

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF SELECTED ḤALQATU 'S-SALAFIYYAH IN ILORIN METROPOLIS

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Abstract

Ḥalqah (p. *Ḥalaqāt*) is a unique avenue for imparting knowledge in Islam. It has been explored over times to get Muslims educated about their religion. It was institutionalised by the Prophet himself in the early days of Islam. The existence of *ḥalqah* in recent times has been synonymous with Salafism through which many Muslims have inclined to it (Salafism). However, different issues have come up due to availability of *ḥalqah* in Ilorin, with both effects. This paper therefore examined the activities of *ḥalaqātu's-Salafiyyah* in Ilorin, identified their major impacts and challenges. Historical method was adopted for the research. It was discovered that *ḥalqah* metamorphosed from *Da^cwah* activities of the *Salafiyyah* scholars in Ilorin. It was also discovered that activities of *ḥalqah* in the city were not limited to traditional teaching of Islam, but also included organisation of seminars and conferences among others. The impacts of *ḥalqah* in the city extended beyond religious entrenchment, but also covered socio-political, economic and intellectual spheres. The *ḥalqah* session in the city is also faced with internal wrangling and external challenges with negative effects on Salafism as a whole, ditto to *ḥalqah*. The paper therefore concluded that *ḥalaqātu's-Salafiyyah* has the potentials to properly institutionalise Salafism in Ilorin if the *Salafiyyah* advocates put their house in order.

Keywords: *Ḥalqah*, Salafism, *Salafiyyah*, *Da^cwah*, Ilorin

Introduction

From every indication, it is conspicuous that proper understanding of Islam is premised on a particular recourse to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, as it serves as the practical manifestation of the general laws of Islam. This is the major reason for *Salafiyyah* Muslims' emphasis on strict adherence to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. Ordinarily, *Salafiyyah* Muslims are a group of Sunni Muslims who advocate the practice of Islam according to methods and principles of the first three generations of the Muslims (*Salaf*).¹To achieve the pristine practice of Islam, therefore, the *Salafiyyah* scholars adopted and incorporated different *Da'wah* processes and methods, among which is the institutionalisation of *ḥalqah* (p. *ḥalaqāt*) sessions which avails the opportunity to teach the primeval form of Islam.

Ḥalqah is a religious study circle staged for the purpose of disseminating and imparting unsullied knowledge of Islam in order to be practiced as taught by the Prophet and handed over to the later generations by the *Salaf*.²Thus, *ḥalqah* is a preparatory or a training ground for Muslims to enhance their understanding of the religion. There are however insinuations from different quarters which posed the *ḥalqah* as the venue for breeding religious extremists and indoctrination of Muslims. In the light of this, the objective of this paper is to appraise the *ḥalaqātu s-Salafiyyah* in Ilorin, in order to unveil the activities, impacts and challenges to their existence in the city. It is therefore considered necessary to adopt historical method of research to avail the opportunity to access various facts that are relevant to achieving the objectives of this paper.

An Overview of *Ḥalqah* in Islam

According to Sai'd, *ḥalqah* is an Arabic word, which is translated as circle, ring, and chain among others.³Technically, it refers to a religious gathering or Islamic study circle where people receive religious teaching under the tutelage of an Islamic scholar.⁴*Ḥalqah* is an old and informal means of Islamic learning that has been in existence since the lifetime of the Prophet and has survived till the present time. It (*ḥalqah*) served as a viable tool for the Prophet's method of educating the companions that synthesises *tarbiyah* (training) and *ta'lim* (teaching). It offers the opportunity to transmit knowledge, especially in its oral form. Albeit, it was not a fully grown academic setting but a purposeful and effective means of educating people, especially about Islam.⁵

