

Islam in Nigeria: A Century of National Islamic Societies

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1.0 Introduction

Among the fundamental human rights allotted to every citizen of Nigeria are the rights to thoughts, freedom and religion. Also, Nigerians, like many of their counterparts across the world, have the rights to peaceful assembly and association¹, without being disgraced, discriminated against or trampled upon². Religion constitutes the core of being for everyone; it is “a personal awareness or conviction of the existence of a supreme being or of supernatural powers or influences controlling one's own, humanity's, or all nature's destiny.”³

While Friedrich Schleiermacher in the late 18th century conceived religion as the “feeling of absolute dependence” indirectly reiterating the truth of man’s nature, Jonathan Haidt, a self-proclaimed atheist in a discussion with CNN, had the following to say about religion, hence its indispensability:

*Whether or not you believe in God, religions accomplish something miraculous. They turn large number of people who are not kin into a group that is able to work together, trust each other, and help each other. They are living embodiments of e pluribus Unum (from many, one). No other species on the planet has ever accomplished that. Bees and ants are great at it, but they can only do it because they are all sisters.*⁴

On his part, the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, on the nature of man and the need to interact with other members of natural species described man as a social animal. Centuries later, the

¹ *The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*. Accessed from www.nigeria-law.org/ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. htm on November 27, 2013

² Ibid.

³ I. O. Oloyede, “MDGs: With God All Things Are Possible”. Speech delivered at the Formal Opening Ceremony of the 29th Annual Conference of the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions (NASR) at the University of Ilorin on September 3, 2008.

⁴ Jonathan Haidt, “Why we lose ourselves”. Accessed from www.edition.cnn.com/2012/04/01/opinion/haidt-religion-evolution/ on November 26, 2013

German philosopher, Carl Marx, wrote in 1844 that “*religion is the opium of the people.*” The reality of today’s life or life generally is that there is no escape from religion and there is no doubt about its relevance. One must pass through it at one stage or another in life: at birth, at marriage and at death.⁵ Thus, in a country like Nigeria; whose Muslim population is estimated to be about 50.4%⁶ of her total population, it is only natural to find a huge number of Islamic organisations.

The relevance of history lies in its cognitive value which made Fafunwa⁷ to assert that memory is to an individual what history is to nations. Islamic organisations have become firmly rooted in the society so much that the history of Islam in Nigeria cannot be told without them. Reasons would vary about why individuals “belong” to particular religious groups rather than others, the fundamental issue is that all Islamic organisations were formed with a view to propagating Islam, helping the deprived, gaining religious knowledge and insight and thus making believers become better Muslims. From the simple individual Da’wah efforts and mosque affiliations of the pre-amalgamation years to the modern and organised “Alasalatu groups⁸” and charismatic Muslim organisations especially in the Southwest zone of Nigeria, Islamic organisations have fully evolved. Many of them are thriving though almost all of them may be wastefully facing the same direction. As Nigeria this year celebrated her centenary as a country, it is auspicious to cast a look at the last century of Islam in Nigeria, with specific reference to Islamic organisations perhaps the next century will usher in better organisation and usher in a more successful regime of Islamic awakening and spiritual rebirth. In appraising a century of Islamic organisations, it is pertinent to examine the history of Islam in Nigeria, discuss some organisations, highlight some of their impacts and offer some thoughts on the way forward. This is exactly what we intend to do in this paper.

2.0 History of Islam in Nigeria

Islam is believed to have crossed to the borders of West Africa in the eight century C E. Scholars like Ibn Munnabbeh had written that as early as 738AD, trade and commerce from

⁵ I. O. Oloyede, “MDGs...”

⁶ Pew Research Centre, “Interactive data table: World Muslim population by country on Accessed from www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population23/ on November 27, 2013.

⁷ A. B. Fafunwa, History of Education in Nigeria. (London: George Allen and Urwin, 1974) p.1

⁸ Alasalatu- Yoruba word denoting people devoted to invoking blessings on the the Prophet (PBUH) and prayers generally.

northern Africa helped to bolster the spread of the new religion⁹. Islam was first accepted by the Kanem ruler Umme Jilmi (1085-1097). He was introduced to Islam by the scholar Hamed Muhammed Mani. Umme Jilmi's son, Dunama I (1097-1150) also followed his father's interest in Islam, learning and practising it and was reported to have gone on pilgrimage or hajj. By the reign of Dunama II (1221-1259), the Kanem empire had begun correspondence with Tunisia in Maghrib and in 1257 a Kanem embassy was established in Tunisia, as mentioned by the famous historian, Ibn Khaldun (d 1406)¹⁰.

By the 14th century, a new capital of Kanuri had been established in Bornu at N'gazaragamu by Ali ibn Dunama who was a very keen student of the teachings of Islam¹¹. Mai Idris Aloom (1570-1602) of Bornu had far-reaching and more extensive Islamic campaign than his predecessors¹², building mosques and Islamic schools, thereby strengthening the foothold of Islam in the Bornu-Kanem axis.

Islam was brought into Hausaland by traders and scholars. About forty Wangarawa traders are thought to be responsible for introducing Islam to Kano during the reign of Ali Yaji (1349-1385). Al-Maghili, a famous scholar of his era, brought Islam to Katsina in the fifteenth century, similarly, a number of scholars from Sankore University; Timbuktu visited Katsina, bringing with them books on divinity and etymology¹³.

Another milestone in the spread of Islam into northern Nigeria was the jihad of Uthman dan Fodio. He was a Fulani man who waged a war for six years (1804-1810) to purify Islam and to eradicate idol worship and purge all forms of distortion and heretical innovation from the religion. He preached the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah and encouraged the Muslims of that time to return to orthodox Islam. This jihad did not only have a religious undertone, it was also political in the sense that it was able to unify the Hausa states under one government (the Sokoto caliphate) administered by the Shariah law. This continued until the partition of the caliphate in 1903 and its eventual incorporation into Nigeria; thereby the Sultan's power was

⁹ A. B. Fafunwa, *History...* p.53.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² A. B. Fafunwa, *History...* p.54

¹³ Ibid.

transferred to the High Commissioner. However, many aspects of the caliphate structure, including the Islamic legal system, were retained and used in the colonial era¹⁴.

The exact period that Yoruba land came in contact with Islam is still unknown, but historians put it between the 14th and 15th centuries, during the reign of Mansa Kankan Musa of the Mali Empire. The first mosque was built in Oyo-Ile in 1550AD, although it was meant to serve foreign Muslims in Oyo as there were no Oyo Muslims at that time¹⁵. Islam was known to Yoruba people as *Esin-Imale*, a patronymic reference to Mali. What makes this submission highly probable is the fact that Dyula traders from Mali reached the Yoruba kingdom at about that time. Also some words have been borrowed from *Songhay*. For example, the *Songhay* word for a holy man is *Alfa*, same with Yoruba and the political title of *barakoi/baray-koi* used by Governors in the Bara province in the north inland delta of *Songhay* in the 16th century and later used by the Commander of the Calvary was adopted by Yoruba as *Parakoyi* with similar connotation and political authority¹⁶.

Gradually Islam found a home in Yorubaland and more mosques were built as the mission began to spread. Iwo town led with its first mosque built in 1655, followed by Iseyin in 1760, Lagos in 1744, Saki in 1790 and Osogbo in 1889. Within a short period of time, Islam had spread to other Yoruba states.

Several factors were responsible for the influx of Yoruba into the fold of Islam. First was that, at that time, Islam had spread to the towns outside Oyo; so at the time Oyo Empire was destroyed, the Muslims who had to relocate were responsible for introducing Islam to their new communities. Secondly, there was a heavy flow of trade and immigration into the Yoruba kingdom at the time, which gave the guests the opportunities of introducing Islam to their hosts. Thirdly, Islam differed in attraction and better adapted to Yoruba social structure because it permitted polygamy¹⁷.

¹⁴ African Studies Centre, "Islam in Nigeria" Accessed from www.ascleiden.nl/?q=content/webdossiers/islam-nigeria on November 27, 2013

¹⁵ See "Islam" Accessed from www.yorupedia.com/subjects/yoruba-religion/islam/ on November 26, 2013.

¹⁶ L. M. Adetona, "Islam before the Colonial Period in Lagos, 1861-1900" In S. Oyeweso and M. O. Raheemson (Eds.) *Actors and Institutions in the Development of Islam in Lagos State: Essays in Honour of Alhaji Femi Okunnu* (Lagos: Matrixy Books Ltd., 2013)

¹⁷ See "Islam" accessed from www.yorupedia.com/subjects/yoruba-religions/islam on November 26, 2013.

