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Intrigues and Twist in the Imamate Crisis of Lagos Central Mosque (Jama'atul Muslimeen Council), 1841 to 1947

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Abstract

The period between 1847 to 1947 was a chequered one in the history of Islam and especially the Imamate in Lagos. After establishing the Imamate, the Lagos Muslim community found the traditional authority as a pillar of support and much later the colonial authority. The crisis, that bedevilled the community from one time and the other, created schism that permanently divided the community into two factions. In a bid to outwit each other, it was exigent for different factions to find support and align with both the traditional and colonial authorities. This paper explored the causes, course and the negative impacts of the crisis on Lagos Muslim community. It also argued that the positive fallout of the crisis is the peaceful succession process to the exalted position of the Chief Imam which Lagos Muslim Community enjoys till today.

Key words: Imamate, Crisis, Chief Imam, Traditional Authority, Colonial Authority,

Introduction

The Imamate Question in the Lagos Muslim Community had received attention by scholars (Gbadamosi 1978; Danmole 1987; Lawal 1995). There had been attempt made to look at the establishment of Imamate generally in Yoruba land with little attention paid to Lagos particularly in the period 1841-1908 (Gbadamosi 1978). Likewise, the discussion of the crisis that rocked the community did not cover some

periods under certain Imams (Danmole 1987; Lawal 1995) and efforts had been made to document the ascension and achievements of a particular house (Musa, 2007) to the exalted office of the Lagos Central Mosque Chief Imam. However, the focus of this present work is to attempt an examination of the Imamate crisis in Lagos that accompanied the emergence of the Chief Imams, starting from the first Chief Imam of Lagos Central Mosque, Alfa Salu up to 1947 and the attendant development, peaceful and turbulent events that characterised the period. Within the focus of this work also is the prospect and progress which the community has achieved particularly as a fall out of happenings experienced over the years.

Establishment of the Imamate and the Emergence of the First Lagos Chief Imam, 1841-1853

The history of the Imamate in Lagos as in other parts of Yoruba land has been divided into three major phases. The first phase was a period of rough and ready improvisation followed by the period when there was only a single Imam for the Muslim community. In the third phase, there was a Chief Imam with other local Imams (Imam Ratib) (Gbadamosi, 1972, p. 230). In the first and second phases; there was a remarkable rapport with the traditional authority. It marked the social transformation of the Muslims as they successfully won the confidence of those in authority. The Obas of Lagos were prepared to risk their thrones on behalf of the Muslim faithful. In fact, one lost his throne and the next one gave them even stronger support in spite of all odds (Fasinro, 2004, p. 186). In a sense, the few Muslims found support and leadership with the traditional authority. In the Yoruba hinterland however, the leader of the community was initially called Parakoyi who also acted as the Muslim liaison with the traditional authorities. Few and insecure as they were, the Muslims needed the patronage and protection which a titled official only could give, hence the adoption of Parakoyi as the leader (Gbadamosi, 1972, p. 230).

The upshot of these periods was the loyalty demonstrated by the Muslims to the traditional political authorities to reciprocate the favourable disposition towards them. The first mosque to be used by the Muslims in Lagos was the Idoluwo Mosque constructed in 1775 (Fasinro, 1994, p.1; 2004, p. 186) situated along Obanikoro Street by Obun Eko. The first Imam ever that led the prayer there was a man called Imam Imoru Tapa (Fasinro, 1994:3). The second mosque was the Oba's Mosque which is at Okiti Eregbe, very near the Oba's Palace (Ibid). This witnessed the development of mosques and places of worship in Lagos.

With time and population increase, another mosque, Idumagbo mosque, was established at Idoluwo Street. The first Jumat congregation service was held in 1841 at the Animashaun Mosque situated at the junction of Shitta Street by Animashaun lane. The first Chief Imam to lead the Jumat prayer was Chief Imam Salu (Fasinro, 2004:11) who presided as the Chief Imam of Lagos Central Mosque between 1841 and 1853.