Also, *ḥalqah* can be likened to *Madrassa* (Islamic school) that is essentially set up for the inculcation of Islamic knowledge. It is open to all Muslims and was instrumental to educating Muslims across ages. The companions were taught the verses of the Glorious Qur'ān by the Prophet and many other aspects of Islam through this means. *Sīrah* (History of the Prophet) holds that the Prophet secretly gathered the first set of Muslims in the house of Al-Arqam for teaching and training.⁶ It is also narrated by Abu Sa'īd Al-Khudrī, how some women demanded from the Prophet to fix a day for their *ḥalqah* session which he granted them.⁷ This proves that *ḥalqah* is rudimentarily part of Islam for religious discussion among the early community of Muslims. The Prophet's mosque in Madinah was the venue, especially after the consolidation of Islam.⁸ The institution of *ḥalqah* does not go into oblivion after the demise of the Prophet. It was adopted by the companions and it continued to flourish till the present time. Its impacts cannot be overemphasised because it is meant for traditional Islamic training and learning. It must be borne in mind that learning is a life-long process. *Ḥalqah* is therefore established for the purpose of learning Islam, to energize faith and increase *taqwa* (conscious of Allah) among others.

However, in recent times, Islamic study circle (*ḥalqah*) has acquired some changes as could be observed from the settings and compositions. Most *ḥalqah* outlets, apart from discussing issues relating to faith, venture into discourses on entrepreneurial skills, organizing seminars on trending issues in the society and even serve as a charity centre, which give some, a socio-religious outlook.⁹ Apart from religious teaching, *ḥalqah* also provides emotional and social supports. Importantly, *ḥalqah* in the present time has become popular, as different Islamic bodies have religious study circles, where they explain and impart their ideologies. There are the likes of *Salafiyyah*, Sufi, and Shiah *ḥalqah* among others.

Salafism in Ilorin and the Emergence of *Ḥalqatu 's-Salafiyyah*

Having examined *Salafiyyah* and *ḥalqah* in Islam, it is necessary to note down the emergence of the two in Ilorin. Generally, it is believed that the call of *Salafiyyah* in Ilorin was pioneered by Shaykh Aminullahi Ibrahim (d.2012) popularly known as Baba Medina. He started his *Da'wah* activities at *Oke kura*¹⁰ upon his return from Saudi Arabia after his graduation from University of Madina. He was believed to have been charged with the responsibility to spread Salafism in Ilorin by the Saudi authority. He strongly condemned Sufism and many other customary

practices in the city. It is pertinent to note that, before his calls to *Salafīyyah*, there were some local scholars, who are vast in the knowledge of Qur'ān and *Sunnah* and used them as bases for their *Da'wah* activities. These local scholars were neither members of *Qādirīyyah*, *Tijāniyyah*, nor any *ṭarīqah*, but encouraged and preached to people to embrace the path of the Prophet (*Sunnah*). Among such scholars was Alfa Dan-Maeduka of Makana quarters,¹¹ and Honourable Justice Abdul-Mutalib Hambali who is known for anchoring Friday early morning programme on Radio Kwara in the eighties (80s) and nineties (90s), tagged *SunnatuNabiyy*.¹²

Apart from the activities of *Shaykh* Aminullah Ibrahim, there are different bodies or organisations that have been working assiduously to advance the course of *Da'watu 's-Salafīyyah* in Ilorin, one of which is *Al-Itihād 'l-Ikhrijī 'Mamlakati 'l-ʿArabiyyah 's-Saudiyyah*, (Alumni of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). The Association is made up of graduates of Saudi Arabian Universities residing in Kwara State. Some of the members include Professors Abdul-Ganiyyu Akorede Agbarididoma, Abdur-Rahman Imam Ahmad Kakuriand Abdur-Razzaq Abdul-Majid Alaro, to mention but few. They spread the *Da'wah* of *Salafīyyah* in different areas within and outside Ilorin.¹³

It is pertinent to state that some of their programmes are anchored under the umbrellas of *Hadhabayānulinna*s (This is a clear explanation to people), *Ad-Deen Nasiha* (The religious sincerity), *Ad-Dalilu Shar'* (The *Shari'ah* proof), among others. Some of the organisations include Right Path Foundation, Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (*MSSN*) among others. These groups established different Islamic schools for the teaching of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. They hold several Islamic programmes, build mosques both for *Jum'at* and the five daily *Ṣalawāt* among other religious activities. Some of the prominent *Salafīyyah* mosques in Ilorin include As-Sunnah Mosque, Tanke, Oke-Odo, Alhaji Yahaya Sanni Memorial Mosque, opposite Sanrab filling station, Imam Ahmad Central Mosque at Sango area, Fatimah Mosque Opomalu, *Darul-l Hijrah* Apalara area, *Al-Istiqāmah*, Ogidi.