3.0 Typology of Islamic Organisations in Nigeria

In my view, all Muslim organisations in Nigeria that have contributed to the advancement of Islam in the past 100 years can be categorised into six major types. These are the root, the umbrella, the professional, the personalised, the ideological and the independent non-aligned. They are explained as follows:

3.1 The Root

The root Islamic organisations are the historical bodies that have led to or influenced the establishment of other groups. In this category are Ahmadiya Muslim Community of Nigeria, Jamaatu Nasril Islam (JNI) and Muslim Students Society of Nigeria. These three organisations are pioneers which directly led to the establishments of other Islamic associations. The third is positive and planned while the other two are accidental products of either schism (as the Ahmadiyyah) or protestation of inactivity as was the case with JNI.

3.2 The Umbrella

The Umbrella Islamic organisations seek a coalition of other Muslim groups within them. In other words, they are organisations of Islamic organisations as various bodies come within their jurisdiction. Examples of what ought to be umbrella Islamic organisations are the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, (NSCIA), Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) and National Council of Muslim Youth Organisations (NACOMYO). The three co ordinate the totality of Islamic affairs, female Muslims and Muslim Youth organisations in Nigeria respectively. It is however confusing to have claims of being the umbrella organisation for Muslims in Nigeria by other bodies such as Assembly of Muslims in Nigeria (AMIN) Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI), Grand Council for Islamic Affairs in Nigeria (GCIAN), Supreme Council for Shariah in Nigeria (SCSN), National Joint Muslim Organisation (NAJOMO), which started as West Joint Muslim Organisation (WESTJOMO) to be the Western State counterpart of JNI, Nigerian Muslim Council (NMC), Muslim Council of Nigeria (MCN) Coalition of Muslim Organisations (CMO) Summit of Muslim Organisations, Organisation of Muslim Unity (OMU) Conference of Islamic Organizations, Council of Muslim Organizations, Federation of Muslim Organisations in Nigeria etc.

Indeed such claims of national authority on Islam in Nigeria have created a semblance of disorganisation, disunity and lack of defined structure among Muslims. It is generally believed

that the inactivity of the NSCIA and its seeming timidity in the defence of Islam and Nigerian Muslims largely account for the springs of the confusing claims. Nevertheless, one cannot totally ignore the role of individual selfish and sectional sentiments in some of the claims. The most prominent of the claims is the legitimate claim of the JNl, the President-General of which is the same (Sultan of Sokoto and) President-General of the NSCIA. Not a few Muslims have expressed some concerns about the confusion being created by such counter-claims moreso when such fluid situations are being exploited by non Muslim government officials to pick and choose who to consult or make to represent Muslims in Nigeria at one point or the other.

3.3 The Personalised

Personalised Muslim organisations are the category of Muslim organisations that are highly influenced owned and dominated by their respective founders or their heirs. The various organisations whose existence depends substantially on the influence and charisma of their founders and/or their biological khalifah(s) belong to this category. Many of the “deen” organisations belong to this category as the founders remain the *de facto* heads who are only joined by others in achieving their noble goals. As certain individuals are critical even to the destiny of nations, individualised Muslim organisations receive their strength from the towering influence of their founders. Such organisations are personal property of the founder and are akin to "husband and wife churches" which are now common in Nigeria. The main characteristic of such individualised Societies or bodies is that leadership succession is by blood relationship with the founder. In the last ten years, particularly in Southern Nigeria, such organisations are no longer limited to religious sages and scholars but are now extended to founders of numerous privatised Islamic 'Foundations'. It should be noted that the establishment, structure and operations of such 'Islamic' Foundations are at complete variance with Islamic Law of *Waqf*, which prohibits its being inherited or personalised.

3.4 The Professional/Specialised

This category belongs to organisations based on the professional affiliations of the members. There are Islamic organisations established by groups of bankers, lawyers, medical doctors, journalists, etc. The qualification for membership is hinged on the professional qualification of the members as they come into being in order to promote and protect the religious interest of their members primarily. Examples are Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP), Muslim

Lawyers Association of Nigeria (MULAN), Islamic Medical Association of Nigeria (IMAN) and League of Imams & Alfas in Yoruba land. Three exceptionally active players in this group are two human rights' groups- Muslim Rights Concerns (MURIC) and Network for Justice based in Kaduna- as well as Muslim Public Affairs Centre (MPAC).

3.5 The Ideological

This category of Islamic organisations is based on ideological peculiarities. These organisations emphasise certain aspects of their interpretation of certain Islamic practice or doctrine with exceptional seriousness. The sufi-based groups belong to this category, just as the *Izaala (Jamaatu Izalatil bid'ah waiqamatis Sunnah)* and the Islamic Movement of Nigeria. The approaches may be different, but the ideological organisations seek ideological re-orientation and re-awakening along or against a particular mode of practice in Islam. Most of the intractable intra religious conflicts among Nigerian Muslims emanate from this group.

3.6 The Independent/Non-Aligned

This category is made up of associations built by collectives for the general promotion of Islam. Though they may be initiated by individuals, they are allowed to operate independently and without the domineering influence of any particular individual or family. Ansar-ud-deen, Nawair-ud-deen, Muslim Youth League of Nigeria, Islamic Welfare Foundation etc belong to this group.

4.0 Islamic Organisations in the Pre-Independence Era (1914 – 1960)

The year 1914 is significant to Nigerians as it was in the year the Northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated and modern Nigeria came into being. To Muslims, it is also significant because the year marked the beginning of formal Islamic organisations in the country. The Ahmaddiyah Muslim Community of Nigeria was the first properly organised Islamic institution to berth in Nigeria in 1914¹⁸. Before its advent, there were only small prayer groups with loose memberships and lopsided administrative set-ups. The Sufis were also known to hold prayer circles, yet, no formal organisation like the Ahmaddiyah was in existence up to that time. In that same 1914, Jamah party emerged in the Lagos Central

¹⁸ [Ahmadiyya in Nigeria](#), a publication of Ahmadiyya Jama'ah in Nigeria, 1978, Lagos and See "How Ahmadiyya was Introduced into Nigeria", Accessed from www.ahmadiyyanigeria.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59Itemid=57 on November 27, 2013.

Mosque in opposition to Chief Imam Ibrahim who was seen as a stooge of the colonial rulers of Lagos¹⁹. There was the establishment of the Muslim Juvenile Society in 1916 under Alhaji Jubril Martins. The same year, the Muslim Literary Society was formed under Alhaji Imam Muhammad Lawal Basil Augusto who played active roles in fusing the Society with the Ahmadiyyah, having been impressed by the literature of the Ahmadis²⁰.

In 1924, Alhaji Lawal Basil Augusto renounced his membership of the Ahmadiyyah due to the issue of creed, and championed the establishment of the Jama'at-ul Islamiyya Society of Nigeria, (JIN). Anwar-ul-Islam is another product of the internal rift and schism within the group. The root of Ahmadiyyah family had earlier split into Ahmadiyyah Muslim Jamat and Ahmadiyyah Movement in Islam based on creed of acceptance or lack of acceptance of Gulam Ahmad as a "follower – Prophet".

Before long, (Young) Ansarudeen Society of Nigeria, Crescent Bearers, (Young) Nawair-ud-deen Society of Nigeria and just before independence, the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN) joined the list of the fledgling Islamic organisations in the country. It was clear that they all had similar or almost identical agenda. At that time, the education of Muslim children had become a major issue. Many of the schools at that time were being run by Christian missionaries and Muslims were being discriminated against. Admission of a Muslim pupil into good schools was rare and most of the schools almost made it compulsory for any Muslim child to convert to Christianity before being admitted. This created a huge gap in the education of Muslim children. This challenge was chief among the reasons why most of these organisations sprang up. Muslims were often seen as second class citizens and it became the responsibility of the groups to advocate change and find effective solutions to the educational challenges confronting Muslims at the time. These groups established schools and awarded scholarships to help educate Muslim children at home and abroad.

