since the underlying principle for the concept of *ḥijāb* is the need to cover essential parts of the body, the traditional Yoruba dress (consisting of *bùbá*, *ìró*, *gèlè*, and *ìbòrí*)[1096] satisfies the requirement."[1097]

For many Christians whom I have interacted with, the image of the Muslim women's veil and male Muslims (whether of the MSSN, the Tabligh Jama'at or the Salafi) whose trousers' leg openings were far above their ankles, evoked religious extremism. Moreover, since the 1990s, there has also been a rise in Islamophobic attitudes against veiled Muslim women in work establishments and schools. Many of them have been terminated or refused employment by banks and advertising media because they insist on using their veils.[1098] Between 2010 and 2017, the number of young women who used the veil, as a disguise, that carried out suicide bombings through the Boko Haram in Northeast Nigeria also aggravated this Islamophobia.[1099] It was not surprising that by 2014, many women in the region abandoned their veils owing to the fear which the veiled bombers created in the public. The government also attempted to ban the veil in the region in 2015, though it was resisted by some Muslims including the leadership of the Federation of Muslim Women in Nigeria (FOMWAN).[1100] Some of the bombings by Boko Haram were made on educational institutions in the North, and there were threats to attack many schools in Southwest Nigeria.[1101] A number of tertiary institutions including IU and OAU therefore responded to this threat with additional security measures on their campuses. In addition, they placed more emphasis on female Muslim students' dress codes. While in most cases, the dress code only ruled out the face veil, there are departments such as Nursing and Tourism where no form of veiling is allowed.[1102] Given these attitudes and

---

[1096] B*ùbá* – blouse, *ìró* -wrapper, *gèlè* – head tie, *ìbòrí* – scarf.

[1097] Opeloye, "The Yoruba Muslims' Cultural Identity Question": 15.

[1098] Kayode Ogunbumi, "Agonies of Muslim in Veils," *The Guardian*, October 3, 1999; Adeyemi Balogun, "What Is Wrong with the Hijab? Muslim Women and the Challenges of Veiling in Yoruba Society of Southwest Nigeria," in *Gender and Social Encounters: Experiences from Africa*, eds. Shilla S. Memusi and Adeyemi Balogun, 99–117, *African Studies Working Papers 23*, (*BIGSASWorks 9*), 107–13.

[1099] Renne, *Veils, Turbans, and Islamic Reform in Northern Nigeria*, 194–96; Chukwuemeka Nwigwe, "Fashioning Terror: The Boko Haram Dress Code and the Politics of Identity," *Fashion Theory* 3, no. 1 (2018): 14. For studies on the Boko Haram, see Loimeier, "Boko Haram": 148–52; Abimbola O. Adesoji, "Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Response of the Nigerian State," *Africa Today* 57, no. 4 (2011): 104–7.

[1100] Renne, *Veils, Turbans, and Islamic Reform in Northern Nigeria*, 196.

[1101] Ola Ajayi and Gabriel Enogholase, "Boko Haram Threatens to Bomb UI, UNIBEN, 18 Others," *Vanguard*, September 13, 2011, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/09/boko-haram-threatens-to-bomb-ui-uniben-18-others/ (accessed September 13, 2018).

[1102] Ibrahim Umar, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

reactions, taking a moderate religious position is used by the MSSN to encourage social acceptance and lessen the fear of insecurity, even if it is understood differently.

6.3.2 **Being a Muslim is a gradual process**

To an extent, the need to ensure moderation can be linked to another major notion of Islam which is emphasised in the MSSN: the learning and embodiment of Islamic knowledge as a "gradual" process. This argument on gradualism is akin to a school system where students start their education with knowledge of simple things and continuing to the more complex ones, moving from the elementary school to the tertiary institution. As pointed out in Chapter Five, this argument is used to oppose the Jama'at faction of the MSSN, who insisted on the instant embodiment of practices such as veiling among female students, irrespective of their level of knowledge of the religion. Rather than demanding that Muslim students embody the knowledge at once, the gradual approach supports a process where they are given time to do so. This approach is considered to have a precedent in how Allah changed the pattern of life of Muslims in the past.[1103] Referring to the Qurʾan texts on alcohol, Adeniran, a member of the Society, explains that,

> When Allah was going to condemn alcohol, He did not say in one day, 'leave alcohol.' In that generation, people were already steeped in alcohol. And for Him to stop them from alcohol, the first thing He said was that, 'in alcohol, you have more evils than benefits.' Obviously, they would start thinking of it that if I am taking something and it would cause me more harm than good... A matured person who still has *something upstairs* [i.e. who can think] would be thinking, 'is it now good for me?' Then the verse of 'if you are drunk, don't come to mosque' came. [By] then, they had gotten used to going to the mosque, and now [with the new verse] if they had alcohol, then they wouldn't have their *ṣalāt* …at the end of the day, gradually, they started dropping it until the final verse that now says, 'no to alcohol.' And it was so easy for them to abandon it at that point, because they had been taken gradually, they had been given information … So, Islam is a gradual change.[1104]

Habibah Oladosu is of the view that this steady embodiment of knowledge and practices must start with teaching Muslims to develop an inner faith in Allah (*iman*) because it is the fundamental basis for being a Muslim.[1105] She notes that this notion of Islam underscored the *Kalima* of the MSSN, its new motto mentioned in Chapter Four. Furthermore, she contends that as soon as faith is instilled in the hearts of Muslims, they can be taught the other

---

[1103] Adeniran Q. (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Habibah Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1104] Adeniran Q. (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun. Emphasis in bracket and italics mine

[1105] Habibah Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun. I refer to this argument in the article, Adeyemi Balogun, "'When Knowledge Is There, Other Things Follow': The Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria and the Making of Yoruba Muslim Youths," *Islamic Africa* 10 (2019).

fundamentals of the faith such as prayer, belief in the Qurʾan and the prophets, fasting during Ramadan, almsgiving, as well as practices like veiling. She emphasises that when Muslims "understand" these beliefs and practices, they will adopt them on their own steadily. To emphasize the importance of this process, she critiques the Jama'at who insisted on embodiment of practices like veiling without knowledge,

> What matters most is the knowledge. When a sister understands what *ḥijāb* means she uses it. …when knowledge is there, other things follow. People will be saying that, 'that brother that does not keep beard' or 'that sister that does not wear *ḥijāb*.' And [yet], *ḥijāb* is not a license to paradise!... What matters most is Islam with knowledge. By the time knowledge comes, other things will follow.[1106]

Habibah's argument can be linked to the modernist discourses on Islam that are articulated in the writings of Mawdudi, embraced by many members of the Society. As discussed in Chapter Five, Mawdudi identifies the knowledge of Islam as the key factor that distinguishes who is a Muslim from who is not. Mawdudi further contends that knowledge can help to acquire "faith" which is the foundation of being a "true Muslim."

> Faith, thus, is firm belief arising out of knowledge and conviction. And the man who knows and reposes unshakable belief in the Unity of God, in His Attributes, in His Law and the Revealed Guidance, and in the Divine Code of Reward and Punishment is called *Mo'min* (faithful). This faith invariably leads man to a life of obedience and submission to the Will of God. And one who lives this life of submission is known as Muslim. This should clearly bring home the fact that without faith (*Iman*) no man can be a true Muslim. It is the indispensable essential; rather, the very starting point, without which no beginning can be made.[1107]

Despite the link between them, Habibah's argument on the role of the *Kalima* contrasts with Mawdudi in one respect. Mawdudi maintains that "After affirming this *Kalima* you are not at liberty, as are the unbelievers, to do as you like. You have to follow what it prescribes and renounce what it forbids."[1108] Meanwhile, Habibah is of the view that less emphasis should be placed on strict adherence to rules for Muslims who are still learning, and that they must not be rebuked for not observing the rules at once. Hence, she claims that the MSSN is a movement that accommodates all manner of "nonsenses" from young Muslims, and she thinks that these young ones will eventually abandon their "nonsenses" when they finally understand what Islam requires from them. She illustrated her position with the example of some ladies she knew in

---

[1106] Habibah Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun. emphasis in bracket mine
[1107] Sayyid A. A.'l. Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam* 7 (International Islamic Federation of Student Organisation, 1996), 17–18.
[1108] Mawdudi, *Let us be Muslims*, 71.

the past who used to wear miniskirts when they prayed in the mosque. Despite their mode of dressing, she stated that the MSSN allowed them to lead their peers in prayers and that in the long run, many of them abandoned their miniskirts for long ones and began to use the *ḥijāb*.[1109] Many of my respondents, such as Adeniran and Yekin, also mentioned similar cases of Muslim students who went through this kind of change in the MSSN.[1110] These examples illustrate that the MSSN does not always follow the ideals of Islamic modernists despite their linkage.

The social reality that enabled the emphasis on this idea of gradualism in the MSSN has a close link with the one on moderation. According to Yekin, who is quoted below, the emphasis on this notion of Islam is partly caused by the complaints of parents over Muslim students' radicalism. It is also influenced by the fact that the MSSN has many 'young people' as members who are from diverse religious backgrounds, often with 'little' understanding of the religion. It is therefore important to promote this notion of Islam in order to keep such members as Yekin points out here:

> We are not far from the reality of our situation. You know, the reality is that, the students who are our primary, our automatic members would be coming from different backgrounds. We are not expecting every Muslim parent to be very religious. In fact, at times, some of the students, by the time they grow quite religious, when they go back home, they would have problems. Their parents would say, 'No! your own is becoming too much. No, you have to scale down.'! And of course, a lot of cases like that on our hands that we have had to deal with. So… it is only natural that that is the methodology that MSS would adopt. *Because if you say it is strict Islam* or *it is either you are in Islam or nothing…* now*, if you do that, of course you cannot have members.* That means who do not want… will just withdraw their children.[1111]

The process in which Islamic knowledge and practices can be progressively learned and embodied is assumed to be embedded in the educational platforms of MSSN. These educational platforms are structured to teach different aspects of Islamic knowledge tailored along what is required for each member category from primary school to tertiary institution.[1112] A major example is the IVC, which is structured based on age group, students' levels in the academia, and marital status of members (discussed in Chapter Seven). The different structures of the MSSN, such as the Branches which only have students in tertiary institutions as members, are also considered as a means used to achieve this systematic learning.[1113] However, this gradual

---

[1109] Habibah Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1110] Adeniran Q. (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Shakirulah Adedoja, interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1111] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun. Emphasis in italics mine.
[1112] Shakirulah Adedoja, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1113] Ibid.

approach is not without its problems. This is because the process of gradual learning or embodying knowledge may not define all that could be learned or embodied and at what point it should cease. Hence, the process can stand in conflict with the idea of moderation.

6.3.3 "**All Muslims cannot be put into a straightjacket**": the flexibility of Islam

The quote used as the title of this section is one of the points made by Oyekan to describe the notion of the "flexibility of Islam" employed by the MSSN to promote its ideal of reform. To an extent, the notion appears as part of the MSSN attempt to find a way around the problem of locating the ideal of moderation. As Oyekan explained to me, Islam allows "flexibility" and freedom to make choices from practices that are within the bounds of rules provided by the religion. Even though this suggests that people can learn and embody knowledge that is within two ends of a pole, it does not take away the problem of determining where the middle position lies. It is interesting that Oyekan also alluded to this problem in his example of the speed limit on the road and its link to flexibility in Islam.

> The religion of Islam sets out various guidelines and principles. Now, within these guidelines and principles, you are given freedom to operate as you like… 'varieties' they say 'is the spice of life.' So, all Muslims cannot be put into a straightjacket when there is flexibility in Islam. *The French might say the maximum limit that you must drive is 60km per hour, if it suits you, you can go 5km per hour. If it suits you, you might go 59.9km per hour.* You are still operating within the law. So, it is not like we all have to practice exactly the same way. There is flexibility, but what is our common denominator is conformity with the content of the Sharia.[1114]

From this idea of flexibility, the MSSN, therefore, suggests many 'options' on what it considered proper in Islam on different aspects of life. None of these 'options' is made compulsory over the other, and members are free to choose from any one of them. Afis Oladosu illustrates this ideal of flexibility with the example of two forms of veiling, *niqāb* (a veil with face cover that leaves the eye region open) and *ḥijāb* (a veil without face cover).

> …what the MSSN believe is the middle position that Islam emphasizes. For example, the *niqāb*, a woman's face cover and the *ḥijāb*. MSSN position is that *niqāb* is part of Islam, but it is not made compulsory. We cannot say that until a woman covers her face, her *ḥijāb* is not valid. MSSN would say no to this. The MSSN says, if you use *niqāb* to cover your face, you are okay. If you don't cover your face, you are okay. Ensure you cover what is necessary. Don't show your figure. Let your *ḥijāb* be big enough, then don't let it go beyond your buttocks. So that is what Islam demands. And don't let it be so attractive that it would be creating distractions.[1115]

[1114] Jibril Oyekan, interview by Adeyemi Balogun. Emphasis mine
[1115] Afis Oladosu, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

Coming up with these options is not necessarily informed by an abstract ideal of Islam. It is shaped by the realisation, as Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke suggest, that there are multiple authorities in Islam who seek to explore the meaning(s) of Islamic texts and implement their injunctions in different contexts.[1116] For example, apart from the major scholars among Sunni Muslims, referred to as the four *madhabs* (Abu Hanifa, Malik, al-Shafi and Hanbal), there is also a wide range of scholars in many Muslim societies who have followers practising the religion based on the interpretation of Islamic texts by these scholars. These followers include reform movements who, though emphasised the supremacy of the Qurʾan and Hadith as the basis of their practices, uphold the interpretation given on these texts by scholars such as Mawdudi. One major effect of this multiplicity of authorities is the production of various, often contradictory, opinions on many issues in the religion. These opinions, in turn, have produced what Ebrahim Moosa referred to as "multiple representations of being Muslim, embodied by concrete individuals and communities."[1117]

Apart from taking these multiple authorities into account, the notion of the flexibility of Islam in the MSSN is also shaped by the realisation that Muslim students belong to different Islamic groups whose leaders are either regarded as authorities on their own or followers of other authorities. Before the mid-1980s, this reality ensured that the MSSN was a movement that encouraged the diversity of opinions and practices, allowing the Society to sustain one of its main objectives: to unite Muslim students irrespective of the groups they belonged to. Although the reform in the MSSN has challenged this objective, it did not put an end to the recognition of multiple authorities. On the contrary, it streamlined the number of authorities to those who promote the Society's understanding of the *sunna*.

6.3.4 Islam and local cultural practices

Connected to the notion of flexibility is another argument in the MSSN that Islam is a religion that tolerates diversity and accommodates local cultural practices which do not contradict its fundamental tenets. This support the debate that Islam is not a 'purist' or 'rigid' religion that is unable to cope with other cultures.[1118] The theory of a purist Islam becomes weak in the face of evidence on the Islamization processes in many Muslim societies. As Geertz contends in his

---

[1116] Krämer, Gudrun and Schmidtke, Sabine, "Introduction: Religious Authority and Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies. A Critical Overview," in *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim societies*, eds. Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke, 1–14 100 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 3–4.

[1117] Ebrahim Moosa, "The Debts and Burden of Critical Islam" in *Progressive Muslims*, 114.

[1118] Zulfikar A. Hirji, "Debating Islam from within" in *Diversity and Pluralism in Islam*, 1–30; Opeloye, "The Yoruba Muslims' Cultural Identity Question": 2.

study of Morocco and Indonesia, Islam is able to cope with other cultures because Islamization consists of double efforts: to translate a 'theoretically' well-integrated system of beliefs and rituals into different local realities; and to maintain its identity, despite its adaptive flexibility, as a religion and directives transmitted by God through the Prophet Muhammad.[1119] By coping with other cultures, one finds diverse Muslim practices across the world that reflect different indigenous cultural practices while sharing a uniform tradition.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the process of Islamization in Yoruba society also showed that several local practices and institutions were adapted into Islam, just as the religion equally adapted to them. That MSSN has promoted the idea of Islam's tolerance to diversity and local cultural practices reflect its continuity with this expression of Islam in Yorubaland. Most importantly, it is a telling example that its understanding of the *sunna* does not translate to abandoning all the local cultural practices. Despite this, however, the MSSN makes a distinction between local practices that it considered 'permissible' and the ones that are not permissible in Islam. One example is the opposition to prostration by men and kneeling by women when greeting an elderly person. While the MSSN opposition is seen as an affront to the values of respect and the structure of hierarchy by many Yoruba, members of the MSSN consider it as a rejection of *shirk* (association of partners with God). This is because the practice is seen to involve the position of worship during *ṣalāt*.[1120] But in some cases, the MSSN accommodates aspects of the so-called impermissible practices and modify their contents to conform to what is considered to be permissible in Islam. In this manner, the Society tries to reduce the supposed friction between Islam and other cultural traditions, thereby encouraging students to engage in both side by side. Recalling the example of Spies' study,[1121] this suggests that while Islam is seen as a 'religion,' the other tradition is not. Aisha Muritala, a female vice-president of the MSSN at UI, described how this was done for a genre of traditional oral poetry called *ìjálá* (chant) which was recited in one of the MSSN events she participated in.

> We sang one song like that. We now chanted in the middle of the song…*iba atelese ti ko wu irun*. That *iba* actually means you are praising, like you are saying *Allāh ʾakbar*. The chant is like this: *iba akoda iba aseda, iba atelese ti ko wu irun*. So *akoda* is Allah, He is the first and the last. *Aseda* is the person that created everything… but we cannot take that attribute, and we were asked to change it to *iba Olodumare to da atelese lai wu irun*.[1122]

[1119] Clifford Geertz, "Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia," in *The Anthropology of Islam Reader*, ed. Jens Kreinath, 65–74 (London: Routledge, 2012), 68.

[1120] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1121] Spies, "Coping with Religious Diversity": In *A Companion to the Anthropology of Religion,* 127-8

[1122] Aisha Muritala, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 18, 2017, UI, Ibadan.

Quotes with translation:

> We sang one song, and we chanted in the middle of the song 'reverence to the foot that doesn't grow hair.' That 'reverence' actually means praise, like you are saying *Allāh ʾakbar*. The chant is like this: 'reverence to the first created, reverence to the One who creates, reverence to the foot that doesn't grow hair.' So, *akoda* is Allah, He is the first and the last. *Aseda* is the person that created everything… but we [humans] cannot take that attribute. [Thus][1123] we were asked to change it to 'reverence to God who created the foot without hair.'

In whatever way the MSSN has promoted the ideal of Islam's tolerance to local cultural practices, the students who are opposed to its interpretation of the *sunna* do not think that the Society has lived by this ideal. The major voices in this regard are members of the Sufi group, the TIMSAN. One of the members of this group, Misbaudeen Babarinde, does not think that the MSSN has promoted this tolerance because its members have adopted 'Arabian' dress, especially the veil, as a symbol of 'authentic Islam' while they neglect the local ones which meet the criteria of modesty.[1124] But beyond this critique, MSSN support and accommodation of these practices show how varying aspects of Yoruba identities are preserved in the expression of Islam among students.

The foregoing discussion illustrates that these notions of Islam in the MSSN reform overlap and relate to one another. The idea of "moderation" is related to those of "gradual embodiment of learning," "flexibility of Islam" and "Islam's tolerance to other cultures" because they all support a particular disposition about the expression of Islam. However, each of these notions also embeds different and contested ideals on what such expression should be. Thus, while the relationality of these notions of Islam gives an impression of uniformity in the ideals of MSSN reform, it also reveals the various points of divergence in the reform, and this is line with the argument by Spies that relationality in the context of religious diversity is not only about connections, dependence or cooperation and but also about disconnections, rejections or conflicts.[1125] As will be shown below, the notions of Islam discussed above shaped the diverse practices and interpretations of Islam that became noticeable in the MSSN from the 1980s. The diversity, on the one hand, shows differences and disagreements on practices that are considered 'correct' and 'incorrect,' as well as practices that are regarded as 'fundamental' and 'less fundamental' in Islam. On the other hand, the diversity demonstrates fluidity in many

---

[1123] Emphasis mine
[1124] Misbaudeen Babarinde, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1125] Spies, "Being in Relation": 68-9.

practices. This diversity is reflected in everyday rituals, style of dress, and socio-cultural activities which are discussed with relevant examples in the following sections.

6.4 **Ritual practices**

In the daily religious acts of Muslims, the MSSN reform has focused on promoting the 'correct' practices and their 'correct' performance. My evidence based on participant observation in the MSSN on what the correct practices are and how they should be performed reveals several varieties and controversies. The *tahajjud* is an example of ritual practices that show this trend. Regarded as a rewardable non-obligatory prayer performed at night/before dawn, many members of the MSSN consider it as one of the *sunna* of Prophet Muhammad. They are also of the view that during his lifetime the Prophet performed the prayer alone, rather than in congregation. This argument has been used by many of them to position the MSSN differently from movements like the NASFAT who organised regular congregational *tahajjud* for members. As this view seems to be shared generally in the MSSN, I saw many students who performed it alone at the UI mosque at midnight. However, this was not the case at the MSSN B-Zone IVC in 2016 when the *tahajjud* was performed in congregation. The Imam who led the prayer later claimed that this was necessary because the IVC was a training programme and that the prayer was performed in congregation in order to teach the delegates who had not inculcated it in their daily rituals. But many students disagreed with this argument and performed the prayer alone. I also heard many students, who I shared space with at the IVC, complained about being woken early for the *tahajjud* for what they thought was an "obligatory" prayer.[1126] Thus, while the performance of the *tahajjud* reflects the diversity in the MSSN, it is a practice that is both controversial and open to innovation.

The *adhkār* (remembrance; invocation) is another ritual that shows diversity in the MSSN. From the perspective of many members of the Society, the *adhkār* must be done regularly. But they disagreed with the *adhkār* done in congregation at the end of each *ṣalāt*,[1127] which is not only the norm in several mosques outside the schools but also among MSSN members in Lagos which I referred to in Chapter Five. Also, they opined that Muslims should not gather at a place to do the *adhkār*. This argument is used to criticise the collective Sufi ritual called *waẓīfa* and the weekly prayer meetings called *asalatu* (Arabic *ṣalāt*) which is common among Muslim movements such as Ansar-Ud-Deen, Nawair-Ud-Deen and NASFAT (some gather for this *asalatu* on Friday while others meet on Sunday as in the case of NASFAT). However, these

---

[1126] Balogun, *Field Notes*.
[1127] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

arguments are not applied in every MSSN activity. In the MSSN B-Zone IVC, for example, the *adhkār* was performed in congregation at the end of each *ṣalāt*. As in the case of *tahajjud*, the Imam explained that this was done because the IVC was a training programme meant to teach delegates about the correct prayers enjoined by the Prophet. He also expressed concerns that many Muslims do not usually perform the *adhkār* after their *ṣalāt*. He therefore urged them to see the congregational *adhkār* as an opportunity to inculcate it into their daily rituals.[1128] What is interesting is that this argument is also made by many Imams I know outside the schools, who ironically have been criticised by the MSSN for doing what it claimed is not correct. Besides the objective of training, which is noticed at the IVC, the *adhkār* is also performed in congregation in other MSSN programmes. These include the Brothers Forum and the Sisters' Circle organised at the Federal College of Education, Akoka Lagos. As a participant-observer in the two programmes in 2017, I witnessed the recitation of the *adhkār* compiled by Al-Banna, *Al-Ma'thurat*, in congregation by both brothers and sisters in their separate sections of the mosque.[1129]

In addition, many MSSN branches hold congregational prayer sessions for their pressing needs in school. The group prayer is similar to those of the *asalatu* groups that assemble Muslims to supplicate for their everyday concerns such as employment opportunities, success in business and protection against enemies, whether real or perceived. Unlike their parents, one of the most important concerns of many students is to pass their exams. For this purpose, the MSSN in branches like the Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH), Lagos organised the Success Dua (supplication) for members. For many years, this was held at the college mosque, two days before the commencement of exams in each semester. However, in 2016, the Success Dua was contested by an executive member of the MSSN in the College who identified with the *ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a* (people of the tradition [of Muhammad] and the community [of believers]). According to the President of the College's MSSN branch, he argued that the Success Dua was not "sunnatic," and therefore, not a correct practice. He also provided evidence in Islamic texts that allegedly supported his argument. However, despite accepting the validity of his evidence, other members of the executive thought that it would be difficult to stop it because of its usefulness to many members of the Society. Instead of cancelling it, they adjusted the practice by ceasing the congregational session and inserted some *adhkār* in what is called the

---

[1128] Balogun, *Field Notes*.
[1129] Ibid.

"Examination Dos and Don'ts,"[1130] pasted on notice boards, which members can recite individually prior to writing their exams.[1131] This innovative blending of *adhkār* with an examination instructions, as noted in Loimeier argument above, shows how a new practice is produced and promoted as part of being Muslim.

The use of prayer beads for *adhkār* is also contested in the MSSN. The prayer beads called *tẹsuba* (*tasbīḥ* in Persian and Muslim Indian usage) by Yoruba Muslims, is considered as an aid to counting in place of the fingers or finger lines. Members of several Muslim groups such as the Ansar-Ud-Deen, Jama'atul Islamiyyah, the NASFAT and the Tijaniyya regularly make use of such beads. But there are MSSN's members like Yekin who are of the view that there is no proof that the *tẹsuba* was used by the Prophet.[1132] Therefore, they consider its use as a form of *bid'a* (unlawful innovation) which should not be allowed in Islam. This argument encouraged them to abandon the *tẹsuba* for their fingers during *adhkār*. On the contrary, there are those who consider its use as a less fundamental issue in Islam because it is only an aid to counting. I saw many of these students who used the *tẹsuba* and one of them confirmed to me that she only used it occasionally.[1133] The contest over the beads shows why multiple authorities and interpretions of Islam account for different practices of the religion. This multiplicity is also found in the type of dress worn by many students.

6.5 Dress

To a large extent, the change in dress of MSSN members has been the most visible expression of their new ways of being Muslim in public since the 1980s. The styles of dress that represent this change are the men's kaftan and the women's veil as shown in figure 3 below. But there are variations in this mode of dressing. Among the male students, there are those who regularly wear the kaftan with an embroidered cap from Northern Nigeria. Some students wear clothes such as t-shirts with trousers. Many students also wear the 'traditional' *bùbá* (blouse) with the slouched caps made from the hand-woven fabric referred to as *aṣọ oke* (*lit*. a cloth from upcountry). While many Yoruba consider this men's blouse to represent the 'authentic' Yoruba identity, its origin tells a different story. This cloth, as suggested by Peel, is of Northern Nigerian Muslim origin.[1134] Like their clothes, the size of the trousers of members of MSSN also varied. Their trousers include those whose leg openings are below the ankle, those that are

---

[1130] This is an instruction manual designed to guide students during preparation for exams.
[1131] Ibrahim Umar, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1132] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1133] Adesina Kafayat (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun, October 27, 2016, UI, Ibadan.
[1134] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 161–62.

slightly above the ankle and those that are raised far above the ankle. However, sometimes the length of the trousers does not correspond with what a student wears every day. A student may have trousers that are of these three lengths worn on different days. According to some members of the Society, a student can choose any of these lengths because there is evidence for all of them in Islamic texts.[1135] However, this argument is inconsistent with the Salafis and Tablighis who frequently wear trousers that are far above their ankles.

There are also a wide variety of styles in the dress of female students. Some of them wear trousers/skirts and shirts with turban hats/*ḥijāb*[1136] and keep scarves in their bags which they use when they pray in the mosque or attend MSSN events. These students are categorised by some members of the MSSN as "scarfites," often as a criticism that they are less "*suunatic,*" to differentiate them from those who used the veil. Outside the MSSN, however, they are identified with terms such as *sọji Alhaja* (enlightened/civilised Muslim woman), especially among non-Muslims. The two categories are a telling example of the varying social acceptance of the veil between the MSSN and the larger society. But those who use the veil, similarly categorised based on the type they used, do not regularly wear them. Their veils are in different sizes, colours and styles such as the *niqāb* (a face veil that leaves the area around the eyes open), the *jilbāb* (a veil that covers the body from head to toe leaving the hands and face open), the *khimār* (a long, cape-like veil which may hang down to the waist or knee), the *burqaʿ* (a veil that covers the body and face with a mesh for the eyes) and the *al-amira* (a two-piece veil which include a close-fitting cap). Many of those who use these veils also wear either socks or gloves or both.

Fig. 3a: The diverse style of Muslim students' dress. Picture by Yemi Balogun, 2017

[1135] Balogun, *Field Notes*.
[1136] The turban hat, a cap that is worn to cover the head, performs a similar function to the turban *ḥijāb*. But unlike the hat, turban *ḥijāb* is wrapped on the head.

Fig. 3b. The diverse style of Muslim students' dress. Picture by Yemi Balogun, 2017

It is also important to point out that the categorisation of these female students into the type of veil they used is not fixed because many of them often switched from one type of head-covering/veil to another. There are "scarfites" who also use the *jilbāb* and the *khimār* only when they pray, either at home or in public. Many of them do this due to concerns that those wearing veils in public are looked upon as "religious extremists."[1137] Anifa Oyekola, a student of Osun State University, Osogbo who is of the view that veiling is not easy to adopt, explained that many female Muslims do this because they have to "please Allah" when they pray and "please themselves" when they are not praying.[1138] In this regard, the veil is only seen as an object meant for religious spaces rather than the public sphere.

Besides, many female students switch their style of veiling due to peer pressure and what is socially acceptable. The contrasting dressing of two friends I interacted with named Rashida Hammed and Jelila Hassan, both students of the University of Lagos, illustrates this point. Rashida wore the *jilbāb*, while her friend Jelila wore the turban hat and kept a scarf in her bag. But before then, Jelila used to wear the *khimār* while Rashida had changed from a turban *ḥijāb* to the *jilbāb* before dropping it for some time and taking it up again. They both explained that their use of the veil was consistent when they were in the circle of veiling Muslims, while they had been discouraged from using it in the circle of non-veiling Muslims, as well as Christians who often contest the use of the veil.[1139]

[1137] Shukuroh Jimoh, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 14, 2017, Akoka, Lagos.

[1138] Anifat Oyekola, WhatsApp to Adeyemi Balogun, November 2, 2018.

[1139] Hassan Jelila (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Hammed Rashida (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 14, 2017, Akoka, Lagos.

The rules on dressing in many schools and work establishments are also responsible for why many females switch veils. This is the case with students in the departments of Nursing of many tertiary institutions where the use of the veil is restricted. Female students in this department use the turban hat when they attend classes but change to their veils when they are not in class. For some female students, the shift is caused by what is approved of by parents and guardians. A case in point is that of Anifa Oyekola, mentioned above, who for many years was required to use the *ḥijāb* when she was living with her uncle whose wife uses the *khimār*. Following her admission into the university, she changed to a turban *ḥijāb*, although not completely. She pointed out that she was concerned about her modesty and that she often used the *ḥijāb* depending on the occasion she attended or what matched her style of dress.[1140] The veil is therefore not only a symbol of an assumed understanding of Islam for her but also what is necessary for different occasions.

The different experiences of these female Muslims support the argument of scholars such as Soares and Osella[1141] and Schielke[1142] regarding the significance of taking the range of struggles, ambivalences and failures of Muslims seriously in the understanding of their religiosity. Their argument is part of the discourse that challenges the anthropological studies which, according to Schielke,[1143] largely focused on how morality and piety are created and practised in Muslim societies. Mostly relevant in this regard is Mahmood's study of the women's piety mosque movement in Egypt which demonstrates the role of the veil in the practice of modesty.[1144] Taking a contrary view to feminists who refer to the veil as a symbol of Muslim women's subjugation and docility, Mahmood contends that veiling should be understood as a key symbol of piety and one of the ways in which the veiled women's agency is realised. Furthermore, she argues that veiling plays an instrumental role in practising the ethic of modesty. The veil, according to her, often serves at first as a measure to train oneself on the attribute of modesty, and that it cannot be separated from this ethic because it is integral to practising it.[1145] However, by focusing on the achievement of piety, Mahmood gives little attention to the ambivalences, failures and struggles that are imbricated in the practice of

---

[1140] Anifat Oyekola, WhatsApp to Adeyemi Balogun.
[1141] Soares and Osella, "Islam, Politics, Anthropology": 10-11.
[1142] Schielke, "Being Good in Ramadan": 25.
[1143] Ibid.
[1144] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*; Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent".
[1145] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 158.

veiling. Meanwhile, these challenges usually impose different negotiations on many Muslim women and determine how they truly live.

A related point to consider is that the colour and size/type of veil that is used by female students is shaped by different interpretations of the concept of veiling. The idea of veiling, as Mahmood illustrates in her study, is considered to help Muslim women achieve modesty.[1146] In the MSSN, there are debates on what colour is suitable for achieving this goal. Many female students who used the black coloured veil consider it as the most appropriate. They are of the view that this colour is less attractive and that it meets the condition of modesty which veiling is expected to produce.[1147] However, this is contested by Uthman Ibrahim who argues that the evidence cited by many scholars in Islamic texts that support the black colour is untenable because the Prophet did not give clear instruction regarding it. He thus contends that women can choose the colour of their choice.[1148] Based on this kind of argument, many female students used a variety of colours such as pink, brown and blue, thereby showing the impact of the multiplicity of authorities on lived Islam.

Also, with regards to the size/type of veil, some students consider the *jilbāb* to meet the criteria of modesty while others think it is the *khimār*.[1149] An example is Rashida Hammed, mentioned above, who is of the view that she prefers the *jilbāb*, which she uses because it does not reveal her body shape that the rules of modesty demand. Some students also consider the use of both the *niqāb* and the *burqaʿ* as the "peak" of veiling, suggesting that these two types of the veil are the best among the rest. Interestingly, this view is also shared by Rashida Hammed while comparing her own *jilbāb* with the *niqāb* of her friend, Shukuro Jimoh, during a group discussion. Although Shukuro (who considers herself to have reached the "peak" in terms of veiling)[1150] left midway during the discussion, Rashida was full of admiration and respect for her for defying all sorts of oppositions and discriminations against it in the Yoruba society.

> Anytime I see someone in *niqāb*; like that sister, I am seeing her for the first time. If I see you in *niqāb*, I just have to know who you are and your story. It is just like an attraction once you are wearing *niqāb*. I'm just like, wow! Because you've gone against all the society. It is really not easy, even wearing normal *ḥijāb*. It is not easy especially in the southwest [Nigeria].[1151]

[1146] Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent": 213–6.
[1147] Anifat Oyekola, Field Report on Women and Veiling, 2017.
[1148] Ibrahim Uthman, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1149] Hammed Rashida (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1150] Shukuroh Jimoh, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1151] Hammed Rashida (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun. Emphasis mine

While the MSSN leaves the option open for female Muslims to choose the type/size of veil they want, the choice also depends on what is recommended by the Muslim organisations which they belong outside the school. The *khimār*, for instance, is mostly used by female students who are linked to the TMC and Al-Mu'minaat (The Believing Women's) Organisation. Students who identify with different Salafi movements also tend to use *niqāb* and *burqa'*. But the recommendation of the type of veil to adopt has stimulated the reactions of many students, including those who are in the MSSN, who contend that the decision to veil must be preceded by a deep knowledge of the concept of veiling and why Muslim women are required to do so. These students are of the view that the knowledge of veiling will not only help women to make informed decisions on the type of veil they want to use but also prevent switching from one type of veil to another.[1152] This argument buttresses the emphasis in the MSSN on the gradual embodiment of knowledge rather than being required to do so at once.

6.6 **Socio-cultural practices**

In the 1950s when its link was established with the students in Lagos, the Burmese Muslim students group had annual events that were used to engage members in cultural and educational activities such as picnics, lectures, quiz and debates. These activities were often organised within the framework of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday called *mawlid al-nabī*.[1153] Indeed, some of these activities, especially the quiz and debates were not new to the Muslim students in Lagos in the 1950s. Lateef Adegbite and Saidat Mabadeje actively participated in them, as mentioned in Chapter Four. But the extent to which these two activities were used to engage issues, if any, relating to Islam and Muslim culture is not known. Despite their experience in the activities organised by Lagos schools, however, the ones put together by the Burmese students may have shaped the development of their own since the content relate to Islam. Yet, this is not to suggest that the MSSN did not borrow from their Christian students' groups, as will be shown later. Since 1954, these social activities have continued to be organised in the MSSN, except for a few of them, like the celebration of the Prophet's birthday which had been stopped. Besides, the MSSN also introduced new activities such as the singing and dancing competitions (before they were stopped in the late 1980s), entrepreneurship training, and prison and hospital visitation. Generally, the participation of Muslim students in these activities

---

[1152] Aminah Olabisi Adisa, interview by Anifat Oyekola, February 17, 2017, Ile-Ife, Osun; Hassan Jelila (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1153] Yegar, *The Muslims of Burma*, 54.

showed that they have been able to incorporate the practices of the colonial schools into their way of life.

The social activities of the MSSN are incorporated into several platforms of the Society. A major example is the Orientation Programme which is usually organised for first-year students at tertiary institutions. Although it is designed to introduce these students to university life, it is also put together to give them various kinds of assistance needed to get settled in their new environments. This is sometimes expected to prevent them from seeking the assistance of the Christian students' groups who offer the same programme. The orientation is also anticipated to prevent them from joining some clubs and associations which are assumed to place less emphasis on the worship of God.[1154]

At the orientation organised in UI in 2017, the MSSN engaged first-year students in an excursion to historical sites around the city of Ibadan such as Mapo Hall. The hall is a colonial architectural legacy, commissioned in 1929, used for historical political gatherings in Southwest Nigeria. As part of the orientation, the students also had a higly stimulating event called Variety Night. The event began with a Qurʾan memorisation competition among students who represented each hall of residence in the university. This was followed by a quiz competition in which questions were based on Islam. There was also Pick and Talk, an intellectual game that has been in practice since the first decade of the history of the Society. Contestants in the game, who represented different faculties, discussed the topic they had selected from a variety of questions in crumpled papers. Unlike the quiz, these questions were not limited to Islam but included questions about science, literature and politics.

The last major event of the night was the Qurʾan Galore, which was more of an entertainment than competition. It involves the recitation of Qurʾanic texts with melodious voices and styles of recitation from different Islamic education schools and clerics in Yorubaland. Among these were the Adabiyya (of Al-Adabiy's *madrasa*) and the Markaziyya (of Al-Ilory's *madrasa*) styles of recitation. The recitation also included those of popular scholars in the Muslim world such as the Imam of the Grand Mosque of Mecca, Abdul-Rahman Ibn Abdul Aziz as-Sudais (b. 1960). As-Sudais' style of recitation has become popular in Nigeria due to the CD and cassette technologies which made it possible to record his recitation of the Qurʾan and the circulation of this recording among a larger audience. Up to fifteen students participated in the galore which incidentally included a member of the Ahmadiyya who recited the Qurʾan with a

---

[1154] Balogun, *Field Notes*. This include cult groups and palm wine drinkers club referred to as Kegite.

technique common to many Ahmadis. Like other events of the night, the galore elicited appreciations from many students who were thrilled by the various style of recitations.[1155] But beyond entertaining the students, the galore illustrates one of the ways in which the MSSN accommodates other Muslims despite their different orientations.