The emergence of Imam Salu as the Chief Imam of Lagos Muslim Community could be linked to the favourable disposition showed by Prince Kosoko who himself was a Muslim. The hallmark of Imam Salu period was the return and settling down at different places in Lagos of the former captives who were Muslims and the concomitant increase in the number of mosque in Lagos.

The returning Muslim emigrants crystallised into two distinct groups: The Sierra Leonian and the Brazilian. The Sierra Leonian, also referred to as Saro Muslims settled at Olowogbowo and Isale-Eko area (Gbadamosi, 1978:28) which later formed two out of the four districts that are under the jurisdiction of the Central Mosque. For the Brazilian also known as Aguda Muslims, they started arriving about 1840 and settled mainly at Bamgbose Street in Lagos where they erected their own mosques such as Olosun Mosque, Alagbayun Mosque at Taiwo Street, Tairu Eko Mosque and the Salvador Mosque at Bamgbose Street (Gbadamosi, *ibid*:30). These Mosques later came under Brazilian District, another major district under the jurisdiction of the Lagos Central Mosque. The movement from Badagry to Lagos in 1852 of Shitta Bey family added momentum to the significance of immigrant Muslims community. The immigrants some of whom were professionals with some levels of western education reshaped the Lagos Muslim Community raising the social and economic status of the Muslims in the entire Lagos and the Colony.

Lagos Throne Succession Crisis and the Muslim Community

The first significant crisis experienced by the Muslim community in Lagos was not one generated within the Muslim community. The crisis was one that occurred and rocked the traditional institution in Lagos. This was as a result of succession dispute between Kosoko and Akintoye, the two princes, in which the British displayed vested interest. For selfish reasons, the latter ensured the ouster and exile of Kosoko from the throne of oba of Lagos and instead installed Akintoye. The exile of Kosoko from Lagos in 1850 dealt some temporary setbacks on the Muslim community. Because of Kosoko's patronage, protection and support for the Muslim community and himself a Muslim, some members of the Muslim Community decided to follow him and identified with him during his travails. Prominent among his retinue upon his exile to Epe was the Chief Imam himself, Alfa Salu and other eminent members (Gbadamosi, *ibid*:31). Perhaps because of Kosoko's support to his emergence the Chief Imam might have the premonition of unfavourable treatment in the hand of the new traditional authority.

The Ascension of Chief Imam Nofiu Gana, 1853-1881

Nofiu Gana, the second Chief Imam of Lagos Muslim community emerged out of the struggle for the succession to the throne of Eleko between Kosoko and Akintoye. This did not leave much impact on the community more so that the overseas Muslims' population had grown more appreciably such that the imamate structure left behind

continued to be operated. Thus Akintoye emerged as the King of Lagos in 1851. To exercise effective control, he appointed Alfa Nofiu Gana in 1853 to replace Imam Salu (Gbadamosi, 1978, p. 31; Fasinro, 1994, p. 3). The period during which Imam Gana presided over the affairs of the community was associated with positive developments as well as challenges that lasted enduring impacts. For record purpose, under the Imamship of Nofiu Gana, the Olowogbowo/Isale-Eko community established their mosque in 1861. It was first known as Jami'u al-Mubariq and later came to be known as Horobay Mosque (Gbadamosi, *ibid.*, p. 28) With time, there was the exigency for a bigger mosque. A piece of land was acquired at Victoria Street and later known as Nnamdi Azikiwe Road, Lagos for the new Central Mosque for all Muslims in Lagos. However, one serious challenge faced by the community during this period was the crisis of 1875 that rocked the community to its foundation.