¹⁹ Olakunle A. Lawal: *Islam and Colonial Rule in Lagos* in Siyan Oyeweso and M.O. Raheemson (Eds.): *Actors and Institutions in the Development of Islam in Lagos State: Essays in Honour of Alhaji Femi Okunnu*, SAN, CON, Matrixy Books Ltd, Lagos 2013 pp 86ff

²⁰ A. Oluranti and Steve Adeniji "The Advent of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Lagos State: Islamic Groups as Agent of Social Rejuvenation". In S.O. In S. Oyeweso and M. O. Raheemson (Eds.) (2013) (Lagos: Matrixy Books Ltd., 2013)pp290ff

The Initial Four

Of all the Islamic organisations established within this period, four stand out for their roles in public space particularly in the education sector of the economy. They are the Ahmadiyyah (with its three factions of the Jamaat, Movement and later Anwarul Islam) Ansar-ud-Deen Society of Nigeria the Nawairu Deen Society of Nigeria and the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSS). The appropriateness and commitment to their set aims and objectives at that critical period was a major relief to the Muslims particularly in the South Western Nigeria. Muslim children were being denied education and anyone who had to enrol in the conventional schools which were being grant aided from public fund had to convert to Christianity. It was the urge to get Muslim children educated, free of Christian indoctrination, and to propagate and defend Islam that made some 42 young Muslims found the organisation at a meeting held on December 21, 1923. Part of the objectives of the Young Ansar-ud-Deen, as it was then, was to found, build and maintain educational institutions, encourage literacy and intellectual pursuits among its members, keep and maintain a library for the use of members and undertake generally other things that may tend to promote education.²¹ The Society has remained committed to its objectives, right from its earlier years, with the establishment of many schools. The foresight and forthrightness engendering the formation of this Islamic organisation and the zeal and commitment with which its past and present leaders champion the Cause of Islam are worthy of emulation. Similarly, in Abeokuta a group of ten young Muslim friends came together to establish, on the 4th of November 1939, the Young Nawairudeen²² Society which later metamorphosed into the Nawairudeen Society of Nigeria (NUD) which has established a large number of schools and Colleges in Nigeria.

The MSSN began in the pre-Independence era, precisely on the 18th of April 1954, under the initial leadership of Alhaji Lateef Adegbite while he was a secondary school pupil,²³ and as at the time of Independence, it had grown into arguably the largest students' group in the whole of Africa. As at Independence of Nigeria, the Society had grown from an association of secondary schools students into an active organisation present in any institution of learning

²¹ S.A. Rufai, "The Historical Development of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria" In S. O. Oyeweso and M. O. Raheemson, (2013) *Actors and Institutions* pp401ff

²² A Brief History of Nawair-ud-deen Society in Nawair-ud-deen society of Nigeria 75th Anniversary Celebration (1939-2014), 8th November 2014 p8

²³ See "How Ahmadiyya was Introduced into Nigeria", Accessed from www.ahmadiyyanigeria.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59Itemid=57 on November 27, 2013.

where Muslim students were found. The MSS is also responsible for the emergence of the Muslim Corpers Association of Nigeria (MCAN), whose membership consists of graduates of Nigerian universities and other tertiary institutions, who are in their one year mandatory National Youth Service Corps. The MSSN has also directly influenced the establishment of bodies like The Companion, the NACOMYO, the Criterion, and Muslim Graduates Associations. It indirectly gave impetus to the establishment of other Islamic Organizations particularly in the last 30 years. West African Muslim Students Association (WAMSA) was pet project of the MSS shortly before the ill digested ideological partisanship that eventually wrecked the advancement of the Society.

One important related development in Nigeria at that time was the establishment of four major Arabic and Islamic Institutions which later became the springboard for the supply of manpower for the Shariah Courts and the training of Arabic and Islamic students in conventional schools and Universities in Nigeria. They are Kano Law School (1934) which later became School of Arabic Studies in 1947; Markaz Talimul Arabi of Shaykh Adam Abdullahi El Ilory which was originally established in Abeokuta in 1952 and moved to Agege, Lagos in 1954; Ma'ahadul Ulumil Arabiyyah of Shaykh Kamaluddin Al Adaby in Ilorin in 1963 and Ma'ahadul Arabi Annajiri (Arabic Institute of Nigeria) Elekuro, Ibadan which was founded by Sheikh Murtadha Abdus Salaam in 1960.

In the Eastern part of Nigeria an island of Islamic learning was also created in 1965 with the establishment of Islamic Centre, Anofia near Afikpo in the present Ebonyi State. The centre founded by an indigene, Ibraheem Nwagui has produced many prominent Islamic leaders in the Eastern and south-southern parts of the country. It has also grown to be a rallying point for Muslims in that area of the country. The centre used to maintain high standard of scholarship in secondary education until recently. The school used to attract students from all over the country and beyond.

5.0 National Islamic Organisations in the Post-Colonial Era in Nigeria

The later generation of Islamic bodies varies only slightly from their predecessors in terms of *modus operandi*. The only difference seems to be that the post-Independence organisations seem to be better organised and consist younger members. JNI, NSCIA, IET, Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria, NASFAT, Qareeb Islamic Society of Nigeria, Federation of Muslim

Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Movement for Islamic Culture and Awareness (MICA), Muslim Ummah of South Western Nigeria (MUSWEN), Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC), Muslim Public Affairs Centre (MPAC), Islamic Education Trust, Jama'atul Muslimeen, etc belong to this category.²¹ The National Council of Muslims Organisations (NACOMYO), National Joint Muslim Organisations (NAJOMO) and the League of Imams and Alfas belong to their own class.

It must be noted however that a large number of Muslims in Nigeria are not impressed with the present low performance of Islamic organizations in public space in the country. This made the Nigerian office of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) organize on November 16, 2014 a workshop on "Islamic Organizations and Institutions in Nigeria: The Challenge of Sustainability". The *raison d'être* for the workshop was that many of the Islamic Organizations "are crisis-riddled, half-dead, have no focus, epileptic and have very low output. The weakness and shortcoming are just too numerous to mention"²⁴

TABLE 1: Some National Islamic Organisations in Nigeria

Organisation	Activities	Founding Date/Founder/Place
Abuja Muslim Forum	Dawa'h	2005
Ahbabul-islam Society of Nigeria	Da'wah	
Ahlusunnah Islamic Foundation	Training programs, Entrepreneurship	
Ahmadiyya Movement of Nigeria	Da'wah, Humanitarian services, Education, Health, Youth empowerment, Prayer circle, Arabic schools	1916, Alh L.B. Agosto
Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat	Da'wah and Education	1914 from England and Pakistan
Akhbarudeen Society of Nigeria	Da'wah	Ogbomoso 1986
Al Fatih-ul- Qareeb Islamic society of Nigeria	Da'wah, prayer groups, Aid Organisation	1999
Al-Muminaat	Prayer circle, Vocational training, Women empowerment	

²⁴ Umar Jibrilu Gwandu "Re-visiting Islamic Organisations in Nigeria" in Daily Trust Vol.36 No. 10 of November 21st 2014 p50

TABLE 1: Some National Islamic Organisations in Nigeria (Continue)

Organisation	Activities	Founding Date/Founder/Place
Al-Usrah Foundation Port Harcourt	Family Usrah, Arabic and western Education	June 12, 1994
Ansarudeen Society of Nigeria	Da'wah, Humanitarian services, Education, Health, Youth empowerment, Prayer circle, Arabic schools	1923, 42 founding members
Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria	Da'wah, Humanitarian services, Education, Health, Youth empowerment	1943
Anwarul Islam Movement of Nigeria	Education, Da'wah, Aid programs, Islamic and Arabic education, Health, Publication, youth and women empowerment	LB Agosto, AT Adele, BA Fanimokun, Alfa Muhammed Bello Lawal and Ashafa Tijani
Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP)	Scholarships, Education, Da'wah, Special women's programs (Port-Harcout)	1970
Council of Muslim Organizations (CMO)	Umbrella	2000 – 2009
Fityanul Islam Foundation	Da'wah	Kano 1963 by Sheikh M. Salga
Federation of Muslim Women Association in Nigeria (FOMWAN)	Gender Coordinated Da'wah	Minna 1985
Hajj Monitors of Nigeria	Educating and enlightening Nigerian Muslims on Hajj and Hajj practices	
Hijrah Foundation	Education	2002 Lagos Proprietor of the Proposed Hijrah University, Ede
Ibo Muslims Movement	Da'wah, Propagation of islam, Advocacy	1980s Enugu
Isabatudeen Society	Female Concerns	1958 establish first Muslim female Isabatudeen High Sch. In 1964
Islamic Brotherhood of Nigeria (ISBON)	Da'wah	1924 Lagos
Islamic Education Trust	Islamic Propagation Center, Education	1969/1977, Sheikh Ahmad Lemu, Sokoto/Minna
Islamic Missionaries Association of Nigeria	Umbrella for Da'wah	1974 Ilorin by Justice Abdulkadir Orire

TABLE 1: Some National Islamic Organisations in Nigeria (Continue)