As the *Salafīyyah* grows and gets consolidated in Ilorin, *ḥalqah* evolves. It started from *Da'wah* with emphasis on the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. At the beginning, there was no specified place for the *ḥalqah* programmes, any available avenue was explored for that purpose. People were equally taught the religion with no specified book but almost all the lectures centered mostly on *ʿaqīdah* (creed) and strict adherence to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. This move, which later gave birth to *ḥalaqātu 's-Salafīyyah*, got boosted with the engagement of the Sufi scholars in

intellectual debates by *Salafiyyah* scholars, especially in social gathering where majority of the attendees benefitted tremendously and got inclined to Salafism therefrom.¹⁴

One of the prominent organisers of *ḥalqah* in Ilorin, Ustadh Jabata, observed that as Salafism got gradual development in the city, most *Salafiyyah* scholars started to designate centres for their lectures and *Da'wah* activities. These centres were later known as *ḥalaqāt* in their respective localities. Though majority of those *Salafiyyah* scholars who organised those centres are middle age men,¹⁵ people do not really attend their *ḥalqah* programmes. In a bid to ensure patronage, foods were made available in the noticeable *ḥalqah* just to entice large population of Muslims that were not mindful of their religion as well as many who will attend with the aim of increasing their knowledge of Islam. Things later fell in place when majority of those who attended, for either food or knowledge increase, began to change their orientation on a gradual process until they later got influenced and embraced Salafism.¹⁶ As such, *ḥalaqātu's- Salafiyyah* began to increase both in composition and in number in the city.

Furthermore, it is observed that as at 2003, the *ḥalqah* had been gaining grounds and expanding tentacles in the city, though facing a lot of challenges from the Sufi scholars and some parents who prevented their children from attending the study circle claimed that the teachings of the *ḥalqah* are repugnant to ethics and morals of Islam and the custom of Ilorin people. Issue of bending to greet is a typical example thereof.¹⁷

Be that as it may, research revealed that as at 2010, *ḥalaqātu 's-Salafiyyah* in Ilorin had gained full fledge and colorful recognition. It has become a household thing with presence at different areas in the city and with substantial number of attendees. As against the initial time when it was difficult to get attendance at *ḥalqah*, due to challenges from the Sufi scholars, different *ḥalqah* programmes are held at different places, even in the traditional areas in Ilorin with little or no disturbances from the Sufi scholars. It can be said that about twenty-six (26) *ḥalqah* centres are presently on ground within the city of Ilorin and most of these *ḥalqah* are run in the mosques.¹⁸

The *ḥalaqāt* have recorded a number of developments in the present time. The scope of religious teaching in the *ḥalqah* which hitherto was mainly on *aqidah* (Islamic tenet) has been expanded to accommodate different branches of Islam such as *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *Naḥw* (Arabic grammar), *Tajwīd* (Rules guiding the proper recitation of the Qur'ān), *Sīrah* (History of the Prophet), Qur'ān among others. Beyond

these, As-Sunnah *ḥalqah* regularly organises conferences that last for a week, where many *Salafiyyah* scholars within and outside the city will converge and discuss different aspects of Islamic teachings.¹⁹

In the same vein, some *ḥalaqāt* hold in places like prison yard for the prisoners and some media houses as a live programme.²⁰ Among the major developments of the *ḥalaqātu 's- Salafiyyah* in Ilorin in the present time, is availability of *ḥalqah* lectures in audio format which are also uploaded on different websites for download. This has actually aided wider circulation and outreach. *Ḥalaqāt* now have specified days and time for teaching different aspects of Islam.²¹