The Reformist and the Traditionalist Crisis of 1875

This crisis began in August 1875 upon the arrival in Lagos of one Mallam Sulaiman, a distinguished Hausa cleric from the North. Having settled down, he took time and keen interest to observe and study the religious practices of the Muslims in Lagos especially the clerics. He was particularly interested in Tafsir, that is exegesis. The common established practice then was to use Tafsir commentary books to explain the verses of the holy Quran. This exercise was more pronounced during the month of Ramadan (month of compulsory fasting in Islam) when learned clerics, scholars and imams took it up to teach, explain and expound the Quran to fasting Muslims. Mallam Sulaiman claimed that the Holy Quran is sufficient enough to expound the verses of Quran (All Sufficiency of the Quran) as opposed to the established tradition of using the Hadith, Fiqh (jurisprudence), Balaagha (rhetoric) and other Tafsir (commentary) books compiled by Fuqaaha (Jurists) such as Jalalain, Qurtobi among others which was widely practised not only in Lagos but throughout Yoruba land. While condemning this practice, Mallam Sulaiman preached some reforms which were more persuasive to sections of clerics and some members of the Lagos Muslim community and were therefore convinced about his reforms and efforts. Gbadamosi (1978, pp. 65-66) succinctly described the effect of the activities of Mallam Sulaiman thus:

the doctrine could not be ignored; so distinguished was the learning of the teacher and so powerful and devastating his lectures. The doctrine shook Lagos, and split the community permanently into two groups, the Quranic section otherwise known as Alalukurani under his leadership, and the other Jalalain, under the Chief Imam of Lagos.

The Chief Imam, Nofiu Gana, and the Imamate Council felt challenged by the activity of Sulaiman and did not fold hands to make him recognise the established Imamate authority. It is sufficient for our purpose to state that the crisis thus created sharp division and there emerged two permanent groups. The Alalukurani were also in

some quarter referred to as Onishakiti as they upon the crisis founded their own Central Mosque. The Jalalain group was also referred to as Jama't party. The differences in the style and form of exegesis of the holy Quran did not only create differences of opinion in knowledge but also deep rooted animosity among the clerics and followers of the two groups. Furthermore, the aftermath of the schism was that the scholars and clerics in the community felt challenged and obliged to advance their study of Arabic and Islamic learning and this eventually led to the growth of knowledge and meticulousness in the handling of religious matters.

Chief Imam Muhammed Nolla, 1881-1891

Muhammed Nolla was the third Chief Imam of the Lagos Central Mosque. He succeeded Imam Nofiu Gana and he was in fact the deputy (Noibi) of the latter during his Imamate period. He was believed to be the ancestral father of the Nolla line of the Imamship of the Lagos Central Mosque. Imam Nolla, a Hausa-Fulani extraction was said to have migrated to Lagos at circa 1825 and settled at Oko-Awo area of Lagos. It was aptly observed by Osuntokun (1987, p. 130) that, for some time, the Muslim hierarchy of Imams were usually non-natives in genealogy. He served as the first Imam of Oko Awo Mosque, which he built, up till 1881 when he became the Chief Imam of the Lagos Central Mosque (Musa, 2007, p. 96). After about 100 years of introduction of Islam into Lagos, it was during the period of Imam Nolla that Lagos produced the first set of pilgrims to the holy land of Mecca and Medina. Although, these pilgrims left Lagos on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina around 1877 prior Imam Nolla ascension, they returned in 1884 on August 31st which coincided with Obun Eko Market day. It was a great occasion for the Imam as the whole of Lagos rose in triumphant joy to welcome back their fellow Muslim brothers to their midst. Fasinro aptly captured the situation on arrival of the pilgrims thus: they were met at Ebute Ero by Muslims, many of whom rode on horseback. It was a great occasion for the Muslims in Lagos who went about dancing and visiting many important people in Lagos. They were very well received by King Dosumu in his palace. The pilgrims gave Oba Dosumu a bottle of Zam Zam Water. The Oba in turn ordered a big pot to be filled with water and Zam Zam water was poured in the big pot. The Muslims were all delighted to be able to drink the water (Fasinro, 1994:93). Islam recorded a steady growth during Imam Muhammed Nolla period. It is also apt to state that Islam faced serious challenge from Christianity and the survival during this period was based on the considerable pride and confidence in Islam displayed by the Muslims with the belief that they had a religion, a system and culture that were self-sufficient and should not be abandoned (Gbadamosi, 1978, p. 141). Imam Nolla died in 1891 having presided as the Chief Imam for 10 years.

Chief Imam Ibrahim Ankuri and the Water Levy Crisis

Imam Ibrahim Ankuri was the fourth Chief Imam of Lagos Central Mosque between 1891 and 1923. He was one of the four children of Imam Nofiu Gana the

second Chief Imam of Lagos. He succeeded Imam Nolla with his ascension as the Chief Imam in 1891. His imamate period was a chequered one as his period was characterised by progress and crisis which hunted the Muslim Community for a long period. Earlier upon his ascension, a prominent Muslim in Lagos, Muhammed Shitta-Bey in 1892 singlehandedly financed the construction of a mosque that contemporary Lagosians considered an architectural masterpiece (Olakunle Lawal, 1995, p. 70). While the mosque was under construction, the then colonial Governor of Lagos once visited and conducted a tour around the site together with the Chief Imam and some Muslim leaders (Gbadamosi, 1978, p. 161). The hall mark of the construction was the formal opening of the mosque, Shitta-Bey Mosque on July 4, 1894. The occasion drew prominent Muslims from far and near. In fact, in attendance was the Governor, Sir Gilbert Carter, the representative of the Sultan of Turkey Abdullah Quillam who came for that purpose. On the courtesy of the Governor, a government dinner was held in respect of the opening of the mosque with the Chief Imam and other members of the community in attendance. In recognition of his contribution to the development of Islam, Muhammed Shitta was conferred with the title of Bey by the Sultan representative (Gbadamosi, *ibid*; Olakunle Lawal, 1995:70-71). This development imbued confidence in Muslims such that they in a petition written to the Governor of Lagos in July 1894 agitated for Muslim state and Islamic (Gbadamosi *ibid*, p. 69).

The Chief Imam, his deputy and Shitta Bey played significant roles in settling the Epe Muslim community crisis of 1898 on the appeal of the Governor. Furthermore, the Imam also organized a delegation of Muslims to Ilorin in the 1890s to appeal to the Muslim leadership of Ilorin to be at peace with the Colonial Government in Lagos and he was consequently rewarded in 1898 with Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee Medal Award. He commanded great respect from two of the Colonial Governors, Carter and Egerton (Gbadamosi 1978, pp. 162-165; Danmole 1987, p. 280; Olakunle Lawal 1995, p. 72).

The first Muslim school was established and officially opened on 15th June, 1896 as Government Muslim School with Idris Animasaun as the Principal (Gbadamosi *ibid*, p. 169). In 1920, Pa Augusto established Islammiyyah Grammar School at 62, Bamgbose Street, Lagos. Also, the Quranic Central Mosque established a primary school in 1922. One fundamental achievement of Imam Ankuri was the constitution and inauguration of the first Executive Committee of the Lagos Central Mosque. This Committee had the privilege in 1905 to receive the staff of office from Sultan of Turkey, the then head of Islamic Missions worldwide through his Majesty, King Edward VII.

Imam Ankuri and the Water Levy Crisis of 1908

The genesis of this crisis was the introduction of water levy (Patrick Cole, 1975, pp.98-101) by the colonial administration in Lagos in 1908. The water levy generated

general reaction among the Lagosians. There was a general opposition among the Lagosians as the colonial policy on water provision was a novel idea and one which was never practised or introduced by the native rulers. However, in spite of the general opposition, it was discovered that in the Muslim community, the Chief Imam Ibrahim Ankuri and some leading members were in support of the water levy while a considerable majority were vehemently opposed to it. Consequently, the community was divided along the lines of the Imam and his supporters known as Lemomu party led by Imam Ibrahim Ankuri, and the other majority opposing group known as the Jama't party under the leadership of Adamu. Danmole & Lawal (1987, pp. 278-291; 1995, p. 72) have argued that the Chief Imam Ibrahim supported the introduction of the water levy because he was swayed by the general argument that it was in the best interest of the people of Lagos. He stressed further that the Imam had been an important ally of the British administration.

We can equally argue that the Imam's support for the colonial government could be imputed to the Imam's obedience to constituted authority as declared in the holy Quran which says obey Allah and obey the apostle and those in authority among you (Quran 4:58). Furthermore, the Imam could have learnt lessons from the Kosoko/Akintoye episode and could not have antagonized the colonial government and therefore stand the risk of parting away with his position or getting his influence waned. However, Lawal (1995, p.72) informed that in spite of the pockets of local support, the colonial administration was forced to abandon this levy when the majority agitation against it became unbearable. Important still, the Imam could have been wary of unpleasant development out of which the solution in his favour could be with allying with the colonial government.

However, it was argued (Ibid, p. 73) that certain unpleasant development had been going on in the Lagos Central Mosque which ranged from strictness on religious matters to highhandedness and arbitrariness on the part of Imam which the water rate issue was used to blow out. Danmole (1987, p. 280) added ethnic dimension to the conflict. Imam Ibrahim's northern ancestry made him not acceptable to the majority of the Muslims. The dispute raged on and later led to the struggle for the control of the newly built Central Mosque in 1913. Consequent upon this, the Jama't party went and instituted a legal action to remove Ibrahim Ankuri from the position of Imam. The water levy dispute shook and tore Lagos Muslim Community into disarray such that the colonial administrator of Lagos could not but intervene. At the instance of the administrator a peace meeting was held in his office. At the meeting, the administrator suggested the adoption of a constitution and inauguration of a Board of Trustee. He was able to influence the Jama't party to withdraw the legal action instituted against the Lemomu party from the court of law. However, the Chief Imam and his supporters were not disposed to the issue of constitution and therefore refused to sign it (Danmole, 1987, p. 282). In his argument, the Chief Imam claimed that no Muslim country under

Quranic laws had anything like a written constitution. The administrator tacitly supported the Imam and even challenged the Jama't party to prove the existence of such a constitution in any Muslim country. It is unfortunate that the administrator failed to realize that Lagos was not a Muslim country and that the idea of constitution was his, as a mechanism to checkmate future occurrence of crisis in the Lagos Muslims community. The Jama't party however contended that with the Imam's refusal to sign the constitution there was no hope whatsoever of reconciliation (Ibid, p. 283).

Although the idea of the constitution enactment was thwarted, the administrator's efforts were not in vain. It suffices here to say that the crisis became deepened and struggle for the control of the mosque by these two factions more often than not led to physical clashes particularly in the year 1922 (Ibid, p. 284). It was asserted that the Lagos press was partial in reporting this crisis that was confronting the Muslim community particularly the section of the press that always supported the colonial administration. This section of the press attacked the Jama't party (Ibid). As a result of the negative reporting; the leader or spokesperson of the Jama't party Mustapha Adamu Animasahun in 1918 acquired the Lagos Central Times from Mr. Davies. The paper was later financed by the Muslim community up to 1924. The crisis induced bad publicity for the Muslim community in the local press and to avail on what he felt was a propensity to inadequate reporting from the mainstream Lagos press on the Muslim community, he bought and became for a short time, the editor of the newspaper. As the publisher, he began to use the medium to balance the reporting on the Muslim crisis and to express his views on many other issues (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mustapha-Adamu).

The Jama't party first took the bold step to lock the Central Mosque claiming that it was not allowed the use of the mosque. In response, the Lemomu party also locked the mosque. Consequently, the Jama't party moved to Shitta-Bey mosque to observe Jumat service in the interim. They later forced a rotational arrangement with the Lemomu party. The colonial administration could not hide its support for Chief Imam Ibrahim and his supporters in the rotational use of the mosque. In fact, Esugbayi Eleko, the then Oba of Lagos pitched his tent with the Jama't party (Patrick Cole, 1975, pp. 101-104; Olakunle Lawal, 1995, pp. 72-74; Danmole, 1987:284). However, the colonial administration brokered another peace meeting in 1922 to put an end to the dispute that had ravaged the entire Muslim community. At the end of the peaceful settlement, the Jama't party returned to the mosque and a big rally was organised around Lagos to mark the end of the feud.

Aafaa Kasunmu Ekemode and the Jama't Party Crisis of 1915

In the year 1912, Alhaji Issa the Imam Tafsir went on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina in observance of the last pillar of Islam. In his absence however, Aafaa Kasunmu Ekemode was asked to act as the Imam Tafsir of the Central Mosque. After

about three years precisely in 1915, Alhaji Issa returned from pilgrimage to the holy land. Expectedly and under normal circumstance, as the substantive Imam Tafsir, he was supposed to resume back his post and responsibility. However, the acting Imam Tafsir, Aafaa Kasunmu Ekemode refused to hand over and evacuate the post. This crisis further tore and divided the community along party lines as the matter had to be resolved in the law court. The court ruled in favour of Imam Tafsir, Alhaji Issa and Aafaa Ekemode was sacked (Danmole, 1987:279). On October 22nd, 1923, Chief Imam Ibrahim Ankuri died.

Imam Muhammed Ligali Nolla and the Succession Crisis of 1923

This crisis began in 1923 after the death of Imam Ibrahim, although, it was a succession dispute but in actual sense the spill over of the crisis generated by the water levy. There was the exigency for the appointment of new Chief Imam and the process to appoint the successor began in earnest. On behalf of the Jama't of the central mosque, the committee of Ratibis headed by Imam Abbas Opere received five nominations. Interestingly two out of the five nominees were sons of the late Imam Mohammad Nolla. Again, these two nominees Alfa Tijani Nolla (Noibi) the elder brother and Alfa Muhammad Ligali Nolla were the most favoured of the five nominees. It is worthy of note that the elder brother Alfa Tijani Nolla deputized for the late Imam Ibrahim throughout his tenure and acted as Chief Imam after Imam Ibrahim's demise. When the committee informed the Jama't of the nomination for notification before the final selection two days later, a proposal was moved by Alhaj Alli Balogun, a key figure in the Lemomu party, that the names of the nominees be forwarded to the colonial government of Lagos for final selection. It is pertinent to state that this proposal was a novel one and this was intended to guard against possible loss on the part of Lemomu party. The name of the Deputy Imam was of course already before the governor (Ibid, p. 235). However, his proposal was vehemently opposed by the Jama't party. This thus re-enacted Lemomu versus Jama't party crisis.

For Alfa Tijani Nolla, an elder brother, deputy to the late Imam Ibrahim and a member of the Lemomu party, he felt he should naturally succeed to the Imamate. Again for Alli Balogun who moved the proposal, there were certain politicking underlined this. First, for members of the Lemomu party, they could not afford to lose the control of the mosque, hence the struggle to ensure that their faction continued to produce the Imam. Second, the wisdom behind forwarding the names of nominees to the governor could be imputed to the understanding and cooperation between the late Imam Ibrahim and his party and the colonial government. It was hoped that the candidate from the Lemomu party would be endorsed and his appointment supported by the colonial governor.

Alfa Muhammad Ligali Nolla on the other hand was a member of the Jama't party. The fact that Alfa Tijani Nolla was a member of Lemomu party and a trusted

deputy of the Imam, he was not acceptable to the Jama't party. Again, because the Lemomu party had been in control of the mosque a situation perceived by the Jama't party to be at their detriment, the latter then resolved to making sure that the chance did not slip away from them to tilt the balance of power to their side. Furthermore, having a Chief Imam from their party would afford them the adoption of constitution which they had championed and fought for. However, Mr. Kasumu Ayorinde, one of the antagonists of the proposal submitted that the idea would contradict the established convention and practice of the Central Mosque which was the tradition of entrusting the selection process to the Board of Ratibis (Ibid, p. 285; Musa, 2007, p. 29).

However, Danmole (Ibid) has argued that it had been a convention among the Muslim community of the Central Mosque to appoint the Deputy (Naib) to succeed the chief Imam whenever there was vacancy. He cited for example, when Salu vacated the Imamship in 1853, his deputy Nofiu succeeded; the same was true of Nolla when he succeeded Nofiu in 1881. Ibrahim son of Nofiu and Nolla's deputy succeeded the latter in 1891. He further hinted that the convention changed after the death of Ibrahim in 1923. This change can be explained in terms of the division which the crisis in the community had generated.

Eventually Alfa Muhammad Ligali Nolla was chosen by thirty-five (35) out of thirty-eight (38) members of the Imam Ratibis that constituted the Board of Ratibis (Musa, *ibid*; Danmole, 285). He was subsequently turbaned as the Chief Imam of Lagos. Few days after this, the Lemomu party, led by Alli Balogun, turbaned Alfa Tijani Nolla as a parallel Imam of the Lagos Central Mosque. Henceforth, there began clashes as two separate Jumat services were conducted on Fridays. There was fierce battle on who would exercise the control over the mosque. The newly turbaned Imam Tijani Nolla of the Lemomu faction took a bold step on 4th January, 1924 and locked the doors of the central mosque.

In response (Musa, *ibid*; Olakunle Lawal, *ibid*) Imam Ligali and his party took two actions. First was to shift the Friday service to the Shitta Bey Mosque on Martins street and second was to institute a legal action against Imam Tijani and his party. The decision of the court went in favour of Imam Ligali and his party. The verdict was appealed and the appellate court upheld the decision of the lower court. By implication, the control of the mosque went back to the hand of Imam Ligali Nolla and his party. The court ruling did not settle the crisis even though it strengthened the position of the Jama't party, rather, it entrenched differences among the two parties (Danmole, 1987, p. 285).

Crisis Resolution

As a result of the dimension the crisis assumed, particularly after the court litigation the total resolution of the crisis among the Lagos Muslim community became a matter of exigency. With the control of the central Mosque back in the hands of Imam

Ligali Nolla and his party thanks to the court verdict, the Lemomu party led by Chief Alli Balogun were dis-satisfied and responded by moving to the Alli Balogun Mosque constructed by Chief Alli Balogun himself few meters away from the Central Mosque to hold their prayers (Danmole, *ibid*). As it were with the Lagos politics, because of the population of Lagos Muslim and their active involvement as well, the crisis was fanned by men who, in spite of the fact that they were not Muslims, belonged to opposing camps in the politics of Lagos and needed the support of the Muslim community in their struggle for and against the colonial administration. The trend of the crisis even became more interesting with the involvement of the Oba of Lagos, Esugbayi Eleko, though not a Muslim, always allied himself with the Jama't party. The Oba did not only recognize but also used his position to influence members of the Jama't party to politico-religious offices (Cole, 1975, pp. 101-104). Expectedly, this situation brought the Oba into a collision course with the colonial government. His salary was stopped and was eventually deposed and deported (Patrick Cole, *ibid*; Lawal, 1995, p. 74; Danmole, 1987, p. 285).

With tide of events, some eminent people within and outside Lagos Muslim community did not fold their arms. These people intervened in the dispute and there began the resolution of the crisis (Patrick Cole, *ibid*). Efforts of people like Egerton Shyngle leading a peace delegation to the governor cannot be underestimated. Following from this, the colonial administration realizing the implication of the crisis began to make moves to settle the rifts. In July 1929, the Administrator of Lagos, Mr. G. H. Findlay arranged a meeting in which all the Muslim groups, agreed to live together in peace. The peace efforts did not stop at that, elders of the Lagos Muslim community engaged themselves in series of private meetings all aimed at finding lasting solution to the crisis. One of such efforts was the meeting convened by Alfa Adamu Animashaun on the 30th September 1933 with about six hundred Muslims in attendance. The resolution passed at the meeting was that (i) an agreement of unity should be drawn up for the Muslim community of Lagos (ii) that a Muslim League should be established amongst others (Danmole, *ibid*). Subsequently, in 1937, Sanni Adewale, a Leading member of the Lemomu party was elected president of all Muslim Societies in Lagos (*Ibid*).

This was a good omen in the settlement of the crisis. The colonial government even continued to use public occasions in appealing to the Muslims to make sure that the crisis was settled. An instance was the occasion of the opening of Ummul-Khair Mosque in Lagos in April 1940. As a follow up to the previous peace efforts, in May 1940, friendly parley was held between the two parties with the colonial Administrator present. This parley seemed to have put an end to the crisis. The British war propaganda against Germany at the wake of Second World War also influenced peaceful resolution of the crisis. All Muslim groups in Lagos assembled at the Race Course (now Tafawa Balewa Square) to pray for the success of Britain and her allies in the war. The prayer

session for the first time since the beginning of the crisis brought all the Muslims in Lagos particularly the two principal warring parties together behind an Imam, Imam Ligali of the Jama't party while the ram sent by the Oba of Lagos for the same purpose was slaughtered by Imam Tijani of the Lemomu party. Thus, the Lemomu party that had moved to conduct their prayers at the Alli Balogun Mosque returned back to the central mosque (Danmole *ibid*, p. 289).

Another similar dispute during this period was the Ebute-Metta Mosque succession dispute of the early 1940s. The community opposed the appointment and automatic succession of the deputy Afaa Idris Ashaka upon the death of Chief Imam Lawani even though the latter wanted to nominate the former as his successor having handed over the staff of office of the Imam to him. The majority members of the mosque community vehemently opposed to the arrangement and demanded that Afaa Ashaka vacate the imamate. The matter was eventually contested and settled at the law court. In the decision of the court, Gbadamosi (Gbadamosi, 1972:235) noted that the mixture of election with consultation and selection was established. From the foregoing, there is no gainsaying the fact that Imam Ligali Nolla's Imamate period between 1923 and 1947 was one that was replete with crisis within the Lagos Central Mosque and few other Ratibi Mosques. It is equally important to stress that the crisis ridden period laid the foundation for the strong administrative arrangement of the Lagos Central Mosque. Of course, the rotation system of the imamate of the Lagos Central Mosque between the Ibrahim and Nolla Houses was unanimously agreed upon and eventually entrenched in the drafted Constitution of the mosque. This was stated in the Article XI Paragraph 2 of the Constitution of the Lagos Central Mosque:

The two well-known ancient houses of the House of Ibrahim and the House of Nolla shall continue to nominate candidates for the office of Chief Imam IN ROTATION whenever the office becomes vacant (Quoted in Musa, 2007, p. 105).

The aftermath of the adoption of a written constitution for the mosque has guaranteed free and democratic succession process up till today. After presiding over a turbulent imamate for a period of 24 years, Chief Imam Ligali Nolla died in the year 1947 after the ripe age of 80 years (Danmole, 1987, p. 289).

Conclusion

The growth and spread of Islam with the establishment of Imamate has helped to bring Islam into reckoning and the effective role the religion could play in the politics of Lagos. From the first Chief Imam to the incumbent, the Lagos Muslim Community has witnessed a chequered experience during different period which was peaceful at one time and largely turbulent at another time. This was so because of certain vested interests within the community and external circumstances from which the Muslim Community could not insulate herself. The crisis situation that ravaged the Lagos

Muslim Community during the period 1915 to 1947 and the peace efforts embarked upon really shaped the development of the Muslim Community in general and individuals in particular. Of course, it led to the fashioning and the institution of the well-structured administrative arrangement backed by constitution which is largely responsible for the peace, understanding and love that is now reigning within the Jama'at Muslimeen Council.

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