The MSSN has other forms of activities which are common to other Muslims and non-Muslims in another event called Jihad Week (also called MSS Week [MSS Day in secondary schools] or Islamic Propagation Week in some Lagos branches). The Jihad Week is an annual week-long event in many tertiary institutions (or day event in secondary schools). To kick-start the event, members of the MSSN usually had a procession with students holding posters, handbills and banners which displayed the theme of the event around the campus and sometimes outside the school. The parade is also used to announce MSSN activities (such as *madrasa* and weekly meetings of members) in the school and to encourage non-Muslims to embrace Islam. In 2016, I saw secondary school pupils with MSSN officials who embarked on this parade at Ojuelegba Lagos with the theme "Great Procession" (see fig. 5 below). Like in other parades, a public-address system was also used to create awareness about the week-long programme.

In 2016, the YABATECH branch of the MSSN embarked on this procession with a horse on which its president addressed the student community (shown in fig. 4). The image of a horseman in a procession has been a recurring practice during special occasions in many parts of Yorubaland. By the 1850s in cities like Osiele and Abeokuta, the leading *alfas* rode on horses in a grand procession to the location where the communal prayer that marked the end of Ramadan was performed.[1156] Also, in the 1950s colonial Lagos, several grand processions were usually organised from the *ọba's* (king's) palace for this festival. The processions, watched by the governors of Lagos, had many Muslim associations (*ẹgbẹ*), social groups, as well as cyclists and Muslim chiefs on horses who accompanied the *ọba* and the chief Imam.[1157] While processions in the MSSN show continuity with this age-long practice in the Yoruba Muslim society, it does not always agree with the interpretation of Islam of many students. An example is the student who identified with the *ahl al-sunna waʾl-jamāʿa*, mentioned above, who contested the whole idea of a procession. But unlike the Success Dua, his arguments were not enough to stop the procession. He therefore excused himself from the procession.[1158]

[1155] Balogun, *Field Notes*.
[1156] Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, 203.
[1157] COMCOL, Muhammedan Festivals, 758, NAI.
[1158] Ibrahim Umar, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

Figure 4. Islamic Propagation Week (IPW) procession of YABATECH, Lagos, 2016. Picture from Ibrahim Umar.

Figure 5. The procession to kickstart MSSN Week of Surulere Area Council, Lagos. Picture by Yemi Balogun, 2016.

Apart from demonstrating the MSSN continuity with Yoruba Muslim practices in the past, and despite the MSSN link to the Burmese group, the organisation of this procession within the Western school system may have been appropriated from the practices of many Christian missions' schools and colonial institutions in the early decades of the twentieth century. The parade, for instance, attracted children to the mission schools and the Church in Lagos. The parade organised by these missionaries included members of the scouting movement, Boy Scouts, which was founded in England in 1907 by Robert Baden-Powell and introduced to Nigeria by Lord Frederick Lugard in 1915, initially for dependents of British citizens.[1159] There

---

[1159] The Scout Association of Nigeria, "The Nigerian Scouter," (2016).

was also the Christian interdenominational youth association, Boys Brigade, established in Glasgow in 1883 by William Alexander Smith and introduced to Nigeria in 1908 by Mr. A.W Wakeman (Revd. Canon) of the Holy Trinity Anglican Church.[1160] There is no doubt that many Muslim educational institutions may have appropriated the same practice. From 1938, in the process of modernising his own *madrasa*, Al-Adaby who saw the effect of the parade in Lagos organised the same for his students, dressed in similar clothes, in which they marched from Ojo Giwa to Onala, via Idumagbo and Jankara. This parade, according to Aliyu, contributed to an increase in his student population, from twenty to fifty in one month.[1161] Today, in many tertiary institutions in Yorubaland, processions and rallies are still organised by Christian student groups, as part of their annual socio-religious programmes to create awareness and invite students into their folds. Its appropriation by the MSSN may, therefore, be considered as a way to promote similar objectives in order to preserve the identity of Muslim students.

The procession is not the only example of appropriation in the MSSN. In recent times, it has included different aspects of urban and youth cultures which are seen during the Jihad Week. The most conspicuous is the customising of shirts to bear the logo of the MSSN, the theme of the Jihad Week, and the names of each student, as shown in the picture above. In the past, the male Muslim students wore traditional attire, which included the *agbada* (garment), while the females wore the blouse, wrapper, head tie, and scarf for the event. Over time, the *agbada* gave way to the kaftan among many male students while the veil replaced the traditional attire of the female students. The customised shirts have become the newest addition to these attires.

The culture of customised shirts seemed to have become prominent in Lagos in the mid-1990s among university students to create their own identity and to celebrate life achievements such as graduation from a university.[1162] What is unique about the shirts is that it allows the students to create a personalised variation of their names, or nicknames, in forms that are not necessarily intelligible. Examples of such names are "Gbàgbé" (Forget) derived in contrast to the Yoruba name "Rántí" (Remember), and "Doohroduller" from the Yoruba name "Dúródọlá" (wait for wealth).[1163] Muslim names such as "Ibrahim" may also be personalised as "Ibro" and "Abdul-Akeem" rendered as "Akoko Akumari." Certainly, the personalisation of Muslim names in this way has not escaped the condemnation of many clerics which I am familiar with in Yorubaland.

[1160] E. A. Birch, *Story of the Boys' Brigade* (London: Frederick Muller, 1959), 5.
[1161] Aliyu, *Transmission of learning in modern Ilorin*, 119.
[1162] Techgeniusworld, "The History of Customised Fashion," *Nairaland*, https://www.nairaland.com/4161150/history-customising-lagos-nigeria (accessed December 1, 2018).
[1163] Olúsànyà E. Kọ́mọláfẹ́, "Name 'Customizing' Among Nigerian Youth and Its Implications on Literacy and Culture," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 3, no. 6 (2014): 48.

Incidentally, this topic was part of the discourse in one of the MSSN lectures at the UI mosque which I attended in 2017. Like other Muslim clerics, the discussant considered the distortion of Muslim names to fall short of a good Muslim identity because most of them are attributes of God or names of His prophets, in which a change in letter would render them meaningless or turn them to "curses" for those who bear them.[1164] To avoid this, most of the customised shirts in the MSSN are not usually printed with the names of students. In cases where there are names on the shirts, the correct spellings, which are often in Arabic, are used. Yet, this is not to suggest that all Muslim students have corrected this practice, as shown in figure 5 below. Nonetheless, the use of the customised shirts can be regarded as an aspect of modernity which the MSSN translated and made digestible for many Muslim students.

Figure 6. Picture showing a customised name "Harnisheet," probably from the Muslim name "Hanifa." Picture by Yemi Balogun at UI campus, 2017.

Apart from this modern youth culture, a handful of local popular cultures are also embedded in many MSSN events. A major example is the recitation of a genre of modern poetry called *ewì* in Yorubaland which replaced singing and dancing competitions during MSSN events. Given the historical context in which it developed and its features, the *ewì* may be considered as a popular culture that reveals the unbounded nature of the diversity of students' practices in MSSN. Historically, as Oyeniyi Okunoye[1165] narrates, the *ewì* emerged in the nineteenth

---

[1164] Balogun, *Field Notes*.

[1165] Oyèníyì Okùnoyè, "Ewì, Yorùbá Modernity, and the Public Space," *Research in African Literatures* 41, no. 4 (2010): 50–1.

century among the early educated Christian Egba (at Abeokuta) elite who demonstrated their literacy with poems modelled on indigenous poetic forms. The forms include proverbs and chants used by hunters and devotees of deities such as the *Egúngún* (masquerade). The *ewì* was formally established as a genre in the twentieth century as part of the cultural nationalism promoted by the Western educated group, *Ẹgbẹ Ijinle Yoruba*.[1166] In this sense, it can be regarded as a popular culture with mixes of indigenous and borrowed values that emerged at the dawn of Christianization and Western education.[1167] An example is the popular *Iṣẹ́ ni òògùn ìṣẹ́*[1168] (Work is the antidote for poverty) *ewì* recited by a female student at the Convention of Secondary School Muslim Students (COSSMUS), a holiday course organised by the MSSN in 2016.[1169] This particular *ewì* is one of the collections of J.F. Odunjo (1904–1980), a teacher and politician who published poems, folktales and proverbs in Yoruba for school children. By encouraging the *ewì*, many students in the MSSN usually go beyond the collections of people like Odunjo to compose their own. Some of the *ewìs* composed by these students are quite fascinating, as revealed in the case of a young female student who composed her own *ewi* on the topic "hard work" at the COSSMUS event. She began the recitation of this poem with a prologue, which contained some chants that are widely used by people of different religious groups including the Traditionalists in Yorubaland.

> *Mo de ki oloko mo le roko*
> *Mo de k'olona mo le r'ona mo*
> *Mo de papapa bi eji ale*
> *Mo de wara wara bi eji owuro*
> *Mo de papapa bi eji iyaleta*
> *Mo ni ki olorire o wa nkan fidi le*
> *Ki oloriburuku o gbona oko lo ko lo ra agbado*
> *Mo ti je orogbo ki ohun mi legbo*
> *Mo ti je ogede ki ohun mi lede*
> *Mo de werewere ki n le gbo ni o*

Translation[1170]

> I come to let the farmer stay at home
> I come to let the person on the road stop
> I come like a downpour at night
> I come like an early morning downpour
> I come like a downpour at sunrise
> I beseech the successful One to take a seat
> Let the One with bad luck go and buy maize at the farm
> I have eaten bitter-cola to strengthen my voice

[1166] Formerly known as the Yoruba Poetry Group

[1167] Ibid.

[1168] See appendix.

[1169] Balogun, *Field Notes*.

[1170] Translation mine.

> I have eaten a banana to ease my voice
> I come swiftly for you to hear me.[1171]

It is also revealing that many members of the MSSN who used to be part of its singing groups in the past have changed to writing *ewì*. Notable among them is Abdul-Hakeem Opadijo, a former *naibul-amir* (vice-president) of the MSSN Oshodi-Isolo Area Council. He is a schoolteacher of Yoruba language and culture, and a coordinator of a community-based organisation (CBO), called Oshodi Local Heritage. His CBO provides support for the less-privileged in Lagos. Following the arguments against singing in the MSSN in the 1980s and the new kind of knowledge (*àgbọ́yé*) they had, according to him, he shifted his interest from music to *ewì*.

> I was trained by MSS. Starting from secondary school, during the time of singing. I love singing. I started as a *fuji* [a genre of music among the Yoruba] musician and I later joined Islamic singing. But when *understanding* came to MSS that singing is not part of it, so I changed it to poem.[1172]

Up to 2005 when the Ashafa faction of MSSN left the B-Zone, Opadijo usually composed *ewìs* that reflected on different themes of the annual MSSN IVC. The poems may include chants, supplication and injunctions from Islamic texts. According to him, he has been able to create these mixes because of his deep understanding of Yoruba culture and his knowledge of Islam.[1173]

Apart from the *ewì*, Opadijo like some other members of the Society, also performs a musical genre of poetry that is popular among Muslim clerics in Yorubaland called *wákà*. This genre is often traced to Badamaṣi Musa Agbaji, mentioned in Chapter Three,[1174] who composed many of these poems in the nineteenth century. The poem is mostly rendered with a musical tone with verses that could be a supplication or sermon called *waasi* (Arabic *wa'z*). It is also performed with Qur'anic verses used to celebrate returning pilgrims, the birth of a child and new couples. Over the years, it moved beyond these modes of expression. From the 1950s, it developed into a form of 'Islamic song' exclusively performed by Muslim women during ceremonies. The 1980s saw the genre popularised beyond its confines of 'Islamic song' by Batili Alake (d. 2013) and Salawa Abeni (b. 1961), the two female Muslims who incorporated

---

[1171] Balogun, *Field Notes*.
[1172] Abdul-Hakeem Opadijo, interview by Adeyemi Balogun. Emphasis in italics mine.
[1173] Ibid.
[1174] "Badamasi B. Musa Agbaji," in *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*, ed. John O. Hunwick and R. S. O'Fahey (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

traditional musical instruments into it and commercialised it.[1175] Despite this development, *wákà* has continued to be rendered with no musical instrument by most Muslim clerics. Given that a number of Muslim students studied under these clerics, they also rendered the *wákà* during their lectures at MSSN events. In one of his lectures, for instance, Opadijo performed the *wákà* below as a criticism of both the Christians and Traditionalists in Yoruba society.

> *Mimo ni f'Olorun mi, mimo ni fun Oba ogo*
> *Allahu ko pe meji, laye ati l'Orun*
> *E so fun baba Sango ko ni k'irin wo pa ohun*
> *E so fun eni t'on bo Oya k'oni k'odo gbe ohun lo*
> *E so fun awon t'on sin Jesu k'oni ki won kan won pa*
> *E mi lo sowipe iku Allah ni ma ku* (Opadijo 2017)

Translation[1176]

> Glory be to Allah, glory be to Allah
> Allah is One, on earth and in heaven
> Tell the Sango [god of iron] priest to prevail on iron to crush him to death
> Tell the one who worships Oya [river goddess] to prevail on the river to be drawn by it
> Tell those who worship Jesus to call for their own crucifixion
> But I can say that Allah will be responsible for my own death.

The content of Opadijo's *wákà* reflects the kind of discourse that is employed by many Yoruba Muslims to oppose the practices of non-Muslims in their lectures. Thus, it is a genre that is also instrumentalised in interreligious encounters. Importantly too, it shows the MSSN continuity with the practices of other Yoruba Muslims in their encounters with non-Muslims. Besides, the various aspects of popular culture such as the *ewì* and *wákà* tend to reveal the innovative blending of different traditions that shape the diversity in the practice of *sunna* in MSSN.

6.7 **Conclusion**

In sum, the everyday rituals, ways of dressing and socio-cultural practices among Muslim students in the period after the MSSN reform are varied and inconsistent as this chapter demonstrates. This support the argument that the Society's reform neither leads to a fixed understanding of Islam nor unchanging practices. To this extent, these findings call attention to the risk of understanding Islamic reform and the ideals it seeks to promote in a narrow sense. The case of MSSN shows that Islamic reform is shaped by certain notions of Islam which are highly debated among Muslims. It is therefore important to take cognizance of the debates on these notions in the understanding of Islamic reform in the MSSN, and in other similar social

---

[1175] Bode Omojola, *Yorùbá Music in the Twentieth Century: Identity, Agency, and Performance Practice,* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2012), 211.
[1176] Translation mine.

contexts. In the same vein, it is also important to be aware of the role of socio-historical realities of the setting in which the ideals of Islamic reform are debated and set into operation. The realities in the case of the MSSN suggest that the efforts aimed at producing good Muslims have not only been informed by the foundational texts of Islam; the efforts also involved paying attention to the societal norms, challenges and concerns which include those of non-Muslims. To be a good Muslim in this sense is not just about cultivating oneself based on certain ideals in Islamic texts, the cultivation also entails reflecting and negotiating between what those texts say and what is possible in a given setting.

In support of Loimeier,[1177] it is worth noting that while the MSSN effort on Islamic reform emphasises the promotion of the traditions of Muslims in the past, this effort is also open to the ideals of modern society and local cultural practices. This underscores the MSSN promotion of a "balanced position" in Islam and the "tolerance of Islam to other cultures" which enabled the Society to embrace the cultures of the modern world and those of Yoruba society. As a result, the new ways of being a Muslim in the MSSN has developed through a series of negotiations between the traditions of the past and those of the changing modern society, which ensures that many Muslim students inhabit multiple identities rather than one.

Along the same line, the continuities in the practices of MSSN and those of other Muslims, which include the Sufi and *asalatu* groups in Yorubaland also suggest that MSSN does not promote ideas that are unique and clear-cut from them. In this regard, this chapter supports the argument in many studies which emphasised the overlapping doctrinal traditions and continuities between reformist and Sufi Muslims.[1178] More importantly, it underscores the notion that, despite the effort of reformers to position themselves differently from the Sufis, there is one Islam which is nevertheless understood and lived differently in various social contexts. In all, this chapter show that the diversity in MSSN reform is produced by a wide range of processes which can be understood from such perspectives as syncretisation, assemblage, pluralism, incommensurability and relationality. These various perspectives suggest that religious diversity is a multidimensional and interlinked process and it manifest in differences in practice, symbols and beliefs.

[1177] Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 12.
[1178] See Marsden, *Living Islam*, 31.; Soares and Osella, "Islam, politics, anthropology": S9.

Chapter Seven

Afiwekewu/Akewukewe: MSSN and New Forms of Islamic Education

7.1 **Introduction**

The two Yoruba words used as topics of this chapter, *afiwekewu* and *akewukewe* (mentioned in Chapter Four), are employed to describe the way Yoruba Muslims, and the MSSN, make sense of the educational experiences of Muslims in the Islamic and Western school systems. The former illustrates a method of learning with the aid of the Western school episteme and pedagogy, often with less competence or knowledge on the different aspects of Arabic language and the ethics of Islamic education, while the latter suggests having such competence and ethics in addition to being educated in the Western school. The two concepts are used in this chapter not only to demonstrate the link between Western education and Islamic education in the MSSN but also why members of the Society, as well as Yoruba Muslims, framed the link in these terms. Looking beyond the nexus between Islamic and Western schooling, these terms also help to shed light on the change in Islamic knowledge production among Muslims in Yorubaland since the colonial period.

As discussed in Chapter Four, two of the objectives of MSSN are to encourage the study of the Qurʾan and Hadith and to provide guidance on how to live as a Muslim in Nigeria. From 1954, these objectives have been carried out in ways that incorporate the pedagogy and epistemology of the three forms of Islamic education that came into being in Yoruba society by 1960 and beyond this period: the classical *madrasa* (Qur'anic school which has incorporated little or no aspects of Western school pedagogy), the reformed *madrasa* (Qur'anic school which has incorporated many aspects of the Western school system), and Muslim schools (which are established along the Western school system). In addition to these three, the MSSN also instituted new methods of learning from transnational Islamic movements from the 1960s. This form of religious change, which Eller refers to as "addition,"[1179] is the basis of my argument in this chapter that the MSSN has contributed to the development of Islamic education in post independence Yorubaland (and Nigeria) and that its contribution is part of the mode in which the 'classical' Islamic education has been transformed following the impact of modern education and colonization. The MSSN's contribution is not only about instituting another

---

[1179] Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, 151.

religious education but also promoting the old and contemporary methods and epistemes of this learning. The Society has demonstrated this by introducing the *madrasa* system into public and private schools and promoting varying forms of knowledge transmission which include the Islamic Vacation Course (IVC), *usrah* (lit. family, referred to as study circle), leadership training and the gendered Brothers' Forum and Sisters' Circle. Though they are all connected to one another in some way, each form of education embodies specific contents or subjects that are used to shape the MSSN notion of a Muslim in a modern society and a multireligious setting. The subjects of this educational programme range from Arabic language to Qur'an memorisation, devotional practices, religious comparison, moral conduct, leadership skills, politics and marital affairs. These various subjects and the platforms employed to transmit them will be a major part of the discussion in this chapter. This is aimed at answering the following research question: what are the forms of education in MSSN and aspects of knowledge taught in the Society?

To understand the forms of knowledge transmission in the MSSN and how the MSSN contributed to Islamic education, this chapter is situated within the wider context of change of the Islamic education following the impact of colonial policies on Muslim education, the introduction of Western education, new communication technologies and eventually the Internet. One of the major outcomes of this change in Yorubaland is the transmission of Islamic knowledge in a Western school system (and particularly in Christian schools) with its own distinctive pedagogy and epistemology which is different from the classical *madrasa* rooted in many Islamic debates and traditions.[1180] The other results of this change include the establishment of Muslim schools that integrate Western and Islamic education, and the adoption of Western school pedagogy by many *madrasas*. This change not only happened in Yorubaland but also in many Muslim societies in Africa. Some of the studies that focused on this change include Louis Brenner's *Controlling knowledge*[1181] in Mali which showed that a network of modern *médersas* (*madrasas*), that combined secular subjects and Western education pedagogy with those of Islamic education, emerged in opposition to the state schools that were favoured by the French colonial government. The edited volume by Robert Launay, *Islamic Education in Africa*,[1182] further demonstrates that the change caused by the adoption of Western school pedagogy by Islamic educational institutions in many parts of Africa led to

---

[1180] Loimeier, *Between Social Skills and Marketable Skills*, 7.
[1181] Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*.
[1182] Robert Launay, ed., *Islamic Education in Africa: Writing Boards and Blackboards* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016).

the use of blackboards which symbolised different methods and epistemes from the classical *madrasa* and led to the emergence of Muslims with a distinctive educational experience from the past. While one of the major aims of this chapter is to highlight the contribution of the MSSN to the transmission of Islamic knowledge in Yoruba society, it also argues that the MSSN contribution is only part of these wide-ranging changes.

The broader transformation of Islamic education in Africa has led to a significant adjustment in the process of the transmission of Islamic knowledge. An important aspect of this change that is crucial to the case of the MSSN is what Dale Eickelman refers to as the "objectification"[1183] of religion in many Muslim societies. One of the main features of this objectification is when 'Islam' is made an object of study in relation to the other subjects in schools. Another aspect of the change that is close to the example of the MSSN is what Gregory Starrett called "functionalisation" of religion, referring to how Islamic knowledge is put to work for socio-economic and political ends of the colonial government.[1184] My respondents in the MSSN used certain terms like "practicals" and "student language" that are related to these concepts of objectification and functionalisation. Thus, I draw on Eickelman and Starrett studies to analyse what they meant by these terms in order to demonstrate the kind of knowledge that is taught to Muslim students.

In addition to the new process of transmission, there has also been an epistemological shift, but not in practice, in Islamic knowledge production particularly from the esoteric to the exoteric (including Brenner's notion of 'rational') paradigm. The promotion of what Seesemann refers to as the *maqāṣid* (purposes, objectives) by postcolonial Muslim professionals is also part of this shift. Theoretically, many studies suggest that the two well-known paradigms, esoteric and exoteric, are interwoven in Islamic knowledge production, yet there have been debates between Muslims of Sufi and reformist traditions that one is more correct than the other. Among Yoruba Muslims, this debate is directly related to the concepts of *afiwekewu* and *akewukewe*. This chapter therefore draws on the literature on these various paradigms to analyse the epistemological variation in Islamic education in Yorubaland and in the transmission of knowledge in the MSSN. And, as I will argue, even though the MSSN deemphasises the esoteric paradigm in its approach to reform, the transmission of knowledge in the Society does not support its move away from this episteme.

[1183] Eickelman, "Mass Higher Education and the Religious Imagination in Contemporary Arab Societies": 646-7.

[1184] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*.

In the next section, this chapter will focus on the history and change in Islamic education in Yorubaland in order to situate how the MSSN contributed to the development of Islamic education. This section also analyses the MSSN link to the objectification and functionalisation of Islam, epistemological variation in Islamic education, and the concepts of *afiwekewu* and *akewukewe*. The second section will analyse the contributions of MSSN to Islamic education through different forms of the transmission of knowledge, the type of subjects and morals that are taught to students, and the epistemes that shape them. My analyses will draw on literature that are connected to the new forms of education in the MSSN. For instance, the discussion on the IVC and the *madrasa* draw from studies on Islamic education in Africa including Brenner and Launay's works. As part of the IVC, I also refer to studies on the activities of Islamic reform movements and comparative religious discourse in Muslim societies of Africa. On the leadership training, an insight, with a critique, is taken from Peel's argument on the "double sense of inferiority" of Yoruba Muslims. Also, an insight from Mahmood's study of the *da'wa* activities of Muslim women in Egypt is employed to reflect on the Sister's Circle, while the discussion on *usrah* draws from the literature on the role of the mosque as a centre of Islamic education. I wish to note that the presentation of some aspects of these forms of education is descriptive, but in line with the studies on change in Islamic education which I refer to in the first section. In the concluding section, I reflect on the MSSN contribution to Islamic education and its impact on Yoruba Muslim society.

7.2 Change in Islamic education in Yorubaland

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the classical *madrasas* in Yorubaland provided Islamic education for the majority of Muslims.[1185] These *madrasas* operated informally often with no specified structure. They were held in places such as the homes of the teacher and mosques in the morning, late noon and at night after the last obligatory prayer. Little is known about the method of learning in these *madrasas* and how they were organised. But from the praxis of those that survived well into the twentieth century, this appears to be done in three stages. The first was the elementary school called *ile kewu wala* (slate school). The name of this school is indicative of the main materials used for learning and developing Arabic writing which are the 'wooden slate' (Yoruba, *wala*) and 'ink' (Yoruba, *tadaa*). Learning in these

---

[1185] See Aliyu, *Transmission of learning in modern Ilorin*; Stefan Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung Und Soziale Intergration in Ilorin (Nigeria) Seit Ca. 1800,* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 1998); Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims"; Olurode, *Glimpses of Madrasa from Africa*; Sakariyau A. Aliyu, "The Modernisation of Islamic Education in Ilorin: A Study of the Adabiyya and Markaziyya Educational Systems," *Islamic Africa* 10 (2019); and Oladiti, "The Growth and Development of Modern Arabic schools in Ibadan, 1945-2000".

schools began with the Arabic alphabet inscribed by the teacher or older students and progressed to the memorisation of short texts and verses of the Qur'an. The process was through constant repetition and incremental learning. Most pupils enrolled in these *madrasas* before the age of seven, and they were not allowed to 'carry' (Yoruba, *gbe*) the Qur'an because it was assumed to be sacred for them at this level. While learning, they sat on a mat with their slates around a teacher who often held a cane or whip to inculcate discipline and ensure correct pronunciation of the texts.[1186] This kind of physical discipline is one of the ways in which the body is disciplined to embody the sacred text, even though its importance should not be exaggerated. The practice supports Rudolph Ware's argument that Islamic knowledge is embodied and it "is brought into the world through concrete practices of corporal discipline."[1187]

Most students stopped at this first stage, having memorised the text they needed to perform daily rituals, and began to learn a trade. Generally, few students proceeded to the second stage called *ile kewu ilimi*[1188] (lit. knowledge school) referred to as the Advanced level in many studies.[1189] This stage primarily involved the translation of the Qur'an and the Hadith, but students were able to learn a few other related topics to this translation such as *nahw* (grammar), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and *adab* (ethics). Thereafter, they proceeded to the third stage considered the area of specialisation. Subjects taught at this stage include *nahw, adab*, *fiqh*, *ṣarf* (morphology), *iman* (faith), *tajwīd* (elocution), and *tafsīr* (exegesis). Unlike the first and second, there were multiple teachers who specialised in different texts at this stage. This often meant that students travelled from one town to another studying a text or part of it under a learned scholar. Upon completion, a student obtained an *ijaza* (authorisation) which certified that he had mastered the text. Notable towns with such scholars include Ilorin, Epe, Iwo and Iseyin.[1190]

The language of communication between the teacher and students was a barrier in the early classical *madrasas* because the teachers were mostly Hausa, Fulani and Tapa speaking people. As a result, the students had to learn the language of their teachers first (or the teachers learned Yoruba). This resulted in the appropriation of many Arabic and Hausa words into Yoruba as

---

[1186] Aliyu, *Transmission of learning in modern Ilorin*, 59–68; Olurode, *Glimpses of Madrasa from Africa*, 49–54.

[1187] Ware, *The walking Qur'an*, 8.

[1188] *ilimi* is a derivative of the Arabic word *ʿilm* which means knowledge.

[1189] See Oladiti, "The Growth and Development of Modern Arabic schools in Ibadan, 1945-2000": 26.

[1190] Ibid.

well as the writing of Yoruba in Arabic. The *Ajami* script, mentioned in Chapter Three, is one of the products of this appropriation. Such texts continued to be used until the second half of the twentieth century when the Arabic primer, *Qaidat Baghdadi*, was introduced to teach the standardised Arabic phonetics.[1191] The primer also led to the decline of the use of slate. Organising *wolimọ* (from the Arabic word *walīmah,* referring to banquet) following the memorisation of certain verses of the Qur'an were marked in these *madrasas*. The feast was frequently marked with chicken or a ram, and it was understood to encourage the enrolment of many children into the *madrasas*.[1192] However, the huge expenses involved in the feast also contributed to the dropping out of many students from the *madrasas*. This was the experience of Alhaji Ladejo, a member of Ansar-Ud-Deen Society (AUD), who was forced to drop out from his *madrasa* in the colonial period because of the huge cost of the *wolimọ*.[1193]

From the second half of the nineteenth century, the introduction of Western schools by Christian missionaries began to pose a challenge to this *madrasa* system. With many students enrolling in Western schools, attendance at the *madrasas* gradually began to decline. Some *madrasas* adjusted to this change by teaching students in the afternoon and at night after the students had attended the Western schools in the morning. On the other hand, some *madrasas* borrowed from the practices and teaching methods of Western schools while they continued to operate in the morning. This innovation began in the *madrasa* established in Lagos by Shaykh Al-Adaby in 1938. His innovations included the adoption of a curriculum for teaching, the use of benches and tables which signalled a departure from sitting on the mat, and the use of a blackboard that represents a break from the slate. Other Muslim scholars who borrowed from the Western school system, though in varying degrees, were Shaykh Al-Ilory, founder of Markaz in Lagos,[1194] and Shaykh Kharashi Muhammad Thanni (d. 1965) the proprietor of Kharashi Memorial Arabic Secondary School, Ibadan (est. 1945).[1195] However, the reforms of these *madrasas* did not lead to the collapse of the classical *madrasa* system; the two of them continued to co-exist in Yorubaland. Generally speaking, these reformed *madrasas* impacted on the development of MSSN Islamic education in one major respect. As discussed in Chapter Five, these *madrasas* produced students who got admitted into tertiary institutions and became

---

[1191] Aliyu, *Transmission of learning in modern Ilorin*, 62.
[1192] Alhaji Muritadha Awal, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1193] Alhaji Ladejo, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1194] I have mentioned this Markaz in Chapter Four. See also Aliyu, *Transmission of learning in modern Ilorin*, 133–37.
[1195] Oladiti, "The Growth and Development of Modern Arabic schools in Ibadan, 1945-2000": 26–30.

teachers, Imams and leaders in the MSSN. Many of these students later introduced different methods and epistemes of the reformed *madrasas* into the MSSN.

Apart from the *madrasas*, the transformation that led to the establishment of Muslim schools further impacted Islamic education in the MSSN. It should be noted that many of these Muslim schools, as discussed in Chapter Three, had been established through communal and associational efforts before Al-Adaby's innovation. Thus, the establishment of these schools formally introduced new pedagogies to Islamic education which included the use of chalkboards, a curriculum for religious instruction and a shift from learning under a learned scholar to a more direct, albeit selective, access to Islamic texts. They also ensured that the space for transmitting Islamic education was expanded beyond the *madrasa*. Reichmuth's study illustrates how one of the Muslim associations, the Ansar-Ud-Deen (AUD), promoted this new method.[1196] In 1931, the AUD established its first school in Lagos and by the late 1960s, it increased to over two hundred in various parts of Nigeria.[1197] The schools largely operated along the Western model with a curriculum that laid strong emphasis on 'secular' subjects such as English and Arithmetic. At inception, the curriculum included Islamic instruction taught in the English language with no Arabic content. But by the 1970s, which coincided with the 1976 UPE (discussed in Chapter Four) policy that made provisions for Arabic language in the school curriculum, the AUD began to emphasise the importance of Arabic language as an important aspect of Muslim identity. It established Arabic classes in many of these schools which were attended by both children and older people such as market women and professionals.[1198]

The involvement of women in the transmission of religious knowledge from the colonial period is another major feature of the changing Islamic education among Yoruba Muslims. The AUD, which emphasised the participation of Muslim women in public life, provided the platform for many women as part of this transformation. Among the women were Imam Ekemode's wife, Hulaymat M. Ekemode (later Mrs. Shodeinde, d. 1971). She taught at the first AUD school at Alakoro in Lagos (1932-1969) and organised Adult Education lessons for women in both English and Yoruba. There was also Aminat O. Gbajabiamila (1908-83) referred to as *Onikewu Adini* (teacher of the religion). A wife of a member of AUD's Mission Board, she organised

---

[1196] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims".
[1197] Ibid., 383.
[1198] Ibid., 387–91.

tafsīr and Arabic classes for women in the society.[1199] Over the years, other Muslim organisations including the MSSN have encouraged this AUD model among women.

The organisation of study circles also came into being as part of this changing Islamic education. An early form of these circles was the Augusto led Muslim Literary Society (mentioned in Chapter Three) in the 1910s. As discussed in Chapter Five, more of these circles were organised by the Muslim elite who studied away from Nigeria which they used to engage some members of the MSSN. Aside from these circles, one can add that the expansion of radio and television broadcast services from 1935[1200] also impacted on new forms of transmission of Islamic knowledge. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, Imam Ekemode of the AUD and Dawud Noibi promoted this form of education with the discourse of Islam on the radio from 1955.[1201] There were also clerics such as Imam Shodeinde of the Ahmadiyya who stimulated the discourse of Islam through newspapers.[1202] From 1954, the MSSN adopted many aspects of these forms of education, albeit with some modifications. The Society also facilitated the emergence of new ones among which is the IVC.

As seen in many Muslim societies in Africa, the transformation of Islamic education in Yorubaland since the colonial period led to a significant adjustment to the epistemology and process of transmission of Islamic knowledge. Some key aspects of this transformation are the processes in which Islam has been 'objectified' and 'functionalised.' Added to these is the shift in modes of knowledge transmission and authentication, particularly the esoteric and exoteric paradigms.

7.2.1 **'Objectification' and 'functionalisation' of Islam**

As Eickelman points out, the objectification of Islam refers to the process in which three kinds of questions became prominent in the consciousness of many believers in the modern era. These are: "What is my religion? Why is it important to my life? and, How do my beliefs guide my conduct?"[1203] These objective questions involved discourse about Islam that is shaped by a large number of people and the practice of all Muslims. Often, the discourse may be led by people considered to be experts, even though many Muslims may disagree with these experts. The discourse also acknowledges the traditions of both Muslims and non-Muslims. The major

---

[1199] Ibid., 379.

[1200] Akashoro, Okidu and Ajaga, "Ideological Implications of Broadcasting Practice in Nigeria": 47–53.

[1201] Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims": 378.

[1202] Y. P. O. Shodeinde, "A Muslim Sermon," *Daily Success*, July 11, 1953.

[1203] Eickelman, "Mass Higher Education and the Religious Imagination in Contemporary Arab Societies". 643

factors responsible for this objectification, as Eickelman argues, are the increase in access to mass (including higher) education and mass communication.[1204]

One of the measures of this objectification is how, for many Muslims, Islam has become a coherent system and a subject to be "explained" and "understood" in relation to other disciplines or systems. This found expression in school textbooks, newspapers and cassette-sermons in which Islam is presented as a set of beliefs and practices. Presentation of this kind of knowledge is common in the writings of reformist thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb who considers religious beliefs as "systems" that could be differentiated from one another.[1205] By presenting Islam this way, the mediation of a learned scholar in the transmission of knowledge is removed. The discussion of Islam in this way may also be considered a radical departure from the medieval tradition in which matters of the religion were debated based on different social conditions. Based on the medieval tradition, Islamic knowledge accommodates change because it is constantly being reinterpreted according to varying historical conditions. However, while this tradition has not been displaced among many Muslims, objectification seeks to promote Islamic knowledge as something that is fixed and unchanging.[1206]

By the end of the twentieth century in Yoruba Muslim society, objectification of Islam was apparent in the way Islamic knowledge was transmitted in Muslim schools such as those of the AUD and the government schools. These schools facilitated the teaching of 'Islam' in the discipline referred to as Islamic Religious Studies/Knowledge (IRS or IRK) as a subject to be studied in relation to others such as Biology and Mathematics. They promoted mass transmission of Islamic knowledge through a teacher who taught many subjects of the religion, rather than a specialist in one subject. The subjects taught by the teacher were spelt out in a newly designed curriculum. Another major development in these schools was the production of textbooks for the curriculum. Many of these textbooks were authored by western educated Arabic and Islamic scholars such as the University of London-trained Ismail Balogun who authored *Islamic Religious Studies for Schools and Colleges*,[1207] the British-born Aisha Lemu who produced *Islamic Knowledge for Senior Secondary Schools*,[1208] and Musa Abdul, a

---

[1204] Ibid., 644.

[1205] Ibid., 646–47.

[1206] Dale F. Eickelman, "The Art of Memory: Islamic Education and Its Social Reproduction," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no. 04 (1978): 490–6.

[1207] Ismail A. B. Balogun, *Islamic Religious Studies for Schools and Colleges* (Lagos: John West Publications, 1979).

[1208] Aisha B. Lemu, *Islamic Knowledge for Senior Secondary Schools* (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1989).

graduate of McGill University in Canada, who wrote on *The prophet of Islam*.[1209] These books formed the basis of Islamic knowledge for many Muslim students who did not attend the *madrasa*. It must be pointed out that cases of objectification were not only observed in the schools, they also found expression in the emergence of media-based sermons through the radio, television and audiocassettes generally in Nigeria. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the MSSN also made use of radio and television to broadcast its sermons. These various aspects of objectification are also closely related to the process of functionalisation in the transmission of Islamic education.

Starrett argues that functionalisation of religion is a "process of translation in which intellectual objects from one discourse come to serve the strategic or utilitarian ends of another discourse."[1210] This usually shifts the meaning of the context of the object of discourse and ensures that religious discourses become reified to fulfil a purpose. Starrett emphasises this point by using the policy of the British colonial government in Egypt which encouraged Muslim teachers to place "spiritual education and moral uplift" in the same context "as the habit of cleanliness and cooperation-enhancing village games"[1211] for students in elementary schools. Under this policy, Muslim scholars and study circles were also placed under government bureaucracies as part of the broader colonial policy to use religion to promote social planning rather than the embodiment of the Qur'an. Consequently, the policy ensured that the values, beliefs and institutions of Islam that have their own evaluative criteria were subsumed to the evaluative criteria of social and political ends.[1212]

There are many examples in the textbooks produced for Muslim students (generally in Nigeria) that show how Islam is functionalised. For instance, in Lemu's pedagogical text for primary schools, *Methodology of Primary Islamic Studies*,[1213] she encouraged teachers to teach the morals of Islam so that children can become "good Muslims" and "good citizens" in the society.

> The teacher should relate worship and the moral and social teachings of Islam
> to the pupils' daily lives, at home, at school, and as members of the
> community. The *good Muslim* is automatically a *good citizen*, and the

---

[1209] M. O. A. Abdul, *The Prophet of Islam: His Life, Sayings and Deeds* (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1971).
[1210] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 9.
[1211] Ibid., 73.
[1212] Ibid., 9.
[1213] Aisha B. Lemu, *Methodology of Primary Islamic Studies: A Handbook for Teachers* (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1980).

teacher's emphasis on Islamic moral conduct in everyday life can do much to
set the younger generation on the road to a better society.[1214]

Furthermore, Lemu encouraged the teachers to teach Islamic Studies by relating it to other subjects such as Health Education, Mathematics and Agricultural Science so that students can see Islam in every aspect of the knowledge of the world. This method was also expected to help children affirm their faith in Islam as she pointed out below.

Islamic Studies should not be taught as something unrelated to other knowledge. Seeing other subjects from the Islamic viewpoint helps the children to know their value and to integrate them into their overall understanding of the world. Also, in teaching Islamic Studies, references to things the children have learned in other subjects often act as excellent illustrations of the teachings of Islam, which helps to confirm the child's faith.[1215]

Bringing Islam into other contexts in the manner recommended by Lemu for children is also common in the writings of many Western educated Yoruba Muslims. A major example is Abdul's contribution to the journal of the MSSN, "The Role of Islam in the Development Plan of Nigeria"[1216] which stated why Islam can be used for social and political ends.

Islam does not make a difference between the religious and secular life of the individuals. One is to supplement the other, that is, the religious teachings and practices are purposely directed towards making every citizen a useful member of the community. In this wise, the behaviour of Musa, for example, in the mosque or at any religious gathering should not be different from his behaviour - thinking, dealings - at a marketplace or at a political gathering.[1217]

Given that members of MSSN usually go through the school system in which IRS/IRK is taught, the process of objectification and functionalisation of Islam also impacted on the type of Islamic education in the MSSN. In addition to the schools, the impact of this process also comes from senior members of the MSSN who became academics, such as Abdul and Balogun, and continued to be involved in the Society's programmes as guest lecturers or Imams. This impact is found in the testimonies of some of my respondents who argue that while the MSSN produces the same Islamic knowledge as in the *madrasa*, the MSSN is only different from the *madrasa* because the knowledge produced in the MSSN is in "student language." The "student language," used by them, is one of the ways in which I think they make sense of the notion of objectification and functionalisation of Islam. Adebisi Razak, who is one of the MSSN leaders

---

[1214] Ibid., 3–4. Emphasis mine
[1215] Ibid., 4.
[1216] Musa O. A. Abdul, "The Role of Islam in the Development Plan of Nigeria," *Al-Ilmu (Knowledge): Journal of the MSSN* 5, no. 2 (1975).
[1217] Ibid., 23.

in Lagos, considered "student language" to mean the use of expressions that students can comprehend as well as the discourse of issues that is closer to what a student can relate with, as he explains here;

> And, when I say 'student language', you will see that… your colleagues are the one delivering the lecture. You will appreciate it…because they understand what you are facing as a Muslim and, also as a student. They speak your language and use the explanation that you can comprehend.[1218]

Closely related to this "student language" is the assumption by Razak that people's "environment" also has an impact on how they comprehend and engage different issues. This notion of environment, which Razak assumes to be another key factor that differentiates the transmission of knowledge in the MSSN from the *madrasa*, reflects Lemu's advice for teachers to relate Islam with what a student can identify with.

> Your environment goes a long way in appreciating what you are doing. What I mean in that respect is that, for example, there are tenets of Islam that, as a student or let me say as a worker, there are different ways you view some issues. Or let me say, if you are a family man and you have someone that is not married, when there are issues, there are different ways they would view it because the environment a married man is operating is different from the environment a single person is operating… that's why I said the methodology used by the *madrasa* in teaching Islam is not the same methodology MSS use. Because the environment differs.[1219]

The method of transmission of knowledge in the MSSN also illustrates how functionalisation of Islam may be understood. Unlike the classical *madrasa*, transmission of knowledge usually begins with the memorisation of the Arabic alphabet and the Qur'an which often take many years for some students to complete before they are taught the meaning of the memorised texts. Meanwhile, even though memorisation of the Qur'an is also emphasised in the MSSN, the Society mostly facilitates learning through discourse, the use of English-Arabic transliterated texts and literature that discusses Islam in English. This method helped the students to move beyond the process of memorisation of the whole Qur'an for many years before the reform, although the method did not cease after the reform. As this method of transmission also facilitates the practical demonstration of lessons in Islamic texts, it allowed many of my respondents to contend that the MSSN teaches the "practicals" of Islam. They mostly used "practical" to mean that the MSSN guides students to live according to what the Qur'an and Hadith say while they assume the tuition in the *madrasa* to fall short of this. Yekin narrated his

---

[1218] Adebisi Razak (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1219] Ibid.

own experience suggesting that while he studied at a *madrasa* for some years, he could not practice what he had learnt properly before his association with the MSSN.

> After my secondary education, I also had the opportunity to learn at an Arabic institution for three years at Iwo before I had opportunity of pursuing higher degrees. So, you know, *from my experience, I am able to know that learning Arabic is a way and then practicalizing it and imbibing it is yet another tuition* that one learns through interaction with like minds – people of like orientations. So, not until one has the opportunity of such association, one may not really appreciate what we are talking about.[1220]

For many students, access to literature from organisations such as the WAMY played an important role in teaching what they regarded as the "practicals" of Islam. As narrated by one of my respondents, this literature helped them to differentiate the "real Islam" from their former religious experiences because they spelt out what Islam was all about and how they could imbibe every aspect of the religion.

> When we were at the *madrasa*, we were taught how to read the Qur'an by our *alfa*. So, *there is no practical experience as par how the religion is supposed to be practised*. What we all know was that Islam is based on knowing the Qur'an and how to do small things like *burning things* [charms]
>
> The *real Islam* that I'm talking about is, we never learn it in the *madrasa* that this is *practical salat*. All we knew was how to read Arabic, how to make intentions, what can nullify a *salat.* But the rudiment aspect of how to offer the *salat* itself, this is how Islam explains it, this is the right intention. As at then, we were all the same whether you are a Christian or either you are a Muslim, or you are something else. We don't see anything different in it. Later on, we realized that the Islam we learnt in Arabic is different from what we are now seeing. This is the *practical Islam*. We were now being introduced to new books. That was when WAMY came to Nigeria and brought some literature.[1221]

However, this position on "practicals" should not be taken at face value because it is part of the narratives used to claim the idea that the practice of one Muslim group is better than others. Rather, the idea that the MSSN teaches the "practicals" of Islam should be understood as the outcome of objectification and functionalisation, which Razak suggested in an interview, has helped the MSSN to fill an important void in Islamic education for many Muslim students who did not attend the *madrasa*. As he narrated,

> Most of the instruction of our *madrasa alfas* are actually tailored to learn Arabic, maybe learn how to read Qur'an. But, the etiquette value of it, appreciating the reason why you do those things, they don't fill those gaps. And, that is why some coordinators of those *madrasas* don't live what they

---

[1220] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun. Emphasis mine
[1221] Abiodun Raheem (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

> preach. MSS now came in, to encourage you to live according to what is preached. So, people see it in their character… that is the gap we fill.[1222]

On the other hand, teaching the "practicals" of Islam and encouraging students to live according to them may also be understood within the context of an embodiment of Islamic knowledge which is a key attribute of the epistemology of Islamic education in the *madrasa*. This is noted in the point made by Yekin above that his training in MSSN taught him how to practicalise and imbibe Islamic knowledge. As Ware rightly points out, "to embody Islamic knowledge is to actualize it, to make it concrete through deeds."[1223] Based on this, even if they are new methodological developments, objectification and functionalisation of Islam also foster the embodiment of Islamic knowledge for students in the MSSN like those trained in the *madrasas*.

7.2.2 **Epistemological variation in Islamic education**

The change in Islamic education in Yorubaland has also impacted on its epistemological character. Many studies of Muslims in Africa show that two main epistemes are connected to this change referred to as the esoteric and exoteric/rationalistic forms of knowledge.[1224] These epistemes are closely linked to the style of debates in the MSSN reforms noted in Chapter Five. For the purpose of this chapter, I wish to restate and widen the main arguments of these epistemes in studies of Islamic education. The esoteric paradigm assumes that the highest form of knowledge (religious) is known to a few specialists and that a student must learn from these specialists through an initiatic form. This personalised form of learning, according to Loimeier, is based on the theory that knowledge is neither gained in the text nor imparted by an institution nor through individual learning, because these forms of learning may cause misunderstandings due to interpretation.[1225] On the contrary, knowledge is considered to reside in a learned teacher, considered to have the spiritual blessing (*baraka*), and can only be transmitted through personal teaching together with the *baraka*. Therefore, only a learned person can provide explanations in cases of the misunderstanding of the texts. One of the methods of realising this knowledge is embedded in the structures of the *madrasas* and *majlis* (personalised tuition) schools where students first learn the Qur'an by rote before proceeding to the stage where meaning is taught (as described in the Yoruba *madrasas* above). This process, linked to Sufism,

---

[1222] Adebisi Razak (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1223] Ware, *The walking Qur'an*, 8.
[1224] Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*, 7–8; Ware, *The walking Qur'an*, 203–27.
[1225] Loimeier, *Between Social Skills and Marketable Skills*, 151.

ensures that knowledge is acquired through successive stages of learning which goes side by side with devotional practices.[1226]

Exotericism, associated with the Salafis and other scripturalists, presupposes that knowledge is available to everyone without the mediation of a specialist. In Brenner's word, it is a "rationalist" conception of knowledge which presumes that one can acquire religious knowledge through intellectual reflection and explanations of Islamic texts through principles that follow divine revelation. While esoterism assumes that the process of learning is linked to devotional practices, exoterism, in theory, seeks to separate the two processes.[1227] Although Brenner gives an impression that there has been a shift from the esoteric episteme to the rational form from the colonial period,[1228] he recognises that there is no clear-cut boundary between the esoteric and exoteric paradigms in practice as other scholars like Seesemann have argued.[1229] In many cases, the Sufis and Salafis draw on any of the paradigms depending on what is practicable in any social context.

Seesemann has drawn attention to other paradigms that are related to both epistemes namely, the *sanad* (chain of transmission), the *maqāṣid* (purposes, objectives) and the *dalīl* (evidence) paradigms.[1230] The first two are relevant here because the third is the same as the exoteric episteme. The *sanad* paradigm assumes that Islamic knowledge resides in a chain of recognised authorities that reached back to the Prophet Muhammad. It assumes that a student can acquire the knowledge through a personal relationship with a renowned authority who is connected to this chain.[1231] Loimeier argues that this recognition of a chain of authorities is peculiar to both the Sufis and Salafis even though they lay claim to different teachers with links to the Prophet.[1232] Thus, unlike the binary seen between esoteric and exoteric paradigms, the *sanad* integrates the two because it focuses on the modes of authenticating and transmitting knowledge which are required in both cases.[1233] The *maqāṣid*, as Seesemann contends, remains difficult to describe because it draws on a wide range of thoughts from Muslims of different western educational backgrounds. However, this paradigm tends to promote rationality with less emphasis on injunctions in Islamic texts in the determination of what is correct or good. It

---

[1226] Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*, 18–19.
[1227] Ibid., 7–8.
[1228] Ibid., 8.
[1229] Seesemann, "Epistemology or Ideology?": 257.
[1230] Ibid., 232.
[1231] Ibid., 236–38.
[1232] Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 53.
[1233] Seesemann, "Epistemology or Ideology?": 236–8.

assumes that what is good should be determined by the purpose or benefit it serves, instead of what the Qur'an or the Hadith may say about it. This way of thinking informs the "Islamization of knowledge" project of many reformist movements which suggests that all knowledge (both religious and scientific) which serve the common good are 'Islamic' from the root, therefore they can be learned. Rather than entering a personal relationship with a chain of transmitters to learn, it assumes that knowledge (which has been 'Islamised') is accessible to everyone because it is not handed down through the transmitters.[1234]

In a general sense, all the epistemes mentioned above have characterised the educational terrain of Yoruba Muslims since the colonial period. There are the *madrasas* which promote the esoteric episteme while the Muslim schools (and reform movements such as the Salafis and TMC) advocate the rational episteme. There is also the "Islamization of knowledge" project of the Islamic Education Trust in Niger State of which Oyekan is a representative in Lagos. Also, some tertiary institutions, such as Crescent University in Abeokuta (est. 2005), offer courses that are tailored toward this goal.[1235] But compared to the esoteric and rational epistemes, the promotion of the 'Islamised knowledge' has yielded little success in Nigeria.[1236] The effort to promote it has been hampered by many problems which include the lack of a model curriculum and expertise to teach this form of knowledge.[1237] Nonetheless, these epistemes have, in varying degrees, shaped the religious education of many Muslim students in Yorubaland. As I noted above, many students who became teachers in the MSSN also underwent the esoteric training as well as the rational one. Today, while the Society emphasises the latter, it has nevertheless continued to foster the esoteric paradigm in its educational activities.

There are still debates among many Muslims in Africa on which of these epistemes is correct regardless of their interconnections.[1238] Among the Yoruba Muslim scholars, the debate is connected to what is conceived as *afiwekewu* and *akewukewe*. As will be analysed below, these concepts are helpful in grasping the epistemological transformation of Islamic education in Yorubaland and the impact of this transformation on the epistemes that are embedded in the transmission of religious knowledge in the MSSN.

[1234] Ibid., 249–53.

[1235] Rafiu I. Adebayo, "The Challenges of Islamization of Knowledge in Nigerian Islamic Universities," *IIUM Journal of Educational Studies* 4, no. 1 (2016): 86–7.

[1236] AbdulGafar O. Fahm, "An Assessment of the Islamization of Knowledge Process in Nigeria," *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization* 4, no. 4 (2014): 121–3.

[1237] Adebayo, "The Challenges of Islamization of Knowledge in Nigerian Islamic Universities": 87–9.

[1238] Seesemann, "Epistemology or Ideology?": 253–8; Salomon, "Evidence, Secrets, Truth": 826–35.

7.2.3 *Afiwekewu* **and** *akewukewe*

The origin of *afiwekewu* and *akewukewe* among the Yoruba remains sketchy. But they appear to have been in use by the early twentieth century to describe the education of Muslims (and their identities) who either studied in Western schools and *madrasas* or both. Some Muslims who were trained in both Western and Islamic schools adopted one of these terms as their name. One of them is my respondent (and his father), Alhaji Bolaji Akewukewe.[1239] The two of them are notable 'religious comparatists' (who compare the doctrines and practices of Islam with other religions) in Lagos. I pointed out in Chapter Four that the first concept, *afiwekewu*, was derisively used by the *alfsa* who studied in *madrasas* to contest the knowledge and authority of MSSN members to speak about Islam. But beyond the challenge of the *alfas*, the concept describes the episteme and pedagogy of Islamic education given the impact of Western education.

Afiwekewu largely goes beyond its literal meaning: using *books* to study Arabic texts. It also includes learning about the Qur'an and other Islamic texts in a Western school, which comes with the pedagogy of this type of school. To put it clearly, among many Yoruba Muslims, the object called *iwe* (book), despite being made of the same material (paper) on which Arabic texts are written today is 'not always' used in the same sense as Islamic texts. Rather, it is called a *tira* when Arabic script is written on it, although it is also noteworthy that the word *tira* is used stereotypically by many Yoruba to mean an 'amulet.'[1240] Yet, there is one exception to this, which is that many clerics refer to the word 'book' (*iwe*) as the translation of the word *kitāb* which they consider the Qur'an to be. Beyond this exemption, most Yoruba Muslims do not refer to Islamic texts which have been translated into English or Yoruba, as well as Islamic literature written in English, as *tira* but as *iwe*. Importantly, there is the need to emphasise that not referring to Arabic texts written on paper as *iwe* by many Yoruba Muslims does not necessarily mean they are unaware of its paper material. Instead, they seek to make a distinction between the words *iwe* and *kewu* (Arabic), and by extension between Western education and Islam because they consider Arabic as both the symbol and language of Islam. This could further be linked to how most Yoruba, Muslims and non-Muslims, make sense of the word *iwe* and the concept of education. It is common among many of them to refer to *iwe* as 'book.' They also used *iwe* in the sense of 'education' in a Western school. For example, it may be said that *mo kawe* or *mo ka iwe* (I am educated). They also make a distinction between a Western

---

[1239] Bolaji Akewukewe, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1240] Oladimeji A.-G. Oloruntele, "Evil Forces and Shirk Among the Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria with Special Reference to Ilorin City," (MA Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2009), 54.

school and a *madrasa* when they refer to the former as *ile-iwe* (lit. 'book study house/centre'), while the latter is called *ile-kewu* (lit. 'Arabic study house/centre'). For the most part, the two are not used interchangeably.

To this extent, the criticism of the *afiwekewu* by the *alfas* is one of the ways of contesting the episteme and pedagogy of Islamic education in Western schools. The Western school, according to Launay, embodies a different epistemology and pedagogy that characterises the transmission of knowledge in the *madrasa*.[1241] For instance, while the *madrasa* facilitates a personalised form of learning, the Western school encourages mass education with certification based on exams. Oral testimonies are also accepted as valid in the *madrasa* while the Western schools consider written texts as authentic. As demonstrated above, Western schools also promote the rational episteme as well as the objectification and functionalisation of Islam. The concept of *afiwekewu,* therefore, did not only seek to challenge the Islamic education transmitted in Western schools but also the episteme and method of education. The idea of *akewukewe*, on the other hand, is considered to be better because it describes a dual educational experience, one in a Western school and the other in a *madrasa*.

Akewukewe represents the current emphasis on Islamic education in the MSSN. Apart from the criticism of the *alfas* which led to this dual education, it is also connected to the crisis in the Society. According to Yusuf Olayinka, the Chief Security Officer (CSO) at the MSSN IVC in 2016, the MSSN realised that its internal crisis in the 1990s was created by those who interpreted the Qur'an "wrongly" to suit their own purposes. This encouraged the Society to support the establishment of *madrasas* in many tertiary institutions to teach Arabic so that members could interpret the texts themselves.[1242] Also, they were established to challenge the *madrasas* outside the schools (the Sufi and the Salafi-minded ones in particular) where members learnt what was regarded as the opposite of the objectives of the Society. Thus, besides the promotion of Islamic education, these *madrasas* are aimed at promoting Islamic knowledge based on the understanding of Islam in the MSSN. However, despite the shift toward *akewukewe*, many members of the Society continued to rely on Islamic texts published in English for their knowledge. The Society also encouraged the use of these texts in many of its programmes. In recent time, this has been aided by access to the internet, cassette- and

---

[1241] Launay, *Islamic Education in Africa*, 1–26.
[1242] Yusuf Olayinka, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

YouTube-based sermons. Therefore, the two concepts are still relevant in understanding the range of Islamic educational experiences in the Society.

Because it gives additional knowledge, the emphasis on *akewukewe* is understood in the MSSN as a form of power which MSSN members have over the *alfas,* since most of the *alfas* only received education in a *madrasa*.[1243] This thinking appears to have created tension between the Muslim elite and these established scholars in the larger Yoruba Muslim society. The tension has mostly played out between the body representing the *alfas* called the League of Imams and Alfas (LIA) (see Chapter Three and Four) and the Muslim Ummah of South-West Nigeria (MUSWEN), founded in 2008 by Muslim professionals (lawyers, academics, doctors, etc.) most of who had been members of the MSSN.[1244] The LIA, which seldomly speak for Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria often opposed many practices of the Yoruba Muslim elite. In 1985, the League under the leadership of Shaykh al-Ilory resisted the appointment of a wealthy businessman, Chief Abdul-Wahab Iyanda Folawiyo (1928-2008), as the first Baba Adinni of Nigeria arguing that the position had been politicised rather than being based on merit.[1245] Although some members of LIA have been educated in western schools today, the founders of MUSWEN appear to see them as not having the modern education and competence to express the common interests of Yoruba Muslims based on new developments (such as the rise of Pentecostal churches headed by Western educated men, democratic governance since 1999 and globalization) some of which characterised their encounter with Christians.[1246] In the remaining sections, I will show how the broader change in Islamic education among Yoruba Muslims has shaped the MSSN educational activities. I will also highlight the new forms of education (including subjects) in the MSSN which I take to be part of this broader change.

7.3 Transmission of Knowledge

Since 1954, Islamic knowledge has been transmitted in the MSSN through a range of platforms. Based on the examples I will give in this section, I consider these platforms and the style of learning embedded in them as aspect of "addition" which Eller refers to as a form of religious change.[1247] The development of these platforms appear to be shaped by two key processes: the revival of Islamic education in the past and borrowing from the contemporary schooling

---

[1243] Ibid.

[1244] The establishment of MUSWEN, headed by Dawud Noibi, was facilitated by some ex-MSS members who formed The Companion in 1984 in Lagos as an umbrella body for Muslim businessmen and professionals.

[1245] *"Rebuff for Baba Adinni of Nigeria: Imam League Takes Stand," National Concord,* June 19, 1985, 1 & 3.

[1246] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 142.

[1247] Eller, Introducing Anthropology of Religion, 151.

system. In addition, some aspects of these platforms also show the impact of the encounter between Christians and Muslims. These platforms do not only shed light on the contribution of MSSN to Islamic education, they are also crucial to understanding the process in which the reform in the Society was inspired and promoted. They showed the styles and techniques employed by the MSSN to discuss Islam in relation to the contemporary world as well as how the Society teach students and fashioned religious piety among them. This is why I take them to be part of my understanding of religious change among Yoruba Muslims and the contribution of MSSN to this change.

Some of these platforms have been mentioned in previous chapters, which include the IVC, seminars, picnics, public lectures and conferences. Though some of them have been sustained, and little is known about how they were organised and what has changed, the Society engaged in a few educational activities up to the 1970s.[1248] Many educational programmes were introduced during the era of reforms in order to replace activities such as singing,[1249] and some of them have been replicated in many platforms. For instance, the IVC features Qur'an memorisation, public lectures and seminars which are also included in other programmes such as the Rural Dawah and Jihad Week. Therefore, the educational programmes discussed below are based on the availability of data and on the need to avoid repetition while showing their diversity. In addition, because it is difficult to describe how they were organised in the past, the focus is mostly on how they have been organised in contemporary times since participant-observation allowed me to describe them better. However, I draw attention to the historical development of some of them up to the period under study.

7.3.1 Islamic Vacation Course (IVC): a camping educational programme

The IVC is the most elaborate educational programme of the MSSN. In contrast to the *madrasa* discussed later, the IVC is a combination of 'Islamic' and 'less-Islamic' educational activities organised at a camp, all of which are employed to provide guidance on what it means to be a Muslim in Nigeria. The content of the camping programme, on the one hand, emphasises the transmission of Islamic knowledge, and on the other hand, it aims to facilitate an understanding of Islam that takes other modern realities in Nigeria and the world into consideration such as Muslim-Christian encounters, political instability, economic crises, science and information technology and the way to deal with these realities as Muslims. This is illustrated by the variety of activities in the camp which include sermons, studies of Islamic texts, Qur'an memorisation,

---

[1248] Jibril Oyekan, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1249] MSSN UNILAG, "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria".

devotional practices, comparative religious discourse, marriage counselling/match-making, vocational training, politics and economic matters.

As noted in Chapter Four, the IVC was first organised by the MSSN in 1965. It may have been borrowed from the SCM and the SU who used it to engage Christian students. It is also possible that the idea came from the transnational Islamic movements such as the IIFSO,[1250] in which the MSSN was associated by 1966. The IVC is held twice a year during school breaks which coincide with two Christian festivals, the first in April during Easter and the second in December during Christmas. Using these festive periods is not mere coincidence, part of the reasons for organising the IVC in these periods is to ensure that Muslim students do not participate in them.[1251] Up to the 1980s, the IVC in December was organised for five days, but it is now organised for ten days while the one of April last four days. From 1965, the IVC was held at various locations, especially in schools across the Southwest and Middle-belt regions. But since 2003, it has been held at Imolisa village, Ogunmakin Ogun State, along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway. From the late 1980s, this Expressway regarded as "spiritual highway" by Janson and Akinyele, has become the location of a growing number of big Pentecostal churches and other religious organisations in Nigeria such as The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), the Mountain of Fire and Miracles, Deeper Life and NASFAT.[1252] The MSSN camp on this road is about 35 acres of land and it is owned by the MSSN B-Zone. Located beside the camp is one of the many schools owned by WAMY in Nigeria, the WAMY International Secondary School. The camp, which is still under construction, has a mosque, an event hall, hostels, a clinic, a kitchen and markets. It is useful to note that in 2016, apart from the camp in Ogunmakin, the B-Zone also organised the IVC in Auchi Polytechnic, Edo State and in Al-Usrah Complex located at Rumuekpirikom, Port Harcourt for the South-South and South-Eastern states. The organization of IVC at these different locations was probably due to the long distance between members within the two regions.[1253] The MSSN Lagos State Area Unit led by Ashafa also has a 10 acres of land located at Epe, Lagos where its IVC was held.[1254] But the focus of this chapter is on the B-Zone IVC at Ogunmakin. This IVC was chosen not only

---

[1250] The camping programme is one of the ways in which IIFSO promote Islamic education and other forms of Muslims sociality. See Altalib, *Training Guide for Islamic Workers*, 279–319.

[1251] Balogun, *Field Notes*.

[1252] Marloes Janson and Akintunde Akinleye, "The Spiritual Highway: Religious World Making in Megacity Lagos (Nigeria)," *Material Religion* 11, no. 4 (2015): 550.

[1253] Segun Adebowale, "Sultan, Babalola, Others for MSSN Vacation Course," *The Eagle Online*, December 20, 2016, https://theeagleonline.com.ng/sultan-babalola-others-for-mssn-vacation-course/ (accessed March 24, 2018).

[1254] Sulaiman Abdulkabir, "MSSN Lagos Human Capital Development Centre (HCDC),", http://www.mssnlagos.net/~mssnlago/index.php/2017-12-27-07-00-30 (accessed March 23, 2018).

by virtue of being the oldest but because it also has members from all Southwestern states, including a faction of the MSSN Lagos Area Unit.

Generally, apart from discouraging Muslims from participating in the Christian festivals, the IVC is considered a "training" in spirituality for the participants who are called "delegates." Idris Awal, the MSSN leader at the Federal College of Education, Akoka Lagos, explained to me that spirituality means having Allah at the centre of every human activity. He contends that "anything that we are going to be doing at all, be it mundane activity, personal activity, it must not go outside the realm of the main purpose for which we are created on earth which is for us to come and worship Allah."[1255] Islam, according to him, touches on every aspect of life and there are things expected of a spiritual person which the MSSN enjoins such as the regular recitation of the Qur'an, fasting during Ramadan, performing the *ṣalāt*, attending gatherings of "righteous people," listening to the exegesis of the Qur'an and doing things that have proofs in the Qur'an. He considers the IVC as one of the platforms in the MSSN used to achieve this spirituality.[1256] This notion of spirituality and the practices that are expected of students to achieve it call attention to the esoteric paradigm which shows that the acquisition of Islamic knowledge is supposed to go side-by-side with devotional practices.

The organisation of this camp and the identities of the delegates that participated in it draws attention to the extent of the impact of modern social changes on MSSN educational activity. This was apparent in the registration of the delegates on the internet and at the campsite. Among these delegates were students, artisans, traders, academics and professionals. Upon registration, they were issued name tags with lanyards which they wore throughout the programme. At the back of the tag was a meal table that was presented for attestation before meals were served. Overall, more than 6,500 delegates attended the camp (compared to more than three thousand recorded in the Ashafa led MSSN Lagos camp). This number only represents the delegates in Southwest Nigeria.[1257] The number was said to be the highest in 1994 (before The Jama'at and other groups left) at the IVC held at the Federal Government Girl's College, Oyo with a figure of more than ten thousand delegates.[1258] Another major aspect of the camp's organisation was the departments and officers charged with different responsibilities. They included the Imam (who is the *amir* of the MSSN B-Zone) who led the daily prayers, the Directorate of

---

[1255] Idris Awal, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, March 7, 2017, Fed. College of Education (FCE), Akoka Lagos.

[1256] Ibid.

[1257] Balogun, *Field Notes*.

[1258] Abiodun Raheem (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

Programmes (DOP) in charge of camp activities, the Muslim Students' Security Organisation (MSSO) responsible for security and mobilization of delegates for camp activities, the Directorate of Studies (DOS) in charge of educational programmes, the Director of Press and ICT who oversees information and communication, and the Clinic which handles cases of ill-health. There was also a Sharia Court which adjudicated on misconducts in the camp, even though its jurisdiction was limited to the camp. There was also an advisory body called the Think Tank largely made up of elderly members, most of who are academics and professionals.

Part of the training at the camp which reveals the way Islamic knowledge is embodied is the one that focused on the daily rituals of many Muslims. An example is the *tahjjud*, the prayer at midnight. For the ten days, delegates were woken up at 4:00 am to perform this prayer in congregation. This was on the open ground used for the mosque, with planks and bamboo separating the male from the female section. The student Imams from tertiary institutions led this prayer, but there were at least two instances in which pupils from secondary schools were called upon to lead the prayer. The Imams later announced that the pupils were selected because they had memorised a large part of the Qur'an and that there was a need to develop their ability to lead the prayer. He therefore encouraged other pupils to emulate their example. Giving students this kind of responsibility is one of the methods of teaching in the MSSN. Ware refers to this kind of practical training as a process in which Islamic knowledge becomes an embodied knowledge. This is based on the theory that Islamic knowledge is transmitted through bodily practices the same way as through mere words.[1259]

The *tahjjud* was followed by the memorisation of some verses of the Qur'an, referred to as the 'Memory Verse' which is also used in many Christian students' programmes. At least three memory verses are chosen each year that reflect the theme of the IVC for that year. The Imam led the recitation of these verses while delegates repeated them after him. In the end, a few delegates were called on to recite the verses to examine how well they had memorised them. This session continued in the evening before *ṣalāt maghrib* (prayer after sunset), although many delegates extended their memorisation beyond these three verses in private. However short the verses are, this emphasis on Qur'an memorisation shows one of the ways in which the MSSN has continued with the esoteric episteme of the *madrasa* which stresses the embodiment of the Qur'an.

[1259] Ware, *The walking Qur'an*, 49–50.

The Memory Verse session was followed with the division of delegates into different classes by the DOP. Until 1985, according to a study by Salami, there were four classes for the IVC.[1260] The organisation of these classes reflected the pedagogy of modern schooling and the concern for the systematic transmission of knowledge in the esoteric paradigm referred to by Brenner.[1261] All the lessons taught in these classes, put together in a curriculum,[1262] also showed the example of the objectification of Islam. For instance, there was a Class One recommended for new delegates or those who were presumed "knew next to nothing about Islam."[1263] Topics for this class were on the "meaning of Islam, pillars of Islam, importance of prayers, life of the prophet and revelation of al-Qur'an."[1264] There was a Class Two for those who were assumed to have little knowledge of Islam. They were taken through such topics as ablution and engaged in the memorisation of short Qur'anic verses. Class Three was considered more advanced. Delegates in this class were taken through topics on the "comparison between Islam and other religions, importance of Islam as a social order, detailed study of the pillars of Islam, the four-orthodox caliph-life and practices."[1265] The fourth class, which was said to be made up of students in tertiary institutions was meant for discussion on various topics. However, Salami gave no information on these topics.[1266]

The 2016 IVC which I attended shows that while some changes have been made to the curriculum, the gradual embodiment of knowledge through the division of delegates into classes was sustained and widened to reflect changes in the Society from the late 1980s. Thus, rather than classes one to four, there was a Lower Class (for delegates between Pry. 6 and JSS 1), a Middle Class (for JSS 2 - SSS1), an Upper Class (for SSS2 – SSS3)[1267] for secondary school pupils, and Advance One (for first time delegates), Advance Two (frequent delegates) and Advance Three classes (regular delegates) mostly for students in tertiary institutions and professionals. The curriculum also included new platforms specifically tailored to meet the concerns of married men and women called Abau (Arabic *ab,* referring to father) and Ummahat (Arabic *ummahāt*, referring to mother) Forum, and another one for singles called Marital Counselling for Singles (MCS). In addition to the curriculum of these delegates, children below

---

[1260] Salami, *Modes of Da'wah in some Selected Towns in Yorubaland*, 76.
[1261] Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*, 18–19.
[1262] See appendix.
[1263] Salami, *Modes of Da'wah in some Selected Towns in Yorubaland*, 76.
[1264] Ibid.
[1265] Ibid.
[1266] Ibid., 77.
[1267] The abbreviations in full are Pry (Primary school, btw age 11-12), JSS (Junior Secondary School, age 12-15), SSS (Senior Secondary School, age 15-18).

age ten also had a separate programme in another location called Kiddies Camp (at the WAMY school).

As in the former classes, new delegates were requested to join the Lower Class, but the subjects taught in this class and the other two for secondary school pupils were on the same issues, albeit at varying levels. The subjects include the Qur'an, the Hadith, Arabic language, *adab*, *fiqh*, *tajwīd*, *sīra* (biography/history), *tawḥīd* (oneness of God), current affairs, English language, Mathematics and ICT.[1268] What the pupils are expected to know on these subjects is in the MSSN curriculum included in the appendix of this thesis. For instance, their lesson on *adab* includes proper bodily disposition and prayers to be said before undertaking different acts such as waking up, eating, using the restroom, and going out of the house. Lessons on *sīra* focus on the biography of many prophets including Prophet Muhammad and his caliphs. Pupils preparing for terminal exams in their schools also received some coaching in Mathematics and English grammar.

Like in others, the pedagogy of modern schooling is largely embedded in the transmission of knowledge in the classes for secondary school pupils. This found expression in the arrangement of the class, the mode of knowledge transmission between the teachers and pupils, and their behaviours as Launay suggests.[1269] The teachers for these pupils were male students in tertiary institutions. Nearly all the teachers in the female classes were also males. During the classes, the teachers wrote on blackboards as well as whiteboards while pupils copied the lessons in exercise books (see figure 7 below). Many of the teachers held canes which they used to discipline the pupils only on a few occasions. This was despite the level of noise through conversations and whispers from many pupils who were often not concentrating. This shows that the use of the cane to discipline the body to embody Islamic knowledge is less important in comparison to the classical *madrasas* which Ware talked about.[1270]

Besides, many of the pupils in this class sat on plastic chairs and benches while they placed their exercise books on their laps to copy the notes. Those who could not find chairs sat on mats. The flexibility in the sitting position of the pupils is common in other MSSN educational platforms, to be discussed below. It should be noted that this flexibility goes against the ethical views of some medieval scholars who considered a particular sitting position as proper conduct

---

[1268] Directorate of Studies, "Syllabus for Islamic Vacation Course for Upper, Middle and Lower Categories," (MSSN B-Zone, 2015).
[1269] Launay, *Islamic Education in Africa*, 1–26.
[1270] Ware, *The walking Qur'an*, 8.

for the transmission of knowledge. Seesemann refers to one of these scholars, a Shafi jurist Ibn Jamāʿa (d. 733/1333), who instructed students of Islamic sciences to sit as children would do before their Qur'anic teacher.[1271] Like the mode of transmission, the process of certifying the pupils' knowledge also followed the modern school pedagogy. This was done on the seventh day of the IVC where the pupils had exams under strict supervision. The exam was based on multiple-choice questions on all the subjects they learnt in their classes.

Fig. 7. MSSN IVC for Lower, Middle and Upper Classes, picture by Yemi Balogun. 2016.

Even though I could not attend all the three Advance classes because they were held simultaneously, their curriculum reflects the MSSN engagement with everyday religious and non-religious issues in Yoruba society and among Muslims in the world. The religious aspect of this curriculum treated topics that emphasised the Society's focus on the *sunna* such as the "Hadith 19 of An-Nawawi" and "Ahlus-Sunnah: Are we?" A part of the syllabus is devoted to addressing Muslims religious life in relation to contemporary issues in politics, economy, security and education in Nigeria. Topics which focused on these include "Insurgency, Recession and Corruption in Nigeria: A Challenge on our Faith," and "My Academics, My Faith." The MSSN's identification with the challenges of Muslims in other parts of the world is also emphasised in a topic, "Global Ostracizing and Enmity against Islam: the case of Yemen and Syria." In addition, the Society's aim to help Muslim students develop their intellectual abilities is reflected in the topic, "Life Skill: Critical Thinking and Decision Making; Reading and Writing Skill; Negotiation/Refusal Skill." Furthermore, an aspect of the curriculum

---

[1271] Rüdiger Seesemann, "Ilm and Adab Revisited: Knowledge Transmission and Character Formation in Islamic Africa," in *The Piety of Learning: Islamic Studies in Honor of Stefan Reichmuth*, eds. Michael Kemper and Ralf Elger, 15–37 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017), 24–25.

indicates the MSSN attempt to support members to deal with various socio-economic challenges in Nigeria such as unemployment and poverty. This is similar to the concerns of the new Muslim organisations referred to in Chapter Five: NASFAT, TMC and Dawah Front. For this socio-economic support, the IVC had a seminar on "Nigerian Economy and the Fate of Average Income Earners." In practical terms, vocational training in trades such as eCommerce, shoemaking, bag making, soap making, and mentholated spirit production were also organised at the camp.[1272]

Fig. 8. MSSN IVC Advance 2 Class, picture by Yemi Balogun. 2016.

I attended Advance Three class where the topic, "the Conditions of lā ʾilāha ʾillā llāh" (there is no god but God), was discussed. The organisation of this class, which is similar to figure 8 above, is like those of the secondary school pupils. But, unlike the pupils, the transmission of knowledge in this class reflected the discursive peer learning method in the contemporary post-secondary school system. The MSSN adopted this method because it assumes that the delegates in this class, numbering more than forty, had the basic knowledge about Islam, even though they were also considered as first-time delegates. The discussion in this class was led by a brother, who I will refer to as Idris.[1273] Brother Idris became a member of the MSSN in secondary school and later the *amir* of the MSSN Ogun State Area Unit. He studied at a local *madrasa* for six years and he is a member of a study circle called Qur'anic Study Group in Ogun state. Before going into the topic, he said he was aware that we were "practising"

[1272] Directorate of Studies, "MSSN B-Zone 102 Islamic Vacation Course," (MSSN B-Zone, 2016-2017).

[1273] Balogun, *Field Notes* (This respondent wished to remain anonymous).

Muslims with knowledge of Islam. As a result, he noted that he was not in the class to "teach" but to exchange with us what we already knew. Although he still gave the major points on this topic, he allowed delegates to give input through different questions.[1274]

Apart from this discursive method, the way objectification and functionalisation of Islam are achieved is also demonstrated in this class. For instance, while Brother Idris discussed the topic by quoting verses of the Qur'an and the Hadith to support his points, he went beyond the reference to these texts by using concepts in the technological world to frame his points. "Submission to Allah" was one of the conditions he mentioned on this topic. But he also framed this by saying "submission means using Allah's *telescope* to view things." He further explained that this means subjecting any undertaking to Islamic perspective. He mentioned another condition which was "love for Allah and the Prophet." One of the framings he used for this was the allusion to a "software" (by which he meant people's brain and mind) which he argued had been "infected" by a "virus" (bad things). He therefore said that love for Allah and the Prophet was necessary to help in "formatting the brain and mind" from this "virus" that infects them.[1275]

The importance of the concept of *tawḥīd* in Advance One class was another fascinating topic I followed in the camp. The discussion, led by a leader in the Society called Yunus Anola, was used to explore the importance of the belief in the oneness of Allah and why Muslims must rely on Him alone in everyday life. Situating it within the Yoruba society, he explained that the Yoruba had cultural practices and beliefs before they accepted Islam and that many *alfas* had integrated a handful of these practices and beliefs into Islam. Therefore, he encouraged delegates to be wary of these practices. Among them is the *Òrìṣà* called *ori,* which is discussed in Chapter Five. He also mentioned the practice of *tira ọdun* or *gbigbọhun tira,* mentioned in Chapter Three. Another example he gave was the practice of making *akara oku* (bean cake used to commemorate the dead) and the prayer which is made to the dead translated as; "do not sleep in heaven, please look back to your children." These practices are used to seek for protection, blessing and well-being by many Yoruba. But, according to Anola, they invalidate the concept of *tawḥīd* which he believed to be the basis of being a good Muslim. Rather than engaging in them, he argued that Muslims must always look for Allah's protection alone.[1276] This concept of *tawḥīd,* which aims to discourage Muslims from association with local cultural

---

[1274] Ibid..
[1275] Ibid.
[1276] Ibid.

practices, is common in the debates of Salafis and other reform movements in Africa.[1277] The importance of *tawḥīd* in their debates, as Abdoulaye Sounaye contends, is to promote exclusive reliance on the Qur'an and the Hadith.[1278]

After the morning classes, there was a break at 10:30 to allow delegates to take their breakfast. Afterwards, another round of classes was held between 11:30 am and 1:30 pm. There was a long break afterwards, for at least three hours. The break was a period of rest, but it was also full of different social activities which were used to promote interaction among the delegates. Some of the lessons which the MSSN seeks to inculcate in the delegates are also embedded in these activities. Within this period, for instance, after performing the two afternoon prayers, many delegates took a nap while others used the period to play football. In the past, a football tournament and other sports such as taekwondo and table tennis were formally organised by the MSSN during this period. Loimeier's study illustrates that such leisure activities are peculiar to many reform movements such as the major *madrasas* in Kenya and the Yan Izala in Nigeria. The case of Yan Izala suggests that many young Muslims participated in football matches to avoid going for the *dhikr* of the Sufi brotherhoods.[1279] However, while these reform movements have organised football teams and competitive matches, the MSSN has given less attention to this aspect in recent times. In the mid-1990s, the football tournament became a concern in the IVC camp following a keenly contested match that failed to produce a winner beyond the time due to perform the prayer after sunset. According to Abdul-Ganiy Raji, the Society decided to stop organising a football tournament because matches like this could happen again and would be a distraction from attaining the objective of spiritual development on which the camp was established.[1280] Stopping this tournament is one of the ways in which the MSSN has reformed its own practices. Besides, stopping it also underscores the strict emphasis on religiosity in the Society.

Apart from the leisure activities, the break also gives an opportunity to see other approaches to inculcating discipline in students which are nevertheless like those of the *madrasas*. These approaches, which focused less on intellectual discourse, include the enforcement of varying types of behaviours and ethics. And, unlike the classes, those responsible for this enforcement might be MSSN officers or even vendors in the camp. One major setting that points attention

---

[1277] Roman Loimeier, "Patterns and Peculiarities of Islamic Reform in Africa," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, no. 3 (2003): 254.

[1278] Abdoulaye Sounaye, "Salafi Revolution in West Africa," *ZMO Working Papers* 19 (2017): 1–2.

[1279] Loimeier, "Patterns and Peculiarities of Islamic Reform in Africa": 257–8.

[1280] Abgul-Ganiy Raji, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

to this kind of discipline is the makeshift boundary that separates the male from the female delegates. Typically, both male and female delegates meet over this boundary, including parents who meet their sons or daughters. During these meetings, the MSSO, in charge of security in the camp, patrolled the boundary to ensure that a minimum of two feet separated the male and female on either side. As I learned from the members of the MSSO, this is to prevent the intermingling of unmarried males and females.[1281] It is worth noting that the emphasis on the separation between men and women in the MSSN differs from the objective of many reform movements such as *Ansar Dine du Nord* studied by Dorothea E. Schulz and Souleymane Diallo in present-day Mali. This movement, as Schulz and Diallo argue, gives support to patriarchal authority by constructing a good Muslim identity of a man that is based on regulating women in public and domestic life which includes segregating them from unrelated men.[1282] To the contrary, the MSSN insistence on separation between men and women is based on its ideal of reform which at the same time does not disregard gender equity in pulic life.

Besides segregating men and women at the camp, the MSSO made several other noticeable efforts to enforce compliance with camp regulations which included disciplining delegates caught gambling, those caught talking to the opposite sex in restricted hours and areas, and those who left the camp without permission. Such discplines, which were usually based on the verdict of the Sharia court in the camp, may also be likened to the method of the classical *madrasas* where physical punishment is considered a part of training the body to receive the words of God. In some cases in the camp, the enforcement of ethics took the form of a polite or even a discourteous correction. The encounter I had with a vendor in which I was corrected on the 'proper conduct' of eating on a plate illustrates this point. This happened at a canteen when I was eating pasta from the opposite side of the plate which I held in one hand. Once the vendor saw this, he collected the food and turned the side of the plate I was eating to face me. When I asked him why he did that, he told me it was *sunna* to be eating from the side of the plate that faces me.[1283]

[1281] Balogun, *Field Notes*.

[1282] Dorothea E. Schulz and Souleymane Diallo, "Competing Assertions of Muslim Masculinity in Contemporary Mali," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 46, 2-3 (2016): 234.

Another distinguishing aspect of the IVC focused on comparative religious debates.[1284] This kind of debate has become a feature of Christian-Muslim relations in Africa. David Westerlund's study refers to one of the prominent Muslim figures in the 1980s, Ahmed Deedat in South Africa, who inspired this form of debates among Muslims who lived with Christians in many parts of Africa.[1285] Deedat's interest focused on providing theological tools for Muslims to defend their faith against the missionary activities of Christians. His audience was the lay Muslims rather than the learned Muslim clerics. As part of his discourse, he employed satirical images and remarks in pamphlets which were shared with his audience.[1286] Comparative religious debate, as Jon Abbink points out, expresses contests about religious 'truths' and power claims, and it could result in sharpening boundaries between faith communities which in turn affect relations between the citizens and the power of the state.[1287] In his study of this phenomenon in Ethiopia, Abbink shows that the theological arguments of figures like Deedat and Zakir Naik, another Indian Muslim preacher, have contributed to the growing hegemonic strategies and claims to power by Muslims in their relation with Christians in Africa.[1288]

A number of Yoruba Muslims have also promoted this comparative discourse since the colonial period. Among them is Alhaji Akewukewe, who I mentioned earlier. Akewukewe wrote some articles whose titles include "True Light" and "Take a Decision: Christianity or Islam" in 1966 as part of this discourse. These articles were published in *Quarterly*, a magazine of the Islamic Youth League of Nigeria.[1289] Since 1954, the MSSN has also produced many students who have taken to this form of polemics, among whom are Dawood Ayodele Amoo and Ishaq Kunle Sanni. In 1987, the two of them published a text, *Why you Should Never be a Christian*,[1290] in the light of their encounter with Christians in Yorubaland.

[1284] The comparative religious lecture is part of the open-air lectures called *taʿlīm* (education) which usually began by 7:00pm after the delegates performed the prayers: *ṣalāt maghrib* (prayer at sunset) and *ṣalāt ʿishā* (night-time prayer). The other topics discussed in this period range from religious to non-religious matters. See appendix on this.

[1285] Westerlund, "Ahmed Deedat's Theology of Religion".

[1286] Ibid., 263–64.

[1287] Abbink, "Religion in Public Spaces": 253–4.

[1288] Ibid., 264–65.

[1289] The magazine and the organization are mentioned briefly in a study by Mujahid Shitu citing Patrick Ryan with little information about the articles by Akewukewe. See Ryan, *Imale*, 240; Mujahid H. Shitu, "A Review of the Activities of Christian Missionary, Clergy 'Experts' And Writers on Islam in Nigeria," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture* 2, no. 3 (2014): 45.

[1290] Ishaq K. Sanni and Dawood A. Amoo, *Why you Should Never Be a Christian* (Ibadan: Iman Publications, 1987).

At the IVC in 2016, the comparative debate was led by another former member of the MSSN, Mallam Yusuf Adepoju who has become a well-known figure in Nigeria. In previous IVCs, the MSSN had invited other comparatists such as Amoo, who by coincidence inspired Adepoju during his lecture at the IVC in 1992. Although Adepoju was first exposed to Deedat's texts as a delegate in the IVC of 1991, his interaction with Amoo further shaped his own career as a comparatist which began in 1994.[1291] At the IVC, he discussed the topic "Defending our Faith Comparatively." Adepoju began his argumentation with the display of some publications authored by Christians, including former Muslims, which they used to contest the beliefs and practices of Muslims.[1292] He raised a point in one of these publications, *How we found Jesus: Twenty ex-Muslims Testify,[1293]* which questioned the verse of the Qur'an: "Guide us to the straight path" (Q. 1:6).[1294] The author of the text had argued that this verse shows that Muslims are "sinners" who follow the wrong faith and had been praying to God to lead them away from their wrong faith. In reaction, like Deedat in South Africa,[1295] Adepoju encouraged the IVC delegates to challenge this position by referring Christians to similar Biblical prayers such as: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6: v. 12-13), and "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Roman 3: 23).[1296] For him, these verses proved that Christians were the ones on the wrong path. Apart from drawing a boundary between Islam and Christianity, this debate is also employed by the MSSN to encourage Muslim students to cherish their own religion, a point which Adepoju also emphasised in his debate. Abbink's study referred to a similar case in Ethiopia in which Muslim polemics initially focused on admonishing Muslims to take care of their faith and to participate in *da'wa* activities rather than contesting the traditions of non-

---

[1291] In 1995, Adepoju founded the Academy of Islamic Propagation (ACADIP) for *da'wa* and engagement with Christians. He also established ACADIP Institute of Comparative Religious Studies (AICOS) in 2016 which run courses such as Science of World Religions, Dawah Methodology, Comparative Religion and Information Technology. See ACADIP Online Institute, "Our History,", http://aicos.com.ng/about-us/our-history/.

[1292] One of these is Abdiyah A. Abdul-Haqq, *Sharing Your Faith with a Muslim* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1980). He mentioned other texts with no publication details such as Rev. Tunde Olufowobi, *The Gate of Hell is Close*; and Oluwasegunfunmi Onasanya, *Jesus Christ through the Qur'an, God, Mankind, Disobedience and Spiritual death*.

[1293] No information is given about the author of this text.

[1294] *The Holy Qurʾān: English Translation by 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali*, 3rd ed. (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1937).

[1295] Westerlund, "Ahmed Deedat's Theology of Religion": 271.

[1296] *The King James Version of the Holy Bible* (2004).

Muslims.[1297] Thus, beyond contesting the Christian faith, the comparative religious discourse is also a key aspect of Islamic knowledge in the MSSN.

Another interesting aspect of the IVC is the Marital Counselling for Singles (MCS).[1298] This was introduced in 2012 to address the problem of those searching for spouses. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the need to ensure that Muslims marry among themselves is one of the goals of the MSSN. For some time, however, the MSSN made it difficult for this to happen, at least during the IVC, because the male and female delegates were camped in different locations.[1299] Although the use of separate camps was often caused by the lack of space to accommodate all the delegates (this was before moving to the present location), it was also done to prevent intermingling between them. Thus, there was no point of contact between them. In addition to helping members find partners, the MCS was also introduced because of the uncoordinated method in which some members courted in schools, where a lady often attracted the interest of several men which led to stiff competition between them over her. Because of this, the MSSN campaigned against pre-marital relationships among members, especially during the period of the reforms. However, discouraging such relationships not only made it difficult for some members to find spouses, it also led to a situation in which they married Christians. As Olaiya narrated,

> we started campaigning against brothers-sisters relationship. And, we were emotional about it. So, when we started campaigning, then it became an offence for a brother to even talk to a sister. And those who got to marriageable age during that period, they had problems getting suitors, especially when they passed out of their various institutions of higher learning. In fact, it got to a point that we were hearing that some Muslim sisters were marrying Christians and they were complaining that Muslim brothers didn't come. They still have to marry, anyway. We also had some Muslim brothers marrying Christians when the Muslim sisters were not available. So, it was when this crisis was coming to our hearing, then we now decided to always have a singles forum or marriage seminar.[1300]

In addition to establishing the MCS to address the crisis, the Society began to have males and females in the same camp by 2014. Also, it encouraged some senior members of the Society to embark on certified training on marital counselling, among whom is Olaiya. This is necessary

---

[1297] Abbink, "Religion in Public Spaces": 265–6.

[1298] Apart from this, there is also Abau and Ummahat Forum, mentioned earlier, which focused on marital life. It held at another location outside Ogunmakin village, where the camp of married women was located. I could not attend this forum because it was organized simultaneously as the MCS in which I participated. But the curriculum of this forum included topics on "Risk Management in an Ideal Islamic Home," "Polygamy: Reality of our Time," and "Managing Career and Home Front.

[1299] Abideen Olaiya, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1300] Ibid.

to ensure that the Society offers a professional based service at no cost. This is unlike career counsellors and match-makers who charged for their services.[1301]

Three seminars on different dates and topics were organised for those seeking spouses at the IVC hall. Attendance at the seminar, which turned out to be more than a hundred, also included those who wanted to listen to the lectures or see the singles yearning for marriage. The first seminar was led by Isa Adeeyo, an engineer and one of the certified marriage counsellors for the Society. He discussed the topic "My Faith, My Status" where he introduced the singles to the importance of marriage for Muslims, making references to verses of the Qur'an which he considered to authorise it. Olaiya discussed the topic of the second seminar which was on "Take a Step beyond your Faith." He explained how to make a decision on marriage and introduced the participants to the conditions that should be met before making that decision. Important aspects of these conditions, according to him, include having a means of income to sustain a family and following what the Prophet recommended in the choice of a spouse. At the end of this second session, he requested those who considered themselves to have met those conditions to hand in their profiles, including their choice of partner, which many did.[1302] The third seminar was, thus, a follow-up to this and it was strictly for those who had submitted their profiles. After the IVC, the marriage counsellors usually match the profiles and contact the potential spouses. But beyond this match-making, the MCS should also be considered as a platform that teaches the MSSN idea of "practical Islam" on how to start a family as Muslims. It is organised to ensure that the process that leads to marriage is guided by knowledge on what the Society considered to be permitted in Islam. It therefore embodies Islamic education on this aspect of Muslim life for the participants.

Even though the objective is to transmit knowledge and cultivate spirituality and good moral character, there was nothing in the camp that suggested that there were no challenges or incidents of moral misconduct. For instance, to attend many camp activities, including the obligatory prayers, the MSSO had to enforce compliance. Many delegates also refused to attend the *tahjjud* which was considered to train them. Whether in classes or during *tafsīr*, many delegates played games on their phones or chatted on social media or with friends. Some

---

[1301] The counselling profession, which began in Nigeria in 1959, is still a small industry. Today, there are many counsellors focusing on different aspects of life such as marriage, childcare and education. See A. J. Adugbo, "Counselling Approaches in Nigerian Traditional Communities," *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling* 2, no. 3 (1979); Aize I. Obayan, "Client/Family Interface in Counselling: Challenges for Counsellor Acceptability and Performance in Nigeria," *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (1998).

[1302] Balogun, *Field Notes*.

delegates were caught gambling and there were several cases of bullying among secondary school pupils which went to the Sharia Court in the IVC. In addition, many delegates also contested the practices which the MSSN sought to inculcate in them at the camp. Of major interest is the ethic on food preservation which is regarded as an aspect of *sunna* in the Society. The MSSN enjoined delegates not to complain about the camp's food irrespective of the taste and portion they were served. Still, many delegates violated this regulation by expressing their displeasure and taking only the beef and abandoning the rest. Eating together on the same plate, another behaviour considered to be *sunna*, was also disregarded by many delegates. However, these revelations do not suggest that there is a problem or crisis in the mode of learning in the MSSN; rather, as suggested in many studies,[1303] it is part of the different challenges which many Muslims face in their attempt to cultivate moral character.

7.3.2 *Madrasa*: The Circle of Learning (COL)

The effect of the Western system of education on the organisation of *madrasa* in Yoruba society, and in many parts of Africa,[1304] is also true in the case of the MSSN. Like those outside the schools, the organisation of the MSSN *madrasas* is determined by the structure of the western schools in Yorubaland. Furthermore, being in the western school setting also imposes some conditions that make the operation of the MSSN *madrasas* different from the ones outside the schools. To illustrate, unlike those outside the schools, the MSSN *madrasas* do not operate along the five- or six-days-a-week system. Rather, they are designed to fit into periods considered free of academic activities for most students. This also depends on different tertiary institutions. In tertiary institutions with student residential halls, the *madrasa* usually operates during the evening and in the morning on weekends. An example is the *madrasa* at the University of Ibadan (UI), called the 'Circle of Learning' (COL) which operates on Fridays (7-9pm) as well as Saturdays and Sundays (7:30-10am) at the central mosque of the university. But in institutions without residential halls such as the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Oyo, the *madrasa* operates in the evening and on weekends.[1305]

The esoteric model of learning that emphasises the steady incremental acquisition of Islamic knowledge is rooted in these *madrasas*. This is first represented in their division into classes, which I will demonstrate with the case of the COL at UI. During my visit, the students in the

---

[1303] Janson, "'How, for God's sake, can I be a Good Muslim?'": 33–8; Schielke, "Being Good in Ramadan": s33-7.
[1304] Some of the major studies which have focused on this are Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*; Launay, *Islamic Education in Africa*; Zahraa McDonald, *Expressing Post-Secular Citizenship: A Madrasa, an Ethic and a Comprehensive Doctrine* (Oxford, New York: Peter Lang Ltd, 2015).
[1305] Balogun, *Field Notes*.

COL were divided into four classes: Preparatory Class, Class One, Class Two and Class Three. The MSSN instructors in this COL are aware that some students had knowledge of the Qur'anic texts, yet, before they are admitted into any of these classes, the students take a mandatory placement test to determine the level of their knowledge and the class appropriate to that level of knowledge to begin with. If the students failed to demonstrate their proficiency in this test, they will begin the study at the Preparatory Class. Throughout their period of study at the university, they will graduate from each class, from the Preparatory Class to Class Three.[1306]

The COL is also linked to the episteme of the reformed *madrasas* outside the schools through its teachers and curriculum. The teachers, who are predominantly males and students of the university, are graduates or students in various reformed *madrasas* outside the schools such as Markaz in Lagos. Among them is Brother Mukhtar, a religious comparatist and a student in the Faculty of Pharmacy. Together with the Director of Studies (DOS) in the MSSN UI branch, these teachers designed the curriculum of the COL mostly in line with those of the reformed *madrasas*.[1307] Except for the subjects like Mathematics, English and ICTs which are taught under another platform, the curriculum of the COL is nearly the same as the IVC. The subjects include *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, *tawḥīd*, *adab*, *sīra*, *tajwīd*, Qur'an memorisation, numbers in Arabic, and Arabic language and writing. The curriculum is supplemented with different texts for each subject. As is the case in some *madrasas* outside the schools, in contrast to the fee-paying reformed *madrasas*,[1308] the teachers at the COL do not receive any compensation for their service. Mukhtar told me that they are not paid by the MSSN or the students because they consider their services as a form of *ṣadaqa* (voluntary charity) which Islam encourages Muslims to perform.[1309] Although students are required to pay some fees to apply for study at the COL, the proceeds from these fees are not given to the teachers but used to procure materials like whiteboard markers and chalk used to teach.

Apart from the teachers and division of the classes, there is also a connection between the reformed *madrasas* and the COL in the Islamic texts used for teaching and the style of knowledge transmission. An example of these texts is a primer that is common in many *madrasas* and Muslim schools in Nigeria. One part of the primer has images with their Arabic

---

[1306] The preparatory class had the least students numbering six, while the three other classes had between thirteen to thirty students. ibid.

[1307] The DOS of MSS in the university is the coordinator of COL. He is responsible for drawing out the timetable for the COL together with these teachers. The timetable made provision for three subjects daily in each class, and fifty minutes for each subject.

[1308] Olurode, *Glimpses of Madrasa from Africa*, 90–91.

[1309] Brother Mukthar, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, March 19, 2017, UI, Ibadan.

and English translations which assist students by relating words with pictures. The other part of the primer has Arabic letters and exercises that could assist students to develop their writing skills in Arabic. Regarding the style of learning, in the Preparatory Class, for instance, the teacher began to pronounce the Arabic letters from the primer one after the other while the students repeated them after him. Later, he called on each student to pronounce the letters to ensure that they grasp the pronunciation correctly. He corrected those who were not able to do this by explaining the rules that guide the letters as well as showing them the mouth and nasal positions which must be observed when pronouncing them. He explained that proper pronunciation of different letters was important in order to avoid using words that sounded similar in pronunciation but whose meanings vary. To illustrate this, he gave the example of *qul* which means 'say' and *kull* which means 'eat.'[1310] This process of ensuring correct pronunciation of the Qur'anic texts, regarded as the science of *tajwīd*, is taken seriously in the embodiment of Islamic knowledge. Kane argues that the process is based on the thesis that the Qur'an is composed of the words of God, and that it is essential to articulate its texts properly to avoid distorting the meaning of God's words which many learned clerics regard as a great sin.[1311] This thinking, as Kane notes, is why many reciters usually beg God for forgiveness after reading the Qur'an in case they have committed an error in their pronunciation of these divine words.

In Class One where the primer was also used, the effort was to teach certain sentences in Arabic and their English and Yoruba translations. The teacher in this class taught the students the use of simple expressions which related to their daily activities such as how to say, 'give me your book.' For them to master the Arabic words, he encouraged them to start using the expressions gradually even if they must combine it with English expressions such as "give me your *kitāb*" (book).[1312] This style of learning is typical of the approach of *afiwekewu*, and it shows one of the processes in which the MSSN is inculcating an Arab identity in Yoruba Muslim students, regarded as part of being better Muslims.

Despite the efforts of the teachers, many students struggled to pronounce the Arabic words, which often amused their colleagues. This reaction was noticed in other classes in which teachers gave examples on a topic which caused laughter. But the teachers usually remonstrate the students over this. The teachers explained to them that this attitude was not a good Islamic

---

[1310] Balogun, *Field Notes*.
[1311] Ousmane Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 77–78.
[1312] Balogun, *Field Notes*.

ethic and that what they were teaching should not be taken as a joke. This kind of remonstration was also used to disapprove of other attitudes of many students, such as their inability to revise what they had learnt in previous meetings and their irregular attendance in class. This is different from the classical *madrasas* where the *alfa* usually uses the cane to discipline the students on such attitudes. The non-use of the cane in COL does not suggest that the students were not disciplined in class because nearly all of them were attentive despite the moments of amusement. In as much as this confirms the argument that the role of physical discipline in the transmission of knowledge in the classical *madrasa* cannot be exaggerated, not resorting to it in this context shows the impact of the tertiary education system in which the COL is located, where any form of physical discipline to students is discouraged.

What is also significant to note in the COL is that many practices that are common in classical *madrasas* in Yorubaland are not encouraged. For example, students are not allowed to venerate or seek the *baraka* of their teachers.[1313] Instead, they are encouraged to consider their teachers as brothers to whom they could turn to for help irrespective of gender and age. To be sure, many students usually continue their lesson with these teachers outside the class, a practice which nevertheless evinces the person-to-person form of learning of the classical *madrasas*. As many studies illustrate, the MSSN criticism against seeking the teachers blessing, a practice identified with many Sufi brothers, is common to many reform movements in Africa.[1314] Drawing insight from Georg Stauth and Samuli Schielke,[1315] this veneration is apposite to the rational thought of many reformists because, for them, it ascribes an aura of sacredness to the teachers which is a form of *shirk*, or associating partners with God, understood by many Muslims as a sin.

Another critique of the MSSN is the banquet referred to as *wolimọ* usually organised in the classical *madrasas*. The *wolimọ* is considered in the MSSN as an innovation that has no basis in the *sunna* of the Prophet. From the 1920s, reformers like the Ahmadiyya have also opposed the *wolimọ* for promoting ostentatious consumption among the Yoruba Muslims.[1316] In one of the newspaper articles in 1920, a member of the movement further contested the kind of Islamic scholarship on which the *wolimọ* was celebrated. For him, the young Muslims who were being celebrated have merely "gone through the Holy Book of God the contents of which they are

---

[1313] Ware, *The walking Qur'an*, 53–54.
[1314] Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 3.
[1315] Georg Stauth and Joska S. Schielke, *Dimensions of Locality: Muslim Saints, Their Place and Space* (Bielefeld, Piscataway, N.J.: Transcript Verlag, 2008), 18–20.
[1316] Katz, "Islamic Prestige, Piety and Debate in Early Lagosian Newspapers, 1920s–40s": 65–7.

neither able to pronounce correctly nor give their real meanings in their own language."[1317] Today, despite the debate around it, the *wolimọ* continues to be organised by many *madrasas* in Yorubaland. But it has been modified in the reformed *madrasas* along the method of graduation in Western schools. These *madrasas* issue certificates[1318] (a kind of *ijaza*) to students upon completion of study like their western model. The MSSN COL also follows this practice. Rather than the *wolimọ*, it awards "certificates of participation" after students complete Class Three.[1319] Many students continued their education after the award of this certification either in such *madrasas* as Markaz in Lagos or by learning from a learned person, a practice that allowed them to remain connected to the classical method of Islamic knowledge transmission.

Like the new Muslim schools in Yorubaland, the COL also departs from the old *madrasas* in the aspect of instructional materials. In writing, lessons were taught with the use of blackboards with chalk and whiteboards with markers, while students copied their notes on exercise books with a ballpoint pen. However, as is the case in the old *madrasas*, the teachers wrote the lessons in Arabic. Likewise, the students copied their notes in Arabic. A number of teachers and students also read the electronic copies of the texts being used for the class from their smartphones and tablet PCs, even though printed texts were also available.[1320] Largely, the electronic copies of these texts are not limited to students in the MSSN; they are also found among those who attend the *madrasas* outside the secular schools. In Nigeria, availability of these electronic copies has been made possible by access to the internet which began from 1996.[1321] This has allowed Muslims in Yorubaland to download and share religious educational contents among themselves.

It is also noticed in the COL that the use of notebooks allowed students to take the exercise books home in order to review their lessons. This contrasts with the classical *madrasas* where what is learnt is washed off from writing boards and drunk by the students. Drinking the water from the writing boards indicates imbibing the ink used to write the Qur'anic texts. As Ware contends, this is part of the ways in which the Qur'an is embodied for many years by West

---

[1317] Abdu Rahim Alabi Smith, "Wolimo: An Unfounded Islamic Practice Among the Nigerian Muslims," *The Times of Nigeria*, October 18, 1920, Cited in ibid., 67.

[1318] In tertiary institutions where the certificates are recognized in Nigeria, graduates of these *madrasas* could be admitted for a study in Arabic and Islamic Studies.

[1319] Brother Mukthar, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1320] Balogun, *Field Notes*.

[1321] Esharenana E. Adomi, "Internet Development and Connectivity in Nigeria," *Program* 39, no. 3 (2005): 259.

African Muslim students in addition to other methods such as memorisation and mimesis of learned persons.[1322] The water is understood to have spiritual power which helps to develop the intellectual ability of the student. Apart from the students, imbibing the Qur'anic texts is also conceived by many Muslims to have therapeutic purposes for human conditions like ill-health and success in any undertaking. Among the Yoruba Muslims, many *alfas* wrote Qur'anic texts on slates for such purposes. The water from the washing of these texts, called *hantu* (Arabic, *khaṭṭ* referring to Arabic script), is used in different ways such as drinking and bathing.[1323] However, the MSSN notion of *sunna* is opposed to this *hantu*.

There is no doubt that the example of the COL shows the different ways in which colonial and modern school systems have shaped Islamic education. The modern school system has introduced the blackboards different from the writing boards of the classical *madrasa* which Launay considers to be symbols of "different postures, different attitude, and different behaviours, which served to inscribe different disciplinary projects on the bodies of pupils."[1324] However, the use of electronic devices shows that Islamic education has gone beyond these blackboards and writing boards and this has made the different attitudes and disciplines that are inscribed in Muslims more problematic. In the MSSN, for instance, ICTs have also allowed the provision of another learning experience on social media. This includes Facebook and WhatsApp groups where explanations of the texts of the Qur'an and the Hadith are shared. They are also used by students to raise questions about their faith and practices. Several texts meant to ridicule and educate members at the same time are also expressed in 'memes' posted on this media.

Many branches of the MSSN also have texts of lectures that could be retrieved by members on their websites. A member could also contact the *amir* on religious issues on this website. However, many students have bypassed this website to learn about their religion. Among them is Rashida Hammed, a member of the MSSN in Lagos who referred to a website, *IslamQA.info,* as her reference point if she needs an explanation or opinion on any topic.[1325] The website was set up in 1996 and supervised by the Salafi scholar, Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid in

---

[1322] Ware, *The walking Qur'an*, 57.
[1323] Oloruntele, *Evil Forces and Shirk among the Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria with special reference to Ilorin City*, 54.
[1324] Launay, *Islamic Education in Africa*, 1–2.
[1325] Hammed Rashida (Pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

Saudi Arabia.[1326] Born in 1960, al-Munajjid is a student of Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn 'Abdillah ibn Baaz and other scholars associated with the Salafi notion of Islam such as Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-'Uthaymeen.[1327] He gives sermons on different media which include radio and television, many of which have been published in books.[1328] His website also allows Muslims in several parts of the world to receive answers and *fatwa* (a ruling by a recognized authority) from him on several topics such as the permissibility of marriage between a Muslim and a non-Muslim.[1329] By requesting the opinion of this Salafi scholar on the internet, Hammed's case illustrates the need to move beyond the interpretation of Islam in the Yoruba Muslim social context. Otayek and Soares have noted that access to the liberalised media has motivated many Africans to question and adjust their own practices.[1330] The example of Yoruba Muslim students is not different from this as Hammed's case shows that the impact of information technology can encourage the consumption of varying interpretations of Islam in any social context.

7.3.3 Leadership Training: self-confidence, organisational skill and speaking about Islam

The leadership training in the MSSN is used to help Muslim students develop their intellectual skills, self-confidence and organisational competence in any social context. The need for this training is largely connected to the sense of 'inferiority' of some Yoruba Muslims to articulate themselves in public. Peel's study draws attention to this, although his argument in this regard appears narrow. He argues in the study that from about the early twentieth century, Yoruba Muslims have been confronted with a dilemma in the areas of culture, religion and politics in Nigeria regarding how to "orient themselves toward their Christian fellow Yoruba or their non-Yoruba fellow Muslims?"[1331] For him, this dilemma ensues from a "double sense of inferiority" that confronted them: "the sense of being regarded as less enlightened than their Christian compatriots, and as less complete Muslims than their coreligionists in Northern Nigeria."[1332] Even though this argument refers to a phenomenon among many Yoruba Muslims, I contend

---

[1326] Uriya Shavit, "Can Muslims Befriend Non-Muslims? Debating Al-Walāʾ Wa-Al-Barāʾ (Loyalty and Disavowal) in Theory and Practice," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 25, no. 1 (2014): 73.

[1327] For reference to these scholars who are also listed on the profile of Al-Munajjid on IslamQA.info, see Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria*, 60–61; Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid, "Biography of the Site's General Supervisor: Islam Question & Answer,", https://islamqa.info/en/about-director (accessed June 25, 2019).

[1328] One of the books is Muhammad S. al-Munajjid, *Interactions of the Greatest Leader: The Prophet´s Dealings with Different People* (Riyadh: Zad Publishing, 2014).

[1329] Shavit, "Can Muslims Befriend Non-Muslims?": 73.

[1330] Otayek and Soares, *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*, 12–13.

[1331] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-religion*, 141.

[1332] Ibid.

that Peel actually overgeneralises it. In fact, his argument primarily fails to recognise that Yoruba Muslims are of varying social statuses in the society, many of who neither consider themselves inferior to the Christians among them nor the Muslims in the North. Looking at the Yoruba society in general, one discovers that there are wealthy (*ọlọla*) and poor (*mẹkunnu*) people who are neither defined by religious identities nor places of origin. This varying social status has impacted on the way they relate and think about one another. To be sure, the poor generally command the respect of the rich in Yoruba society irrespective of their religious faiths. Since the 1850s, education and employment in economic and political institutions have also conferred a high status on many Yoruba of different religions who might not necessarily be wealthy.[1333] In both cases, social status is a marker of superiority in the society rather than religion. In the same way, it is erroneous to suggest that Yoruba Muslims regard those in Northern Nigeria as "more complete" or better Muslims than them because this suggestion overlooks other important factors that shape what they think about their religious orientation, and, in this regard, I refer to their different interpretation of Islam and political encounter (discussed in Chapters Three and Four). By focusing on the varying notions of Islam in their different social contexts and their political relation since the fall of the old Oyo empire through the politics of post/colonization, it will be discovered that what the Yoruba Muslims think about the Muslims in the North is more complicated than the assumption that some groups feel they are better Muslims than others.[1334]

This notwithstanding, many Yoruba Muslim students from the early twentieth century are understood to think that they are lower in status in relation to their fellow Christians. One of the ways in which this attitude was sustained was to identify with their Yoruba names rather than their Muslim names in schools where they were outnumbered by Christians. Christian teachers in such schools also promoted this tendency by calling them their Yoruba names

---

[1333] For a general discussion on Yoruba social stratification and how the modern social changes have impacted on it, see Eades, *The Yoruba today*, 144–64.

[1334] There are many Yorubas (both Muslims and Christians) who think that Muslims in Northern Nigeria are 'backward' in many ways and because of this they doubt their credentials in the governance of Nigeria. To the contrary, the political history of Nigeria shows that many Yoruba have supported Muslim politicians from the north. An interesting case is the 1979 general elections in which Christian leaders of the Northern People's Party (NPN) in Oyo campaigned with a song that supported Islam which is noted by Oloyede: "Cast the vote into the box of the Prophet (Muhammad, S.A.W.])-shun that of *Jahannum* (hell-fire), drop your vote into the ballot box of the Prophet (Muhammad) [S.A.W.)." Oloyede, "The Council of Muslim Youth Organisations (COMYO) in Oyo State": 83–4. In addition, many Yoruba Muslims also believed that Muslims in the north practiced a 'radical' form of Islam which does not recognise the character of their own relation with non-Muslims. Yet, despite these views, many Yoruba Muslims also consider that they are historically linked with Muslims in Northern Nigeria, while their Christian fellows think they are not. For these contrasting views, see Aderemi S. Ajala, "Yoruba Nationalism: Culture, Politics and Violence in South-Western Nigeria (1900-2009),", Arbeitspapiere/Working Papers 107 (Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, 2009), 9.

instead of their Muslim names.[1335] The Yoruba Muslim students' sense of being lower in status is also based on the assumption that many of them do not not feel confident to talk in public, especially on occasions where they had encounters with Christians.[1336] While some of my respondents linked this attitude to the ethic of modesty in the wider Yoruba tradition,[1337] many Yoruba Muslims think that the ethic is counter-productive in the context of their encounter with Christians in modern times.[1338]

Since 1954, the MSSN has been involved in helping many Muslim students deal with these two challenges. Concerning the first challenge, there is a strong emphasis on members to identify with their Muslim names in schools and in public. This is often done by insisting on calling students their Muslim names even if such students wished to be identified by their Yoruba names. In recent times, as part of the changing interpretation of Islam in the Society, some members went a step further by signifying their names in Arabic such as Abideen Olaiya who identifies as "Abu Abdullah ibn Kharasiy."[1339] It is also common to see a married woman who identifies as "Umu Aisha" (Aisha's mother) instead of the Yoruba, "Iya Aisha" while a married man could bear "Abu Aisha" (Aisha's father) instead of "baba Aisha."

To deal with the second challenge, leadership training is organised in the MSSN to encourage the development of public speaking among Muslim students. This approach relates to Peel's argument on the role of Western and Islamic education in how Yoruba Muslims deal with the sense of inferiority among them.[1340] The leadership training appears to be mainly organised through the platform of the Leadership Training Course (LTC), but it is also understood in the Society to be embedded in other platforms such as the National Higher Institutions Convention of Muslim Students (NHICOMS). These two platforms were introduced as part of the reforms in the MSSN in the 1980s. The establishment of these platforms was considered necessary to encourage members to develop their knowledge of Islam, the art of public speaking and academic research.[1341] The Society also assumed that these platforms would help students to develop their leadership skills and the manpower needed in the Society and in professional life. Thus, the training is often structured to facilitate debates on issues that affect the MSSN and

---

[1335] Noibi, *Yoruba Muslim Youth and Christian-Sponsored Education*, 18–19.
[1336] Sherrifdeen Adegoke, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1337] Abdul-Hakeem Opadijo, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1338] Sherrifdeen Adegoke, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1339] See his text published for the Society, Abu Abdullah ibn Kharasiy (Olaiya, Abideen), *The Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Lagos: Al-Fathi Islamic Publications, 2003).
[1340] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orişa-religion*, 141–43.
[1341] Taofeeq Yekin, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

the larger Muslim community.[1342] I wish to point out that training in public speaking is not peculiar to the MSSN in Nigeria; it is also common in other religious organisations as well as public establishments. This is why it should be understood as part of the growing form of education in contemporary Nigeria.

Even though I consider them as important aspects of MSSN educational project, I could not attend any of these training programmes because they were not organised during my fieldwork. But, one of my respondents whose case is quite fascinating draws my attention to a training course that is used for students in secondary schools and tertiary institutions based on his own experience. His name is Mikhail Abdus-Salam and he is one of the MSSN leaders who completed their education at a *madrasa* before enrolling in a Western school (discussed in Chapter Five).[1343] He is a graduate student at the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, UI. On joining the MSSN, Mikhail's knowledge of Islamic texts quickly facilitated his rise as a leader after he was identified at one of the MSSN programmes. He was appointed as the *naibul-amir* or Vice-President of his secondary school. With this responsibility, he led members in prayers and gave sermons during the MSSN's weekly meetings. While he thought this was going to be an easy task initially, he realised that he could not express himself in the English language. He therefore began to adopt some strategies to teach himself and speak to members of the Society. This self-training, according to him, was further facilitated by the leadership training of the MSSN.

The training was at the weekly Area Council meeting held at Molete, Oke-Ado in Ibadan. During the meeting, while other members of the Society were assembled in a class for lectures, members of the executives, which included Mikhail, attended a separate class called Training Class. For this training, similar to an academic workshop, the pupils were expected to have many texts which included the English texts of the Qur'an and the forty Hadiths of Imam al-Nawawi. A few publications produced for secondary schools and colleges as well as the IIFSO series may also be part of the training materials. Being a training programme, the students did not receive any lecture in the class. However, each of them was requested to study a text or research on a topic and discuss it. They were also expected to react to various questions on what they discussed as Mikhail narrated here:

> In that class, the training they normally give to a student is that they will saddle everybody with a responsibility. They may say this: next week, all of you, go and read this book. They may say go and read the first and second

---

[1342] "MSS at a Glance", 13.
[1343] Abdus-Salam Mikhail, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

chapter of this book and you come back next week to summarize it. They may say, ok, you, you are going to be the one to give us lecture next week. You, read so so so Hadith next week; you will discuss it in the class. The class is mainly for training, it is not like anybody would come to give you a lecture, you would be the one to talk and many other persons in the class. There is no way you are going to escape it, every week, you go to the podium, you talk to your mates. They will criticize you, they will ask you questions. So, saying that you will not get any assignment before next week, it is mandatory that you must get it.[1344]

Because he could not express himself in English, and knowing that he would not be overlooked, Mikhail was very disturbed by the prospect of embarrassing himself in front of his mates. To avoid this, he decided to commit the various texts that explained the topic he was given to memory, which is "being good, doing good to parents." And, when he was called on to discuss it, he quickly read out what he had memorised, which he described as "downloaded," and took his seat without responding to questions from his colleagues.

What I did was that...I know some verses of the Qur'an. So, because that *evidence* is there. So, I tried to get English translated Qur'an. I *memorized* all the quotations in English. I memorize everything, and I got all the Hadiths, I memorized all the translated versions of those Hadiths. When I was called to come and deliver the lecture, they said they gave me twenty minutes, I only spent ten minutes. So, once I *downloaded* all the verses of the Qur'an and all the Hadiths, I left the podium and I went to my seat. They said, 'Ah! question and answer.' I said I won't answer. The coordinator said it is compulsory![1345]

Indeed, while he thought he could escape, Mikhail narrated that other members of the class protested and criticised his manner of presentation. Of major interest was a lady who was vocal in her criticism. She pointed out that Mikhail memorised the texts and "downloaded" them rather than engaging and interpreting them in his own words. This suggest to me that she actually contested the objectified discourse of Islam by Mikhail. However, despite the protest, Mikhail said he did not respond to the criticisms but that the experience challenged him further to train himself in the English language,[1346] which he succeeded in doing because our discussion was in English.

After his secondary school, his leadership training continued at the tertiary education level which was held late in the evening twice in a month. Unlike the secondary school stage, female members were only allowed to join the training during the day. The education at this level was more like an academic seminar in which senior members of the Society delivered lectures, among whom were Afis Oladosu and Ibrahim Uthman. Mikhail narrated that they were taught

---

[1344] Abdus-Salam Mikhail, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1345] Ibid. emphasis in italics mine
[1346] Abdus-Salam Mikhail, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

to inculcate several habits in this class. This includes buying one Islamic piece of literature every month to improve on their knowledge. They were also taught to strengthen their bond of friendship to the extent of knowing each other's house, a lesson that portrays how the Society is strengthening its idea of brotherhood among members.[1347]

Mikhail narrated that they were also tasked with different responsibilities on behalf of the Society. This includes going to different secondary schools to coordinate MSSN activities such as the weekly Friday prayers.[1348] In these schools, they lead the weekly Friday prayers. They also informed the pupils about the programmes of the Society such as Qur'an memorisation and quiz competitions, and they facilitate the participation of these pupils in the programmes. Mikhail's tutelage also includes a workshop at the Islamic Education Trust (IET) in Niger state which, as mentioned earlier, is involved in the Islamization of knowledge in Nigeria. According to him, the instruction at this workshop also followed the method used to train the MSSN leaders in the tertiary institutions. Like others who were appointed to administrative positions, Mikhail moved from the position of Vice-President in his secondary school to become Vice-President of the Molete Oke-Ado Area Council Ibadan, to the President of Akinyele Area Council Ibadan, and eventually head of the Directorate of Secondary Schools (DSS) in Oyo State.[1349]

Beyond this fascinating experience of Mikhail, the leadership training reveals another key method of Islamic education in the MSSN. While the training focuses on developing students' administrative skills and leadership responsibilities in religious and professional life, it is also used to encourage them to engage in various texts on Islam. This is to facilitate the development of their knowledge of the religion and their ability to speak about it. The reaction to Mikhail's presentation also showed that the training is not only about memorising Qur'anic texts and knowing their correct pronunciation, it also emphasises the importance of discourse and making sense of these texts, which further demonstrates that Islamic education in the MSSN is not limited to the embodiment of Arabic texts.

7.3.4 Brothers' Forum and Sisters' Circles: a gendered approach to learning

There are two gendered based platforms in the MSSN called Brothers'/Brotherhood Forum and Sisters'/Sisterhood Circle. They are organised once every one to two weeks, depending on the

---

[1347] I attended a three-day holiday camp in November 2017, which is regarded as a mini-IVC, for secondary school pupils in Akinyele Ibadan where this point was also emphasised.
[1348] Abdus-Salam Mikhail, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1349] Balogun, *Field Notes*.

school, for students in secondary schools and tertiary institutions, many of whom are not married. The Society also has two similar circles called *Abau* and *Ummahāt*, mentioned above, for members who are married. These circles seemed to have been introduced by the 1980s as part of the reforms in the MSSN to provide Islamic knowledge for members on gender roles and sex education. Drawing on the study by Mahmood about female Muslims and agency, I give more attention to the Sisters' Circle and the *Ummahāt* in this section to analyse how the MSSN promotes this gendered education. This does not imply equating gender with women, nor taking out the men from this form of education. Rather, the aim is to illustrate the contribution of women to Islamic education in the MSSN and Yoruba society.

In her critique of feminist ideas about female Muslims and agency, Mahmood shows the example of the Muslim women in the mosque movement in Egypt who were concerned about achieving piety in their everyday lives.[1350] Piety is understood as *taqwā* in Arabic referring to 'virtuous fear' (or fear of God). As Mahmood argues, this piety is not only realised through devotional and non-religious acts, it "also entailed the inculcation of entire dispositions through a simultaneous training of the body, emotions, and reason as sites of discipline until the religious virtues acquired the status of embodied habits."[1351] The women in Mahmood's case study sought to achieve this piety through *da'wa*, which requires a Muslim to encourage others towards the path of piety. This includes teaching Islamic texts to other Muslim women and how to cultivate pious dispositions such as prayers, shyness, fear of God and veiling. Providing this kind of *da'wa*, therefore, allowed the women to enter the male-centred field of Islamic education.[1352] This women's movement has some similarities with the *ummahāt*/Sister's Circle in the MSSN concerning Islamic education. Like the mosque movement, members of the *ummahāt*/Sister's Circle are also concerned about the achievement of piety through knowledge which focuses on different aspects of life such as dressing, prayers, hygiene and social interaction.

The Sister's Circle of the Federal College of Education (FCE), Akoka Lagos is used as a case study in this section. The Circle is coordinated by the *amira*, who is referred to in the MSSN as the female President. The Circle has about twenty-five students in attendance who sat on chairs. At the start, the *amira* introduced a female lecturer,[1353] an elderly member of the Society who used the *ḥijāb* but was not a student of the College. The lecturer, standing in front of the

---

[1350] Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent"; Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*.
[1351] Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent": 212.
[1352] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 57–72.
[1353] I did not mention the name of the Amira and the lecturer because they wanted to remain anonymous.

students, discussed the topic, "Muslima and her Soul" to demonstrate the importance of the soul in Islam for women and the ways to purify it. As she explained, the soul is important because it is the main part of the body that will meet Allah on the day of judgment when a person dies. However, she noted that the soul is usually infected by different "diseases" caused by insincere intentions through which several activities and practices of a Muslim woman are performed. She gave the example of dressing modestly which is not based on sincerity and fear of Allah. Another example she gave was what she referred to as "excessive beautification" which, according to her, the *ḥijāb* ought to have discouraged. She also referred to the association of partners with Allah called *shirk* and uncontrolled intermingling with unrelated men as other diseases of the soul. To deal with these "diseases", she urged the female students to strive to purify their souls. She also admonished them to be sincere in all they do, move closer to Allah, seek Allah's forgiveness always, attend Islamic lectures regularly and practise charity. Furthermore, she encouraged them to develop a "self-reproaching soul," which might sin but is capable of repelling or correcting itself from the sin.[1354] From the notes she prepared for this discourse, and switching between English and Yoruba languages, she quoted several verses of the Qur'an and the Hadith to validate her points. With this explanation, she defined what piety means for the female students and the way to cultivate it.

Fig. 9 A typical Sisters' Circle at Zumratul-Islamiyya mosque, Yaba Lagos. Picture by Yemi Balogun, 2017.

In addition to their commitment to achieving piety, the women in the MSSN are also concerned about socio-economic issues affecting women in the wider Nigerian society. Among these

---

[1354] Balogun, *Field Notes*.

issues is the difficulty in getting employment in public and private establishments. In most cases, the veiled Muslim women have been hard hit by this difficulty as many establishments are not willing to tolerate the use of the veil, particularly in Southwest Nigeria. But rather than abandoning their veils for any professional job, many of these women have decided to set up their own businesses which include commodity trade and event decoration after university education.[1355] Although I could not attend the event, these issues formed the main discussion at the annual "Ummahat Day" held at Yaba, Lagos in April 2018 which I followed on Facebook. The Ummahat Day focused on the theme, "The Empowered Woman." The discussant at the event was a senior staff member in the service of the Lagos State government who adorned the *ḥijāb*. In her lecture, she emphasised the importance of empowerment for Muslim women in the areas of education and entrepreneurship. According to her, Muslim women need to work on these areas not only because of their socio-economic challenges but also to support themselves and their families. In addition, she encouraged them to be steadfast in their ritual prayers and to ensure that their children are guided in the same manner. This lecture suggests that the achievement of piety is expected to go hand in hand with Muslim women's empowerment.[1356]

Generally, beyond the knowledge they are expected to acquire, both the Brothers' Forum and Sisters' Circle are also organised to give members the freedom to be open about their private concerns.[1357] This is expected to encourage those who might be timid to talk about some issues or ask certain questions in the presence of opposite gender which a respondent named Kafayat Adesina tries to point out here:

> …in the general programme where the brothers and sisters are around… they would want to ask some questions but because of the presence of the sisters… sisters would be like 'that brother…you were at the programme and you were the one that asked so so questions.' So, they want to keep quiet that, 'don't let me ask o.' Sisters too, sometimes you may want to ask a question. Things that are bothering your mind... But because some brothers are there, you would say, 'I don't want people to be saying I never knew that sister can say something like that.'[1358]

The freedom and openness which members have in these platforms are also facilitated by the choice of teachers. A male usually teaches in the Brothers' Forum while a female (sometimes male depending on the topic) teaches in the Sisters' Circle. As Adesina pointed out, having a

---

[1355] Balogun in *Gender and Social Encounters*, 108–10.
[1356] Balogun, *Field Notes*.
[1357] Adesina Kafayat (pseudonym), interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1358] Ibid.

female teacher in their circle usually helped them to feel at ease to share what she considered as their "mutual experience." Beyond having these teachers, the need for separate platforms is also because sex education is part of their discourses, which many members might not wish to discuss in the presence of the opposite gender. This is revealed in the testimony of a female respondent below who confirmed that she learnt about her body system in the Sisters' Circle based on what is enjoined in Islam. She refers to the knowledge of changes in the human body such as the woman's monthly cycle as one of the lessons she learnt in the Circle. This knowledge is important because many Muslims consider some rituals such as the daily prayers, cannot be undertaken without following the rules on cleanliness after the female monthly cycle.

> I gained a lot from the Sisters' Circle. There, I learnt about my body system, how to calculate my menstrual cycle Islamically and how to know if I am clean or not. They tell us that you do not assume that you are clean after three days or five days, because there are some things you need to observe to know if you are clean or not.[1359]

But the gendered education in the MSSN is not limited to issues of sexuality and gender roles, both the Brothers' Forum and Sisters' Circle are also used for entrepreneurship training in trades such as bead making, decoration and planning, catering, shoemaking, barbering and graphic design.[1360] There are several reasons for encouraging the development of these entrepreneurship skills among members. The most important of these, as noted earlier, is the scarcity of jobs in Nigeria, which has increased exponentially since the economic crisis of the 1980s. In the same vein, while the entrepreneurship training seeks to address this job crisis, it is also aimed at ensuring that young Muslims have jobs that would allow them to start a family early in life. As I mentioned in Chapter Five, the MSSN encouraged early marriage to avoid courtship and premarital sex which were common among many members before the reform. Because the MSSN considered having a job as a prerequisite for raising a family,[1361] the entrepreneurship training has increasingly become an intervention aimed to assist members to perform their gender roles and socio-economic expectations as Muslims.

7.3.5 *Usrah*: a mosque-centred education

The *usrah* (Arabic, family) is used interchangeably with "study circle"[1362] or "learning circle" in the MSSN. It is held in different mosques that are in tertiary institutions and secondary

---

[1359] Opeyemi Hadiza (Pseudonym), interview by Uthman Atobatele, January 23, 2017, Apete, Ibadan.
[1360] Balogun, *Field Notes*.
[1361] Mahfuz Alabidun, interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Abideen Olaiya, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.
[1362] Study circle is associated with another Arabic word known as *halaqah* which literally means 'circle' or small group of pupils who sit in a circle with a teacher. Among the Salafis in Yorubaland, the word *halaqah*

schools and, in some cases, in mosques outside these educational institutions. The organisation of the *usrah* in the mosque is one of the symbols of the MSSN emphasis on the revival of Muslim traditions from the past. The mosque, which emerged as the classical institution of worship by Muslims, doubled from the beginning of Islam in the seventh century as the first centre of learning.[1363] Wadad Kadi points out that teaching in the mosque started informally by learned scholars who shared their knowledge with other Muslims who gathered around them.[1364] Study circles developed around these scholars who taught a number of subjects such as *tafsīr* and *fiqh* in separate circles. The structure of these circles is less formal: students attended any circle and it was not restricted to any age group. But in contrast to the modern Muslim schools, the mosques had no accommodations for students during their studies. Over time, many of these mosques became renowned as centres of Islamic education towards the end of the tenth century. The first was the Prophet mosque in Medina which attracted a significant number of devoted students, many of whom eventually became leading scholars of Islam. The other mosques included the Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem and the Umayyad mosque in Damascus that were established toward the end of the seventh century.[1365] By the end of the nineteenth century, the mosque-centred institutions of learning also developed in various parts of Yorubaland as illustrated in the first section of this chapter. However, they differ from the ones that were organised in the MSSN in terms of the teachers who transmit the knowledge and the materials used to study in them. In this regard, the teachers in the MSSN *usrah* are Western educated Muslims who might not have attended a *madrasa* like the *alfas* of these mosque-centred institutions.

The introduction of the *usrah* in the MSSN could be linked to individuals such as Oyekan and Hussein who started organising study groups in Lagos from the 1970s as shown in Chapter Five. But the term '*usrah*' did not appear in any major document of the Society until 1984, although the Society organised what was called "Sunday lessons" in many branches.[1366] Thus, this form of education may have started by the 1980s. Today, the *usrah* is organised weekly at different levels for secondary school pupils, students in tertiary institutions and professionals. During my fieldwork, one of the sessions held on Sundays for professionals, civil servants,

---

is used to describe their study programme. This suggests that they have a similar educational platform with MSSN despite the debates between them about whose practice is more correct.

[1363] Wadad Kadi, "Education in Islam: Myths and Truths," *Comparative Education Review* 50, no. 3 (2006): 313; Malika Zeghal, "The Multiple Faces of Islamic Education in a Secular Age," in *Islam in the Modern World*, eds. Jeffrey T. Kenney and Ebrahim Moosa, 125-148 (London: Routledge, 2014), 128.

[1364] Kadi, "Education in Islam": 313–4.

[1365] Ibid., 314.

[1366] See Tajudeen, *MSS at 30*.

academics, businessmen and artisans between 11 am and 1 pm at one of the local mosques in Agbowo, Ibadan. This *usrah* is under the Central Branch of the MSSN Oyo State Area Unit. Participants at this *usrah* were both men and women who were almost forty in number. Although the sitting arrangement of the *usrah* in many branches of the Society reflects the notion of a 'circle' (as shown in figure 9), other centres such as the one at Agbowo did not necessarily conform to this. The men sat opposite the women, with a space separating them, while the lecturer sat in the middle facing the men. Rather than forming a circle, most of the participants sat resting against the wall, reflecting the flexibility of posture that is noticed in other forms of learning discussed above.

Fig. 10 *Usrah* in the MSSN. Source: MSSN Lagos 2016 at https://www.mssnlagos.net/ (accessed 17.11.2015)

The teaching at this *usrah*, as in other platforms, is based on different topics. For instance, the lecturer at this *usrah,* Dhikrullah Olurode, a senior academic at the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta (FUNAAB) Ogun State, presented the topic, "Preparing for the Inevitable" which addressed the need for Muslims to prepare themselves before death. One of the things required for this preparation, according to him, was to keep a diary of the "debts" they owed to different people to serve as a reference for their families to repay them after their death. The topic of this lecture reflects the emphasis in the MSSN on the importance of a 'balanced' life that is oriented towards the present world and life after death, and, to a large extent, an aspect of what the Society regarded as a good Muslim.

Despite some changes in pedagogy, the study circles in the MSSN have continued with the method of learning in the past. For instance, as in other forms of education, the Society put a

strong demand on members to take note of the key points which lecturers discussed in these circles. Although many participants did not come with exercise books and pen to the *usrah* I attended at Agbowo in Ibadan (unlike the one I attended at Yaba Lagos), they still followed the discourse in their copies of the Qur'an. Furthermore, while the lecturers are deemed to be learned on the topics they talked about, the *usrah* nevertheless provokes debates between them and the participants on these topics. At the end of Olurode's talk, for instance, he asked the participants some questions in order to generate debates.[1367] The disputation between teachers and students, as Kadi notes, is one of the modes of instruction in the mosque-centred institutions of learning. This method is employed by the teacher to probe a student's comprehension and proficiency to work out difficult questions before he is certified as an authority to speak on any discipline.[1368] Based on this example, the MSSN *usrah* shows continuity with the past tradition of learning Islam despite the change in the character of teachers and instructional materials.

7.4 **Conclusion**

This chapter shows that the MSSN educational objectives and its definition of a Muslim are transmitted in a variety of forms which include the IVC, the *madrasa*, the LTC, the Brothers' Forum, the Sisters' Circle and the *usrah*. I argue in this chapter that the MSSN has contributed to the development of Islamic education among the Yoruba Muslims through these forms of learning. The MSSN employed these various modes of learning to teach the knowledge of Islam in many subjects such as the Qur'an exegesis, Arabic language, Islamic jurisprudence and diverse aspects of life including hygiene, morals, dressing, courtship and marriage. Additionally, the Society also focused on developing the skills of Muslim students in the areas of academics, administration and entrepreneurship, all of which are considered to be useful for being Muslim in modern society. Generally, these educational programmes give an insight into the Society's understanding of Islam in relation to the kind of knowledge which a good Muslim should embodied and the method of its transmission. I also consider them to be a crucial aspect of the process of religious change among Yoruba Muslims because they integrate new forms and epistemes to their religious educational experience which, in turn, shaped new ways of being Muslim among them.

Although these new forms of learning represent some of the ways in which Islamic education has changed in many parts of Yorubaland and other Muslim societies in Africa, they do not

---

[1367] Balogun, *Field Notes*.
[1368] Kadi, "Education in Islam": 318.

represent a complete break with the past. On the contrary, they share many attributes with the pedagogy and epistemology of the classical Islamic education system which include the emphasis on the memorisation of the Qur'an, gradual incremental learning, tutelage under a specialist and the actualisation of embodied knowledge through practice. Yet, they differ from the classical system through their promotion of objectification and functionalisation of Islam, depersonalisation of knowledge transmission, use of English texts and electronic media. The change therefore illustrates diversification of Islamic knowledge transmission rather than a transition from the past.

Beyond the contribution to new methods of Islamic education, these modes of education are in a broad sense connected to the Muslims response to Christianity in Yorubaland. This point is important because the founders of the MSSN could have attended the *madrasa* if they wanted Islamic education, which many of them did in the evening after attending the Western schools in the morning (and which many Muslim students continued to do), however, they adopted a different model of Islamic education, through an association (the MSSN) inspired by those of the Christian students. As the Christian students' associations were used to promote religious education, which attracted many Muslim students to Christianity in the past, the MSSN was employed to provide Islamic education for Muslim students and preserve their religious identity. As part of this response, the MSSN engages Muslim students in comparative religious discourse to position Islam differently from Christianity and encourage Muslim students to remain steadfast in their own faith. In this regard, the Islamic education in MSSN can not only be understood within the discourse of Islam but also in relation to how Muslims have encountered Christianity in Yoruba society.

Certainly, the significance of the new forms of Islamic education within the MSSN cannot be ignored as many of them have been replicated, albeit in different ways, by other Muslim organisations including the MSSN rivals in Yorubaland. Of major interest are the vacation education course and the female study circles which are also organised by groups such as TMC, NASFAT, Dawah Front and the Tijaniyya students' association. These forms of learning are therefore a telling example of the enormity of diversification of Islamic education among Yoruba Muslims today. It is also noteworthy that these modes of learning have contributed to the rise of another generation of Muslim scholars called *afiwekewu* and *akewukewe* that are different from the traditional *alfas* with little or no Western education. These new scholars are in various academic and professional fields having sufficient knowledge on various Islamic

texts, typical of many Muslim societies with a history of reform.[1369] For the most part, they often challenge the practices and episteme of knowledge transmission of the traditional *alfas*, the same way the *alfas* have contested their own knowledge and authority to speak for Islam. Their emergence and new identities show the impact of the colonial system of education. It also draws attention to the character of those who have joined the production of Islamic knowledge in Yoruba society since the colonial period.

[1369] See Lapidus, "Islamic Revival and Modernity": 447–8.

Chapter Eight

Summary and Conclusion

My central argument in this study is that there has been a change in the way Islam is portrayed and articulated by a significant number of Yoruba Muslims since the colonial period. I also posit that the MSSN played a significant role in mediating this change. In this concluding part of the study, I reflect on the role of the MSSN in different aspects of this change and the implications of the change in Yoruba society and Nigeria in general. Also, I point out the key findings in this study, how this study relates to the existing literature on Islam in Africa and the contributions made by this study to such literature.

Focusing on the MSSN in Southwest Nigeria, this study has demonstrated that what it means to be a good Muslim has changed for a significant number of Yoruba Muslim elite from the colonial period. Using the concept of Islam as a discursive tradition,[1370] the study assumes that the definition of a good Muslim in the MSSN is not given, instead, it is constructed and subject to fluctuation in different social and historical settings. In reality, for many Muslims, the foundational texts of Islam (the Qur'an and the Hadith) serve as the basis for defining who a good Muslim is. However, these texts do not speak for themselves, but are mediated by human agents who translate them and thereby specify what being Muslim represent within a social context. The change in the notion of a proper Muslim for the Western educated Yoruba Muslims has therefore been produced by the effort of many actors which include Noibi, Adegbite, Oyekan, Thanni, Oladosu and Olaiya in the MSSN to translate these texts at various points in time.

A key point that is emphasised in this study is that the shift in the notion of a good Muslim for MSSN members is an aspect of a wider religious change in Yoruba Muslim society, particularly from the nineteenth century. This religious change has manifested in new and different types of religious organisations, diverse pedagogy of Islamic education and variation in the interpretation of Islamic texts and traditions. A rise in multiple forms of ritual practices, religious ethics, dress, and sociality are also part of this change. Thus, while the main argument of this study is that the MSSN contributed to the religious change of Yoruba Muslims, it also

---

[1370] Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 14–17.

contends that the history of the Society and the experience of its members constitute a major aspect of this change.

The study draws attention to the centrality of various factors that shaped the outcome of this religious change such as the cultural practices of the Yoruba, colonization, Christianization, transnational Islamic movements, technology, education and the politics of the nation-state. More importantly, the study argues that these factors also have an impact on the definition of Islam and what a good Muslim represented at different points in time. A major example of this is the reinterpretation of 'knowledge,' based on Islamic texts, in the light of the introduction of 'Western education' to make the latter acceptable for Muslims. The contrasting characters of the colonial and post-colonial governments that determined the shift in the orientation of the MSSN is another case study. Also, there are factors like the internet and social media which transformed the ways Islamic knowledge is produced and circulated and thereby challenging the old pedagogy and epistemology of Islamic education. Based on these various factors, I argue in this study that the definition of Islam in any social context and how it is lived are products of complex and interwoven processes. This confirms Peel's argument that religious change among the Yoruba is not necessarily a unidirectional development or a phenomenon that manifested in a single form but an elaborate one that is noticed in many aspects of social life.[1371]

The varied local dimensions of transnational Islamic movements that are contributing to religious change in Muslim societies of Africa today is another point to consider in this study. The examples of these movements among the Muslim students in Nigeria are IIFSO, the Muslim Brotherhood, and WAMY. One of the main findings in this study is that these transnational organisations are helping to change the orientation of previously localised Muslim associational groups which, for instance, the MSSN represent. This study also discovered that these transnational movements do not impose their notions of Islam on the Western educated Yoruba Muslims. Instead, the new notions of Islam were discursively produced between the representatives of these movements and Yoruba Muslim students who had graduated from the local *madrasas*. As part of the interaction between these transnational movements and the Yoruba students, this study argues that the MSSN, which was initially confined to Yorubaland, metamorphosed to a nationwide movement with a global orientation symbolized by its involvement in the formation and membership of IIFSO and WAMY.

[1371] Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orișa-religion*, 5.

Taking insight from Otayek and Soares' argument, this study illustrates how transnational Islamic organisations such as IIFSO and WAMY have helped to deepen the interconnection among Muslims around the world, leading to the building of a global community of Muslims that transcends national states.[1372] In many cases, these organisations promote similar objectives. The example of Nigeria shows that they often contribute to the educational developments of young Muslims through charity. The Muslim World League (MWL) declaration of the Ahmadiyya movement as a heretical sect in 1974, leading many Yoruba Muslims to dissociate themselves from the movement, also suggests a form of uniformity in the discourse of transnational Islamic movements on Islam which includes the definition of a 'Muslim' and a 'non-Muslim.' On the contrary, the case of Muslim students in Nigeria also indicates that these movements are made up of actors whose visions run at cross-purposes, which may be part of their own rivalries for global influence as Peter Mandaville argues.[1373] Of major interest is the competition for international supports between Iran and Saudi Arabia from the 1980s.[1374] The rivalry between the two countries found expression in Shi'i Islam promoted by Iran in Northern Nigeria through a former member of the MSSN on the one hand, and the Saudi Arabian sponsored WAMY which helped to strengthen its ties with Muslim students of Sunni orientation on the other hand. From the example of these two countries, I argue that transnational Islamic movements do not only connect Muslims around the world but also contributing to multiple expressions of Islam.

One of the findings in this study is that while many transnational Islamic movements and their local supporters are challenging the legacies of colonization particularly the formation of national states, the case of the MSSN reveals that how these movements engaged the nation-states differ remarkably from one another. Major examples that come to mind in Nigeria are the Boko Haram which promotes a violent form of Islam to challenge the government and the El-Zakzaky led Shi'i movement that advocates the founding of an Islamic state. However, although the MSSN often sympathises with some of the aims of these movements and has a goal to build a community of Muslims ruled by Sharia, its own method emphasises accommodation of the nation-state and moral change among Muslims. Also, while some

---

[1372] René Otayek and Benjamin F. Soares, "Introduction: Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa," in *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*, eds. René Otayek and Benjamin F. Soares, 1–24 (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 8.

[1373] Peter Mandaville, "Transnational Muslim Solidarities and Everyday Life," *Nations and Nationalism* 17, no. 1 (2011): 7–8.

[1374] René Otayek and Benjamin F. Soares, "Introduction" in *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*, 8–9.

aspects of MSSN reform and activities are in opposition to the government, the Society nevertheless encouraged Muslim students to be involved in the efforts to build the nation-state and their own self-development in life. The example of the MSSN thus supports the argument in many studies that the attitude of contemporary transnational Islamic movements toward the nation-state is one of ambivalence rather than definitive.[1375]

While this study has demonstrated that Muslim students in Nigeria have contributed to the development of transnational Islamic movements in contemporary Africa, it also challenged how many studies have portrayed the rise of these movements and their interpretation of Islam in the country. The existing studies on Islam in Nigeria give the impression that many young Muslims and professionals in Northern Nigeria have largely contributed to the formation and promotion of reformist traditions of Islam that is emphasised by these movements with little or nothing to say about the role of Yoruba Muslims in Southern Nigeria.[1376] For instance, studies by Kane and Loimeier have looked at the Yan Izala movement and the activities of figures like Shaykh Gumi and his relationship with Saudi Arabia.[1377] Thurston's work also focused on the contribution of the students who studied in Saudi Arabia to the rise of Salafism in Nigeria.[1378] The implication of focusing exclusively on actors in this region is that contemporary expressions of Islam in Nigeria would seem to have only occurred in the North. However, by looking at the role of actors like Oyekan, Solaja and Thanni in the MSSN, this present study demonstrates that Yoruba Muslims were also actively involved in the rise of these movements and that new ways of being Muslims in modern Nigeria have also flourished in the South, some of which moved to the North. Thus, for a comprehensive study of contemporary forms of Islam in Nigeria, it is important to take the Muslims in Yorubaland into consideration.

The involvement of these Yoruba Muslim students gives us some key insights into why the lives and social experiences of the category of Muslims referred to as 'youth' can be understood as part of the religious and social changes in post-colonial Muslim societies in Africa. A

[1375] Loimeier, "Patterns and Peculiarities of Islamic Reform in Africa": 237; Sounaye, "Salafi Revolution in West Africa": 11–3.

[1376] For instance, see Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria*; Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria*; Roman Loimeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1997); Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 154–64; Abdul R. Mustapha, ed., *Sects and Social Disorder: Muslim Identities and Conflict in Northern Nigeria* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2014).

[1377] Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 154–64; Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria*

[1378] Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria*, 64–90.

significant number of Muslim youths in these societies are showing new identities which manifest in many aspects of their life such as dress, use of social media, sport, music culture, Islamic education and associational activities.[1379] In Niger, Masquelier has given an example of such Muslim youth who are reconciling hip-hop culture with their faith in Islam.[1380] A few cases that are similar to this in the MSSN are the use of customised shirt and the reconciliation of the traditional oral poetry with Islam. Notwithstanding the fact that they represent new ways of being Muslim, the formation of the identities of Muslim youth is also interwoven in different layers of politics as Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera suggest. The Muslim youth, according to Bayat and Herrera, are salient in the politics and cultures of many societies where Islam is often placed in opposition to neoliberal policies, globalisation, imperialism and Western civilisation.[1381] Furthermore, Soares and Masquelier contend that in the aftermath of the September 11 attack on the United States, the character of Muslim youth has also manifested in the whole politics of Islam, defined by "the landscape of geopolitical conflicts and loyalties, new media, global markets, consumption patterns, and cultural forms."[1382] The major examples of such politics as this study demonstrates are the involvement of Muslim students in the struggle to encourage the teaching of Islam in Christian and public schools, the MSSN agitation for Sharia as well as the support of Muslim political and religious leaders for MSSN activities in their encounter with Christians.

Another dimension of their social experiences in Nigeria today is in the reconstruction of the concept of 'youth.' One of the main findings of this study is that the MSSN has contested the notion of 'youth' with the argument that the term is inadequate for conceptualising the

---

[1379] See Benjamin F. Soares, "'Rasta' Sufis and Muslim Youth Culture in Mali," in *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North*, eds. Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera, 241-157 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Hatsuki Aishima, "Are We All Amr Khaled? Islam and the Facebook Generation in Egypt," in *Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation*, eds. Adeline Masquelier and Benjamin F. Soares, 105–22 (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016); Gomez-Perez, LeBlanc and Savadogo, "Young Men and Islam in the 1990s".

[1380] Adeline Masquelier, "'The Mouthpiece of an Entire Generation': Hip-Hop, Truth, and Islam in Niger," in *Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation*, eds. Adeline Masquelier and Benjamin F. Soares, 213–38 (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), 216–38.

[1381] Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera, "Introduction: Being Young and Muslim in Neoliberal Times," in *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North*, ed. Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera, 3–24 (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3; Adeline Masquelier and Benjamin F. Soares, "Introduction: Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation," in *Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation*, eds. Adeline Masquelier and Benjamin F. Soares, 1–29 (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), 3.

[1382] Adeline Masquelier and Benjamin F. Soares, "Introduction: Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation," in *Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation*, eds. Adeline Masquelier and Benjamin F. Soares, 1–29 (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), 3.

identities of a good Muslim. In place of this term, it adopts the word 'student' based on a Qur'anic text that regarded Muslims as learners in life. Even though this new term has remained controversial among its members, the dropping of 'youth' for 'student' is an indication of why the notion of a 'youth' has remained difficult to frame as many studies illustrate.[1383] Beyond this, as I showed in Chapter Five, adopting this controversial concept of a 'student' has become one of the ways in which the MSSN is challenging the definition of youth in terms of age in Nigeria. And, as I suggested in Chapter Three, there is still a need to research on the young Muslims in Nigeria from the colonial era not only to understand their religious experience but also how they define their identities.

If the social status and educational gap between the Yoruba Muslims and their Christian fellows up to the end of colonial rule had been wide, today, these 'students' or Muslim elite have considerably closed that margin. The new Muslim elite include lawyers, engineers, academicians, journalists, bankers, and governors, who not only received training in Western schools but also grounded in Islamic education often with methods that differ, but intersect, those who studied in the *madrasa*. Some of them are "public intellectuals," such as Noibi, Oladosu, Opadijo, and Adepoju, with interests in different concerns such as education, ethical reform and women's rights. Soares' study has shown the rise and significance of these intellectuals in the contemporary expressions of Islam in other West African countries like Senegal and Mali.[1384] In Yoruba society, their rise can be appreciated against the backdrop of contemporary social changes that are produced by multiple factors such as the rise of Pentecostal Churches, industrialisation, urbanisation, globalisation and increasing access to communication technologies. Due to their education and professional experiences, these Muslim figures often see themselves as having a better knowledge of these changes and the skills to mediate their impacts on many Yoruba Muslims. As I noted in Chapter Seven, they have also positioned themselves as the mouthpiece of Yoruba Muslims in religious affairs and the articulation of their interest within the larger socio-political sphere of Nigeria. In doing so, they challenged the leading *alfas* that constituted the League of Imams and Alfas (LIA), who continued to make their voice heard on such issues. However, these new figures are not united in their views because they identify with different orientations including the Salafi and the Sufi.

[1383] See Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera, "Introduction" in *Being Young and Muslim*, 6–8; Collins et al., "Youth in Motion"; Honwana, *The Time of Youth*, 3–7.

[1384] Benjamin F. Soares, "New Muslim Public Figures in West Africa," in *Islamic Education in Africa: Writing Boards and Blackboards*, ed. Robert Launay, 268–84 (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016), 268–70.

Thus, as the example of contemporary Muslim societies suggests,[1385] the rise of these Muslim figures is also an illustration of the fragmentation of religious authorities among the Yoruba Muslims and how the authority of established scholars among them is being challenged. Certainly, there is a need to understand the relationship between the Muslim elite and the established scholars beyond what is presented in this study.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the change in the understanding of a good Muslim in the MSSN goes closely with a shift in some of its previous objectives and orientations about Islam. One major orientation that reveals this shift is the Society's emphasis on a single Muslim community in educational institutions. Between 1954 and the mid-1970s, this orientation had allowed open discussion of Islam and accommodation of the students' religious diversities. However, this orientation was first challenged in 1974 after the Ahmadiyya movement was declared non-Muslim and in the 1980s following the Society's insistence on s*unna* and scriptural interpretation of Islamic texts. Even if it has continued to promote the idea of one Muslim community, the new orientation has encouraged a form of intolerance of Muslims of Sufi and Salafi orientations who do not share the Society's understanding of *sunna* and interpretation of Islamic texts. Still, rejecting these other Muslims should not be taken to mean that there was homogeneity in the MSSN's interpretation of Islam. Indeed, the interpretation of *sunna* in the Society also varied. Another previous orientation of the MSSN that has fluctuated over time is the idea of 'peace' in its first motto. To an extent, as I argued in Chapter Four, the choice of this word appears to be based on the meaning of *Islam,* which many Yoruba Muslims translate as *peace*. On the other hand, the use of this word is also closely linked to its self-positioning as a non-resistant and accommodating Society. This positioning was with a view to cooperate with colonial administrators who were strongly concerned about the activities of Islamic movements that were perceived to oppose their rule. The emphasis on peace was also aimed at maintaining a neutral stand among Muslims who belonged to different political parties in Nigeria's pre/post-independence era. Even though this notion of peace continued to be promoted in the Society, I argued in Chapter Four that the change of its motto to the *kalima* (declaration of faith) was a signal to a different orientation, which confirms

---

[1385] Loimeier, "Boko Haram": 141–3; Benjamin F. Soares, "New Muslim Public Figures in West Africa" in *Islamic Education in Africa*, 268–70; Francis Robinson, "Crisis of Authority: Crisis of Islam?," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 19, no. 3 (2009).

Loimeier's argument on why a change in the terminology used by an Islamic movement is an indication of a change in its orientation with regard to Islam.[1386]

One of my findings in this study is that the MSSN has many educational platforms that are linked to the change in its orientation about Islam. I argue that while these platforms provided the settings that facilitated the change to its new understanding of Islam, they also represent the outcome of the broader transformation of Islamic education in Yoruba society. Hence, to illustrate this point, I describe the many aspects of this transformation which include Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) textbooks, the Islamic Vacation Course (IVC), Leadership Training and the gendered Brothers' Forum and Sisters' Circle, among others, that are used to transmit Islamic knowledge to students. However, I note that despite the criticism of the pedagogy and epistemology of these forms of Islamic education by the established scholars, they remained crucial to the process of learning about Islam for many students. In particular, many students consider these forms of education to facilitate the embodiment of Islamic knowledge in a better way than the *madrasas*. Also, I argue that while the pedagogy and epistemology that underpinned these forms of education are challenging those of the *madrasas*, there is a need to better problematise them beyond the point of view of the classical *madrasas* and the Muslim schools which is popular in existing literature. Be that as it may, it is important to note that their pedagogies and epistemologies are still connected to those of the classical *madrasas* in many ways. This is why they may be considered as part of the diverse methods in which Islamic education is transmitted today rather than a transition to new forms.

Apart from the transmission of knowledge, the MSSN educational platforms also facilitated open debates about Islam. These open debates were central to how reform was achieved in the Society. The reform, as I showed in Chapter Five, was produced by the reinterpretation of prophetic s*unna* and the consciousness for *ḥujja* (evidence) based on the Qur'an and Hadith. From the works of Seesemann and Salomon, I showed that asking for evidence is central to the project of many Islamic reform movements in Africa. Added to this, I highlighted the emphasis on *àgbọ́yé* (understanding) in the MSSN reform, which I take to be another major finding in this study. The notion of *àgbọ́yé* describes the importance of sufficient Islamic knowledge on any matters of the religion, such as the *sunna* of the Prophet. It emphasises having a 'different' or 'alternative' concept of this knowledge. Based on this concept, I argue that the MSSN does not consider having sufficient Islamic knowledge is what makes a Muslim better. To the

---

[1386] Loimeier, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*, 19–20; Loimeier, "Boko Haram": 151–2.

contrary, the Society also takes the line of reasoning as a central factor in what makes a Muslim better. This study notes that the importance of *àgbọ́yé* is also upheld by other Muslim groups such as NASFAT, the Sufi brothers and the Salafis in Yorubaland regardless of their different understanding of Islam. Thus, rather than thinking that *àgbọ́yé* is only relevant to the MSSN, I maintain that it should also be understood as an important factor in the concept of a good Muslim in the wider Yoruba Muslim society.

This study further demonstrates that the MSSN reform had an impact on the religious and social lives of many students. However, while the MSSN considers its newly discovered orientation as the correct position in Islam, the orientation has affected the way the Society is viewed in the broader Yoruba society and in Nigeria. Until the 1990s, many Yoruba Muslims saw the MSSN as a platform to give their children an 'enlightened' 'Islamic' form of social interaction, teaching them the basic knowledge of their religion and guiding them on their academic life.[1387] However, the current orientation of the Society is now seen by many of them to be more 'radical' than what they wanted for their children,[1388] although there are also parents who consider the new orientation as better than what the Muslim youths had in the past.[1389] This perception has heightened due to the emphasis on the veil for female Muslims and the cases of students who have challenged the religious and cultural practices of their parents. This kind of reaction to Islamic reforms seems to be widespread in Africa where reformers promote new ethics and contest the 'traditional' practices of other Muslims. Masquelier's study has already referred to this with the example of women in Niger who opposed the Yan Izala's emphasis on an austere marriage ceremony. While the Yan Izala's aim is to control extravagant expenses on the wedding, and thereby helped the men to meet up their marital obligations, according to Masquelier, the women questioned this patriarchal notion of social order by demanding a high bridewealth and equipping their daughters with valuable modern household items before they join their husbands' family circle.[1390]

Besides the Muslim communities, the current orientation of the MSSN has also produced a new kind of interreligious encounters in contemporary Yoruba society. While the past encounter was more about the Muslim fear of Christianization through the schools, today it is

---

[1387] Alhaji Sheriffdeen Adenuga, interview by Adeyemi Balogun; Alhaji Muritadha Awal, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1388] Alhaji Sheriffdeen Adenuga, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1389] Alhaji Muritadha Awal, interview by Adeyemi Balogun.

[1390] Masquelier, *Women and Islamic Revival in a West African Town*, 175–204.

more about the Christian fear of Islamization. This fear of Islamization is responsible for the increasing number of altercations between Yoruba Muslims and Christians involving veiled Muslims in public establishments and schools. Perhaps, what has heightened this fear is also the way of thinking of both Muslims and Christians about the issues of "secularity," "freedom of religion" and "multi-religiosity" of Nigeria.[1391] The position of many Christians is that using the veil in public spaces like school is a violation of the secularity of Nigeria (even though the attitude of the Nigerian government to "secularism" remains ambivalent),[1392] while the Muslims are of the view that the veil is an expression of their religious freedom which the Nigerian constitution is understood to recognise.[1393] For the most part, these recent encounters have not caused any major violence in Yorubaland, but they are challenging the argument regarding religious tolerance and coexistence which scholars like Ade Ajayi and Peel refer to in Yoruba society.[1394]

This study demonstrates that the MSSN is neither oblivious to the counter-reaction of its reform from the Yoruba Muslim communities, nor the encounter it inspired within the Christian circles. One of the findings in this study is that these reactions are central to the MSSN' concept of Islam that emphasised moderation and flexibility in religious and social life, the gradual embodiment of Islamic knowledge and the tolerance of Islam to non-Muslim traditions. As shown in Chapter Six, these notions of Islam are contentious and seem difficult to apply in real life. Nonetheless, they helped the MSSN to temper the tone of its reform orientation, even though the orientation has continued to be understood as "extreme" and "radical" within the Christian communities and by many Yoruba Muslims. Moreover, these notions of Islam also shaped the diversity of social and religious practices in the MSSN and they allowed multiple interpretations and expressions of the *sunna* to develop rather than one. Furthermore, these notions point to the importance of interpreting Islamic texts in relation to historical conditions.

[1391] Julius Adekunle, "Religion and Politics in Transition," in *Religion in Politics: Secularism and National Integration in Modern Nigeria*, ed. Julius Adekunle, 3–18 (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2009); Tunji Olaopa, "Of Ḥijāb and Robes: The Challenge of Secularity in Nigeria," *The Guardian*, July 24, 2016.

[1392] Osita Ogbu, "Is Nigeria a Secular State? Law, Human Rights and Religion in Context," *The Transnational Human Rights Review* 1, no. 1 (2014): 135–6; Tunji Olaopa, "Of Ḥijāb and Robes: The Challenge of Secularity in Nigeria," *The Guardian*, July 24, 2016.

[1393] Fatima Abubakre, "Media Influences on the Perceptions of the Usage of Hijab in Nigeria'S Public Institutions and Surrounding Controversy in the Lagos-Ibadan Axis," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 38, no. 4 (2018): 6–7.

[1394] J. F. A. Ajayi, "Promoting Religious Tolerance and Cooperation in the West African Region" in *Proceedings of the International Congress of Dialogue on Civilizations, Religions and Culture in West Africa*; Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orisa-religion*, 2.

Above all, they shed light on different lines of reasoning in Islam and why they informed the heterogeneity of Yoruba Muslims.

If the MSSN reform aroused opposition from Muslim parents and fear of Islamization among Christians, the effect on its own existence as a unit is equally extensive. To an extent, the breaking away of groups like the Salafis and TMC from the MSSN is linked to the differences in their interpretation of Islam. In this regard, the MSSN took a separate view to the Salafis' argument on the formation of religious groups and participation in politics as well as TMC's emphasis on the embodiment of ethics like veiling and praying regardless of Muslims' knowledge of these ethics. However, besides their different interpretation of Islam, it is also important to focus on the struggle for leadership and the question of the transformation of MSSN probably to another movement in order to understand why they left. As I demonstrated in Chapter Five, these two issues show that the exit in the mid-1990s (especially of TMC, Dawah Front and The Companion) is also related to concerns about how to preserve what they had learnt about the *sunna* after school and how to deal with the problems of unemployment, poverty and other socio-economic crises which confronted many Nigerians including Muslims in the post-independence era. This, therefore, suggests that while religion was an important factor in the MSSN crises from the mid-1990s, the strains imposed by the poor socio-economic conditions of Nigeria was also salient in the crises. But looking beyond the factors that led to its organizational crisis, the fragmentation of the MSSN has added to the diversity of Yoruba Muslims today. Even though it challenged the Society's effort to build an indivisible Muslim community, the fragmentation has ensured the widening of new expressions of Islam among the Yoruba Muslims.

In general, while the study argues that the MSSN contribution to religious change involves a range of interlinked processes that fluctuated at different points in time, it nevertheless shows that what is known about many aspects of these processes remain sketchy especially in the period between 1954 and the late 1990s. For instance, little is still known about the other factors that led to the constitutional review of the MSSN by the 1980s which culminated in the adoption of the *kalima* as a motto. Also, there is scant information on the activities of the MSSN and the everyday life of members of the Society up to the 1990s. Furthermore, this study shows that the MSSN encouraged Muslims participation in politics, but what is known about the relationship between the Society and the governing elite is insufficient. Also, there is inadequate information about the various kinds of relationships between the MSSN and the larger Yoruba Muslims and the clerics in particular. The knowledge of these other aspects of

the Society's history will contribute to an understanding of the other dynamics in the religious change of many Yoruba Muslim elite. Despite these lacunas, this study has drawn attention to some of the key processes involved in this change.

In all, the study demonstrates that the Yoruba Muslim elite were able to negotiate their religious lives in a post-independence Nigeria that has experienced a great deal of socio-economic and political changes. It shows that how they negotiate these changes inspired their new ways of being Muslim which reflect what Otayek and Soares have identified as *Islam mondain* (or 'Islam in the present world') in the Muslim societies of Africa today.[1395] Their experiences are thus an illustration of the way they developed different ways of being Muslim that go together with modernity. In another vein, this study broadly suggests that from the colonial era the importance of religion in the Nigerian public sphere did not disappear with the onset of secular/modern institutions and policies ranging from Western schooling to the introduction of nation-state system, neo-liberalism and communication technologies. In fact, the example of the school system lagely managed by missionaries gives the impression that religious values are integrated into many aspects of these secular institutions, making it a salient factor in the private and public life of most Nigerian elite. Little is still known about the religious experience of these elite, and it will be interesting in future research to understand why religion has been at the centre of their private and public life despite being integrated into secular institutions.

With the worldwide attention on Nigeria and the often shocking misrepresentation of Islam in the country by the media especially following the breakdown of security caused by the violent Boko Haram movement in the Northeast region since 2009, this study provides a better and thorough insight into the understanding of Islam and Muslims in contemporary Nigeria. Using the example of MSSN not only in Yorubaland but also in Northern Nigeria, it shows that Muslims relation with Christians in the country is not only about violence. In many communities, members of both faiths frequently borrow from each other, marry among themselves and convert to each other's religion. The representation of both faiths is also balanced in many public establishments and governance, albeit this is mostly happening where the population of Muslims and Christians is almost equal. Furthermore, Islam is widely contested among the Muslims in Nigeria, and, often, the contest is linked with intergroup and national politics. By implication, it will be erroneous to take the argument of some groups or a religious authority as the correct interpretation of the religion in the country. Besides, the

---

[1395] René Otayek and Benjamin F. Soares, "Introduction" in *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*, 17–19.

meaning of Islam for many Muslims and their practices are neither static nor closed to innovation. The impact of new epistemological perspective, Western schooling and the internet are examples of the factors shaping this change today. Another aspect of the contemporary expression of Islam in Nigeria is in the activism of Muslim women. In many communities, women have established their own religious movements, enrolled in Western schools, acquired professional skills, participated in religious knowledge production and remained visible in public life. This study illustrates that Muslim movements like the MSSN have generally facilitated this public life for many women. There can be no doubt that understanding the Muslims in Nigeria from these broad-ranging perspectives is not only fruitful, it is also helpful to unravel the extent to which Islam and the different orientations of the religion among them have actually influenced interreligious conflicts as well as politics and social encounters in the post-independence era.

Bibliography

Documents from the National Archive, Ibadan, Nigeria

Comcol 1. Education Committees, 81/2.

Comcol 1. Education Committees, 81/5.

Comcol 1. Muslim Cricket Club, 253/1.

Comcol 1. Pilgrims to Mecca-Individual cases, 253/1.

Comcol 1. Mohammedan Festivals, 758/1.

Comcol 1. The Crescent Bearers, Lagos, 248/81.

OyoProf. Christianity and Paganism Conflict of Law and Customs, 840/1.

OyoProf. Young Nawair-Ud-Deen Society School, Ilesha, 4556.

Documents from the Institute of African Studies (IAS), Bayreuth, Germany

Al Ilm (The Knowledge), 4, no. 1. 1973.

Al Ilm (The Knowledge), 4, no. 2. 1974.

Al Ilm (The Knowledge), 5, no. 2. 1975.

Al Ilm (The Knowledge), 8, no. 1. 1977.

Al Ilm (The Knowledge), 8, no. 2. 1978.

Al Ilm (The Knowledge), no. 3. 1982.

Al Ilm (The Knowledge), no. 4. 1983.

Al Ilm (The Knowledge), Anniversary edition. 1985.

Jama'at-Islamiyya of Nigeria: 60th Anniversary Celebration. 1984.

Radiance, 1979-80

Radiance, 1979-83

Radiance, 1979-84

Report for the Years, 1923-1973. The Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria. Lagos, 1974

Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria, 1983, NGA 6.51-17.6

Newspaper Reports

Daily Sketch, July 27, 1995

Daily Success, July 11, 1953.

Daily Success, June 12, 1953

Daily Times, February 4, 1985.

National Concord, June 19, 1985.

New Nigerian, September 7, 1981.

Nigerian Herald, December 19, 1982.

Nigerian Tribune, October 20, 1992.

The Punch, February 7, 2017.

The Guardian, October 3, 1999.

The Guardian, July 24, 2016.

The Nation, April 8, 2016.

Vanguard, January 29, 2010.

Vanguard, September 13, 2011.

Vanguards, July 21, 2016.

Vanguard, July 23, 2019.

Brochures and Memoirs

Annual Zonal Conference: The True Successor. MSSN, 2015.

Annual Conference Transitional: Recipe for Good Leadership. MSSN, 2015.

Annual Zonal Conference, MSSN B-Zone, 2014.

Ash-Shabaab (The Youth) Pen, MSSN UNILAG Branch, 2004.

Directorate of Studies. "Syllabus for Islamic Vacation Course for Upper, Middle and Lower Categories." MSSN B-Zone, 2016.

"MSS at a Glance." MSSN, Abuja, 2009.

MSSN: 60th Anniversary. Abuja Nigeria, May 24, 2014.

Tajudeen, Abubakr. *MSS at 30: The History and the History Makers of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria*. Ibadan: The Islamic Book Centre, U.I.M.S.S., 1984.

The Muezzin. vol. 1, August 18, 1974.

The Nigerian Scouter. Lagos: The Scout Association of Nigeria, 2016.

Internet Sources

Abdulkabir, Sulaiman. "MSSN Lagos Human Capital Development Centre (HCDC).". http://www.mssnlagos.net/~mssnlago/index.php/2017-12-27-07-00-30 (accessed March 23, 2018).

Abideen Olaiya. "MSSN and Its Unending Crises." *Newspaper Online*, March 4, 2018. https://mynewspapersonline.blogspot.de/2017/03/mssn-and-its-unending-crises.html (accessed February 19, 2018).

ACADIP Online Institute. "Our History.". http://aicos.com.ng/about-us/our-history/.

Adebowale, Segun. "Sultan, Babalola, Others for MSSN Vacation Course." *The Eagle Online*, December 20, 2016. https://theeagleonline.com.ng/sultan-babalola-others-for-mssn-vacation-course/ (accessed March 24, 2018).

Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Nigeria. "Ahmadi Muslim Students' Association (AMSA).". https://islaminafrica.wordpress.com/category/ahmadiyya/ahmadiyya-muslim-jamaat-nigeria/ (accessed December 26, 2017).

Al-Atharee, Aboo Aamir. "What Happened to MSSN: An Historical Overview.". http://simplysalafiyyah.com/what-happened-to-MSSN.html (accessed February 5, 2018).

Al-Atharee, Aboo Aamir. "What Is Haunting the Muslim Congress?". http://simplysalafiyyah.com/what-is-haunting-tmc.html (accessed February 24, 2018).

Al-Atharee, Aboo Aamir. "OAU Campus and Myopia of the Aging Detractors.". http://simplysalafiyyah.com/oau-campus-and-myopia-of-the-aging-destractors.html (accessed March 7, 2018).

Al-Mu'minaat. "About Us: Al-Mu'minaat (the Believing Women) Organization.". https://www.almuminaatng.org/about-us/ (accessed February 24, 2018).

al-Munajjid, Muhammad S. "Biography of the Site'S General Supervisor: Islam Question & Answer.". https://islamqa.info/en/about-director (accessed June 25, 2019).

"Badamasi B. Musa Agbaji." In *Arabic Literature of Africa Online*. Edited by John O. Hunwick and R. S. O'Fahey. Brill, 2016/04/06. https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/arabic-literature-of-africa-online/badamasi-b-musa-agbaji-COM_ALA_20011_1_18 (accessed September 23, 2017).

Balogun, Adeola. "I Took a Second Wife to Avert Impending Scandal: Wasiu-Sidiq.". http://www.nairaland.com/273114/took-second-wife-avert-impending (accessed January 2, 2018).

Balogun, Ismail A. B. "Why Did I Renounce Ahmadiyyah?".http://irshad.org/brochures/renounce.php (accessed December 27, 2017).

Bearman, P. Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, ed. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 2nd ed. http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/hudjdja-COM_0297?s.num=19 (accessed January 15, 2018).

Brill Reference on Middle East and Islamic Studies: https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/subjects/Middle%20East%20and%20Islamic%20Studies (accessed 2017-2019).

"Daarus-Salafiyyah, Ibadan, Nigeria.". https://www.facebook.com/pg/Daarus-Salafiyyah-Ibadan-Nigeria-553996631378744/photos/?ref=page_internal (accessed March 6, 2018).

Dawah Front of Nigeria. "About Us.". http://dawahfrontnigeria.com/welcome/about_us (accessed February 25, 2018).

Durosinmi, M.A. "OAU Professor Durosinmi Writes on Muslim Students in Hijab.". http://www.nairaland.com/4249440/oau-professor-durosinmi-writes-muslim (accessed January 3, 2018).

Falowo, Abdul-Wahab. The Famous First Muslim Singer and Scholar of Great Repute. interview by Olatunji Yusuf Hassan, Lagos. https://www.tundishonline.com/437957347 (accessed March 6, 2018).

Federal Ministry of Youth Development, Nigeria. "Second National Youth Policy." 2009 https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Nigeria_2009_National_Youth_Policy.pdf (accessed 2017-2019).

Igbafen, Favour. "Sultan Mediates in OAU MSSN Crisis." *New Telegraph*, April 8, 2017. https://newtelegraphonline.com/2017/04/sultan-mediates-oau-mssn-crisis/ (accessed March 7, 2018).

MSSN B-Zone. Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/search/str/mssn+bzone/keywords_search (accessed April 14, 2018)

MSSN Lagos State Area Unit. Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/mssnlagosstateareaunit/ (accessed June 14, 2018)

MSSN Lagos State Area Unit. "Council of Higher Institutions.". https://www.mssnlagos.net/index.php/cohi (accessed July 5, 2019).

MSSN UNILAG. "Embryonic Stage of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria." *Ash-Shabaab (The Youth) Pen*, 2004. http://www.mssnlagos.net (accessed November 14, 2015).

Muqoddam Odetayo Sulaiman. "The TIMSAN Message.".
http://timsannational.blogspot.de/2014/10/the-timsan-message.html (accessed March 8, 2018).

National Population Commission. "Nigeria's Population Now 182 Million: NPC.".
http://population.gov.ng/nigerias-population-now-182-million-npc/ (accessed November 29, 2017).

Niaz, Azhar. "International Islamic Federation of Student Organisation." *Islamicus*, May 12, 2014. islamicus.org/international-islamic-federation-of-student-organizations/ (accessed December 23, 2017).

Olaiya, Abideen. "Dangerous Trend of Salafist Movement in Southwest Nigeria." *iWitness*, November 28, 2016. https://www.iwitness.com.ng/dangerous-trend-of-salafist-movement-in-south-west-nigeria/ (accessed March 5, 2018).

Oyekola, Anifat. WhatsApp, WhatsApp texts, November 2, 2018.

PressTV. "Hijab Controversy in Lagos: INfocus.".
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0Ir44fNEBw (accessed January 12, 2019).

Rabiu, Jamiu. "'Cold War' Between Buhari's Minister, OAU Muslim Community." *iWitness*, September 27, 2017. https://www.iwitness.com.ng/cold-war-between-buharis-minister-oau-muslim-community/.(accessed January 13, 2018).

"Shariah College of Nigeria.". http://www.shariahcollege.com/Home (accessed March 5, 2018).

Sheikh Abeebullah Adam Al-Ilory. "Ailagboye Islam 2.".
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ON4J5-TOVI8 (accessed March 2, 2018).

Shobo, Kunle. "NASFAT Former Chief Missioner, Abdullahi Akinbode, Opens New Islamic Enterprise, Jamaa'Tu Ahli Llahi - Blackbox Nigeria.".
http://blackboxnigeria.com/2017/06/18/nasfat-former-chief-missioner-abdullahi-akinbode-opens-new-islamic-enterprise-jamaatu-ahli-llahi/ (accessed January 2, 2018).

Sikand, Yoginder. "The Tablighi Jamaat's Contested Claims to Islamicity." *Indian Muslim Observer*, June 24, 2010. http://indianmuslimobserver.com/2010/06/24/issues-the-tablighi-jamaats-contested-claims-to-islamicity/ (accessed February 21, 2019).

SimplySalafiyyah. "Preaching the Creed and Methodology of the Salaf to Africa and the World.". http://simplysalafiyyah.com/ (accessed March 6, 2018).

Sodiq, Kamoru. "Abu Ibeji's Road to Prison." *iWitness*, December 2, 2016.
https://www.iwitness.com.ng/abu-ibeji-road-to-prison/.

Techgeniusworld. "The History of Customised Fashion." *Nairaland*.
https://www.nairaland.com/4161150/history-customising-lagos-nigeria (accessed December 1, 2018).

"The Islamic Review (1913–1971; 1980–1989) (Official Magazine of the Working Muslim Mission, UK).". http://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/islamicreview/islamicreview.shtml (accessed December 8, 2017).

The Muslim Congress. "The Imams of the Muslim Congress (TMC): 3 of 3.".
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i616uAmrr_s (accessed February 24, 2018).

The Muslim Congress. "Interview with Sheikh Abdul Fatah Thanni: YouTube.".
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNxTecOxHD8 (accessed January 8, 2018).

The Muslim Congress. "About the Muslim Congress: Introduction.". http://tmcng.net/about/ (accessed February 23, 2018).

The Story of Scripture Union Nigeria.
http://sunigeria.org/documents/scriptureunionhistory.pdf (accessed May 27, 2017)

"The Working Muslim Mission, England, 1913-1960s: *The Islamic Review* Archive.".
http://www.wokingmuslim.org/work/islamic-review/index.htm (accessed May 10, 2019).

Voice of the Salaf. "Abu Ibeji and Abu Abdillah Sentenced.".
https://voiceofthesalaf.com/2016/11/22/abu-ibeji-and-abu-abdillah-sentenced/ (accessed March 7, 2018).

Interviews

Abass, Abdul-Kareem, MSSN Vice President UI Branch, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, March 12, 2017, UI, Ibadan.

Abdul-Azeez, Taofiq. Professor of English, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, June 19, 2018, University of Abuja, Abuja.

Abdul-Rahman, M. O. Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 22, 2016, UI, Ibadan.

Abdus-Salam, Mikhail. MSSN Oyo fmr. Director of Secondary Schools, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 23, 2016, UI, Ibadan

Abiodun, Raheem. Vice-President, MSSN Agbowo Central Branch, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 22, 2016, Ikeja, Lagos.

Abdul-Rasaq, AbdRahman. Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 23, 2016, IU, Ibadan.

Abdur-Raheem, Luqman. Lecturer and President of TMC, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 16, 2016, YABATECH, Lagos.

Abdul-Rahim, Bashir. Lecturer and Imam, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, February 31, 2017, UNILAG, Akoka, Lagos.

AbdirRahim, Ishaq. Teacher, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 11, 2016, Ede, Osun.

Adebayo, Tawakalit. Trader, interview by Anifat Oyekola, January 1, 2017, UI, Ibadan.

Adedoja, Shakirulah. MSSN Oyo President, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 10, 2016, Oke-Ado, Ibadan.

Adegbola, Ibrahim. Engineer, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, July 27, 2017, Text communication.

Adegoke, Sherrifdeen. Teacher, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 2, 2016, Ilupeju, Lagos.

Adekoya Abdur-Raheem. Teacher, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 30, 2017, Yaba, Lagos.

Adeleke, A., and Adele, F. and Ajao, S. (pseudonym). Students, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 16, 2017, Akoka, Lagos.

Adeniyi, Zafaran Omotope. Director, Vanguard School, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 12, 2017, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun.

Adenuga, Alhaji Sheriffdeen. Imam, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, February 2, 2017, Ifako, Lagos.

Adeoye, Abdul-Waheed. MSSN PRO The Polytechnic Ibadan, interview by Atobatele Uthman, January 21, 2017, Sango, Ibadan.

Adesola Sodiq. (pseudonym). Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 29, 2017, Idiaraba, Lagos.

Adewuyi, Abdul-Hakeem. Admin. staff, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 2, 2016, UI, Ibadan.

Adisa, Aminah Olabisi. Trader, interview by Anifat Oyekola, February 17, 2017, Ile-Ife, Osun.

Adisa, Hakeem. Teacher, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 16, 2016, Oja-Oba, Ibadan.

Agbaje, Yusuf. Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, March 12, 2017, LASU Mosque, Ojo Lagos.

Ajibola Aminat. Teacher, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 13, 2016, UI, Ibadan.

Akewukewe, Bolaji. Civil servant and Religious comparer, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 5, 2016, Obalende, Lagos.

Akinwande, Babatunde. Pharmacist, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 28, 2016, Agodi Secretariat, Ibadan.

Akiode, Mariam. Trader, interview by Anifat Oyekola, January 1, 2017, Agodi Secretariat, Ibadan.

Alabidun, Mahfuz. MSSN President LASU Branch, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, March 12, 2017, LASU Mosque, Ojo Lagos.

Alao, Ibrahim. Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, February 2, 2017, FCE Akoka, Lagos.

Alaran, Mushafau. MSSN B-Zone President, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 24, 2016, Abeokuta, Ogun.

Alarape, A. A. Lecturer 1, Wildlife Ecology and Management, UI, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 30, 2016, UI, Ibadan.

Alhaji Ladejo. Member of Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 20, 2016, Surulere, Lagos.

Awal, Alhaji Muritadha. Imam, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 21, 2016, Bariga Lagos.

Awal, Idris. (pseudonym). Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, March 7, 2017, Federal College of Education (FCE), Akoka, Lagos.

Balogun, Kabirat. Student, interview by Adeyemi, Balogun December 2, 2016, UI, Ibadan.

Babarinde, Misbaudeen. Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 13, 2016, UI, Ibadan.

Brother Mukthar. Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, March 19, 2017, UI, Ibadan.

Dawud, Ibrahim. Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 18, 2016, UI, Ibadan.

Fasanya, Abdul Wasiu, AGS MSSN Lagos Area Unit, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, March 11, 2017, Agege, Lagos.

Hammed, Rashida. (pseudonym). Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 14, 2017, Akoka, Lagos.

Hassan, Jelila. (pseudonym). Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 14, 2017, Akoka, Lagos.

Imam Eti-Osa LG Mosque. Cleric, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 14, 2017, Eti-Osa, Lagos.

Ishola, Sherifat. Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 17, 2016, YABATECH, Lagos.

Jimoh, Shukuroh. Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 14, 2017, Akoka, Lagos.

Kabir Ajadi. (pseudonym). Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 12, 2016, Ile-Ife Osun.

Mabadeje, Fathi. Professor of Pharmacology, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 22, 2016, UNILAG Mosque Akoka Lagos.

Mabadeje, Saidat. Professor of Botanical Science, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 22, 2016, UNILAG Mosque Akoka Lagos.

Mogaji, Nasirudeen Musa. Imam, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 17, 2016, Isolo, Lagos.

Mumin, Abdul. Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 20, 2016, Ojuelegba, Lagos.

Muritala, Aisha. MSSN UI Vice-President, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 18, 2017, UI, Ibadan.

Noibi, O. S. Dawud. Prof. of Arabic and Islamic Studies, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, February 9, 2017, Idi-Ape, Ibadan.

Odukoya, Ibrahim. Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 22, 2016, UI, Ibadan.

Okunade, Abideen. Vice President MSSN OAU-Ife, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, February 27, 2017, OAU Ife, Osun.

Oladimeji, Abdul-Qudus. Teacher, interview by Atobatele Uthman, January 8, 2017, Abeokuta, Ogun.

Oladosu, Afis. Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 28, 2016, UI, Ibadan.

Oladosu, Habibah. Snr. Lecturer, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 28, 2016, UI, Ibadan.

Olamilekan, Ibrahim. Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, February 18, 2017, LASU, Ojo Lagos.

Olaiya, Abideen. Assoc. Professor of Cropping systems, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 29, 2016, IVC, Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.

Olaoye Rashid. (pseudonym). Student, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, March 14, 2017, Ikirun, Osun.

Olanrewaju, Ahmad. Admin. staff, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 29, 2016, UI, Ibadan.

Olayinka, Yusuf. MSSO CSO, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 28, 2016, Ogunmakin Town, Lagos-Ibadan Road.

Oloso, K. O. Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, March 14, 2017, UI, Ibadan.

Opadijo, Abdul-Hakeem. Teacher, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, January 31, 2017, Yaba, Lagos.

Opeyemi, Hadiza. Student, interview by Uthman Atobatele, January 23, 2017, Apete, Ibadan.

Oyekan, Jibril. MSSN Board of Trustees member, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 21, 2016, Ikoyi Lagos.

Raji, Abdul-Ganiy. Professor of Agric. Eng. interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 26, 2017, Ogunmakin, Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.

Raji, Sherrif. MSSN President Bariga LCDA, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, February 9, 2017, Ifako, Lagos.

Salami, Sekinat. Student, interview by Anifat Oyekola, January 1, 2017, Ife, Osun.

Sanni, Amidu. Prof. of Arabic and Islamic Studies, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, March 18, 2017, LASU, Ojo Lagos.

Sanni, Ishaq Kunle. Coordinator, NACOMYO, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 9, 2016, Bodija, Ibadan.

Sanni, Rafiu. Lecturer, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 6, 2016, ACE-Ondo, Ondo.

Shaykh Abdul-Fatah Muhammad Thanni. Imam and Patron of TMC, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 22, 2018, Satelite Town, Lagos.

Taiwo, Abdur-Rahman, MSSN Oyo PRO, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, May 10, 2016, Challenge, Ibadan.

Umar, Ibrahim. MSSN YABATECH President, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, December 20, 2016, YABATECH, Lagos.

Uthman, Ibrahim. Lecturer and MSSN B-Zone fmr. President, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, February 17, 2017, UI, Ibadan.

Yekin, Taofeeq. Lecturer and National President of MSSN, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, November 28, 2016, UI, Ibadan.

Yusuf, Rukayat. fmr. PRO MSSN UI Branch, interview by Adeyemi Balogun, October 27, 2016, UI, Ibadan.

Field reports

Adegbenle, Semiu. Field Notes, 2017.

Atobatele, Uthman. Field Notes, 2017.

Balogun, Adeyemi. Field Notes. 2017.

Oyekola, Anifat. Field Notes, 2017.

Jempeji, Sofiat. Field Notes, 2017.

General Literature

"The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity." Forum on Religion & Public Life.
Washington, D.C.: PEW Research Center, 2012.

"Wole Soyinka on Yorùbá Religion: A Conversation with Ulli Beier." *Isokan Yorùbá Magazine* 3, no. 3 (1997).

Abass, L. O. "The Role of Muslim Organisations of Oyo State in Policy Implementation of Islamic Religious Studies." *ALFKIR* 19 (2006): 132–143.

Abbink, Jon. "Religion in Public Spaces: Emerging Muslim-Christian Polemics in Ethiopia." *African Affairs* 110, no. 439 (2011): 253–274.

Abdul, M. O. A. *The Prophet of Islam: His Life, Sayings and Deeds*. Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1971; Book Two.

Abdul, Musa O. A. "The Role of Islam in the Development Plan of Nigeria." *Al-Ilmu (Knowledge): Journal of the MSSN* 5, no. 2 (1975): 23–28.

Abdul-Haqq, Abdiyah A. *Sharing Your Faith with a Muslim*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1980.

Abdul-Malik, Najib A. "A Study of the Activities of Village Da'wa of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria, University of Ilorin Branch." Unpublished BA essay, University of Ilorin, 2016.

Abernethy, David B. *The Political Dilemma of Popular Education: An African Case.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969.

Abu Abdullah ibn Kharasiy. *The Covenant*. 2nd ed. Lagos: Al-Fathi Islamic Publications, 2003.

Abubakar, Abdur-Rasheed. *Hijab and the Nigerian Press*. Lagos: Rawshield PR Company, 2016.

Abubakre, Fatima. "Media Influences on the Perceptions of the Usage of Hijab in Nigeria'S Public Institutions and Surrounding Controversy in the Lagos-Ibadan Axis." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 38, no. 4 (2018): 1–16.

Adamolekun, Ladipo, John Erero, and Basil Oshionebo. ""Federal Character" And Management of the Federal Civil Service and the Military." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 21, no. 4 (1991): 75–88.

Adebayo, A. G. "Money, Credit, and Banking in Precolonial Africa: The Yoruba Experience." *Anthropos, Bd 89.* 4, no. 6 (1994): 379–400.

Adebayo, Rafiu I. "The Challenges of Islamization of Knowledge in Nigerian Islamic Universities." *IIUM Journal of Educational Studies* 4, no. 1 (2016): 78–99.

Adeboye, Olufunke. "Intra-Ethnic Segregation in Colonial Ibadan: The Case of Ijebu Settlers." In *Security, Crime and Segregation in West African Cities since the 19th Century*. Edited by Fourchard, Laurent and Albert, Isaac Olawale, 303–20. Ibadan: Karthala et IFRA, 2003.

Adedayo, Musa A. *Abdul-Lateef Adegbite: A Life for the People*. Lagos: WEPCOM Publishers Ltd., 2006.

Adedeji, 'Femi. "Classification of Nigerian Gospel Music Styles." *Nigerian Music Review*, no. 5 (2004): 62–80.

Adéẹ̀kọ́, Adélékè. "'Writing' and 'Reference' in Ifá Divination Chants." *Oral Tradition* 25, no. 2 (2010): 283–303.

Adefuye, Ade, Babatunde Agiri, and Jide Osuntokun, eds. *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*. Ikeja Lagos: Lantern Books, 1987.

Adegbindin, Omotade. *Ifá in Yorùbá Thought System.* Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2014.

Adekunle, Julius. "Religion and Politics in Transition." In *Religion in Politics: Secularism and National Integration in Modern Nigeria*. Edited by Julius Adekunle, 3–18. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2009.

Adeleye, R. A., "Mahdist Triumph and British Revenge in Northern Nigeria: Satiru 1906," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 6, no. 2 (1972): 193-214.

Adeloye, Adeola. "Some Early Nigerian Doctors and Their Contribution to Modern Medicine in West Africa." *Medical History* 18, no. 3 (1974): 275–293.

Adeoti, Oladele Ezekiel and Ojo, Oluranti Edward. "The Dynamics of Pre-Colonial West African Economy: The Yoruba Experience." *Nigerian Journal of Economic History* 11, no. 12 (2014): 122–145.

Aderinto, Saheed. "Researching Colonial Childhoods: Images and Representations of Children in Nigerian Newspaper Press, 1925-1950." *History in Africa* 39 (2012): 241–266.

Adesoji, Abimbola O. "Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Response of the Nigerian State." *Africa Today* 57, no. 4 (2011): 99–119.

Adesoji, Abimbola. "The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria." *Africa Spectrum* 45, no. 2 (2010): 95–108.

Adesoji, Abimbola O. "Progressive Unions and the Competition for Community Development in Nigeria: A Study of Ifon, Ilobu and Erin Progressive Unions, 1940-1970." *African Study Monographs* 29, no. 2 (July 2008): 51–72.

Adesoye Omolasoye. "Yoruba Oral Literature as a Panacea for Unemployment in Nigeria." *Knowledge Review* 25, no. 1 (2012): 103–108.

Adetona, Lateef M. "NASFAT: A Modern Prayer Group and Its Contributions to the Propagation of Islam in Lagos." *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization* 2, no. 2 (2012): 102–107.

Adetona, Lateef M. "Religious Models for Peace and War in a Heterogenous Society: A Case Study of the Sharia Law Model in Yorubaland." In *Islam in Africa South of the Sahara: Essays in Gender Relations and Political Reform*. Edited by Pade Badru and Brigid M. Sackey, 313–28. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013.

Adogame, Afe, Magnus. Echtler, and Oliver. Freiberger, eds. *Alternative Voices: A Plurality Approach for Religious Studies*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013.

Adomi, Esharenana E. "Internet Development and Connectivity in Nigeria." *Program* 39, no. 3 (2005): 257–268.

Adugbo, A. J. "Counselling Approaches in Nigerian Traditional Communities." *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling* 2, no. 3 (1979): 213–218.

Afigbo, A. E., and Toyin Falola, eds. *Nigerian History, Politics and Affairs: The Collected Essays of Adiele Afigbo*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World, 2005.

Afigbo, A. E. *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891-1929*. New York: Humanities Press, 1972.

Afowowe, Oluranti. "The Advent of Ahmadiyya Movement in Lagos State: Islamic Group as Agent of Social Rejuvenation in Nigeria." In *Actors and Institutions in the Development of Islam in Lagos State: Essays in Honour of Alhaji Femi Okunnu*. Edited by Siyan Oyeweso and M. O. Raheemson, 117–26. Ibadan: Matrixcy Books Ltd, 2013.

Aghedo, Iro. "Sowing Peace, Reaping Violence: Understanding the Resurgence of Kidnapping in Post-Amnesty Niger Delta, Nigeria." *Insight on Africa* 7, no. 2 (2015): 137–153.

Ahonsi, Babatunde A. "Deliberate Falsification and Census Data in Nigeria." *African Affairs* 87, no. 349 (1988): 553–562.

Aishima, Hatsuki. "Are We All Amr Khaled? Islam and the Facebook Generation in Egypt." In *Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation*. Edited by Masquelier, Adeline and Soares, Benjamin F., 105–22. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016.

Ajala, Aderemi S. "Yoruba Nationalism: Culture, Politics and Violence in South-Western Nigeria (1900-2009).". Arbeitspapiere/Working Papers 107.

Ajayi, J. F. A. "Promoting Religious Tolerance and Cooperation in the West African Region: The Example of Religious Plurality and Tolerance Among the Yoruba." In *Proceedings of the International Congress of Dialogue on Civilizations, Religions and Culture in West Africa*. Edited by Ikeogu Oke, 43–7. Paris: UNESCO, 2005.

Ajayi, J. F. A. *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: The Making of the New Elite*. London: Longmans, 1965.

Ajetunmobi, O. R. "Early Socio-Political Organisations." In *Evolution and Development of Lagos State*. Edited by Rasheed Ajetunmobi, 74–89. Lagos: Centre for Lagos Studies, 2003.

Ajetunmobi, Rasheed, ed. *Evolution and Development of Lagos State*. Lagos: Centre for Lagos Studies, 2003.

Akashoro, Olalekan G., Onjefu Okidu, and Mikaila I. Ajaga. "Ideological Implications of Broadcasting Practice in Nigeria: From Pre and Post-Independence Regulation to Deregulation." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* 15, no. 2 (2013): 41–55.

Akinade, Akintunde E., ed. *Fractured Spectrum: Perspectives on Christian-Muslim Encounters in Nigeria*. New York: Peter Lang, 2012.

Akinjogbin, I. A. *The Cradle of a Race: Ife from the Beginning to 1980*. Port Harcourt: Sunray Publications, 1992.

Akinyele, R. T. "States Creation in Nigeria: The Willink Report in Retrospect." *African Studies Review* 39, no. 2 (1996): 71.

Akitoye, Hakeem A. "Islam and Traditional Titles in Contemporary Lagos Society: A Historical Analysis." *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences* 25 (2014): 42–49.

Alebiosu, Kudirat B. "The Life and Work of a Nigerian Muslim Activist: Alhaji AbdurRazzaq Afolabi Solaja." Unpublished BA essay, University of Ilorin, June 1986.

Alemika, Etannibi E. O. "Colonialism, State and Policing in Nigeria." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 20, no. 3 (1993): 187–219.

Alidou, Ousseina. *Engaging Modernity: Muslim Women and the Politics of Agency in Postcolonial Niger*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005

Al-Ilory, Adam. *Adinu Anasi'A*. 3. Lagos, Nigeria: Motibaatu Sakofa Al-Islamiyya, 1978.

Aliyu, Sakariyau A. "The Modernisation of Islamic Education in Ilorin: A Study of the Adabiyya and Markaziyya Educational Systems." *Islamic Africa* 10 (2019): 75–97.

Aliyu, Sakariyau A. "Transmission of Learning in Modern Ilorin: A History of Islamic Education, 1897-2012." PhD thesis, Leiden University, 2015.

Al-Munajjid, Muhammad S. *Interactions of the Greatest Leader: The Prophet´s Dealings with Different People*. Riyadh: Zad Publishing, 2014.

Al-Qushayrī, Muslim a.-Ḥ., Abū Khalīl, Huda Khattab, and Nasiruddin Khattab. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. English Translation. Riyadh, London: Darussalam, 2007.

Altalib, Hisham. *Training Guide for Islamic Workers*. 4th ed. 1. Herndon, Va.: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2001.

Amir, Zahid M. "First Wind of Islamic Revivalism After World War II: Muhammad Asad (1900-92) and International Islamic Colloquium, 1957-58." *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies*, no. 8 (2015): 88–102.

Anjum, Ovamir. "Islam as a Discursive Tradition: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 3 (2007): 656–672.

Anyia, Albert. "Muslim Organisation and the Mobilisations for Sharia Law in Northern Nigeria: The JNI and the NSCIA." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 52, no. 1 (2017): 82–102.

Apata, Z. O. "Lugard and the Creation of Provincial Administration in Northern Nigeria, 1900-1918." *African Study Monographs* 11, no. 3 (1990): 143–152.

Apter, Andrew. "Notes on Orisha Cults in the Ekiti Yoruba Highlands. A Tribute to Pierre Verger." *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 35, no. 138 (1995): 369–401.

Aremu, Johnson O. "Administration of British West African Colonies and the Furtherance of Nigeria-Gold Coast Relations, 1885-1960." *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies* 1, no. 4 (2015).

Areo, Margaret O. "Regbe-Regbe: Multidimensional Impact of Cloth and Colour in Ojude-Ode Oba Festival." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 5, no. 5 (2016): 55–72.

Arifalo, S. O. *The Egbe Omo Oduduwa: A Study in Ethnic and Cultural Nationalism (1945-1965)*. Akure, Nigeria: Stebak Books, 2001.

Arkoun, Mohammed. *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers, Translated by R. D. Lee*. San Francisco, CA: Westview Press, 1994.

Asad, Talal. *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam.* Occasional Papers Series. Washington D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1986.

Asaju, Dapo F., ed. *General Studies: Book of Readings* 2. Lagos: Lagos State University Press, 2006.

Asimiyu, Rasheed A. "Conflicts Among the Members of MSSN in Tertiary Institutions in Southwestern Nigeria." Unpublished MA thesis, University of Ibadan, 2011.

Asonzeh, Ukah. "Seeing Is More Than Believing: Posters and Proselytization in Nigeria." In *Proselytization Revisited: Rights Talk, Free Markets and Culture Wars*. Edited by Rosalind I. J. Hackett, 167–98. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Atanda, J. A. *The New Ọyọ Empire: Indirect Rule and Change in Western Nigeria, 1894-1934*. 1st ed. New York: Humanities Press, 1973.

Attah, Noah E. "Nigerian Inter-Group Relations: Emerging Trends and Challenges." *African Identities* 9, no. 1 (2011): 85–99.

Awe, Bolanle. "Conflict and Divergence: Government and Society in Nigeria." *African Studies Review* 422, no. 3 (1999): 1-20.

Awe, Bolanle. "Militarism and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Yoruba Country: The Ibadan Example." *Journal of African History* XIV, I (1973): 65–77.

Awolalu, J. O. "What Is African Traditional Religion." *Studies in Comparative Religion* 10, no. 2 (Spring, 1976).

Ayandele, Emmanuel A. *African Historical Studies*. Reprint. London: Frank Cass; Routledge, 2005.

Ayandele, Emmanuel A. *African Historical Studies*. London [England], Totowa, N.J.: Frank Cass, 1979.

Aydin, Cemil. *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017.

Badru, Pade, and Brigid M. Sackey, eds. *Islam in Africa South of the Sahara: Essays in Gender Relations and Political Reform*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013.

Bakker, Edwin, and Roel Meijer. eds. *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Balogun, Adeyemi. "What Is Wrong with the Hijab? Muslim Women and the Challenges of Veiling in Yoruba Society of Southwest Nigeria." In *Gender and Social Encounters: Experiences from Africa*. Edited by Shilla S. Memusi and Adeyemi Balogun, 99–117. *African Studies Working Papers 23, BIGSASWorks 9*. Bayreuth: Institute of African Studies (IAS), 2019.

Balogun, Adeyemi. "'When Knowledge Is There, Other Things Follow': The Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria and the Making of Yoruba Muslim Youths." *Islamic Africa* 10 (2019): 127–152.

Balogun, Adeyemi. "Challenges and Affirmations of Islamic Practice: The Tablighi Jamaat." In *Beyond Religious Tolerance: Muslim, Christian and Traditionalist Encounters in an African Town*. Edited by Insa Nolte, Olukoya Ogen and Rebecca Jones, 123–49. Religion in Transforming Africa 2. Rochester NY: James Currey Ltd, 2017.

Balogun, Adeyemi. "The Dynamics of Traditional Religion in the Political Economy of Ìkòrodú." *Yoruba Studies Review* 2, no. 1 (2017): 73–96.

Balogun, Yemi. "Why Youth Service in Nigeria: The Contests and Agitations in 1972-1973." *Journal of Pan African Studies* 7, no. 8 (2015): 153–171.

Balogun, Ismail A. B. *Islamic Religious Studies for Schools and Colleges*. Lagos: John West Publications, 1979.

Balogun, Ismail A. B. *Islam Versus Ahmadiyya in Nigeria*. Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1977.

Balogun, Muhsin A. "Islam in Lagos: Its Growth and Development." In *Actors and Institutions in the Development of Islam in Lagos State: Essays in Honour of Alhaji Femi Okunnu*. Edited by Siyan Oyeweso and M. O. Raheemson, 24–40. Ibadan: Matrixcy Books Ltd, 2013.

Balogun, Muhsin A. "Syncretic Beliefs and Practices Amongst Muslims in Lagos State Nigeria: With Special Reference to the Yoruba Speaking People of Epe." PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011.

Balogun, Oladele A. "The Concepts of Ori and Human Destiny in Traditional Yoruba Thought: A Soft-Deterministic Interpretation." *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 116–130.

Bankole, Sherifa F. "The Role of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria in the Development of Islamic Ethics in University of Ilorin." Unpublished BA essay, University of Ilorin, 2006.

Baran, Zeyno. *Citizen Islam: The Future of Muslim Integration in the West*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011.

Barber, Karin. *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow: Oriki, Women and the Past in a Yoruba Town*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1991.

Barnes, Andrew E. "'Evangelization Where It Is Not Wanted': Colonial Administrators and Missionaries in Northern Nigeria During the First Third of the Twentieth Century." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 25, no. 4 (1995): 412–441.

Barringer, Terry, and Marion Wallace, eds. *African Studies in the Digital Age: Disconnect?* Brill, 2014.

Bayat, Asef, and Linda Herrera, eds. *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Bayat, Asef. *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007.

Beck, Herman L. "The Rupture Between the Muhammadiyah and the Ahmadiyya." *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 161, 2-3 (2005): 210–246.

Bello, Mufutau O. "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria and Development of Islam in Ekiti State, 1954-2014." Unpublished PhD thesis, Ekiti State University, 2016.

Benthall, Jonathan. "The Rise and Decline of Saudi Overseas Humanitarian Charities." Occasional Paper 20. Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University in Qatar, 2018.

Bewaji, John A. I. "Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief and the Theistic Problem of Evil." *African Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1998).

Bhambra, Gurminder K. *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination*. Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York: Palgrave, 2007.

Bierschenk, Thomas, and Eva Spies. "Introduction: Continuities, Dislocations and Transformations: 50 Years of Independence in Africa." *Africa Spectrum* 45, no. 3 (2010): 3–10.

Birch, E. A. *Story of the Boys' Brigade*. London: Frederick Muller, 1959.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. Edited by John G. Richardson, 241–58. Westport Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986.

Bowen, John T. "On Scriptural Essentialism and Ritual Variation: Muslim Sacrifice in Sumatra and Morocco." *American Ethnologist* 19, no. 4 (1992): 656–671.

Bowen, T. J. *Central Africa: Adventures and Missionary Labors in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa, from 1849 to 1856*. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969.

Bowering, Gerhard, ed. *Islamic Political Thought: An Introduction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Brenner, Louis. *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power, and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.

Britto, Remi, and Bolaji Olaniran. "The Establishment and Leadership of Jamatul-Islamiyya of Nigeria in Lagos." In *Actors and Institutions in the Development of Islam in Lagos State: Essays in Honour of Alhaji Femi Okunnu*. Edited by Siyan Oyeweso and M. O. Raheemson, 127–35. Ibadan: Matrixcy Books Ltd, 2013.

Brown, Spencer H. "A Tool of Empire: The British Medical Establishment in Lagos, 1861-1905." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 37, no. 2 (2004): 309.

Bukhārī, Muḥammad i. I., and Muhammad M. Khan. *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī: The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari*. Riyadh-Saudi Arabia: Darussalam Pub. & Distr., 1997.

Buxton, Thomas F. *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*. 2nd. London: John Murray, 1840.

Calvert, John. "Wayward Son: The Muslim Brotherhood's Reception of Sayyid Qutb." In *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*. Edited by Edwin Bakker and Roel Meijer, 249–71. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Cavatorta, Francesco, and Fabio Merone, eds. *Salafism After the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power*. Kettering: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2008.

Chouin, L. Gérard and Ogunfolakan, B. Adisa. "Ife-Sungbo Archeological Project: Preliminary Report on Excavations at Ita Yemoo, Ile-Ife Osun State and on Rapid Assessment of Earthwork Sites at Eredo and Ilara Epe, Lagos State." December 2016.

Church Missionary Society. *The Church Missionary Record* v. 13. Seeleys, Hatchard, Nisbet, Simpkin, Marshall, 1842.

Clarke, Julian. "Households and the Political Economy of Small-Scale Cash Crop Production in South-Western Nigeria." *Africa* 51, no. 04 (1981): 807–823.

Clarke, Peter B. "Book Review: Islam in Yorubaland Imale: Yoruba Participation in the Muslim Tradition. A Study of Clerical Piety, by S.J. Patrick Ryan, Missoula, Montana: Scholars' Press, 1979." *The Journal of African History* 21, no. 02 (1980): 287.

Clarke, Peter B., and Ian Linden. *Islam in Modern Nigeria: A Study of a Muslim Community in a Post-Independence State, 1960-1983*. Entwicklung und Frieden. Wissenschaftliche Reihe 32. Mainz: Grünewald, 1984.

Clarke, Peter. "Islamic Reform in Contemporary Nigeria: Methods and Aims." *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1988): 519–538.

Cole, Juan. "Pakistan and Afghanistan: Beyond the Taliban." *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 2 (2009): 221–249.

Collins, Rebecca, James Esson, Caitlin O'Neill Gutierrez, and Adefemi Adekunle. "Youth in Motion: Spatialising Youth Movement(S) in the Social Sciences." *Children's Geographies* 11, no. 3 (2013): 369–376.

Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff. *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*. Vol. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. "Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa." *American Ethnologist*, no. 13 (1986): 1–22.

Commins, David D. *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Connley, Aleah. "Understanding the Oppressed: A Study of the Ahmadiyah and Their Strategies for Overcoming Adversity in Contemporary Indonesia." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 35, no. 1 (2016): 29–58.

Cooper, Frederick. *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. 4th ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

Cresswell, Tim. *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*. New York, London: Routledge, 2006.

Crowther, Samuel A. *Experiences with Heathens and Mohammedans in West Africa*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1892.

Danmole, H. O "Religious Encounter in Southwestern Nigeria: The Domestication of Islam Among the Yoruba." In Òrìṣà Devotion as World Religion: The Globalization of Yorùbá Religious Culture. Edited by Jacob K. Olupona and Terry Rey, 202 – 235. Madison, Wis., London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.

Danmole, H. O. "Religion and Politics in Colonial Northern Nigeria: The Case of Ilorin Emirate." *The Journal of Religious History* 16, no. 2 (Dec. 1990): 140–153.

Danmole, H. O. "The Alkali Court in Ilorin Emirate During Colonial Rule." *Transafrican Journal of History* 18 (1989): 173–186.

Danmole, H. O. "The Crisis of the Lagos Muslim Community, 1915-1947." In *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*. Edited by Ade Adefuye, Babatunde Agiri and Jide Osuntokun, 290–305. Ikeja Lagos: Lantern Books, 1987.

Daré, O. M. "Trade and Religion in Ikorodu." Unpublished BA essay, University of Lagos, 1982.

David, James O. "The Root Causes of Terrorism: An Appraisal of the Socio-Economic Determinants of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria." Unpublished MA thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2013.

Davids, Nuraan. "Islam, Moderation, Radicalism, and Justly Balanced Communities." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 37, no. 3 (2017): 1–12.

Deeb, Lara. *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon* v.41. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Delibas, Kayhan. "Conceptualizing Islamic Movements: The Case of Turkey." *International Political Science Review* 30, no. 1 (2009): 89–103.

Della Porta, Donatella, and Mario Diani. *Social Movements: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. Malden, Mass., Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.

Denny, Frederick M. "The Meaning of "Ummah" In the Qurʾān." *History of Religions* 15, no. 1 (1975): 34–70.

Dibua, Jeremiah I. *Modernization and the Crisis of Development in Africa: The Nigerian Experience*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006.

Dirks, Nicholas. Colonialism and Culture. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992.

Dòpamu, Ade. "The Yorùbá Religious System." *Africa Update* 4, no. 3 (1999).

Duderija, Adis. "Evolution in the Concept of Sunnah During the First Four Generations of Muslims in Relation to the Development of the Concept of an Authentic Ḥadīth as Based on Recent Western Scholarship." *Arab Law Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (2012): 393–437.

Dudley, B. J. Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria. Reprint. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Dumbe, Yunus, and Abdulkader Tayob. "Salafis in Cape Town in Search of Purity, Certainty and Social Impact." *Die Welt des Islams* 51, no. 2 (2011): 188–209.

Dumbe, Yunus. Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana 5. Stockholm: Södertörn University, 2013.

Durojaye, Qasim O. "Karikasa Movement in Ibadanland." Unpublished MA thesis, University of Ilorin, 2008.

Eades, J. S. *The Yoruba Today*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Earl Castillo, Lisa. "Mapping the Nineteenth-Century Brazilian Returnee Movement: Demographics, Life Stories and the Question of Slavery." *Atlantic Studies* 13, no. 1 (2016): 25–52.

Easterly, William. "The Lost Decades: Developing Countries' Stagnation in Spite of Policy Reform 1980-1998." *Journal of Economic Growth* 6, no. 2 (2001): 135–157.

Echeruo, J. M. *Victorian Lagos: Aspects of Nineteenth Century Lagos Life*. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers Inc., 1978.

Eickelman, Dale F. "Mass Higher Education and the Religious Imagination in Contemporary Arab Societies." *American Ethnologist* 19, no. 4 (1992): 643–655.

Eickelman, Dale F. "The Art of Memory: Islamic Education and Its Social Reproduction." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no. 04 (1978): 485.

Eller, Jack D. *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*. Second edition. London, New York: Routledge, 2015.

Ellis, Stephen, and Ineke van Kessel, eds. *Movers and Shakers: Social Movements in Africa*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009.

El-Zein, Abdul H. "Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6, no. 1 (1977): 227–254.

Esposito, John L. *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* 3rd ed. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Esposito, John L. "Introduction: Islam and Muslim Politics." In *Voices of Resurgent Islam*. Edited by John L. Esposito, 3–15. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Esposito, John L. ed. *Voices of Resurgent Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Fadipẹ, N. A. *The Sociology of the Yoruba*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970.

Fafunwa, A. B. *History of Education in Nigeria*. Rev. ed. Ibadan: NPS Educational, 1995.

Fahm, AbdulGafar O. "An Assessment of the Islamization of Knowledge Process in Nigeria." *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization* 4, no. 4 (2014): 119–124.

Fajana, Ade. "Colonial Control and Education: The Development of Higher Education in Nigeria, 1900-1950." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 6, no. 3 (1972): 323–340.

Falola, Toyin, and Akíntúndé Akínyẹmí, eds. *Encyclopedia of the Yoruba*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016.

Falola, Toyin. *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies*. 2nd ed. New York: University of Rochester Press, 2009.

Falola, Toyin, and Matthew M. Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Falola, Toyin. "Missionaries and Domestic Slavery in Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century." *Journal of Religious History* 14, no. 2 (1986): 181–192.

Falola, Toyin. *The Political Economy of a Pre-Colonial African State: Ibadan, 1830 - 1900*. Ile-Ife: Univ. of Ife Press, 1984.

Fasan, Rotimi. "Women and Child-Naming Song Poetry of Southeast Yorubaland." *Research in African Literatures* 46, no. 1 (2015): 107.

Fasinro, H.A.B. *Ahmadiyya Achievements and Conflicts: As I See It*. Lagos: Irede Printers, 1995.

Fisher, Humphrey J. "Dreams and Conversion in Black Africa." In *Conversion to Islam*. Edited by Nehemia Levtzion, 217–35. New York: Holmes & Meier Publ, 1979.

Fisher, Humphrey J. "Conversion Reconsidered: Some Historical Aspects of Religious Conversion in Black Africa." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 43, no. 1 (1973): 27–40.

Fisher, Humphrey J. *Ahmadiyyah: A Study in Contemporary Islam on the West African Coast*. Oxford: OUP, 1963.

Flynn, Simone I. "New Social Movement Theory." In *Theories of Social Movements*, 88–98. California: Salem Press, 2011.

Forrest, Tom. *The Advance of African Capital: The Growth of Nigerian Private Enterprise*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994.

Fosu, Augustin K., and Paul Collier, eds. *Post-Conflict Economies in Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2005.

Fourchard, Laurent and Albert, Isaac Olawale, ed. *Security, Crime and Segregation in West African Cities Since the 19th Century*. Karthala, 2003.

Fourchard, Laurent. "Lagos and the Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria, 1920-1960." *The Journal of African History* 47, no. 1 (2006): 115–137.

Garba, Abdul-Ganiyu and Garba, Kassey P. "The Nigerian Civil War: Causes and the Aftermath." In *Post-Conflict Economies in Africa*. Edited by Augustin K. Fosu and Paul Collier, 91–108. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2005.

Gardet, L and Hodgson, M.G.S. "Ḥudjdja." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Edited by Bearman, P. Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. 2nd ed. Leiden; Köln: E. J. Brill, 1998.

Gatawa, Muhammad M. "Inter-Group Relations in Historical Perspectives: A Case Study of Yoruba and Hausa Communities of Agege, Lagos, Nigeria." *African Journal of History and Culture* 5, no. 9 (2013): 171–177.

Gbadamosi, T. G. O. *The Growth of Islam Among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*. London: Longman, 1978.

Gbadamosi, G. O "Odu Imale: Islam in Ifa Divination and the Case of Pre-Destined Muslims." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 8 (1977): 77–93.

Gbadamosi, G. O. "The Establishment of Western Education Among Muslims in Nigeria, 1896-1926." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4, no. 1 (1967): 89–115.

Gbadegesin, Olujide. "New Religious Movements and the Politics of Nation Building." In *Religion in Politics: Secularism and National Integration in Modern Nigeria*. Edited by Julius Adekunle, 275–94. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2009.

Geertz, Clifford. "Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia." In *The Anthropology of Islam Reader*. Edited by Jens Kreinath, 65–74. London: Routledge, 2012.

Geertz, Clifford. Islam Observed: Religious Developments in Morocco and Indonesia. New Haven: Yale U.P, 1976.

Gellner, Ernest. *Muslim Society* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

George, Abosede. "Within Salvation: Girl Hawkers and the Colonial State in Development Era Lagos." *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 3 (2011): 837–859.

Ghazzālī, Imam M. *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm Al-Dīn. al-Ṭabʿah 1*. 10 vols. Jiddah: Dār al-Minhāj lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzīʿ, 2011.

Gilsenan, Michael. *Recognizing Islam: An Anthropologist's Introduction*. London: Croom Helm, ca. 1982.

Glaser, Barney G., and Anselm L. Strauss. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: AldineTransaction, 2006.

Gomez-Perez, Muriel, Marie-Nathalie LeBlanc, and Mathias Savadogo. "Young Men and Islam in the 1990s: Rethinking an Intergenerational Perspective." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39, no. 2 (2009): 186–218.

Green, Nile. *Terrains of Exchange: Religious Economies of Global Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Haar, Gerrie T., and Stephen Ellis. "The Role of Religion in Development: Towards a New Relationship Between the European Union and Africa." *The European Journal of Development Research* 18, no. 3 (2006): 351–367.

Hackett, Rosalind I. J. "Conflict in the Classroom: Educational Institutions as Sites of Religious Tolerance/Intolerance in Nigeria." *BYU Law Review*, no. 2 (1999): 537–561.

Hackett, Rosalind I. J. ed. *Proselytization Revisited: Rights Talk, Free Markets and Culture Wars*. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Hackett, Rosalind I. J., and Benjamin F. Soares. eds. *New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa*. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015.

Haeri, Niloofar. "The Private Performance of Salat Prayers: Repetition, Time, and Meaning." *Anthropological Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (2013): 5–34.

Hammudah Abdal-Ati. *Islam in Focus*. 16 of International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations. Indianapolis, Ind.: American Trust Publications, 1980.

Hanson, John H. "Jihad and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community: Nonviolent Efforts to Promote Islam in the Contemporary World." *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 11, no. 2 (November 2007): 77–93.

Heap, Simon. "'Jaguda Boys': Pickpocketing in Ibadan, 1930-60." *Urban History* 24, no. 3 (1997): 324–343.

Herskovits, Jean. "One Nigeria." *Foreign Affairs* 51, no. 2 (1973): 392–407.

Hinnells, John R., ed. *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*. 2nd ed. London, New York: Routledge, 2010.

Hirji, Zulfikar A. "Debating Islam from Within: Muslim Constructions of the Internal Other." In *Diversity and Pluralism in Islam: Historical and Contemporary Discourses amongst Muslims*. Edited by Zulfikar A. Hirji, 1–30. London, New York, London: I.B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010.

Hirji, Zulfikar A. ed. *Diversity and Pluralism in Islam: Historical and Contemporary Discourses Amongst Muslims*. London, New York, London: I.B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010.

Hoebink, Michel. "Thinking About Renewal in Islam: Towards a History of Islamic Ideas on Modernization and Secularization." *Arabica* 46, no. 1 (1999): 29–62.

Honwana, Alcinda M. *The Time of Youth: Work, Social Change, and Politics in Africa*. Sterling, Va.: Kumarian Press, 2012.

Hopkins, Antony G. "Property Rights and Empire Building: Britain's Annexation of Lagos, 1861." *The Journal of Economic History* 40, no. 4 (Dec. 1980): 777–798.

Horton, Robin. "African Conversion." *Africa* 41, no. 2 (1971): 85–108.

Horton, Robin. "A Definition of Religion, and Its Uses." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 90, no. 2 (1960): 201–226.

Houtsma, M. T., ed. *E.J. Brill's First Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1913-1936* v. 5. E.J. Brill, 1993.

Hrbek, Ivan. "Towards a Periodisation of African History." In *Emerging Themes of African history*. Edited by T. O. Ranger. Nairobi: East Africa Pub. House, 1974.

Hunter, Shireen T. "Iran and the Spread of Revolutionary Islam." *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (2007): 730–749.

Hunwick, O. J., ed. *Religion and National Integration in Africa: Islam, Christianity and Politics in the Sudan and Nigeria*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1992.

Ibrahim, Murtala. "Sensational Piety: Practices of Mediation in Christ Embassy and NASFAT." PhD thesis, University of Utrecht, Netherland, 2017.

Idowu, Bolaji E. *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1973

Idowu, Bolaji E. *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016.

Idowu, Bolaji E. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. London: Longmans, 1962.

Ihonvbere, Julius O. "Economic Crisis, Structural Adjustment and Social Crisis in Nigeria." *World Development* 21, no. 1 (1993): 141–153.

Ikime, O. The Fall of Nigeria: The British Conquest. London: Heinemann, 1977.

Ikime, Obaro. "Reconsidering Indirect Rule: The Nigerian Example." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4, no. 3 (Dec. 1968): 421–438.

Ismail, Salwa. "Islamism, Re-Islamization and the Fashioning of Muslim Selves: Refiguring the Public Sphere." *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 4, no. 1 (2007): 1–22.

Jackson, Roy. *Mawlana Mawdudi and Political Islam: Authority and the Islamic State*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Janson, Marloes. "Unity Through Diversity: A Case of CHRISLAM in Lagos." *Africa* 86, no. 04 (2016): 646–672.

Janson, Marloes, and Akintunde Akinleye. "The Spiritual Highway: Religious World Making in Megacity Lagos (Nigeria)." *Material Religion* 11, no. 4 (2015): 550–562.

Janson, Marloes. "'How, for God's Sake, Can I Be a Good Muslim?': Gambian Youth in Search of a Moral Lifestyle." *Ethnography* 17, no. 1 (2015): 22–46.

Janson, Marloes. *Islam, Youth, and Modernity in the Gambia: The Tablighi Jamaʿat* Volume [45]. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Jimoh, Mariam O. "Music as an Efficient Tool for Promoting Moral Teaching in Islam: Abdul-Wahab Falowo's Songs as a Case Study." Unpublished BA essay, University of Ilorin, 2015.

Johnson, Paul C. "Syncretism and Hybridization." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion*. Edited by Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, 755–72. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Johnson, Samuel. *The History of the Yorubas: From Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*. With the assistance of Obadiah Johnson. Lagos: CMS Bookshop Nigeria, 1921.

Kadi, Wadad. "Education in Islam: Myths and Truths." *Comparative Education Review* 50, no. 3 (2006): 311–324.

Kamali, Mohammad H. *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam: The Qurʾānic Principle of Wasaṭiyyah*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Kane, Ousmane. *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria: A Study of the Society for the Removal of Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition*. Boston MA: Brill, 2003.

Kareem-Ojo, Mutiat T. "International Trade and Women Merchants at Gbagi Textile Market, Ibadan." *Journal of Global Initiatives: Policy, Pedagogy, Perspective* 3, no.2 (2008).

Katz, Sara. "Islamic Prestige, Piety and Debate in Early Lagosian Newspapers, 1920s–40s." *Islamic Africa* 10, 1-2 (2019): 27–74.

Keddie, Nikki R. *Iran and the Muslim World: Resistance and Revolution*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995.

Kemper, Michael, and Ralf Elger, eds. *The Piety of Learning: Islamic Studies in Honor of Stefan Reichmuth*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017.

Kenney, Jeffrey T., and Ebrahim Moosa, eds. *Islam in the Modern World*. London: Routledge, 2014.

Khan, Adil H. *From Sufism to Ahmadiyya: A Muslim Minority Movement in South Asia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015.

Khan, Dominique-Sila. "Being One and Many Among the Others: Muslim Diversity in the Context of South Asian Religious Pluralism." In *Diversity and Pluralism in Islam: Historical and Contemporary Discourses amongst Muslims*. Edited by Zulfikar A. Hirji, 43–60. London, New York, London: I.B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010.

Knott, Kim. "Insider/Outsider Perspectives." In *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*. Edited by John R. Hinnells. 2nd ed., 243–58. London, New York: Routledge, 2010.

Kobo, Murzik O. *Unveiling Modernity in Twentieth-Century West African Islamic Reforms*. Brill, 2012.

Kolman, Iris. "Gender Activism in Salafism." In *Salafism after the Arab Awakening: Contending with People's Power*. Edited by Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone, 187–204. Kettering: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Kọ́mọláfẹ́, Olúsànyà E. "Name 'Customizing' Among Nigerian Youth and Its Implications on Literacy and Culture." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 3, no. 6 (2014): 47–56.

Krämer, Gudrun, and Sabine Schmidtke, eds. *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006.

Kreinath, Jens, ed. *The Anthropology of Islam Reader*. London: Routledge, 2012.

Labouret, Henri. "Mali." In *E.J. Brill's First Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1913-1936*. Edited by M. T. Houtsma, 203–4 v. 5. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993.

Lapidus, Ira. "Islamic Revival and Modernity: The Contemporary Movements and the Historical Paradigms." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40, no. 4 (1997): 444–460.

Larkin, Brian. "Binary Islam: Media and Religious Movements in Nigeria." In *New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa*. Edited by Rosalind I. J. Hackett and Benjamin F. Soares, 63–81. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015.

Last, Murray. *The Sokoto Caliphate*. London: Longman, 1977.

Launay, Robert. ed. *Islamic Education in Africa: Writing Boards and Blackboards*. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016.

Launay, Robert. *Beyond the Stream: Islam and Society in a West African Town*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

Lauzière, Henri. "The Construction of Salafiyya: Reconsidering Salafism from the Perspective of Conceptual History." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 03 (2010): 369–389.

Law, Robin. "Early Yoruba Historiography." *History in Africa* 3 (1976): 69–89.

Law, Robin. "The "Hamitic Hypothesis" In Indigenous West African Historical Thought." *History in Africa*, no. 36 (2009): 293–314.

Law, Robin. ed. *Contemporary Source Material for the History of the Oyo Empire, 1627-1824*. Toronto: York/UNESCO Nigerian Hinterland Project York University, 2001.

Law, Robin. *The Oyo Empire, C.1600-C.1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.

Lawrance, Benjamin N., Emily L. Osborn, and Richard L. Roberts, eds. *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa*. Madison, Wis.: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2006.

Leaman, Oliver. *Controversies in Contemporary Islam*. London: Routledge, 2014.

Leichtman, Mara A. Kuwaiti Humanitarianism: The History and Expansion of Kuwait's Foreign Assistance Policies. Virginia: School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, August 2017.

Lemu, Aisha B. *Laxity, Moderation and Extremism in Islam: Advice to Young Muslims on the Path to Peaceful Coexistence in Accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah*. Reprint. Minna, Nigeria: Islamic Education Trust, 2010.

Lemu, Aisha B. *Islamic Knowledge for Senior Secondary Schools*. Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1989; Book One.

Lemu, Aisha B. *Methodology of Primary Islamic Studies: A Handbook for Teachers*. Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1980.

Lerman, Eran. "Mawdudi's Concept of Islam." *Middle Eastern Studies* 17, no. 4 (Oct. 1981): 492–509.

Levtzion, Nehemiah. *Islam in West Africa: Religion, Society and Politics to 1800.* Collected studies series CS 462. Aldershot: Variorum, 1994.

Levtzion, Nehemia, ed. *Conversion to Islam*. New York: Holmes & Meier Publisher, 1979.

Lewis, Peter M. "Economic Statism, Private Capital, and the Dilemmas of Accumulation in Nigeria." World Development 22, no. 3 (1994): 437–451.

Lijadu, E. M. *Ifa: Imọlẹ Rẹ Ti Iṣe Ipilẹ Ìsin Ni Ilẹ Yoruba*. Exeter [Devon]: James Townsend & Sons, 1923.

Lloyd, P. C. "Sacred Kingship and Government Among the Yoruba." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 30, no. 3 (July 1960): 221–237.

Loimeier, Roman. *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Africa*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

Loimeier, Roman. "Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria." *Africa Spectrum* 47, 2-3 (2012): 137–155.

Loimeier, Roman. "Traditions of Reform, Reformers of Tradition: Case Studies from Senegal and Zanzibar/Tanzania." In *Diversity and Pluralism in Islam: Historical and Contemporary Discourses amongst Muslims*. Edited by Zulfikar A. Hirji, 135–62. London, New York, London: I.B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2010.

Loimeier, Roman. *Between Social Skills and Marketable Skills: The Politics of Islamic Education in 20th Century Zanzibar*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009.

Loimeier, Roman. "Patterns and Peculiarities of Islamic Reform in Africa." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, no. 3 (2003): 237–262.

Loimeier, Roman. *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997.

Lovejoy, Paul E. *Slavery, Commerce and Production in the Sokoto Caliphate of West Africa*. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World; [London: Turnaround, 2005.

Lukens-Bull, A. R. "Between Text and Practice: Considerations in the Anthropological Study of Islam." *Marburg Journal of Religion* 4, no. 2 (1999): 1–21.

MacIntyre, Alasdair C. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 3rd edition. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.

Maduako, Dachi et al. *The Story of Scripture Union, Nigeria*, Ibadan: Scripture Union Press & Books Ltd., 2005.

Mahmood, Saba. "Ethical Formation and Politics of Individual Autonomy in Contemporary Egypt." *Social Research* 70, no. 3 (2003): 837–866.

Mahmood, Saba. "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival." *Cultural Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (2001): 202–236.

Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, N.J., Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Makinde, Abdul-Fatah 'K. "The Entanglement of Sharia Application in South-Western Nigeria." *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* 10, no. 5 (July 2017): 84–98.

Makinde, Abdul-Fatah Kola and Ostien, Philip. "The Independent Sharia Panel of Lagos State." *Emory International Law Review* 25 (2011): 921–944.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. *The Dynamics of Culture Change: An Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa*. Edited by Phyllis M. Kaberry. New Haven, London: Yale University Press; H. Milford Oxford University Press, 1945.

Mandaville, Peter. "Transnational Muslim Solidarities and Everyday Life." *Nations and Nationalism* 17, no. 1 (2011): 7–24.

Mann, Kristin. *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2007.

Mann, Kristin. "The Dangers of Dependence: Christian Marriage Among Elite Women in Lagos Colony, 1880-1915." *Journal of African History* 24 (1983): 37-56.

Marranci, Gabriele. *The Anthropology of Islam*. Oxford, New York: Berg, 2008.

Marsden, Magnus. *Living Islam: Muslim Religious Experience in Pakistan's North-West Frontier*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Marvasti, Amir B. *Qualitative Research in Sociology: An Introduction*. London: Sage Publications, 2004.

Masquelier, Adeline and Soares, Benjamin F., ed. *Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation*. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016.

Masquelier, Adeline. *Women and Islamic Revival in a West African Town*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

Masud, Muhammad K., ed. *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal.* Leiden: Brill, 2000.

Mawdudi, Sayyid A. A.'l. *Towards Understanding Islam* 7. International Islamic Federation of Student Organisation (IIFSO), 1996.

Mawdudi, Sayyid A. A.'l. *Let Us Be Muslims*. Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1985.

Maxwell, Joseph A. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. 2.ed. 41. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2005.

McCutcheon, Russell T., ed. *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*. London, New York, NY: Continuum, 2005.

McDonald, Zahraa. *Expressing Post-Secular Citizenship: A Madrasa, an Ethic and a Comprehensive Doctrine*. Oxford, New York: Peter Lang Ltd, 2015.

McGuire, Meredith B. *Religion: The Social Context*. 5th ed. Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 2002.

McIntyre, W. D. "Commander Glover and the Colony of Lagos, 1861–73." *The Journal of African History* 4, no. 1 (1963): 57.

Mckinnon, Andrew. "The Sociology of Religion: The Foundations." In *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*. Edited by Bryan S. Turner, 31–51. Blackwell companions to sociology. Chichester, West Sussex, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Meijer, Roel. "The Muslim Brotherhood and the Political: An Exercise in Ambiguity." In *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*. Edited by Edwin Bakker and Roel Meijer, 294–320. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Meredith, David. "The British Government and Colonial Economic Policy, 1919-39." *The Economic History Review* 28, no. 3 (1975): 484.

Metcalf, Barbara D. "Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama`at." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 52, no. 3 (1993): 584–608.

Metcalf, Barbara D. Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016.

Mitchell, Richard P. *The Society for the Muslim Brothers*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Moosa, Ebrahim, and SherAli Tareen. "Revival and Reform." In *Islamic Political Thought: an Introduction*. Edited by Gerhard Bowering, 202–18. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Moosa, Ebrahim. "The Debts and Burden of Critical Islam." In *Progressive Muslims: On justice, gender and pluralism*. Edited by Omid Safi, 111–27. Oxford: Oneworld, 2003.

Morton-Williams, Peter, William Bascom, and E. M. McClelland. "Two Studies of Ifa Divination." *Africa* 36, no. 04 (1966): 406–431.

Mudimbe, Victor Y. *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 2010.

Muhammadu-Thani, Muhammadu M. "The Impacts of Hassan's Writings on the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria." Unpublished MA thesis, University of Ilorin, 2006.

Muojama, O. G. *The Nigerian Cocoa Industry and the International Economy in the 1930s: A World-Systems Approach*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018.

Musa, Afiz Oladimeji and Ibrahim, Hassan Ahmad. "Jalabi Practice: A Critical Appraisal of a Socio-Religious Phenomenon in Yorubaland, Nigeria." *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research* 5, no. 1 (2015): 120–132.

Mustapha, Abdul Raufu. "Institutionalising Ethnic Representation: How Effective Is the Federal Character Commission in Nigeria?". *CRISE Working Paper 43*. Oxford, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE): 2007.

Mustapha, Abdul Raufu. ed. *Sects and Social Disorder: Muslim Identities and Conflict in Northern Nigeria*. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2014.

Na'Allah, Abdul-Rasheed. "The Origin of Egungun: A Critical Appraisal." *African Study Monographs* 17, no. 2 (1996): 59–68.

Nnoli, Okwudiba. *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension publisher, 1978.

Nnoli, Okwudiba. *Ethnicity and Development in Nigeria*. Reprint. Aldershot: Avebury, 1996.

Noibi, D. O. S. *Yoruba Muslim Youth and Christian-Sponsored Education*. Ijebu-Ode: Shebiotimo Publications, 1987.

Nolte, Insa M., Clyde Ancarno, and Rebecca Jones. "Inter-Religious Relations in Yorubaland, Nigeria: Corpus Methods and Anthropological Survey Data." *Corpora* 13, no. 1 (2018): 27–64.

Nolte, Insa, Olukoya Ogen, and Rebecca Jones, eds. *Beyond Religious Tolerance: Muslim, Christian and Traditionalist Encounters in an African Town.* Religion in Transforming Africa 2. Rochester NY: James Currey Ltd, 2017.

Nolte, Insa, Rebecca Jones, Khadijeh Taiyari, and Giovanni Occhiali. "Research Note: Exploring Survey Data for Historical and Anthropological Research: Muslim–Christian Relations in South-West Nigeria." African Affairs 115, no. 460 (2016): 541–561.

Nwigwe, Chukwuemeka. "Fashioning Terror: The Boko Haram Dress Code and the Politics of Identity." *Fashion Theory* 3, no. 1 (2018): 1–20.

Nyang, Sulayman S. "Religion and Social Change in Contemporary Africa." Washington: Howard University, April 22, 2010.

Obadare, Ebenezer. "The Muslim Response to the Pentecostal Surge in Nigeria: Prayer and the Rise of Charismatic Islam." *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 2, no. 1 (2015): 75–91.

Obadare, Ebenezer. "White-Collar Fundamentalism: Interrogating Youth Religiosity on Nigerian University Campuses." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 45, no. 04 (2007): 15.

Obasa, Olusegun. "Sports and the Modernity of Leisure in Nigeria: Stadium Space and the Symbolisms of Expressions, 1930-1980." Unpublished PhD thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 2015.

Obayan, Aize I. "Client/Family Interface in Counselling: Challenges for Counsellor Acceptability and Performance in Nigeria." *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (1998): 87–94.

Obinyan, Oluwatoyin O. "The Influence of Email Use on Generation and Postage of Mails by NIPOST in Southwest Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria." *International Journal of Digital Library Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2011): 18–33.

Oduwobi, Tunde. "Deposed Rulers Under the Colonial Regime in Nigeria." *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 43, no. 171 (2003): 553–571.

Oduyoye, Modupe. ed. *Fifty Years of SCM in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1990.

Oduyoye, Modupe. *The Planting of Christianity in Yorubaland 1842-1888*. Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1969.

Ogbeidi, Michael M. "Political Leadership and Corruption in Nigeria Since 1960: A Socio-Economic Analysis." *Journal of Nigeria Studies* 1, no. 2 (2012): 4–25.

Ogbu, Osita. "Is Nigeria a Secular State? Law, Human Rights and Religion in Context." *The Transnational Human Rights Review* 1, no. 1 (2014): 135–178.

Ogunbado, Ahamad F. "Historical Development of Muslim Education in Yoruba Land, Southwest Nigeria." *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* 4, no. 8 (July 2016): 13–21.

Ogunlade, F. O. "Education and Politics in Colonial Nigeria: The Case of King's College, Lagos (1906-1911)." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 7, no. 2 (June 1974): 325–345.

Oguntomisin, G. O. "Political Change and Adaptation in Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 15, no. 2 (1981): 223–237.

Ohadike, Don. "Muslim-Christian Conflict and Political Instability in Nigeria." In *Religion and National Integration in Africa: Islam, Christianity and Politics in the Sudan and Nigeria*. Edited by O. J. Hunwick, 101–23. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1992.

Ojelade, Rushdat O. "The Emergence, Doctrines and Practices of the *Alalukurani* Group of Lagos." Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Ibadan, 1990.

Ojiaku, Mazi Okoro and Ulansky, Gene. "Early Nigerian Response to American Education." *Phylon* 33, no. 4 (1972): 380–388.

Ojo, Matthews A. "The Contextual Significance of the Charismatic Movements in Independent Nigeria." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 58, no. 2 (1988): 175–192.

Oke, Ikeogu, ed. *Proceedings of the International Congress of Dialogue on Civilizations, Religions and Culture in West Africa*. Paris: UNESCO, 2005.

Okùnoyè, Oyèníyì. "Ewì, Yorùbá Modernity, and the Public Space." *Research in African Literatures* 41, no. 4 (2010): 43–64.

Okunoye, Oyeniyi. "Lanrewaju Adepoju and the Making of Modern Yoruba Poetry." *Africa* 81, no. 2 (2011): 175–203.

Oladimeji, Lateef F. "The Role of the Jama'Tut-Tablighi in the Promotion of Adult and Non-Formal Education Among Muslims in Nigeria." In *Education Crises in Nigeria: Arabic and Islamic Studies Perspectives*. Edited by M. A. Muhbbu-Din. Minna, Nigeria: NATAIS Publication, 2007.

Oladiti, Akeem A. "The Growth and Development of Modern Arabic Schools in Ibadan, 1945-2000." *Historical Research Letter* 12 (2014): 26–34.

Oladosu, Abdul-Ganiy A.-S. "Fluctuations in the Fortune of Arabic Education in Nigeria." 115th Inaugural Lecture, University of Ilorin, Thursday September 27, 2012.

Oladosu, Afis. "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria at 60: Impact, Problems, Challenges and Lessons for Today's Generation." A presentation at Trenchard Hall, University of Ibadan, MAY 4, 2014.

Olagunju, Gbadebo A. "Historical Development of Nigeria's Legal System from Colonialism to Present." In *General Studies: Book of Readings*. Edited by Dapo F. Asaju, 306–13 2. Lagos: Lagos State University Press, 2006.

Ọlájubù, Oludáre. "The Use of Yoruba Folktales as a Means of Moral Education." *Fabula* 19, Jahresband (1978): 211–224.

Olaniyan, Richard, ed. *The Amalgamation and Its Enemies: An Interpretive History of Modern Nigeria*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2003.

Olaniyi, Rasheed O. "Hausa-Yoruba Relations, 1500-1800." *Journal of Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2007).

Olanrewaju, Shuaib G. "A Study of Activities of Hospital Visitation: Jama'ah of the Muslim Students Society, University of Ilorin." Unpublished BA essay, University of Ilorin, 2011.

Olaseni, Taiwo O. "Knights of a Global Countryside: The Balogun Institution of Ijebuland, Nigeria." *NSUKKA Journal of History* 3 (2016): 1–22.

Oloidi, Jumoke F. "External Trade in Cocoa and Palm Produce in Colonial Ekiti of Western Nigeria." *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research* 2, no. 3 (2014): 299–309.

Oloruntele, Oladimeji A.-G. "Evil Forces and Shirk Among the Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria with Special Reference to Ilorin City." Unpublished MA thesis, University of Birmingham, 2009.

Oloyede, Ishaq O. "Islam in Nigeria: A Century of National Islamic Societies." *Journal of Islam in Nigeria* 1, no. 1 (2015): 1–35.

Oloyede, Ishaq. "Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigerian Universities: Trends, Development and Challenges." Paper presented at the University of Ibadan 50th anniversary of Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2012.

Oloyede, Ishaq O. "The Council of Muslim Youth Organisations (COMYO) in Oyo State." *Islamic Studies* 26, no. 1 (1987): 81–95.

Olubomehin, Oladipo O. "Road Transportation as Lifeline of the Economy in Western Nigeria, 1920 to 1952." *African Journal of History and Culture* 4, no. 3 (2012): 37–45.

Olukoju, Ayodeji. "Elder Dempster and the Shipping Trade of Nigeria During the First World War." *The Journal of African History* 33, no. 2 (1992): 255–271.

Olukoju, Ayodeji. "The Port of Lagos, 1850–1929: The Rise of West Africa'S Leading Seaport." In *Atlantic Ports and the First Globalisation, c. 1850-1930*. Edited by Miguel Suárez Bosa, 112–29. Cambridge imperial and post-colonial studies series. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Olukoshi, Adebayo O. "Economy and Politics in the Nigerian Transition." *African Journal of Political Science* 5, no. 2 (2000): 5–29.

Olupona, Jacob K. "Slaves of Allah: Ifa Divination Portrayal of Islamic Tradition - an Intertextual Encounter." In *Alternative Voices: A Plurality Approach for Religious Studies*. Edited by Afe Adogame, Magnus. Echtler and Oliver. Freiberger, 75–85. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013.

Olupona, Jacob K. "The Study of Yoruba Religious Tradition in Historical Perspective." *Numen* 40, no. 3 (1993): 240.

Olupona, Jacob K. *City of 201 Gods: Ilé-Ifè in Time, Space, and the Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Olupona, Jacob K., and Terry Rey, eds. *Òrìṣà Devotion as World Religion: The Globalization of Yorùbá Religious Culture*. Madison, Wis., London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.

Olurode, 'Lai. *Glimpses of Madrasa from Africa*. Lagos: Islamic Network for Development, 2009.

Oluwatoki, Sidikat A. "Muslim Organisations in Ekiti-Central Local Government of Ondo State." Unpublished BA essay, University of Ilorin, 1984.

Omenka, Nicholas I. "Blaming the Gods: Christian Religious Propaganda in the Nigeria-Biafra War." *Journal of African History* 51 (2010): 367-89.

Omoiya, S. Y. "Conflict as a Propelling Instrument of Change and Continuity: The Ilorin Example." *Journal of Law and Conflict Resolution* 6, no. 4 (2014): 78–83.

Omojola, Bode. *Yorùbá Music in the Twentieth Century: Identity, Agency, and Performance Practice*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2012.

Omolewa, Michael. "Traditional African Modes of Education: Their Relevance in the Modern World." *International Review of Education* 53, 5-6 (2007): 593–612.

Omosini, Olufemi. "Railway Projects and British Attitude Towards the Development of West Africa, 1872-1903." *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* 5, no. 4 (1971): 491–507.

Onapajo, Hakeem. "State Repression and Religious Conflict: The Perils of the State Clampdown on the Shi'A Minority in Nigeria." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 37, no. 1 (2017): 80–93.

Opeloye, Muhib O. "Religious Humanism Among the Yoruba of Nigeria." *Studia Missionalia* 47 (1998): 161–176.

Opeloye, Muhib O. "The Yoruba Muslims' Cultural Identity Question." *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, (IJOURELS)* 1, no. 2 (2011): 1–19.

Oppen, Achim v. "Bounding Villages: The Enclosure of Locality in Central Africa, 1890s to 1990s.". Habilitation Treatise, Humboldt University, 2003.

Osella, Filippo, and Benjamin F. Soares, eds. *Islam, Politics, Anthropology*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Osella, Filippo, and Caroline Osella, eds. *Islamic Reform in South Asia*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Østebø, Terje. "African Salafism: Religious Purity and the Politicization of Purity." *Islamic Africa* 6, 1-2 (2015): 1–29.

Østebø, Terje. *Localising Salafism: Religious Change Among Oromo Muslims in Bale, Ethiopia*. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

Ostien, Philip. "Percentages by Religion of the 1952 and 1963 Populations of Nigeria's Present 36 States." *Nigerian Research Network Background Paper*, no. 1 (2012): 1–14.

Ostien, Philip, Jamila Nasir, and Franz Kogelman, ed. *Comparative Perspectives on Sharia in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2005.

Otayek, René, and Benjamin F. Soares. eds. *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*. New York & Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Otite, Onigu. *Ethnic Pluralism and Ethnicity in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Shaneson, 1990.

Oyebade, Adebayo. ed. *The Foundations of Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Toyin Falola*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003.

Oyelade, Emmanuel O. "The Lanase Movement of Nigeria." Unpublished MA thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1970.

Oyeweso, Siyan. "'Jesus Is a Stranger Here': The Healing Jesus Crusade and Its Perception by the Muslim Community of Ede, Southwestern Nigeria." Rethinking Violence, Reconstruction and Reconciliation, Indianapolis, Indiana, November 20, 2014.

Oyeweso, Siyan, and M. O. Raheemson, eds. *Actors and Institutions in the Development of Islam in Lagos State: Essays in Honour of Alhaji Femi Okunnu*. Ibadan: Matrixcy Books Ltd, 2013.

Oyeweso, Siyan. *Torch Bearers of Islam in Lagos State: Essays in Honour of Alhaji Femi Okunnu*. Ibadan: Matrixcy Books Ltd, 2013.

Oyeweso, Siyan. ed. *Eminent Muslims in Osun State: Essays in Honour of HRM Oba Raufu Olayiwola Olawale Adedeji II, Akinrun of Ikirun*. Abuja: Megapress, 2012.

Oyeweso, Siyan. *Ede in Yoruba History*. Lagos: Multivisions Publishing House, 2002.

Oyeweso, Siyan. *Perspectives on the Nigerian Civil War*. Lagos: OAP Publications, 1992.

Peek, Lori. "Becoming Muslim: The Development of a Religious Identity." *Sociology of Religion* 66, no. 3 (2005): 215–242.

Peel, J. D. Y. *Christianity, Islam and Oriṣa-Religion: Three Traditions in Comparison and Interaction*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016.

Peel, J. D. Y. "Olaju: A Yoruba Concept of Development." *The Journal of Development Studies* 14, no. 2 (2007): 139–165.

Peel, J. D. Y. *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.

Peel, J. D. Y. "The Pastor and the Babalawo: The Interaction of Religions in Nineteenth-Century Yorubaland." *Africa* 60, no. 03 (1990): 338–369.

Peel, J. D. Y. "Religious Change in Yorubaland." *Africa* 37, no. 03 (1967): 292–306.

Quṭb, Sayyid. *Milestones*. Salimiah, Kuwait, Chicago, IL: International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, 2003.

Rafael, Vicente L. *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Raifu, Isiaka. "Interrogating Shariah Practice in Yorubaland, 1820-1918." *IOSR, Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 21, no. 12 (2016): 3–9.

Ranger, T. O., ed. *Emerging Themes of African History*. Nairobi: East Africa Pub. House, 1974.

Reese, Scott S. "Islam in Africa/Africans and Islam." *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 01 (2014): 17–26.

Reese, Scott S. "Salafi Transformations: Aden and the Changing Voices of Religious Reform in the Interwar Indian Ocean." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 01 (2012): 71–92.

Reese, Scott S. "The Best of Guides: Sufi Poetry and Alternate Discourses of Reform in Early Twentieth-Century Somalia." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 14, no. 1 (2001): 49–68.

Reichmuth, Stefan. "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations Among Yoruba Muslims: The Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 26, no. 4 (1996): 365–405.

Reichmuth, Stefan. *Islamische Bildung Und Soziale Intergration in Ilorin (Nigeria) Seit Ca. 1800.* Münster: Lit Verlag, 1998.

Reis, João J. *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* [Transl. Brakel, Arthur]. John Hopkins Studies in Atlantic History and Culture. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Renne, Elisha P. *Veils, Turbans, and Islamic Reform in Northern Nigeria*. Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018.

Reynolds, Jonathan. "Good and Bad Muslims: Islam and Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34, no. 3 (2001): 601-618.

Richardson, John G., ed. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. Westport Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986.

Rivera, John. "Finding Aristotle's Golden Mean: Social Justice and Academic Excellence." *Journal of Education* 186, no. 1 (2006): 79–85.

Robinson, David. *Muslim Societies in African History* 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Robinson, Francis. "Crisis of Authority: Crisis of Islam?" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 19, no. 3 (2009): 339–354.

Robinson, Francis. "Islamic Reform and Modernities in South Asia." *Modern Asian Studies* 42, 2/3 (2008): 259–281.

Robinson, Francis. "The British Empire and Muslim Identity in South Asia." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 8 (1998): 271–289.

Rofel, Lisa. "Rethinking Modernity: Space and Factory Discipline in China." *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 93–114.

Rotberg, Robert I., ed. *Crafting the New Nigeria: Confronting the Challenges*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2004.

Rubin, Barry, ed. *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Organization and Policies of a Global Islamist Movement*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Rudincová, Kateřina. "Desiccation of Lake Chad as a Cause of Security Instability in the Sahel Region." *GeoScape* 11, no. 2 (2017): 112–120.

Rufai, Saheed A. "Emergent Issues in Heterodox Islam Among the Yoruba of Nigeria." *Jurnal Hadhari* 4, no. 2 (2012): 117–136.

Rufai, Saheed A. "Rethinking the Proliferation of Muslim Chieftaincy Titles in Contemporary Yorubaland (Southwestern Nigeria) for an Effective Administration of Muslim Affairs." *Jurnal Hadhari* 3, no. 1 (2011): 69–77.

Rufai, Saheed A. "Da'wah in the Face of Christian Persecution: The Historical Development of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN)." *Jurnal Al-Tamaddun*, no. 6 (2011): 75–88.

Rufai, Saheed A. "The Muslim Minority of Southwestern Nigeria: WESTJOMO and the Challenge of Speaking with One Voice." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 31, no. 2 (2011): 285–291.

Ryan, Patrick J. "In My End Is My Beginning: Muslim and Christian Traditions at Cross-Purposes in Contemporary Nigeria." In *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa*. Edited by Benjamin F. Soares, 187–220 v. 6. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006.

Ryan, Patrick J. *Imale: Yoruba Participation in the Muslim Tradition* no.11. Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1978.

Sabiq, As-Sayyid. *Fiqh Us-Sunnah.* 5 in 1. Indiana: American Trust Publications, 1991.

Safi, Omid, ed. *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender and Pluralism*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2003.

Salami, Jimoh A. "Modes of Da'wah in Some Selected Towns in Yorubaland." Unpublished BA essay, University of Ilorin, 1985.

Salau, 'Tunde M. "The World Assembly of Muslim Youth, 1972-1987: A Performance Evaluation." Unpublished BA essay, University of Ilorin, 1988.

Salihu, Hamisu. "Is Boko Haram a "Child" Of Economic Circumstances?" *International Journal of Social Economics* 45, no. 8 (2018): 1174–1188.

Salomon, Noah. "Evidence, Secrets, Truth: Debating Islamic Knowledge in Contemporary Sudan." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 81, no. 3 (2013): 820–851.

Salvatore, Armando. *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity*. Reading: Ithaca, 1997.

Sanni, Amidu. "New Knowledge, Old Medium: The Yoruba *Ajami* of Southwestern Nigeria in the Factory of Learning." Paper presented at the African Studies Center, College of Arts and Sciences, Boston University USA, November 20, 2017.

Sanni, Amidu. "The West African Manuscript Heritage: Challenges of the Digital Revolution in a Research Economy." In *African Studies in the Digital Age: Disconnect*? Edited by Terry Barringer and Marion Wallace, 128–47. Brill, 2014.

Sanni, Amidu. "Conversion and Reversion in the Power Accession Narrative: Muslim Prayer Groups in Nigeria." *Journal of Oriental and African Studies* 21 (2012): 157–166.

Sanni, Amidu. "The Shari'ah Conundrum in Nigeria and the Zamfara Model: The Role of Nigerian Muslim Youth in the Historical Context." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 27, no. 1 (2007): 117–132.

Sanni, Ishaq K., and Dawood A. Amoo. *Why you Should Never Be a Christian*. Ibadan: Iman Publications, 1987.

Sawada, Nozomi. "The Educated Elite and Associational Life in Early Lagos Newspapers: In Search of Unity for the Progress of Society." PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011.

Schielke, Samuli. "Second Thoughts About the Anthropology of Islam, or How to Make Sense of Grand Schemes in Everyday Life." *ZMO Working Papers*, no. 2 (2010): 1–16.

Schielke, Samuli. "Being Good in Ramadan: Ambivalence, Fragmentation, and the Moral Self in the Lives of Young Egyptians." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15 (2009): S24-S40.

Schulz, Dorothea E., and Souleymane Diallo. "Competing Assertions of Muslim Masculinity in Contemporary Mali." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 46, 2-3 (2016): 219–250.

Seesemann, Rüdiger. "Epistemology or Ideology? Toward a Relational Perspective on Islamic Knowledge in Africa." *Journal of Africana Religions* 6, no. 2 (2018): 232–268.

Seesemann, Rüdiger. "'Ilm and Adab Revisited: Knowledge Transmission and Character Formation in Islamic Africa." In *The Piety of Learning: Islamic Studies in Honor of Stefan Reichmuth*. Edited by Michael Kemper and Ralf Elger, 15–37. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

Seesemann, Rüdiger. *The Divine Flood: Ibrāhīm Niasse and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Shafiu, Ashiat A. "The Contribution of MSS to Educational Development of Nigeria: A Case Study of Halal Nursery and Primary School, Ibadan." Unpublished BA essay, University of Ilorin, 1994.

Shavit, Uriya. "Can Muslims Befriend Non-Muslims? Debating Al-Walāʾ Wa-Al-Barāʾ (Loyalty and Disavowal) in Theory and Practice." *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 25, no. 1 (2014): 67–88.

Shaw, Rosalind and Stewart, Charles. "Introduction: Problematizing Syncretism." In *Syncretism/anti-syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis*. Edited by Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw, 1–24. London, New York: Routledge, 1994.

Shitu, Mujahid H. "A Review of the Activities of Christian Missionary, Clergy 'Experts' and Writers on Islam in Nigeria." *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture* 2, no. 3 (2014): 25–46.

Sikand, Yoginder S. "The Origins and Growth of the Tablighi Jamaat in Britain." *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 9, no. 2 (1998): 171–192.

Singerman, Diane. "The Economic Imperatives of Marriage: Emerging Practices and Identities Among Youth in the Middle East." *Middle East Youth Initiative Working Paper*, no. 6 (2007).

Singleton, Brent D. ""That Ye May Know Each Other": Late Victorian Interactions Between British and West African Muslims." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 29, no. 3 (2009): 1–17.

Sklar, Richard L. "Unity or Regionalism: The Nationalities Question." In *Crafting the New Nigeria: Confronting the Challenges*. Edited by Robert I. Rotberg, 39–59. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2004.

Sklar, Richard L. *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation*. Reprint. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004.

Smith, R. S. "Ijaiye, the Western Palatinate of the Yoruba." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2, no. 3 (Dec. 1962): 329–349.

Smith, Wilfred C. *The Meaning and End of Religion*. London: S.P.C.K, 1978.

Soares, Benjamin F, and Filippo Osella. "Islam, Politics, Anthropology." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15, no. 8 (2009): S1-S23 (accessed August 2, 2017).

Soares, Benjamin F. "New Muslim Public Figures in West Africa." In *Islamic Education in Africa: Writing Boards and Blackboards*. Edited by Robert Launay, 268–84. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016.

Soares, Benjamin F. "Reflections on Muslim-Christian Encounters in West Africa." *Africa* 86, no. 04 (2016): 673–697.

Soares, Benjamin F. "'Rasta' Sufis and Muslim Youth Culture in Mali." In *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North*. Edited by Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera, 241-157. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Soares, Benjamin F. "An Islamic Social Movement in Contemporary West Africa: NASFAT of Nigeria." In *Movers and Shakers: Social Movements in Africa*. Edited by Stephen Ellis and Ineke van Kessel, 178–96. African dynamics 8. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009.

Soares, Benjamin F. ed. *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006.

Soares, Benjamin F. *Islam and the Prayer Economy: History and Authority in a Malian Town*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, 2005.

Soares, Benjamin F. "Notes on the Anthropological Study of Islam and Muslim Societies in Africa." *Culture and Religion* 1, no. 2 (2000): 277–285.

Solihu, Abdul K. H., and Abdulganiy A. Abdulhameed. "Christian Translations of the Qur'an into Yoruba and Their Historical Background." *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 26, no. 4 (2015): 465–481.

Sounaye, Abdoulaye. "Doing Development the Islamic Way in Contemporary Niger." *Bulletin de l'APAD*, no. 33 (2011): 1-20.

Sounaye, Abdoulaye. "Irwo Sunnance Yan-No! 1: Youth Claiming, Contesting and Transforming Salafism." *Islamic Africa* 6, 1-2 (2015): 82–108.

Sounaye, Abdoulaye. "Salafi Revolution in West Africa." *ZMO Working Papers* 19 (2017): 1–15.

Spies, Eva, "Being in Relation: A Critical Appraisal of Religious Diversity and Mission Encounter in Madagascar," *Journal of Africana Religions* 7, no. 1 (2019): 62-83.

Spies, Eva, "Coping with Religious Diversity: Incommensurability and Other Perspectives." In, *A Companion to the Anthropology of Religion*, eds. Janice Boddy and Michael Lambek. West Sussex, UK: John Wiley and Sons, Inc, 2013, 118-136.

Spies, Eva and Rüdiger Seesemann, "Pluralicity and Relationality: New Directions in African Studies," *Africa Today*, 63, no. 2 (2016):132-139.

Starrett, Gregory. *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Stausberg, Michael, and Steven Engler, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Stauth, Georg, and Joska S. Schielke. *Dimensions of Locality: Muslim Saints, Their Place and Space*. Bielefeld, Piscataway, N.J.: Transcript Verlag, 2008.

Steinberg, Guido. "The Muslim Brotherhood in Germany." In *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Organization and Policies of a Global Islamist Movement*. Ed. Barry Rubin, 149–60. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Suárez Bosa, Miguel, ed. *Atlantic Ports and the First Globalisation, C. 1850-1930*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Suberu, Rotimi T. "The Struggle for New States in Nigeria, 1976–1990." *African Affairs* 90, no. 361 (1991): 499–522.

Sulaiman bin Ash'ath Abu Dawud. *Sunan Abu Dawud: English Translation*. 5. vols. 4. Riyadh: Darussalam, 2008.

Sulaiman, Abdullahi A., and Aminu M."a. Kambari. "The Activities and Challenges of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN) in Nasarawa State, Nigeria." *IOSR, Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 19, no. 1 (Jan. 2014): 40–45.

Tamuno, Tekena N. "The Role of the Legislative Council in the Administration of Lagos, 1886-1913." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4, no. 4 (June 1969): 555–570.

Tasie, G.O.M. *Christian Missionary Enterprise in the Niger Delta, 1864-1918*. Brill, 1978.

Tayob, Abdulkader. "The Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) of South Africa: Challenging the Ulama Hegemony." *J. Islam Stud.*, no. 12 (1992): 101–124.

Teriba, O., and M. O. Kayode, eds. *Industrial Development in Nigeria: Patterns, Problems and Prospects*. Ibadan: Univ. of Ibadan Press, 1977.

Thurston, Alexander. *Salafism in Nigeria: Islam, Preaching, and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Tibawi, A. L. "History of the London Central Mosque and the Islamic Cultural Centre, 1910-1980." *Die Welt des Islams* 21, 1/4 (1981): 193.

Toth, James. *Sayyid Qutb: The Life and Legacy of a Radical Islamic Intellectual*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013.

Tully, J. C. "Youth in Motion: Communicative and Mobile." *YOUNG* 10, no. 1 (2002): 19–43.

Turner, Bryan S. "Introduction: Mapping the Sociology of Religion." In *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*. Edited by Bryan S. Turner, 1–29. Blackwell companions to sociology. Chichester, West Sussex, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Turner, Bryan S. ed. *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion.* Chichester, West Sussex, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Ukah, Asonzeh. "African Christianities: Features, Promises and Problems.". *Arbeitspapiere/Working Papers 79*. Mainz: Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, 2007.

Umeh, Charles C. "The Advent and Growth of Television Broadcasting in Nigeria: Its Political and Educational Overtones." *Africa Media Review* 3, no. 2 (1989): 54–66.

Uthman, Ibrahim O. "Muslim-Christian Encounter in Nigeria and Yoruba Muslim Educational Jihad." In *Fractured Spectrum: Perspectives on Christian-Muslim encounters in Nigeria*. Edited by Akintunde E. Akinade, 85–93. New York: Peter Lang, 2012.

Uthman, Ibrahim O. *The Hijab of the Muslim Woman and a Call to Every Reformer*. Abeokuta: Islamic Conscious Group of Nigeria, 1997.

Van Binsbergen, Wim. "Regional and Historical Connections of Four-Tablet Divination in Southern Africa." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 26 (1996): 2–29.

Van Bruinessen, Martin, Armando Salvatore, and Muhammad K. Masud, eds. *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates*. Boston, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

Van Ginkel, Rob. "Writing Culture from Within: Reflections on Endogenous Ethnography." *ETNOFOOR* 7, no. 1 (1994): 5–23.

Varisco, Daniel M. *Islam Obscured: The Rhetoric of Anthropological Representation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Vaughan, Olufemi. *Religion and the Making of Nigeria*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Vaughan, Olufemi. "Chieftaincy Politics and Communal Identity in Western Nigeria, 1893-1951." *The Journal of African History* 44, no. 2 (2003): 283–302.

Vidino, Lorenzo. *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Voll, John O. "Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: Tajdid and Islah." In *Voices of Resurgent Islam*. Edited by John L. Esposito, 32–47. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Wallis, Roy. "Introduction: Religion and Change." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 2, no. 1 (1982): 2–7.

Walls, Andrew F. "The Legacy of Samuel Ajayi Crowther." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 16, no. 1 (1992): 15–21.

Ware, Rudolph T. *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

Wasiu, Jamiu A. "Muslim Students Society of Nigeria and Its Da'wa Activities in Edeland." Unpublished BA essay, University of Ilorin, 2016.

Weiss, Holger. "Zakat and the Question of Social Welfare: An Introductory Essay on Islamic Economics and Its Implications for Social Welfare." In *Social Welfare in Muslim Societies in Africa*. Edited by Holger Weiss, 7–38. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2002.

Weiss, Holger. ed. *Social Welfare in Muslim Societies in Africa*. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2002.

Welch, David. "Ritual Intonation of Yoruba Praise-Poetry (Oríkì)." *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* 5 (1973): 156-164.

Westerlund, David. "Ahmed Deedat's Theology of Religion: Apologetics Through Polemics." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, no. 3 (2003): 263–278.

Willet, Frank. "Ife and Its Archaeology." *The Journal of African History* 1, no. 2 (1960): 231–248.

World Assembly of Muslim Youth. *Islam in Concept*. Kuwait City: Dar Al Watan Publishing, 1980.

Wright, Zachary V. *Living Knowledge in West African Islam: The Sufi Community of Ibrahim Niasse*. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Wuam, Terhemba. "Nigeria Since 1960: A Comparative Study in Nation-Building and Development." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 21 (2012): 99–116.

Wüstenberg, Jenny. "When the Field Is Home: Conducting Research in One's Country of Origin." *APSA-CP* 19, no. 2 (2008): 19–23.

Yagboyaju, Dhikrullah A. "Alhaji Yisa Olasunkanmi Akanni Yagboyaju and the Development of Nigerian Muslim Youths: An Insider's Perspective." In *Eminent Muslims in Osun State: Essays in Honour of HRM Oba Raufu Olayiwola Olawale Adedeji II, Akinrun of Ikirun*. Edited by Siyan Oyeweso, 44–52. Abuja: Megapress, 2012.

Yearwood, Peter J. *Nigeria and the Death of Liberal England: Palm Nuts and Prime Ministers, 1914-1916*. Britain and the World. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Yegar, Moshe. "The Muslims of Burma: A Study of a Minority Group." Unpublished MA thesis, University of Heidelberg, 1972.

Zachernuk, Philip S. *Colonial Subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas*. Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 2000.

Zeghal, Malika. "The Multiple Faces of Islamic Education in a Secular Age." In *Islam in the Modern World*. Edited by Jeffrey T. Kenney and Ebrahim Moosa, 125-148. London: Routledge, 2014.

Appendix

The MSSN B-Zone Islamic Vacation Course (IVC) Curriculum

DIRECTOR OF STUDIES

جمعية الطلبة المسلمين بنيجيريا

MUSLIM STUDENTS' SOCIETY OF NIGERIA B-ZONE

102ND ISLAMIC VACATION COURSE

1438A.H. 2016/2017 (24ᵗʰRabiu'l-Awwal - 3ʳᵈRabi'uthThanni 1438A.H. (23ʳᵈ Dec.2016-1ˢᵗ Jan.2017)

THEME: في الدفاع عن عقيدتنا

In Defence of Our Faith

MEMORY VERSES: Q 24: 54-56

ADVANCE 1

DAYS	1ˢᵀ SESSION 8.30am-10.30am	2ⁿᵈ SESSION 11.30am-1.30pm
Saturday 25/3/1438 24/12/2016	Global Ostracizing and Enmity Against Islam: The case of Yemen and Syria (B) Barr. Mutiu Agboke (S)Dr Abideen Alarape	Emergence of Disagreement on the Manhaj :The Issue and Solution (B)Dr. Dhikrullah Olurode (S)Ustadh Talha AbdulHakeem
Sunday 26/3/1438 25/12/2016	PRE -FORMAL OPENING	FORMAL OPENING في الدفاع عن عقيدتنا In Defence of Our Faith
Monday 27/3/1438 26/12/2016	Nigeria Economy and the fate of Average income earners (B)Ustadh Dhikrullah Abdul Azeez (S) Amir Sharafdeen Abdus-Salam	الإستعاذات بغيرالله (B)Alh (Imam) Yunus Anola Al Amr bil Maaruf Wa Nahyu Anil Munkar (S)Amir Sharafdeen Muhammad
Tuesday 28/3/1438 27/12/2016	الرقى و التمائم (B) Mallam Abdul-Rasheed Solaudeen (S)Ustadh Abdul-Wasiu Salman	Al Amr bil Maaruf Wa Nahyu Anil Munkar (B) Dr.Sirajudeen Bilal Al-Asrau Insurgency, Recession & Corruption In Nigeria: a challenge on our faith (S) Dr. (Mrs) Modinat AbdurRaheem
Wednesday 29/3/1438 28/12/2016	Vocational Training: E-Commerce (B)Mr. Oketokun AbdulHakeem (S)HajiaLateefat Alli Mentholated Spirit and Others	فضل التوحيد وما يكفرمن الذنوب (B)Mallam Taoheed Shafii (S)Ustadh Luqman Keulere
Thursday 30/3/1438 29/12/2016	Book Review (B) Imam Maruuf Aroyehun (S)Dr Yusuf AbdulHameed	Hadith 19 of An-Nawawi (B) Ustadh Abdul-Rasheed Adedeji (S)Ustadh Abdul Hameed Yusuf
Friday 1/4/1438 30/12/2016	Life Skill (Critical Thinkingand Decision Making) (B) Prof Bunyamin Kareem (S) Dr. Sulayman Luqman	أنحن سلف؟ (B) Engr. AbdulWasiu Awwal إذا تبين فساد العقد بطل ما بنى عليه (S) Engr. Abdul-Ghaniy Akinosho
Saturday 2/4/1438 31/12/2016	Health Talk: Infertility (B)Dr. Ridwanullah Abdus-Salam (S)Alh AbdulRafiu Adeniyi	إذا تبين فساد العقد بطل ما بنى عليه (B)Ustadh (Dr) Rasheed Jaba rBuwayb أنحن سلف؟ (S)Nurudeen Adeyemo
Sunday 3/4/1438 1/1/2017	DEPARTURE	

ADVANCE 2

DAYS	1ST SESSION 8.30am-10.30am	2nd SESSION 11.30am-1.30pm
25/3/1438 24/12/2016	Understanding the right Creed (B)Mallam Sa'eed Alashe (S)Ustadh Ismail Abdullateef	Size and Shape : Future of Basic Educatio Nigeria (B)Ustadh Abdulfatai Adigun (S) Abdul Kabir Alamal Yaqeen
26/3/1438 25/12/2016	PRE -FORMAL OPENING	FORMAL OPENING لدفاع عن عقيدتنا **In Defence of Our Faith**
27/3/1438 26/12/2016	Al-Qadar (B)Engr Tajudeen Hamzah (S)Ustadh Sheu Yaqub	ستعاذات بغير الله (B)Alh. (Imam) Yunus Anola (S) Barr. Tolani Abdus-Salam
28/3/1438 27/12/2016	AhlusSunnah : Are We ? (B) Amir Abdul Ghaniy Yusuf (S)Ustadh Tajudeen Junayd	Insurgency, Recession & Corruption Nigeria: a challenge on our faith (B) Alh. Ishaq Kunle Sanni (S) Dr. (Mrs) Modinat AbdurRaheem
29/3/1438 28/12/2016	Vocational Training (B)Mallam Yusuf Shin'Aba (S)Ustadh Nurudeen Yusuf	Nigeria Economy and fate of Average income Earners (B) Dr. Abbas Alade (S)Mallam Sulaiman Muhammad-Jamiu
30/3/1438 29/12/2016	Book Review (B) Imam Maruuf Aroyehun (S)Hajia Sakeenah Sa'eed	Hadith 19 of An-Nawawi (B)Ustadh Ishaq Awwal (S)Ustadh Luqman Karashi
1/4/1438 30/12/2016	Life Skill (Reading & Writing skill) (B) Prof. Luqman Akinbile (S) Mallam Abdul-WasiuAkinbode	تبين فساد العقد بطل ما بنى عليه (B) Ustadh Haadi Yusuf (S) Imam Taofiq Raji
2/4/1438 31/12/2016	Health talk (Brain &Mental Disorder) (B)Ustadh Qasim Akano (S)Dr. Saliu Ishola	سلف؟ (B) Imam Bashir Olasunkanmi (S) Imam Tijani Raji Kewuyemi
3/4/1438 1/1/2017	DEPARTURE	

2

SUBJECT: TAWHEED

LOWER CLASS

(December I.V.C)

1. Definition of the concept of Tawheed
2. Definition of the concept of Shrik
3. Classification of Tawheed
   3.1. Rububiyah
   3.2. Ulhuhiyyah
   3.3. Al-Asmah-Wasifaht

(April I.V.C)

1. Definition of Iman
2. Al-Iman Billahi
3. Al-Imanbil-Malaikah with some of their names
4. Al-Imanbil-Kutub with some of their names
5. Al-Imanbil-Rusul with their classes
6. Al-Imanbil-Yaomilakhir
7. Al-Imanbil-Qadar

MIDDLE CLASS

(DECEMBER I.V.C)

1. Definition of the concept of Tawheed and its classification
2. Importance of Tawheed
3. Definition of shirk and its classification
4. Consequence of associating partner with Allah

(APRIL I.V.C)

1. Definition of Bid'ah and its classification
2. Evils and consequence of Bid'ah
3. Relationship of Muslims with non-Muslims

UPPER CLASS

(DECEMBER I.V.C)

1. Definition of the concept of Tawheed and Shrik
2. Definition of the concept of Tawakul and Tawasul
3. Introduction to sects in Islam and their evils
   (I)   Mu'tazilites (II) Shi'tes (III) Khawari
4. Bid'ah: its classes and consequences

(APRIL I.V.C)

5. Sunnah: its meaning and essence in Islam
6. Essence of religion & superiority at Islam
7. Sufism and Sufi orders i.e. Tijaniyah and Qadriyah