Organisation	Activities	Founding Date/Founder/Place
Islamic Missionary Society	Education	1933 Ibadan Proprietor of Islamic High School, (1957) Orita Bashorun, Ibadan
Islamic Movement of Nigeria	Ideological	Sheikh Ibrahim Zakyzaky
Islamic Propagation Centre Warri (IPC)	Da'wah	1987 Warri
Islamic Trust of Nigeria (ITN)	Education	1975 Kano
Islamic Welfare Foundation (IWF)	Research and Development	1 st May, 1984 Lagos
Islamic Youth League of Nigeria	Islam Propagation	
Istijabah Prayer Group	Spiritual Development	23/7/1983 Ilobu, Osun
Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'a wa Ikamati Sunnah	Da'wah	1976/1977, Sheikh Ismaila Idris
JNI	Umbrella	1964
Jama'atu Tableegh in Nigeria	Propagation	In india 1926
Jamatul Islamiyya of Nigeria (Islamic Society of Nigeria)	Da'wah, Humanitarian services, Education, Health, Youth empowerment, Prayer circle, Arabic schools	1923, Alh. L.B. Augusto (March 1924)
Katsina Islamic Foundation	Education	1999 Owners of Alqalam University, Katsina
League of Imams & Alfas (Rabita)	Umbrella for old Western Region	1962
League of Islamic Scholars and Missionaries of Eastern Nigeria	Umbrella Body for eastern and south-southern Nigeria	1998
Movement for Islamic Culture and Awareness (MICA)	Da'wah, Entrepreneurship, Aid organization, Education	1980s Lagos
Muhyideen Association of Nigeria	Education	Ilorin 1960 by Alhaji Jibril Sahban
Muslim Associates	Propagation of Islam, Health, Education, Advocacy, Da'wah	1959, Prof Aliu Babs Fafunwa, Justice Babalakin and co

TABLE 1: Some National Islamic Organisations in Nigeria (Continue)

Organisation	Activities	Founding Date/Founder/Place
Muslim Association of Nigeria (MAN)	Da'wah, Advocacy, Education, Arabic classes, Humanitarian services	1 st Jan. 1959 Lagos
Muslim Council of Nigeria		1995
Muslim Public Affairs Center (MPAC)	Advocacy, Lobbying and Implementing projects	Virtual
Muslim Professionals in Da'wah (MPD)	Da'wah to new Converts	
Muslim Rights Concerns (MURIC)	Human Right Organization	1994 Lagos
Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSS)	Da'wah, Health programs, Advocacy, Education, Arabic classes, Humanitarian services	1954, Alh. Lateef Adegbite
Muslim Ummah	Da'wah, Prayer circle, Education, Health, Social welfare, Empowerment	1980s
Muslim Ummah of South Western Nigeria(MUSWEN)	Umbrella	2008. Prof AB Fafunwa and co
Nasrullahi Fatih Society of Nigeria (NASFAT)	Da'wah, Humanitarian services, Education, Health, Youth empowerment, Prayer circle, Arabic schools, zakkat collection	1995, Abdul Lateef Wale Olasupo
National Council Of Muslim Youth Organisations (NACOMYO)	Da'wah and Advocacy	1987
NAJOMO/WESTJOMO	Umbrella for old western state	1972 by Dr. Lateef Adegbite
National Islamic Centre (NIC)	Think Tank	1981 Zaria by former MSS Officials
Nawair-ud deen Society of Nigeria (NUD)	Usrah, Aid organization	1939
Network for Justice	Human Right Concerns	1980s Kaduna
Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA)	Apex National Umbrella	August 1973
Nurul-Islam Missionary Society of Nigeria	Da'wah, Aid Organization	
Organisation of Tadamunul Muslimeen	Propagation of Islam	

TABLE 1: Some National Islamic Organisations in Nigeria (Continue)

Organisation	Activities	Founding Date/Founder/Place
Organization of Muslim Unity (OMU)	Umbrella	1973 Ilorin
Saadat Abadiyat Organization of Nigeria	Islamic Propagation, Publication of Magazine, Scholarships	Abeokuta
Shababu-Deen-l-Islam	Islamic Propagation, Islamic Education	
Sirajudeen Society of Nigeria	Da'wah	Ado-Ekiti 1964
South East Muslim Organization	Umbrella Body	2007
The Companion	Family Development	1984 Lagos
The Criterion	Parenting	1986 Lagos
The Islamic Foundation of Nigeria	Islamic Education	1973 in Kano
The Muslim Congress	Propagation of Islam, Da'wah, Aid Organization.	1980s
The Muslim Stars Association Of Nigeria	Propagation of Islam, Da'wah	
The Peace Guards Organization of Nigeria	Da'wah, Islamic Paramilitary Organization	
The Young Muslim Brothers and Sisters of Nigeria (YOUMBAS ANJAENA)	Da'wah	
Young Muslim Association of Nigeria (YMAN)	Da'wah	Aran-Orin (Kwara) 1967
Zumratu Islamiyya Society of Nigeria	Da'wah, Education	1927 Lagos

Source: Expansion and modification of the list contained in Abdul-Lateef Adekilekun: Selected Islamic Organisations in Nigeria 1916-1986, vol.I&II n.p. 1989

5.1 Islamic Organisations in the Southern Nigeria

The marriage of Islam and the people of the Yoruba states has been a long and fruitful one. The number of Islamic organisations in the South, especially the Southwest, are too numerous and their effect has been profound on the propagation of the message of Islam. Yet there is still a lot of work to be done. The Ahmaddiya Movement, Anwar-ul-Islam, Ansarudeen and

Jama'at-ul-islam stepped into the scene at a much needed time when the education of Muslims children needed a big boost. Schools were established by the groups to bridge the educational gap between the Christians and the Muslims.

Most of the Islamic organisations started as prayer circles in community mosques, when the numerical strength of the members began to expand, new chapters of the same prayer circles were formed and an institutionalisation was put in place to provide proper organisational process and ensure survival. Some would argue that the competition to match the Christians in the practice of religion and social standards had led to the flamboyancy of many of the organisations at this period. There are virtually no two streets without a neighbourhood mosque and every town has a central mosque, and Arabic school.

There is in each state of southern Nigeria a state branch NSCIA made up in reality of individuals who attend functions of these two bodies without grass roots involvement. In most of the states, NSCIA and JNIA are not only made to function as any other Islamic organisations, they comprise few individuals rather than the collectivity of the whole Muslim Ummah in the state. Whenever there is need for collective position of Muslims on certain issues or policies, either an ad hoc committee is hurriedly put together or the Muslim Communities of the major central mosques in the state are made to represent the Muslims. Throughout Nigeria, an all inclusive Muslim Community at the State level is functional only in Oyo, Lagos and Adamawa States. In others it is a semi-permanent ad hoc body- Committee/Council of Muslim Organisations that is in place. This situation is not in the best interest of Islam in Nigeria.

In his two-volume book²⁵, Adekilekun explains the backgrounds, aims and objectives and other salient issues about scores of Islamic organisations in the country most of which are from the south, including south east and south south. Table 1 contains some of the major organisations.

I.W.F: A Failed Attempt?

Generally, virtually all Islamic organisations in Nigeria address identical issues of Daawah and establishment of educational institutions without much differentiation or specialisation. In

²⁵ A. Adekilekun, *Selected Islamic Organisations in Nigeria (1916 – 1986)* Vols. I & 2. 2nd ed. (Ede: Mayanjuola Press, 2012)

May 1984, the Islamic Welfare Foundation (IWF) was established in Lagos by a group of elite and academics to serve “as a think-tank and Research and Development agency”²⁶ for the Muslims in Nigeria. Late El-Hajj Saka Fagbo of the Nigerian Television Authority was the pioneer National Co ordinator. Within a short period, the Foundation gave a good account of itself by supplying the Muslim Ummah with vital statistics and policy documents for guidance. It published the data of Muslims in each of the Universities in Nigeria with a clarion call for Muslims to rectify the anomaly of their non-existence in virtually every University in Nigeria. In refuting an erroneous allegation by a group of non Muslims, the Foundation published an analysis of religious affiliation of public officers in Nigeria. This was followed by a study on noise making in the country. The appreciative Muslim Community was sensitised and awakened by the research based findings of the Foundation. In congratulating the IWF on its 30th anniversary, one needs to lament the tragedy of derailment of IWF from its focus on R &D. The Ummah would have been better served if IWF has retained its focus on being an Islamic watchdog of public sector and institutions for a coherent and informed voice of the Ummah in Nigeria. Time and space may prevent an analysis here of the causes of derailment, one major factor is the unpreparedness of members of IWF to dedicate as much as two hours every week to the study and analysis of Muslim concerns in Nigeria. Another is the failure of members of the Foundation to harness financial resources to employ first rate researchers either on full or part time basis for the prosecution of its mandate. The commitment and passion which made Late Alhaj Ishola Owoniboy perpetually endow the Foundation with a spacious facility of the Owoniboy complex on the prime Taiwo Road, Ilorin must have totally weaned to bring us to this parlous situation.

5.2 Islamic Organisations in Post-Colonial Northern Nigeria

It can be argued that an excellent Islamic organisation with its super structure and incontrovertible control had been established by Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio in the early part of the 19th century of the Christian era. The organisation was so formidable to withstand the direct onslaught of the Christian Missionaries and colonisers who worked strenuously to uproot Islam and supplant it with Christianity. The unitary system of the North and the entrenchment of Islam as the custom of the majority of the North made establishment of

²⁶ Draft Constitution of IWF 1984 p2

Formal Islamic Society a non issue in the North. Consequently, in comparison with the Southwest, there are fewer National Islamic organisations in the North prior to Independence.

The reason for this could also be the fact that Islam has a stronger foothold in the Hausa states. Also, the major reason for the establishment of Islamic organisations was to help the Muslims of that time in getting quality education. The Hausa states already took pride in the high standard of their Islamic education, so when Western education was introduced by the colonialists, it took much longer for them to accept it in northern Nigeria at that time because it was considered almost synonymous with accepting Christianity. Naturally, to protect their Islam, the north shunned it; just as many did, in the South-West. It was not until they recognised the inherent socio-political impediments that the north accepted to modify its position on western education, and over the years they carefully married the two types of education assisted by the colonial commissioners.

The feeble resistance of South Western Muslims to Western Education led to massive indoctrination and forced conversion of Muslims into Christianity because they had to choose between Islam and Western Education and enjoyment of certain essential social facilities such as hospital and employment opportunities. The Muslim of South Western Nigeria still pay the price up till today.

The first formal Islamic organisation in Northern Nigeria after the 1914 amalgamation is Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria which was founded in Ilorin by Shaykh Kammaluddeen Al Adabi in May 1942. It was the first Islamic voluntary organisation to establish a Primary school in Northern Nigeria in 1947.²⁷ Its main focus is Education. It has numerous primary and secondary schools across Nigeria.

An account of the establishment of JNI has been provided by an eye witness and active participant Prof S.A.S. Galadanci²⁸ as follows:

Nigeria gained her independence....the Northern Region...was lagging behind in terms of Western system of education....some of the political leaders realised

²⁷ Abdullateef Adekilekun: Selected Islamic...Vol. I p179

²⁸ S.A.S. Galadanci: *Nigerian Muslims and the JNI: Strengths, achievements, Prospects and Challenges* an unpublished paper delivered at the JNI 50th Public Annual Lecture on the 13th of April, 2014 pp5&7

they could not successfully rule.....without the support and co operation of traditional rulers.....Late Sardauna who served as the pivot around whom all other actors rotated.. was a political leader as well as a traditional ruler. He, therefore...instituted an Advisory Board on Religious Affairs with 100 members. The Board.....held its first meeting in August 1963 under the chairmanship of Waziri Junaidu of Sokoto... The ...achievement of the Advisory Board helped...in uniting the Ulama.....and paving the way for the establishment of a non governmental association which would serve as umbrella for the entire Muslim Ummah in this country. Thus, using some of the members of the Advisory Board and some senior committed civil servants in his government, he was able to establish the JNI....The inaugural meeting was held in Lugard Hall Kaduna, in March 1964 under the chairmanship of Dr. Waziri Junaidu of Sokoto....JNI began to grow... until his death in 1966... JNI fell into slumber.....Members.....attempted to draw the attention of the organisation..... (to) its responsibilities. Those Young Turks saw no alternative but to set up their own Muslim organisations.

Incidentally, the two examples given by Galadanci were State Grand Kadis to which I can add the third. They are Islamic Education Trust (IET) by the then Grand Kadi of Niger State, Hon Justice Sheikh Ahmed Lemu in 1977; Islamic Foundation of Nigeria(IFN) established in Kano in 1973 by Dr. Hassan Gwarzo, the then Grand Kadi of the state. There is also Islamic Missionaries Association of Nigeria (IMAN) founded by the then Grand Kadi of Kwara State, Hon. Justice Abdulkadir Orire, in 1974. Though by default, the lull in JNI yielded the good fruits in Islamic propagation through the three organisations that are vibrant.

The JNI has been reinvigorated and active, yet I share the genuine concern of Galadanchi that:

Can JNI function effectively with its current structure (when) ...the traditional rulers are part and parcel of the order of the day. Can they guide the organisation to ...oppose the Government if and when Muslims are being victimised or marginalised?²⁹

²⁹ *Ibid* p11

This, to a less extent, is true of also the NSCIA where non traditional rulers are more than traditional rulers in the decision making organs of the Council. Within two years of the establishment of JNI, it founded Sultan Bello Primary School, Kaduna and Sheikh Sabah College, Kaduna. It has a hospital and a magnificent office complex in Kaduna. It established a voluntary organisation; the Aid Group in 1975. One major defect of the organisation is that it functions at the State level in Northern Nigeria as any other Islamic organisation instead of being an umbrella which incorporates all Islamic organisations in each state. Until recently that was also true of the NSCIA.

Another account³⁰ was that Jamaa'atu Nasril Islam was formed in 1963 after the return of the Premier of Northern Nigeria, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello (Sardauna of Sokoto) from pilgrimage in Makkah having realised the need for a body that would champion the propagation of Islam. Inspired by Ansarul Islam Society in Ilorin, the organisation was formed by the Sardauna and Shaykh Abubakar Gumi with the objective, "basically to work, through peaceful ways, including 'wisdom and good preaching' in projecting the good image of Islam and defending the legitimate rights and interest of Muslims throughout Nigeria."³¹ Every Muslim of Northern origin was declared a member. The Waziri of Sokoto was the foundation President at the beginning while the Sultan served among the Patrons. At the official inauguration of the body, observers were invited from the South. These observers included Sheikh Adam Abdullah El-Ilory, Alh. Laguda (Lagos); and Alh. M. K. Ekemode. Part of the mission was to bring all Islamic organisations in the North under a common umbrella. Alhaj Labaika Olukade Bello, from Ilorin who was then the Secretary General of Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria was the first paid full-time Administrative Secretary of the JNI.

As challenges tend to make people organise, due to the established Islamic system in the north and the institutionalisation of Islamic practices against what operates in the south, the North still has fewer Islamic organisations. Most of the Islamic organisations are non-governmental organisations because the need for better welfare for the citizens. FOMWAN has been dedicated to the struggle of the women folk, and it has achieved a high level of success. NASFAT, AUD, NUD and Ahmadiyyah have been able to establish outposts as branches in the North but most of the active members and officers are Yorubas who reside in the North.

³⁰ Abdul Lateef Adekilekun: Selected... Vol. I p99

³¹ "Jama'atu Nasril Islam", Accessed from [www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamaa'atu_nasril_Islam](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamaa%27atu_nasril_Islam)

Sufism is prevalent more in the north than in the south. Tijanniyyah and Qadiriyyah Orders are the major two off-shoots of Sufism in Nigeria. The Sufis believe in mysticism and some form of esoteric powers obtained through certain rites which could be used to benefit a practitioner. Opposing this group is the *Jamaat Izala al Bida wa Iqamat as Sunnah* (Society for the Removal of Innovation and Re-establishment of the Sunnah). It was founded in 1976 by Sheikh Ismaila Idris in Jos. Their main focus appears to be the opposition of Sufism as they tagged the sufis as the people of bid'ah (innovation)³².

Another prominent Islamic organisation is the Islamic Movement of Nigeria headed by Sheikh Ibrahim Zakyzaky. The movement is Shiite and has been credited with certain humanitarian projects. However, the public has been concerned with certain disturbances that appeared to have portrayed the organisation in bad light. It is important to mention that the religious leader, Sheikh Ibrahim Zakyzaky is a product of the M.S.S³³. It must be noted that the Government of President Goodluck Jonathan was unduly repressive of the group many of their adherents were extra-judiciously executed in the name of public order.