Selected *Ḥalaqāt* in Ilorin Metropolis

As-Sunnah Ḥalqah* and Umar bin Al-Khattab Mosque's *Ḥalqah

These two study circles were established by Professor Abdur-Razzaq Abdul-Majid Alaro of University of Ilorin, Ilorin. Prof. Alaro, as he is fondly called, is a graduate of Islamic University, Madinah and holds Masters and Ph.D Degrees from the same University.²² He established the two centres when he settled down in Ilorin. The former where he delivers lectures in Arabic language, is for *Uṣūl'l-Fiqh* and it holds on every Friday at As-Sunnah Mosque in Tanke. The latter is a Yoruba session and focuses on *tawḥīd* and other *fiqh* related matters at Umar Al-Khattab mosque, Kuntu area in Ilorin and it holds every last Sunday of the month.²³

Ustadh Muhammad Ali Jabata's *Ḥalqah*

Ustadh Muhammad Ali Jabata is a prominent *Salafiyyah* advocate in Ilorin. He studied at *Daru 'l-Ulum*, Isale-Koto for his *'Idadiyyah* certificate and Markaz Agege, Lagos for his *Thanawiyyah* education.²⁴ Thereafter, he was admitted into Al-Azhari University in Egypt to study *Uṣūl 'd-Dīn* but did not graduate due to ideological clash with the lecturers in the University.²⁵ He was therefore rusticated and deported to Ilorin. Upon his arrival, he started the *Salafiyyah* calls. He began his preaching at the Ilorin central mosque but was disallowed the further use of the place. The scholars in Ilorin consider his ideology strange. He moved to Umar Al-Khattab mosque, Kuntu. After a while, he was also denied the place. He then turned his father's house to a venue of his activities, thus becoming the centre for his *ḥalqah* programme. He holds his *ḥalqah* on every Sunday between the hours of four and six pm. He also secured a place at Hajj camp area in Ilorin where he is gradually moving

his activities to.²⁶ Jabata's lectures focus on different topics but in *Salafiyyah* colouration.

Shaykh Abdul-Wahhab Ajia's *Ḥalqah*

The Shaykh is a prominent *Salafiyyah* figure in the city with much respect from people, especially the youth. He was formerly an instructor in the mosque of the Prophet in Madinah before he returned home and had since established *ḥalqah*. His study circle session, which holds twice in a week, Saturdays and Sundays, is widely attended by different people across the city. He discusses different books and topics that are considered relevant to the society.²⁷

Imam Ahmad Islamic Centre's *Ḥalqah*

The centre which is situated at Sango area in Ilorin, was established by Professor Abdur-Rahman Ahmad Al-Imam who is popularly known as Dr (now Prof) Kakuri. He is a former Markaz Agege student. He was admitted for a Diploma programme at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and graduated with Distinction in Arabic language. He later got scholarship to study at Imam Muhammad bin Saudi University, in Riyādh where he obtained another Diploma in Arabic before he proceeded for B.A, M.A and Ph.D (1984-2003) all in Arabic language from the same University.²⁸ His *ḥalqah* holds every morning after *Subh*.

Fatimah Mosque's *Ḥalqah*

Fatimah Mosque was built in 2006 through a *Waqf* (endowment fund) from a Saudi Arabia citizen for his deceased mother, Fatimahbint Fallah, hence the name Fatimah Mosque. The endowment was facilitated by Imam Ahmad Islamic Centre, Sango, Ilorin, Kwara State. The Mosque is located at Opomalu area of Ilorin. It is under the control of Ustadh Ali Bawa. The mosque organises *ḥalqah* for males on weekly basis, every Sunday morning and another one on Tuesdays for females. The *ḥalqah* features different topics as may be necessitated by the demands of the members or based on what is going in the society.²⁹

Qur'ān Academy's *Ḥalqah*

Qur'ān Academy was established in 2015 by Ustadh Ibrahim Mustapha Osi, a seasoned Islamic scholar and researcher. Qur'ān Academy is located at Sabo- line road in the premises of Khalilu 'r-Rahman Nursery and Primary school. It is a full-fledged Islamic centre offering various Islamic courses such *Ḥifzu 'l-Qur'ān* (Qur'ān

Memorisation), *Fiqhu* (Islamic jurisprudence), *Naḥw* (Arabic syntax), *Ṣarf* (Arabic morphology), *Tawḥīd* (Islamic Monotheism). Weekend *ḥalqah* holds every Saturday and Sunday between 9am and 1pm.³⁰

SANRAB Mosque's *Ḥalqah*

Located at Tanke, University of Ilorin road, Ilorin, Sanrab Mosque was officially opened in April 2008 by the Chief Imam of Ilorin Shaykh Muhammad Bashir.³¹ As a citadel of Islamic knowledge, the mosque is a rallying point for students of the University staying in the area and the people living in the locality. The mosque was named after its founder, Alhaji Yahya Sanni who laid the foundation but completed by his brother, Alhaji Kunle Sanni. The mosque has no particular Chief Imam, but the most frequent in terms of activities include Dr. Kamaludeen Ajijolakewu of the Department of Microbiology, University of Ilorin and Prof. Abdulghaniy Akorede of the Department of Arabic, Al-Hikmah University. The mosque, as a centre, offers various educational, spiritual and social programmes for people. Some of the activities include *Jum'ah* service, *Ṣatikāf*, and regular *ḥalqah* for the populace on a regular basis. The *ḥalqah* sessions include Special Class for University students on weekend basis, and another one for adults and women during weekdays. It holds between the hours of 4pm and 6:30pm everyday excluding Thursdays and Fridays.³²

Topics and Books by *Ḥalaqātu's- Salafiyyah* in Ilorin Arabic language

Arabic is a *sine qua non* to understanding Islam and *Sharī'ah*. Mastery of the language makes the application of Islamic rules easy and simple. It is a known fact that books of Islamic legislation are primarily written in Arabic language. So, it is important for an advocate of Islam to understand the language, hence the relevance and importance of learning it in the *ḥalqah*. The classes, as they used to hold, cover Arabic grammar and other affiliates. Some *ḥalaqat* like that of Shaykh Ajia, take the knowledge of Arabic with utmost importance. They make use of Arabic text books like *Shudhur 'd-Dhahab Fi Ma'rifati Kalami -l Arab*, written by Jamalud-Din Abu Muhammad Abdullahi Ibn Hisham Al-Ansari and *Qatru Nida Wabil Sudaby* Ibn Hisham and *Matn Ajrumiyyah* by Ibn Ajram.³³

Ḥadīth and Sirah

Ḥadīth, which is the record of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet and his companions is central to understanding Islam. It is also a pivotal to *Da'watu's-Salafiyyah*, because the call is premised on ensuring the practise of Islam as it was practised by the *Salaf*. Works of *ḥadīth*, including the *Ṣiḥāḥusitta* (six authentic compilations), *Muwatta* of Malik, *Musnad* of Ahmad, *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Khuzaymah and Ibn Ḥibān among others are studied at the *ḥalqah*. They equally study *Mustalahu l-ḥadīth* (science of *ḥadīth*), and various books of commentaries on *ḥadīth*, especially the works of Shaykh Muhammad Nasirudeen Al-Albānī among others. The study of *ḥadīth* has equally necessitated the need to go into the study of *Sīrah* to provide an in-depth knowledge about the Prophet and early community of Muslims (*Salaf*). This is to enable them dissect the lives of the people of *Salaf* and ensure that their religious affairs are fashioned after theirs.³⁴

Fiqh and Usul'l-Fiqh

The *ḥalqah* classes feature various aspects of *fiqh*, *Uṣūl-Fiqh* and Islamic legal opinions of scholars (*fatāwā*) among others. From *tahārah* (purification) to Hajj and other *Mu'amalāt* (interactions) like marriage, contracts and a host of others form the major discussions of many *ḥalaqāt*. Works of different scholars both the classical scholars like the founders of the four major schools of thoughts, including the *Zāhirī* school are studied. Also, works of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim, