

EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC REFORMIST TRENDS IN YORUBALAND OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The presentation of religion in its true picture of revelation has always been threatened by human interpolation, manipulation, and misinterpretation. To save religion from the nemesis of the above, the Prophet of Islam guaranteed that Allah shall be raising in every Muslim generation a reformer who will redefine religion in its original form. Hence, the expectation of a reformist trend at every particular point of spiritual retrogression by Muslims has become a recurring convention. The present research attempts to examine the aforementioned trend in Yorubaland of Nigeria. The research is a mixture of library and field research and adopts historical and descriptive methods. It discovers that the prophetic tradition on the rise of a reformer could not be limited in exclusion of others to mean a personified or individual description. Rather it can also render the meaning of the emergence of a new religious trend pursued by a large congregation of believers. The research also reveals that the comprehensive take-off of the reformist trend in Yorubaland started in the 70s of the last century with a noticeable influence from abroad. It recommends further detailed studies on the challenges and prospects of the new emerging revivalist trends in the region.

Keywords: Emergence, development, Islamic, reformist, trend, and Yorubaland

Introduction

Throughout the history of Islam, various personalities have been considered by Muslims through the assessment of their efforts as reformers. ‘Umar bn ‘Abdil ‘Azīz (d. 101A.H); Imam Ash-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204A.H); Abū Hāmid Al-Ghazālī (d. 505A.H) and Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728A.H) were considered reformers in their various times. They possessed qualities that are set by unanimity of scholars for a reformer. Aaariz enumerates such qualities as to include but not be limited to, identifying and diagnosing the problems and defects in society by returning to the authoritative sources, inquiring whether these problems were addressed within the corpus, and how have they been.¹

The contemporary Muslim world has also featured the manifestation of Islamic reformation after much religious slumber and spiritual deterioration which visited the *Ummah* with their negative implications in the 19th and 20th centuries. Thus the Muslim nations in contemporary times paid host to the trend of religious reformation. The current research is an attempt to examine the emergence and development of Islamic reformist trends in Yorubaland of Nigeria.

Geographically, Yorubaland occupies land which lies on the South-Western part of Nigeria between the third and the sixth degrees of North latitude. It is bounded on the North, and on the East, roughly by the River Niger, on the South, by the Bight of Benin, and on the West, by Dahomey (now the Benin Republic) and Togo.² The Yoruba constitute one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria and they effectively occupy the whole of Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, and the Lagos States and a substantial part of Kwara and Kogi States. A considerable number of Yoruba people also inhabit the South-Eastern part of the Republic of Benin (former Dahomey). All these areas formed what was known as the Yoruba country before the European partition of Africa.³

¹ Aaariz, Hassan, *A Concise History of Islam* (New Delhi: Random Publication, 2012), 56.

² Samuel Johson. *The History of the Yoruba* (Britain: Lowe and Brydone Printers Limited, 1976), 98.

³ J.A. Atanda, *An Introduction to Yoruba History* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1980), 247.

The Yoruba country lies roughly between latitude 6⁰ and 9⁰ North and longitudes 2⁰ 30¹ and 6⁰ 30¹ East, with an estimated area of about 181,300 square kilometers. Pockets of the Yoruba are found in other parts of Nigeria, in some West African countries, and even in the West Indies and South America, but the area defined above is regarded as the traditional homeland of the Yoruba people.⁴ As an ethnic description, the word "Yoruba" was first recorded about Oyo Empire in a treatise written by the 11th century Songhai scholar Ahmed Baba. It was popularized by Hausa usage and ethnography written in Arabic and *Ajami* during the 19th century originally referring to Oyo exclusively.⁵

By and large, before the advent of Islam, the people were predominantly adherents of Yoruba Traditional Religion. The traditional religion was based, according to Oluremi, on worshipping deities who may be broadly classified into four, namely: Olodumare, national deities, ethnic deities, and ancestors.⁶ The Yoruba believe in the existence of a Supreme God whom they refer to as Olodumare, i.e. the Owner or Lord of Heaven. A few deities were of national importance and worshipped throughout the entire Yorubaland. They include Oduduwa (the creator of the earth), Obatala or Orisanla (the god of whiteness or white cloth), Ogun (the god of iron), Esu or Elegbera (devil), Ifa or Orunmila (god of divination), Sonpona (god of smallpox), Osanyin (god of medicine) and Sango (god of thunder).⁷ Ethnic deities are confined to particular Yoruba communities.

The deities are the patrons and guardians of the communities. Osun (goddess of the river) in Osogbo, Oju Osi of Abanta in Ijebuland, and Olumo Rock in Abeokuta are some of the ethnic shrines in Yorubaland.⁸ In addition to the national and ethnic deities, ancestor worship is also rampant among the people. The spread of Islam in the region only reduced the strength of the

⁴ Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, 113.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Obateru Oluremi, *The Yoruba City in History* (Lagos: Penthouse Publications, 2006), 242.

⁷ *ibid.*, 263.

⁸ *ibid.*, 275.

traditional religion; there is still a fair proportion of Yoruba practicing the idolistic faith currently.

Concept and Development of Islamic Reformation

The literal meanings of revivalism and reformation in the Arabic language are *Iṣlah* and *Tajdid* respectively.⁹ *Iṣlah* derived from the word *Ṣulh*, describes a condition that is virtuous, just and good, and refers to the activity of ensuring this state of virtue and incorruptibility.¹⁰ In Islamic literature, *Iṣlah* (reform) is often used interchangeably with the term *Tajdid* (revival); the latter suggesting a recurrent effort to define the true spirit of the Islamic faith, guided by the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*.¹¹ The moral critic who takes up the task of re-defining the truth and reasserting anew its authority is called a *Mujaddid* or a *Muṣliḥ*.

Mawdūdi traces the genesis of revival to the Prophets of Allah whose missions were to revolutionize the intellectual and mental outlook of humanity and to instill the Islamic attitude towards life and morality.¹² He stresses that four worldview forces are in conflict with one another, namely: atheism, polytheism, asceticism, and Islam.¹³ According to him, at every stage of Islamic history, these forces do constitute a formidable threat towards professing a pure Islam, and the attempt to purge Islam of their evils through presenting it once again in its original form was the heavy task for which the *Mujaddidūn* (reformers) was needed.¹⁴

The necessity of religious reformation is inferred by Muslims from the famous prophetic tradition that provides that, “Allah will send to this *Ummah* (nation) at the head of each century one who will renew its faith for it”. It is worthy of note that two phrases in the quoted *ḥadīth* remain the bedrock upon which the majority of traditional scholars based their conception

⁹ *The Dictionary (Bilingual)*, Prepared by Research and Studies Centre. (Lebanon: Dar Alkotob Al-Ilmiyyah, 1971), 168.

¹⁰ Obateru, Oluremi. *The Yoruba City in History*, 545.

¹¹ Aariz, *Concise History of Islam*, 56.

¹² A. Mawdudi, *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam*. Trans. Al-Ashari. (Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2002), 17.

¹³ *ibid*, 18.

¹⁴ *ibid*.

on the issue of revival and reformation. The two phrases are 'Ra's *miat*' (head of each century) and '*man*' (one). The *ḥadīth* to them connotes that a reformer can only be sought after at the beginning of each century or the end and that such position is reserved for an individual, not for a congregation of people. Mawdūdi attempts to refute this traditional misinterpretation in the following quotes:

But some people have wholly misconstrued this tradition and formed a very wrong view about *Tajdid* and *Mujaddidin*. As a matter of fact, neither the word "head" in the tradition means an end, nor the pronoun used signifies one single individual.¹⁵

Qardāwi has also followed suit when he asserts that a group of people which represent a trend or a school of thought can undertake the task of religious revival or reformation.¹⁶ The argument of the two scholars looks convincing, for stipulating a certain period in a century as a condition for the rise of a reformer seems contestable in the face of dominating corruptions that are begging for reformative combats. Also, limiting reformation to an individual is not linguistically justifiable because the word '*man*' in Arabic grammar is used for an individual as it is also used for a group of people.¹⁷

Throughout the history of Islam, various personalities who were considered by Muslims, through the assessment of their efforts, have been raised as reformers. 'Umar bn 'Abdīl 'Azīz (d. 101A.H); Imam Ash-Shāfi'ī (d. 204A.H); Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī (d. 505A.H) and Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728A.H) were considered reformers in their various times.¹⁸ They possessed qualities that are

¹⁵ M. Abū Dāwud, *Sunan bn Abī Dāwud* (Cairo: Dar bn Haytham, 2013), 4270; 318.

¹⁶ Mawdūdi, *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam*, 25.

¹⁷ Yusuf Qardawi, *Min Ajli Ṣaḥwat Rāshidah* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1988), 12.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 16.

¹⁹ *ibid*.

set by unanimity of scholars for a reformer. Aaariz enumerates such qualities: identifying and diagnosing the problems and defects in society by returning to the authoritative sources, inquiring whether these problems were addressed within the corpus, and if so, how.¹⁹ According to Mawdūdi, a reformer is characterized by a clear mind, penetrating vision, unbiased straight thinking, special ability to the right path, inherent ability to lead and guide, the acumen to distinguish Islam from un-Islam in the finest details, and must possess the ability to extract the truth from the welter of long-established falsehood.²⁰ Without these extraordinary qualities, one cannot mount the revered position of a *Mujaddid* and these qualities are the very attributes that characterized a Prophet only on a far higher scale.

The aspects and areas where Islamic revival is needed vary from one time to another. Diagnosing and observing the current status of the Muslim *Ummah* has led thinkers such as Qardāwi to limiting the aspects of Islamic revivalism in contemporary time to three, namely: forming a formidable Muslim vanguard who will be capable, through cooperation and collaboration, to lead the modern society with the tools of Islam; creating a general poll that will strive towards assisting and unifying the direction of Muslim missionaries and facilitating an international atmosphere that will recognize the being of Muslim *Ummah*.²¹ Mawdūdi stresses that irrespective of any time and society, the aspects of the program of Islamic revival must include the following: diagnosis of the current ailments, a scheme for reformation, estimation of one's limitation and resources, intellectual revolution, practical reforms, *Ijtihād*, defense of Islam, the revival of the Islamic system and universal revolution.²² Among the aforementioned programs, Mawdudi maintains that the first three items as such as must necessarily be carried out by any person who intends to work for the revival of Islam.²³ As regards the other six items, their satisfactory accomplishment by the same person is not a necessary condition

²⁰ Aaariz, *A Concise History of Islam*, 56.

²¹ Mawdūdi, *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam*, 16.

²² Yusuf Qardāwi, *Awlawiyyāt al-Ḥarakat al-Islāmiyyah*. 5th ed. (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 2001), 15.

²³ Mawdūdi, *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam*, 13.

for him to become a *Mujaddid*.²⁴ This study agrees with Mawdudi in his first point which stresses that reformation can only be properly situated after the diagnosis of the current ailments of the *Ummah*.

This singular point is the basis for discrepancy and contention among various revivalist trends in contemporary times. Since the fall of the Islamic Caliphate in 1923 and which had been preceded by the colonization of Muslim territories by the west, various reformist theories aimed at reclaiming the glory of Islam had arisen in the Muslim world. The outcome of the diagnosis of the ailment of the Muslim *Ummah* has polarized the direction of each reformist trend. The *Salafiyah* School maintains that though the calamities that fell on the *Ummah* are superfluous, the root of all, according to this school, is syncretism, polytheism, and heresy that have taken over the true picture of Islamic creeds. Hence, *the Salafiyah* trend focuses its reformist agenda on purifying the *Aqīdah* (the Muslim creed) from all that have contaminated it.²⁵

The Muslim Brotherhood Society attributes the unfortunate condition of the Muslim *Ummah* to the lack of *Khilāfah* (Islamic Caliphate) which is solely responsible in Islam, according to them, to defend the sanctity of Muslim creeds. Hence, the revivalist focus of the Muslim Brotherhood is struggling to mount an Islamic government that will pave way for the much-expected caliphate.²⁶ *Al-Jamā'at al-Islāmiyyah* in Pakistan founded by Mawdūdī also shares the same notion with the Muslim Brotherhood.²⁷ It is worthy of note that the two hostile reformist trends never dispute the worthiness and necessity of the reformist focus of each other, they only differ in the placement of priority. For instance, the current *Salafiyah* school, also like the Muslim Brotherhood, wants the return of Islamic Caliphate but believes

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Arikewuyo, A.N. *A Comparative Study of Revivalist Da'wah Approach of Salafiyah and Muslim Brotherhood Oriented Groups in Yorubaland*.

ProQuest, 2019, p.53.

²⁷ Ibid.

that an ideal Caliphacy can only be produced in a community where sound and undiluted creeds dominate among the Muslims.²⁸

The Muslim Brotherhood, also like its *Salafīyyah* counterpart, often frowns at the dominating heresies among the contemporary Muslims and does make effort at correcting them, but unlike the *Salafīyyah*, the Muslim Brotherhood firmly believes that for the reclaim of Islamic Caliphacy or state, there is need for systematic and structured planning for its actualization.²⁹ It is convincing that due to the variety of diagnosed ailments in the current Muslim *Ummah*, there is no barrier to the emergence of a multitude of reformist trends for addressing the multitude of problems. Hence, there is no justification for unnecessary polemics over which area of diagnosed problem of the current Muslim *Ummah* that a reformist trend gives priority to.

Historical Development of Islam in Yorubaland

The exact period that Yorubaland came in contact with Islam is very contentious. Al-Ilori gives justification for the contention by reiterating that Islam in Yorubaland passed, indisputably, through three stages namely: advent, spreading, and development stages.³⁰ He maintains that failure to acknowledge the aforementioned stages propelled some historians into mistaking a stage for another.³¹ Gbadamosi, given this, thus maintains:

The date of entry of Islam to Yorubaland cannot be fixed with precision. It was un-announced and un-planned and for the most part, the first Yoruba Muslims had to worship privately and secretly. What is fairly certain is that in the seventeenth century, mention was made of Muslims in Yorubaland. Towards the close of the 18th century, the position of Islam was already such that the Yoruba were propagating Islam as far

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori, *Nasīm aṣ-Ṣabā fī Akhbār al-Islām* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 2014), 48.

afield as Porto-Novo and Dahomey. The evidence shows that by 1840 there was a considerable degree of Islamization in Yorubaland.³²

The historical development of Islam in Yorubaland is shaped by four forces. It is known that the old Oyo Empire was very proximate, geographically, to the ancient Mali Empire which had assumed, by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the stronghold of Islam in West Africa. Adetona asserted that the first contact of the Yoruba to Islam in that period was through the influence of caravan trade that existed among neighboring regions.³³ Hence, Islam was known to Yoruba people as *Esin-Imale*, a patronymic reference to Mali. He further submitted that this account is highly probable by the fact that Dyala traders from Mali reached the Yoruba kingdom at about that time.³⁴

Some words have also been borrowed from Songhay to buttress the earlier view. For example, the Songhay word for a holy man is Alfa, same with Yoruba and the political title of *barakoi/* bara-koi used by Governors in the Bara province in the north inland Delta of Songhai in the sixteenth century and later used by the Commander of the Calvary was adopted by Yoruba as *Parakoyi* with similar connotation and political authority.³⁵

The second force in the historical development of Islam in Yorubaland is constituted by some Nupe and Hausa Muslims who lived as immigrants in the Yoruba Old Oyo Empire towards the half of the 16th century.³⁶ Although Islam was not deep-rooted then as it was only the faith of the strangers, the *Alaafin* (ruler) often maintained a cordial relation with the strange Muslims who usually offered him spiritual assistance in the moment of

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Adetona, L.M. "Islam before the Colonial Period in Lagos, 1861 – 1900." *Actors and Institutions in the Development of Islam in Lagos State: Essays in Honour of Alh Femi Okunnu*, edited by S. Oyeweso and M. O. Raheemson, (Ibadan: Matrix Books Ltd, 2013), 4.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

tribulation.³⁷ A very big mosque was erected in 1550 by those Hausas which was regarded as the first mosque in Oyo-Ile.³⁸

It is worthy of note that before the half of the nineteenth century, Islam in Yorubaland had not assumed conspicuous recognition as it was only being practiced secretly and individually. This does not suggest that it had not arrived in the region, as history has asserted that various Yoruba cities have had their first mosques early in the eighteenth century. The first mosque in Iseyin was erected in 1770 by Mallam Aboki from Katsina; Iwo also got her first mosque during the regime of Oba Muhammad Lamuye in 1755 and Ketu, a Yoruba domain which has now fallen to the Benin Republic, got her first mosque erected in 1760 by one Mallam Sofo.³⁹

The third force in the history of Islam witnessed unprecedented development in Yorubaland towards the half of the nineteenth century which marked the beginning of successive armed struggles against the Yoruba pagans by the Islamic State in Ilorin.⁴⁰ The struggles were responsible for the expansion and extension of Islam to other parts of Yorubaland. The triumph of Muslims in the said struggles was interrupted by the arrival of the colonial masters.⁴¹

The fourth force that shaped the development of Islam in Yorubaland was occupied by individual scholars from Ilorin who took the bull by the horn in spreading and preaching Islam to various cities of Yorubaland.⁴² The missionary conversions of the pagans by those scholars continued until the arrival of the

³⁷ Al-Ilori, *Nasīm aṣ-Ṣabā*, 50.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid, 51.

⁴⁰ Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori, *Al-Islām fī Najīriyyah*, 2nd ed. (Agege: Islamic Cultural Centre, 1971), 48.

⁴¹ Al-Ilori, *Naṣīm aṣ-Ṣabā*, 53.

⁴² Ibid.

Christian missionaries who subdued them with material wealth and colonial support.⁴³

It is apparent from the foregoing that the characters who played key roles in the development of Islam in Yorubaland until the arrival of colonial masters towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century were the Negroes of Mali, Nupe, and Hausa Muslims, and finally the Ilorin scholars and *Mujāhidūn*. On the arrival of the British colonial masters and most especially after the 1914 amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates, the long-achieved legacies of Islam in Yorubaland were subjected to humiliation and the target of the dual Christian missionaries and colonial masters. They introduced policies that jeopardized the implementation of *Shari'ah* that had been in use in notable Yoruba cities such as Iwo, Ikirun, and Ede; and they converted a large proportion of Muslims through the newly introduced western educational system.⁴⁴

The struggle to combat the new challenges by Yoruba Muslims gave birth to the influx of Muslim organizations and Islamic institutes in the last century. Notable among the premier organizations that rose to the challenges were: Ahmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at of Nigeria in 1916; Ansar-ud-Deen Society of Nigeria in 1923; Nawairudeen Society of Nigeria in 1939; and Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria in 1954.⁴⁵ The uniform mission of the organizations was to combat the conversionary mission of the Christian missionary through the western education system.⁴⁶

From the 1950s onward there was a takeoff of major Arabic institutes in Yorubaland which aimed at supplying

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Opeloye, M.O. "The Realization of the Shari'ah in South-Western Nigeria: A Mirage or Reality?" A digest on Islamic Law and Jurisprudence in Nigeria., A Publication of National Association of Muslim Law Students, edited by Zakariyah Oseni, (Auchi: Darun Nur, 2003), 32.

⁴⁶ Oloyede, "Islam in Nigeria", 9.

manpower for Islamic missions and strengthening the knowledge about Islam in a period characterized by a low shortage of capable Islamic scholars. Hence, the following institutes were created by prominent Muslim scholars in Yorubaland: Arabic and Islamic Training Centre, Agege established in 1952 by Shaykh Adam Al-Ilori (d. 1992); Arabic Institute of Nigeria, Elekuro Ibadan, established in 1958 by Shaykh Murtadha AbdusSalam (d. 2007) and Al-Azhar Institute, Ilorin established in 1963 by Shaykh Kamaldudeen Al-Adabi (d. 2005).⁴⁷ The aforementioned institutes are the springboards for other Arabic and Islamic institutes in Yorubaland.

It is noteworthy that Islam was handed down to current Muslims in Yorubaland through the direct channel of various Muslim organizations and the Arabic/ Islamic institutes. Hence, the Muslim organizations and the various institutes of Arabic are credited for preserving Islam from the plots targeted at eroding the faith and converting its faithful in the twentieth century. Currently, due to the efforts of the aforementioned forces, the development of Islam has reached its peak in Yorubaland as manifest in the rate of Muslim scholars, Muslim Students, Arabic and Islamic institutes and centers, Muslim organizations, Islamic centers and mosques, Islamic publications, Muslim Universities and the acceptance of current Islamic awakening and revivalism.⁴⁸

Emergence and Development of Islamic Reformist Trends in Yorubaland

It is very pertinent to note that the version of Islam espoused by most Muslims in Yorubaland is highly characterized by syncretism and other beliefs and practices that are opposed to its tenet. Al-Ilori mentions some of the paganist practices that the Yoruba Muslims still sustain to include: fortune-telling, sorcery, magic, and celebrating the idol festivals.⁴⁹ He further stresses that

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 10.

⁴⁹ Arikewuyo, Nafiu Ahmed. *The Status of Shari'ah among the Muslims in Yorubaland: Inheritance Law as a Case Study* (Ilorin: As-Salafi Productions, 2018), 12.

before the advent of Islam into Yorubaland, the spiritualists and herbalists were placed in a venerated position in the society; and that at the advent of Islam the Muslim scholars seemed to replace the herbalists by engaging in some spiritual and metaphysical practices.⁵⁰ The account of Al-Ilori only lends credence to the fact that the faith adopted by the Muslims in Yorubaland was faulty.

Various writers have however postulated the reasons why syncretism has become part and parcel of the faith of the majority of Yoruba Muslims. Opeloye has argued that it is due to the absence of *Jihād*, the type embarked on by 'Uthmān Dan Fodio.⁵¹ This is because syncretism was very ingrained in the faith of Hausa Muslims before the regime of *Jihād*. Al-Ilori admits that it is due to the gradual and lenient manners adopted by the Yoruba scholars.⁵² He justifies the attitude of the said scholars with the fact that since they were not in the position of authority, they were not Islamically allowed to use force to curb un-Islamic practices.⁵³ While it is true that those scholars were not in the position of authority, as postulated by Al-Ilori, one disagrees with him over sparing them of the guilt. This is because Al-Ilori has admitted in other places that those scholars often, like their followers, resorted to astrology and divination. Hence, the syncretic faith was adopted by both the scholars and their followers.

The foregoing narration accounts for the motivations of the reformist trend in Yorubaland. It should be declared from the outset that, most Muslim organizations that trooped out from the beginning of the twentieth century were not representing the revivalist trend, as their members were also archetypical examples for the practice of syncretic faith. Only a few among them were created primarily to correct the un-Islamic practices.

The first revivalist movement that aimed to condemn the syncretic practice of Islam in Yorubaland was the Ahmadiyyah Movement of Nigeria. Before the year 1916, some young Muslims

⁵⁰ Al-Ilori, *Nasim aṣ-Ṣabā*, 108.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Opeloye, "The Realization of the Shari'ah in South-Western Nigeria: A Mirage or Reality?", 31.

⁵³ Al-Ilori, *Nasim aṣ-Ṣabā*, 108.

in Lagos who was not happy with the non-exposure and ignorance of the then acclaimed Muslim scholars formed themselves into progressive societies, such as the Muslim Literary Society headed by L.B. Augusto and Juvenile Muslim Society under the headship of B.A. Fanimokun.⁵⁴ The two groups later came together to bear the Ahmadiyyah Movement of Nigeria. One of the aims of Ahmadiyyah was to study, teach and preach Islam, according to the Holy Qur'ān.⁵⁵

Although, it later appeared to some members that some doctrines of Ahmadiyyah clashed with the fundamental faith in Islam, and which prompted the division and dissension of the movement at some time. It is indisputable that the movement was the first organization that tackled the predominant syncretism, prostrating before the elders while greeting, and advocated for strict adherence to the provisions of the Qur'ān in Yorubaland.⁵⁶

Another reformist movement that rose to condemn prevalent un-Islamic practices among the Muslims in Yorubaland was Zumrat-ul-Mu'minīn Movement of Nigeria founded in 1926 by Alfa AbdusSalam Bamidele of Ibadan. The objectives of the movement were to enforce the practice of purdah among Muslims, behave and act following the dictates of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, and uphold the principles of using turban, shaving the head hair, and keeping the beard.⁵⁷

The Islāhudeen Movement of Nigeria was founded by Alh. Usamat from Kuta near Iwo in 1954 under the spiritual auspices of Alh Baqi Muhammad was another revivalist movement in Yorubaland. The movement strove to promote *Sunnah*, wage war against the Muslim scholars practicing divination, fortune-telling, and herbalism and it also checked the wasteful spending by Muslims during funerals.⁵⁸

The Jamā'at Mujāhidūn was founded by some secessionist brothers from Islāhudeen and based in Ilorin. The cause of their

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Adeniyi, Musa. "Islamic Movements in Yorubaland" (Ph.D. Thesis: University of Ilorin, 1992), 211.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 306.

secession is attributed to the polemics that ensued regarding how to sight the lunar moon of Ramadan and the permissibility of using pump water for ablution. The members of this secessionist group waged a ceaseless attack on the popular syncretist practice of Muslims and scholars in Ilorin via their weekly public lectures in front of the Ilorin Central Mosque. They often challenged the saintship of many of Ilorin's celebrated saints whom they accused of possessing elements of sorcery and talisman.⁵⁹

It is worthy of note that the foregoing revivalist movements in Yorubaland preceded the advent of *Salafyyah* and Muslim Brotherhood-oriented groups who are currently in exclusion of others representing the reformist campaign in the region. The major difference between the preceding movements from the Muslim Brotherhood and *Salafyyah* groups is apparent in three ways. Firstly, they were partial revivalist movements in the sense that they only focused on some aspects of religious reformation. Secondly, unlike the Muslim Brotherhood and *Salafyyah* groups, except for the Ahmadiyyah, those movements were a product of the indigenous Muslims. Lastly, they were not fortified with exemplary scholarship as it obtains in the Muslim Brotherhood and *Salafyyah* groups who can boost specialists in different disciplines of Islamic studies.⁶⁰

However, beyond the organizational revivalist movements in Yorubaland, there was also individual engagement in reformist calls in the region. An example of this trend was the advocacy of Shaykh Adam Al-Ilori since the 1940s for the abandonment of the slavery-based system of Arabic and Islamic education in Yorubaland. He dared to challenge the established convention among the then Muslims whereby teaching others of Islamic education automatically made the learners be slaves of the teachers.⁶¹ He also condemned the greeting modes adopted by the

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Shaykh Daud Abdulkarim , (A former cleric in Jama'atul Mujahidin), interview by the researcher, August 28, 2018.

⁶¹ Arikewuyo, *A Comparative Study of Revivalist Da'wah Approach of Salafyyah and Muslim Brotherhood Oriented Groups in Yorubaland*, 61.

Muslims in Yorubaland such as prostrating, removing shoes, and bowing.⁶²

The entire reformist struggles before the emergence of Islamic awakening championed by the *Salafīyyah* and Muslim Brotherhood movements in the 70s were not effective and conspicuous. Hence, there was the need for a strong and effective revivalist campaign in the region. The Muslim Brotherhood and *Salafīyyah* groups; therefore, seemed to answer the clarion call.

It is not far-fetched that the 70s of the last century was more considered to be referred to as the premier stage of the two reformist groups in Yorubaland. This assertion can be buttressed with three pieces of evidence: firstly, the decade has been considered by observers as the starting point for unprecedented official funding of the trend by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia consequent upon the discovery of oil money.⁶³ It was in the decade that the two trends got connected with other parts of the world through the heavily funded *Mandūbūn* (missionary) and philanthropic services.⁶⁴ Secondly, the decade saw the return of the first batch of Yoruba students from the Saudi Universities, namely: Islamic University of Madinah and Al-Imam University of Riyadh. The returnees had to practice some of what they had been taught. Prominent among those returnees were Shaykh Ameenullahi Ibrahim (Ilorin), Shaykh Hadiyyatullahi (Iwo), Shaykh Isa Ameen (Lagos), and Dr. Khidr (Abeokuta).⁶⁵ Thirdly, the first mention of *Salafīyyah* and the negative reaction by the traditional scholars against the trend in Yorubaland began in the decade. Al-Ilori only made mention of the trend in 1978 and reacted to some issues which are the major themes of current *Salafīyyah*, such as *Tawassul* (intercession) *Istighāthah* (seeking the help of the saints), and polemics on *Taşannuf* (mysticism).⁶⁶ He

⁶² Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori, *Ad-Dīn an-Naṣīḥah* (Agege: Islamic Cultural Press, n.d), 35.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Husām Tamām. *Al-Ikhwānūl Muslimūn*, 1st ed. (Cairo: Dar Ash-Shuruq, 2012), 106.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Arikewuyo, *A Comparative Study of Revivalist Da'wah Approach of Salafīyyah and Muslim Brotherhood Oriented Groups in Yorubaland*, 252.

even described the adherents of the trend as products and allies of the Muslim World League and *Dārul-Iftāi* which were the main channels used by the Saudi kingdom to reach out to the Muslim world.⁶⁷

Another negative reaction to the new trend was also the book published by Shaykh Aliu Jabata in 1978. The author sought to refute the allegation of the new adherents of *Salafīyyah* against the tenet of Sufism.⁶⁸ He got the approval of Shaykh Adam Al-Ilori who gave forward to the book. It is glaring from the above that the 70s was the premier stage or starting point for the teachings of *Salafīyyah* in Yorubaland. The characteristic feature of the trend at that time was that *Salafīyyah* was being practiced individually and surreptitiously due to the strength and popularity of Sufism among the people in Yorubaland. In addition, the adherents were youths who could not dare the authority of their teachers. Hence, the majority of the first batch of Saudi returnees later resorted to the traditional *Sufi* scholarship.⁶⁹ The only few ones who could endure the stigma attached to being a *Salafī* by the society were the ones whose names shine currently among the adherents of *Salafīyyah*. Many had gone with the winds.

In the 80s, there was enhanced awareness about the trend due to the increasing number of Yoruba students returning from Saudi Universities. But in this stage, there was a strong unnoticeable mix-up between the trend of Muslim Brotherhood and *Salafīyyah*. This can be explained in the sense that the University system in Saudi was at this time under the unchecked influence and power of the Muslim Brotherhood trained scholars who often trained students with movementalist thought.⁷⁰ Hence, in the 80s most of the Saudi graduates who returned to

⁶⁷ Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori, *Tawjīh ad-Da^cwah Wad-Du^cāt*. 3rd ed. (Mushin: Daaru-N-Nuur Printing Company, 2006), 8.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ The title of the book is *Raf^cu ash-Shubuhāt*

⁷⁰ Shaykh ^cAbdul Mu^cmin Onisin. (A *Salafī* Scholar based in Ilorin), interview by the researcher, 28 August 2018.

Yorubaland were products of merged *Salafīyyah* and Muslim Brotherhood. The mix-up was later uncovered towards the beginning of the twenty-first century when the kinds of literature of *Salafīyyah* countering the thought of the Muslim Brotherhood began to troop into the region.

The major characteristic feature in this stage was that neither the conservative Muslims nor the representatives of *the Salafīyyah* trend, as it was then, could fathom out the difference between the ideology of the current *Salafīyyah* group and the Muslim Brotherhood. They stood for a uniform mission which was to revive the way and methodology of the Prophet and his noble companions in a society highly dominated by syncretic faith. It should be noted that even in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, only a few in the 80s could also make a distinction between the two trends before the ideological and political polemics of the 1991 gulf war.⁷¹

Salafīyyah continued with the title of *Ahl as-Sunnah* without any distinct identity from the Muslim Brotherhood in the 90s up to the beginning of the twenty-first century when the dichotomy of *Salafīyyah* and Muslim Brotherhood began to be heating up in Yorubaland. Two factors were responsible for this development. First was the influence of foreign literature produced by the polemics that ensued after the gulf war. Those kinds of literature which contained the 'refutation' and 'exposition' of the ideologies of Muslim Brotherhood by Shaykh Rabī'ū al-Madkhalī led scholars had a great influence on the thoughts of the new emerging *Salafī* youths in Yorubaland as from the beginning of the twenty-first century. Also, some aggrieved members of the Muslim Brotherhood-oriented organizations who differed with their leaders over some matters of religion saw in the new emerging *Salafīyyah* a relief and platform through which they could register their grievances and contention.⁷² Hence, the beginning of the twenty-first century marked the separation of the Muslim Brotherhood faction of *Ahl as-Sunnah* from the current *Salafīyyah* faction.

⁷¹ Tamām, *Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, 108.

⁷² Arikewuyo, *A Comparative Study of Revivalist Da'wah Approach of Salafīyyah and Muslim Brotherhood Oriented Groups in Yorubaland*, 253.

Currently, *Salafyyah* and Muslim Brotherhood-oriented groups have become one of the formidable and influential groups in Yorubaland with a large rate of mosques under their control, a great number of scholars and advocates, large followers, and extensive programs in the radio/television stations and other social platforms. Some of their reformist calls include but are not limited to condemning syncretism, veneration of tombs, black magic, sorcery, fortune-telling, funeral ceremony, advocating for using of *Hijab*, *Niqaab*, adhering to the *Sunnah*, shunning all sorts of heresies such as Mawlid celebration, *Laylatul Qadr* ceremony, promoting the prophetic medicine and incantations and also the memorization of Qur'an, collections of Hadith and other ancient texts of classical works of Islamic heritage.

Conclusion

It can be deduced from the foregoing that, contrary to the conventional perception which views the Prophetic tradition on the rise of a reformer as necessarily indicating an individual description, the more appropriate connotation entails that a trend pursued by a large congregation of believers may constitute the anticipated centenary emergence of a reformer. This is actually what obtains in the current time when it is much difficult to tag an individual scholar as the sole reformer of the *Ummah*. The task of religious reformation from the 20th century to contemporary time seems to have been carried out by a reformist trend pursued by a set of the religious congregation such as the Muslim Brotherhood and *Salafyyah* groups.

It is obvious from the finding of this research that the emergence of the main and comprehensive reformist trend in Yorubaland could not be disconnected from foreign influence. Such influence was much feasible due to the globalization syndrome and effective communication means thriving in contemporary times. Hence, the current reformist trend in Yorubaland is influenced by the same reformist wave in Saudi Arabia and some other Arabia nations through the channel of studentship of some Yoruba in foreign universities, books, and missionary activities.

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The study recommends further researches on the challenges and prospects of the new reformist trends in the region. This is because, during pursuing reformist agenda, it is noticed that artificial problems are often being created by its pursuers as a reaction to the challenges of effecting change. Hence, the reformist trends have also, in addition to the inherited problems, created new challenges which need to be studied for the sake of charting means of accomplishing effective reformist advocacy.

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