In recent times, particularly in 2002, Muhammad Yusuf founded *Jamaa'tu Ahlis Sunna Lida'wati Wal-jihad* ("Group committed to the propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad")³⁴. This group would later be given the name "Boko Haram" because the thrust of Yusuf's preaching was that Western education accounted for the degenerate state of the country and the Islamic law had to supplant the system. He was at daggers drawn with other Muslims who did not share his belief and method. People started to refer to his group as "Boko Haram" (Western education is forbidden) while he operated from his base in Maiduguri. The frequent clashes between his group and the security forces climaxed in the extrajudicial killing of Yusuf in police custody on July 30, 2009. The generality of Muslims in Nigeria denounced and condemned the methods of Yusuf and his group. The memory is fresh as all are witnesses to the cataclysmic consequences of the *Boko Haram* activities on peace

³² See "The Izala Movement in Nigeria: Its Spirit, Relationship to Sufis and Perception of the Sharia Re-implementation" Accessed from www.bigsas.uni-bayreuth.de/en/Alumni_c_research_p/the_izala_ben_amara/index.html on November 27, 2013

³³ See. "Biography of Mu'Allim Ibrahim Zakyzaky" Accessed from November 28, 2013. www.bregava.tripod.com/MAZBIOG.

³⁴ "Boko Haram" Accessed from www.wikipedia.org/wiki/boko_haram on November 26, 2013.

and security in the country. It has also been a tool that the enemies of Islam have used to wreak havoc on Islam and Muslims.

The Jama'atu Ansaru Musliminna fi Biladi Sudan announced their breakaway from Boko Haram. While stating their differences stated that they, unlike Boko Haram, do not believe in the killing of Muslims except in the case of self defence. The group, which has been allegedly involved in kidnapping, condemned the killing of innocent security operatives and said they would not attack them until when attacked first. Finally, unlike Boko Haram, their focus is said to be limited to Nigeria, which vowed to 'protect' the interest of Islam all over Africa³⁵. The two groups have been outlawed in Nigeria.

It is important to note that prior to mid 2015 the war against *Boko Haram* was being impeded by what appears as ill-motif, and hatred for Islam by those charged with security of the Nation. Muslims were generally sceptical about the genuiness of the claims and actions of the Nigerian security agencies. The Apo massacre and the highly suspicious allegations against a University lecturer who was generally known to have openly opposed *Boko Haram* activities, but yet being presented not only as sympathetic but also being a spiritual leader of the group, were recent pointers in support of the scepticism. International communities have persistently accused Nigeria of gross violation of rights of innocent citizens in the name of fighting terrorists. There was wide reportage of 15 citizens, including an Imam, arrested in their homes in Potiskum and their battered corpses were the following day deposited at the mortuary! Another instance of extra judicial killing! Hiding under the cover of emergency rule, two armed soldiers-James Isuwa and Umoh-who were on military check point in Maiduguri on the 6th of November, 2014 coerced a 22 year undergraduate-Muhammad Sulum- to give the soldiers a ride only to stop him at a point, shot him at close range, pushed him down and zoomed off with his 1998 accord car and other belongings. It took the vigilance and courage of some civilians to eventually got them arrested.³⁶

While it might be out of place here to digress into the complex issues involved in the current wave of intense and unjustifiable civil war in which the nation has been callously thrown, it

³⁵ "New Islamic group emerges in Nigeria, vows to defend all Muslims in Africa" Accessed from www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2012/06/new_islamist_group_emerges_in.php on November 28, 2013.

³⁶ "Mother of unimaid Graduate shot by soldier cries for justice" in Saturday Punch Vol7254 no. 1754 of November 22, 2014 p38

may be necessary to call our attention to two publications which, in our view, seem, in addition to the recent arm-deal scandal in South Africa, to suggest that Boko Haram is a contrived devilish arrangement to blackmail Islam and weaken Nigerian Muslims for political ends.

Inna ladhina kafaru yunfiquna amwalahum liyasuddu an sabililahi fasayunquunah thumma takuunu' alayhim hasratan thumma yughlabuuna waladhina kafaru ilaa jahanamah yukhsharun³⁷

The publications are (I) Sharon Faliya Cham: "As the Church slept...The Trilogy"³⁸. (II) I O Oloyede: "Theologising the mundane, politicising the divine: A cross-current of Law, Religion and Politics in Nigeria"

5.3 Formation of NSCIA as an Apex Body for the Management of Islamic Affairs in Nigeria

There is no doubt that the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello must have intended that JNI should speak for Muslims across the nation but the political circumstances of the nation at the formation of the JNI, made such impossible, hence the invitation of some Muslims from the south to merely observe the inauguration of the JNI. After the unfortunate assassination of the visionary Ahmadu Bello and the military take-over, it became obvious that there was the need for a body to speak on behalf of all Muslims in Nigeria. Dr Abdul Lateef Adegbite who was then the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftancy Affairs in Western State initiated a discussion with Sir Abubakar III, the then Sultan of Sokoto on the need for such national umbrella body and after series of meetings of representatives of Muslims from all states of the Federation, it was decided that a new and neutral body should be formed to act as the voice of all Muslims in Nigeria. Consequently, the NSCIA was inaugurated at Kaduna in August 1973.

Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs is thus the apex Islamic organisation charged with the promotion and advancement of Islam in Nigeria. It is headed by the Sultan of Sokoto as the President-General, His Eminence Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar mni CFR. It

³⁷ (Quran 8 Verse 36)

³⁸ www.thenigerianvoice.com/NigeriaHome/download.asp?id=8 and www.blueprint.ng/2014/05/the-tools-jonathan-uses-to-divide-nigerian

³⁹ (2014) 1 AHRLJ 178-202

serves as the channel between the government and the Muslims in Nigeria on Islamic affairs. All Islamic institutions in Nigeria fall under the general canopy of the NSCIA.

The NSCIA was established to cater for, preserve, protect and advance the interests of Islam and Muslims throughout Nigeria. It is a unifying organ and as the highest decision-making organ of the Nigerian Muslim ummah, some of its objectives include⁴⁰:

- *Promoting Islamic solidarity through fostering brotherhood and cooperation among Muslims in Nigeria and other parts of the World.*
- *Promoting the continued application of Shari'ah in Nigeria and the observance of Islamic morality. The Council shall therefore, ensure that the ideals of Islam as laid down in the Glorious Quran and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (P.B.O.H.) are adhered to by all Muslims in Nigeria.*
- *Serving as a channel of contact with the Government authorities on Islamic affairs.*
- *Ensuring uniform observance of Islamic rites including festivals throughout the federation of Nigeria.*
- *Coordination of the external contacts, interests and activities of Muslims in Nigeria as individuals or groups. The Council acting thus shall be the channel of contact and communication with external bodies on Islamic matters.*

In summary, the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs is the platform provided by the Muslims in Nigeria for interacting among themselves and interacting with the public, particularly the Government in the management of the affairs of Islam in Nigeria. So, it is the highest organ as the name suggests for interacting with others on behalf of Muslims in Nigeria. The Council represents and protects the interest of Muslims in Nigeria. It is made up of representatives from all segments of the Muslim community and it is for that reason that it speaks for the Muslims in Nigeria. Its National Executive Committee has five segments of (a) 8 Principal Officers (b) Chairmen of its National Standing Committees (c) 2 representatives of each State of the Federation and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) (d) President and Chief Missioner of every National Islamic Society and (e) Selected notables.

⁴⁰ "Objectives", Accessed from www.nscia.com.ng/index.php/about-us/objectives.

6.0 Contributions of Islamic Organisations to National Development

There is no doubt that Islamic organisations have contributed tremendously to several areas of national development. Some of these areas are highlighted briefly thus:

6.1 The Economy and National Islamic Institutions

The contribution of Islamic institutions to Nigerian economy is bio-dimensional. Many Islamic organisations have driven empowerment programmes to eradicate poverty by providing tools of trade, or organising seminars where people are taught to fish. FOMWAN has many activities of this nature going on around the thirty six states of the federation⁴¹. NASFAT has a full-fledged business unit. Under it is the TAFSAN beverages which produce Nasmalt. The group also has a Hajj/Umrah travelling agency and a couple of private Islamic schools among other businesses. This is apart from a thriving Islamic University. This entire business unit has in its employment Muslims and non Muslims who earn their living from this organisation. Many of such efforts are being made in different Islamic Organisations in Nigeria.

JNI is also involved in some investment. One of it is being a majority share holder in Gaskiya Corporation Ltd Zaria.

6.2 Protection of Women Rights

Uthman dan Fodio is to be credited as one of the first scholars to advocate the rights of women in his time. He engaged in the education of women and had his daughters educated. He encouraged women to come to the mosque and he helped to raise the status of Muslim women in the society. Obviously, this is FOMWAN's area of concentration, which is the provision of humanitarian services to women and empowering them. Generally, most of the Islamic organisations are not gender-sensitive in their programmes as such programmes are often targeted at Muslims generally, yet, they make sure they make substantial contribution to the women folk.

Advocacy and protection of the rights of women has always been a concern for most Muslims organisations in Nigeria. There is a lot to be done in providing accommodation for female Muslims in our mosques particularly in the North.

6.3 Da'wah and the Call for National Unity and Peace

⁴¹ "Aims and Objectives" Accessed from www.fomwan.org/about_fomwan.php, on November 29, 2013.

Virtually all the National Islamic organisations sponsor religious programmes, Arabic literacy and Islamic education to ensure that there is continuous learning, understanding and propagation of the religion. The standard of such institutions may be a topic for another discourse.

At an international conference this year, hosted by the Muslim World League, the Sultan of Sokoto along with several Muslim leaders, scholars and academics discussed the need for peace, while calling on the Muslims to ensure peaceful co-existence with their non – Muslim brothers. The conference which was themed “International Conference of Islam and the Need for Peaceful coexistence in Nigeria” is an example of Muslims advocating peace⁴². Every Friday, at most mosques, the same message is passed from the *Minbar*.

6.4 Media

In May, 2012 Quds Radio, a Muslim-owned radio station, began operations in Iwo with a view to propagating Islam, clearing up misconceptions about the religion and giving proper orientation about Islam according to the Quran and Sunnah. The radio, established by Jama’atu Ta’awun Muslimeen took this bold step because the Christian dominated media houses have always been grossly biased against Islam⁴³. Muslim organisations write articles for newspapers through their missionaries and other officers while in the month of Ramadan, they buy spaces in newspapers to disseminate the message of Islam. They also sponsor Islamic programmes on the electronic media. The Lagos-based media house, Muhri International Television (MiTV), is owned by a Muslim, though there is still a long way to go in making what belongs to Muslims serve the interest of Islam.

Publishing has been small scale with organisations producing magazines, journals and authored sponsored books and prayer books. The effects of our Islamic organisations are yet to be felt much in the publishing industry in an age in which knowledge is power and information rules the world. It is unfortunate that the mainstream media has been anti-Islam and Muslims do not have a voice. More efforts are therefore needed to be made in this direction. It is worthy of note that early Muslims in Nigeria realised the importance of media. Alh. Adamu Anmashahun procured the Times of Nigeria in 1928 and later handed it over to

⁴² Muhammad Bala, “Peace- The Message from Sokoto” Accessed from www.weeklytrust.com.ng/index.php/saturday-column/12146-peace-the-message-from-sokoto, on November 28, 2013

⁴³ Rafiu Oriyomi, “Nigeria gets first Muslim Radio” Accessed from www.onislam.net/english/africa/457119-nigeria-gets-first-muslim-radio.htm, on November 29, 2013.

the Lagos Muslim Community. It is also on record that within 2 years of the establishment of JNI, it was publishing regularly in three languages a magazine called HASKE in Hausa, Nurul Islam in Arabic and The Light of Islam in English.

6.5 Education

Without the contributions of Islamic organisations among which Ansar-ud-Deen towers high, there would have been a wider gap in the social standard that exists between Muslims and non-Muslims. It is one of the best two in the establishment of Muslim Secondary Schools in Nigeria. This is at the time it mattered much. The historical efforts of Ansar-ud-Deen in this direction are highly commendable and laudable.

In the last decade too, there have been considerable reforms in the educational sector. Leading this transformation are the Islamic Trust of Nigeria (ITN), the Nigerian Association of Model Islamic Schools (NAMIS) and the Islamic Education Trust. These organisations have made considerable effort in addressing the education needs of Muslims⁴⁴. Many other institutions have established schools after the pioneering efforts of Ansaru-deen and the Ahmadiyyah Movement but NASFAT is the only one that has educational institutions at all levels of education.

Unfortunately, we still don't have enough schools that can favourably compete with mainstream or secular schools. High standard schools are usually expensive to run so the tuition fees are very high. Many of the schools of the first generation of Islamic institutions need refurbishment. In the schools where the fees are moderate, they only have capacity to admit a limited number of students. The educational sector in Nigeria needs serious reform, and hence, the ripe time is now for more contributions by Islamic organisations in that area. It is interesting to note that Christian individuals and organisations have established dozens of universities in Nigeria; while Muslims have only been able to establish four. This however does not call for the proliferation of Muslim-owned universities in the typical bandwagon mentality, it only calls for setting our priorities right. One media University with standard campuses may be a good option based on limited resources.

⁴⁴ R. I. Adebayo, "The Islamic Education Trust: an Educational Experiment in Nigeria" Accessed from www.unilorin.edu.ng/publications/Adebayo/The%20islamic20%Education%Trust.htm. on November 29, 2013.

6.6 Health

The Ahmadiyyah Muslim Jamat is the most active Islamic organization in the health sector in Nigeria. It has well established hospitals in different parts of Nigeria. The Muslim Community of Saki also established a hospital in 1987 to cater for the health needs of the community. In a community of almost 90% Muslims, the only hospital that existed in the town before then was a Baptist hospital. Muslims who sought medical attention there were discriminated against and were given differential charges. Similar stories like this have necessitated the establishment of hospitals across the country, but unlike school buildings, hospitals are more expensive to build and manage so there hasn't been much development in that sector. The state of our healthcare delivery system is pathetic and it is worrisome that few Islamic organisations are looking in that direction.

Nevertheless, some individuals have set up private hospitals which make it easier for Muslims to access medical care. For example, at the birth of a child, certain rites have to be performed. In a Muslim hospital, these would easily be carried out and they would be more difficult elsewhere. This among other reasons explains why more Islamic hospitals need to be established. Hospitals owned by Islamic organizations include: Muslim Community Hospital of Saki, Crescent Maternity and Child Welfare Centre, Inisa, Osun; Crescent Hospital, Ilorin; and the Ahmaddiya Muslim Hospitals (Apapa, Ifako-ijaiye, Kano, New Bussa).

6.7 Social Security

The state of affairs in northern Nigeria keeps escalating, with the Boko Haram insurgency and counter-insurgency claiming innocent lives in thousands. There have been strong condemnation by Islamic groups and almost all Muslims denounce the group and their activities. Yet, the anti-Islamic media, taking cue from their foreign masters, have still remained hesitant to change their narrative of Muslims being terrorists, though non-Muslim terrorists are called by their fathers' names, not by their religious affiliations. Meanwhile, Muslims continue to suffer losses of lives, limbs and livelihoods with many widows, orphans and internally displaced people who cannot afford ordinary food.

7.0 Resolving the Issues of Re-Inventing the Wheel by Islamic Organisations

While the foregoing has shown that Muslims in Nigeria, since the beginning of a century ago, had realised the imperative of the Labour slogan that you organise, not agonise, the way and

manner by which Muslim organisations are managed still leave much to be desired. There has been incompetent leadership engendering dormancy and stagnation; there has also been unnecessary duplication of efforts, sheer waste of energy and misplacement of priorities.

On the issue of dormancy, most of the Islamic organisations in Nigeria with roots in Yoruba land have only outposts in Northern Nigeria. They have largely restricted their impacts to Yoruba residents in those areas whereas dynamism would involve integrating members of the host community into themselves to be fully grafted. This is quite different from the pattern in some other religions whose branches are populated by the natives of the areas in which they establish branches.

On the duplication of efforts, examples are legion. Many of our Islamic organisations proverbially sleep with their heads at the same direction. The Muslim Youth League was established in 1952 in Ibadan to contribute to the development of Islam and advancement of Muslims. But it is the same Ibadan that produced NACOMYO in the early 80's with related objectives. Instead of the organisations to be spreading and expanding, new ones are replacing old ones without coordination.

There is also the emergence of umbrella organisations that are creating confusion. The Islamic Missionary Association of Nigeria (IMAN) for example is supposed to be the umbrella body for all missionaries of various organisations. But this is not the case as IMAN organises its programmes for its members, who are not necessarily missionaries, like any other Islamic organisation. The problem is that it is the bottom-up approach that would work, not the top-down approach. If all missionaries had come together to form the body, there would be a different result from the one involving the body being formed by an independent organisation with the expectation that others would key in.

To some extent, the Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) was conceived to manage Islamic organisations in the North. It should be an umbrella body for all the groups in the North. Though efforts are being made to address the situation in which all groups would see the JNI as a coalition of Islamic organisations, it is hoped that such efforts will be sustained so that expected results will be achieved. Every Muslim organisation in each of the States in the North should be represented on the state executive of the JNI.

In the Southwest, the Muslim Ummah of Southwest Nigeria (MUSWEN) started well as a body. It is hoped that it will remain a regional umbrella body for all Muslims in the South-Western Nigeria, by restricting its activities to co-ordination of activities of its constitutions. The Islamic Welfare Foundation started as a think-tank body. Now it has also become a lecture-organising body like others. If an association is focused on education and another is preoccupied with healthcare, it will be good for Islam. If an organisation focuses on the collection and distribution of Zakat while another one is primarily concerned with social welfare under the supervision of the umbrella body, the various needs of the Muslim ummah will be adequately catered for.

On the part of the Federation of Muslim Women Associations of Nigeria (FOMWAN), there is no doubt that it is a success story especially with its branches spread across the nation. But its success as an umbrella body is being threatened by the very success. This is because those who should be active in areas such as health and education at other associations soon join FOMWAN and that becomes the end of their activism. FOMWAN then becomes another Islamic organisation with its own schools instead of supervising, organising and coordinating the activities of the member associations for increased efficiency.

It is also believed that rather than dissipating energy and wasting efforts, a single Islamic organisation for professionals in Nigeria is ideal. Various professionals like Muslim lawyers, Muslim accountants, Muslim doctors, Muslim engineers, Muslim lecturers, etc. can now be constituents within the body. What is happening at the top is now affecting the roots such that the root itself is not strong.

An example in this regard is the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN), a Society that has contributed so much to the emergence of the crop of Muslim elite in the country today. From the embers of a rallying point for all Muslim students regardless of social and doctrinal backgrounds, the MSSN has become fragmented structurally and ideologically. Apart from splinter groups within the body that do not follow the mainstream based on slight differences, there is the disturbing trend of various Muslim students in different Faculties and Departments forming their own MSSN to the extent that they now have different national bodies. There is the National Association of Muslim Law Students (NAMLAS) and there is that of the medical and other counterparts. The MSSN is therefore being drained of energy and resources as

individuals that should have contributed to its growth are localising their activities in their Departmental cocoons. There is therefore lack of direction and there are internal schisms and contradictions in the running of the body as there is apparent lack of unity. NACOMYO that ought to co-ordinate youth organizations is fast becoming Association of individual Muslims rather than organizations.

8.0 Recommendations

There are over 500 Islamic organisations in Nigeria, more than enough to reach out to the entire Muslim populace, yet there are still inadequacies. Most of the organisations have the same agenda; very few of them have something different to offer. My suggestions would include:

1. Worthy of being considered is the view of Professor Galadanci that:⁴⁵

The mandate of JNI (and NSCIA)...is too wide for the current circumstances. We live in an age where organizations are becoming increasingly specialized so that they can become more efficient and effective...There is need for JNI (and NSCIA) to refocus itself and reduce its mandate so as to achieve a much more efficient organization..... Perhaps, an ideal arrangement will be for JNI to merge with the NSCIA and MUSWEN to form a really strong umbrella organization that would represent all Muslim individuals and Islamic organizations in Nigeria. Our view is not even a merger but an integration which will be more manageable and efficient.

There is, therefore, need for regional bodies to register and monitor the practices and progress of the organisations. JNI, MUSWEN and League of Islamic Scholars and Missionaries of Eastern Nigeria or South East Muslim Organisation can co-ordinate at the regional levels and be effectively co-ordinated by a strong and thoroughly re-oriented NSCIA. This integrative approach is imperative to break the ethnic silos in which Muslim organisations operate in Nigeria. Every Muslim organisation or branch of an Islamic organisation which operates in any state should be an integral part of the State Muslim Council or whatever name it chooses to bear. In other words a state branch of JNI in any state in Northern Nigeria must include in its management/executive Board the leadership of all Islamic bodies operating from the state

⁴⁵ S.A.S. Galadanci: Nigerian Muslims... (2014) pp12-14

irrespective of their origin or location of their national headquarters. The same should apply to MUSWEN and the League in Eastern/South-Southern Nigeria respectively. This does not prevent branches of National bodies from reporting to their headquarters.

2. A conference of all Muslims organisations has been convened. There is the need for the conference to formally engage the NSCIA for proper structural integration and co-ordination.
3. Muslim organisations should network and create a think tank which would serve as an idea bank for the Ummah and strategise to help devise means of solving many of the complex issues. IWF and Network for Justice can be charged with this responsibility.
4. Only two universities in Nigeria are owned by non personal Islamic organisations and there is an obvious problem of funding. It would serve Islam well if three to four Islamic organisations jointly establish a University and each of the parent organisations has a seat on the Board of Trustees and Governing Council where they together chart the course and direction of the University. NSCIA exists for such a trans-organisational co-ordination.
5. In the same vein, Islamic organisations should combine resources and establish more Muslim Hospitals for the benefit of the Ummah and the country.
6. Leaders of Islamic organisations should create vocational and entrepreneurial centres to engage Muslim youths; many Nigerian muslim graduates and school leavers would benefit immensely from this type of intervention.
7. No Islamic organisation owns a full-fledged media house. This is an area that needs to be addressed if the poor media coverage Islam currently has should be changed.
8. More Islamic advocacy groups should be established especially in the areas of anti-corruption, girl child education, and the social media.
9. Need for financial independence cannot be over emphasised. It should be recalled that early Muslims in Lagos established Islamic Bank of West Africa (IBWA) as far back as 1960 the licence of which was revoked, under Gowon regime by the then Federal Commissioner of Finance, Chief Obafemi Awolowo in 1967⁴⁶ The vision of such early Muslims ought to be re invented for sustainable funding for Islamic organisation. Zakat

⁴⁶ I.O. Oloyede: Exploring the future of Islamic Finance in Africa for enhancement of Malaysia-Africa Development, unpublished presentation at Malaysia Africa Summit, Kuala Lumpur 18th September 2014

largely belong to the poor and as such cannot be, beyond a certain fraction, legitimately utilised for running Islamic organisation. Awqaaf (Real Islamic endowments) are also a veritable source of funding for Islamic organisations.

10. There is the need for a conference of descendants of early Lagos Muslims whose forebears moved mountains for Islam to, in memory of their worthy ancestors, rejuvenate the latter's visions and passions in the promotion of peaceful and effective propagation of Islam in Nigeria. A good model can be found in the descendants of the founders of the Sokoto caliphate. The Sultan of Sokoto Alh. Muhammad Saad Abubakar recently published and aculated many of the writings of the leaders of the Sokoto Caliphate.

A compendium on the lists and heroic efforts of such early Muslims in Lagos was recently published in honour of Alhaji Lateef Femi Okunnu. The publication is a pride to Lagos State University whose members champion the compilation of that historic documentation.⁴⁷ Perhaps it is also a challenge to Centre for Ilorin Studies (UNILORIN) to produce an equally standard and well researched accounts of the life, works, institutions and achievements of first and second generations of great scholars and leaders of Ilorin emirate. This is without prejudice to recent publications of the Centre in that direction. It is instructive that the book on Lagos was published forty years after its initial discussion between Alhaji Femi Okunnu and Prof Ibrahim Babatunde Williams (Late husband of Professor Grace Alele-Williams of UNIBEN fame)

9.0 Conclusion

Islam in Nigeria has seen its challenges and many Islamic Institutions have sprung up to tackle those difficulties. It is important to recognise and appreciate the selfless and philanthropic contributions of these organisations and the men and women who have spent, and are still

⁴⁷ Siyan Oyeweso and M.O. Raheemson (Eds) *Actors and Institutions in the Development of Islam in Lagos State* (2013)

spending their wealth, time and resources on Islam in Nigeria within the past 100 years especially.

Apart from schools, hospitals and other physical infrastructure, perhaps the most enduring legacy of the Ummah in Nigeria to National development is in the area of morality, values and ethics. This has been comprehensively articulated by His Eminence, The Sultan of Sokoto in his presentation at Harvard University when he delivered "The Samuel L. and Elizabeth Jodidi annual lecture" at Weatherhead Center for International Affairs. The Sultan discussed five core values that are the legacies of the founder of the Sokoto Caliphate, Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio. They are knowledge as the basis for effective leadership, justice as the basis for good governance, the fight against corruption and proper management of public property, dignity of labour and uplifting the status of women³³. If these values can be rejuvenated, Muslims will not be living on the past glory but they would rather be making powerful impressions on the conscience of the world.

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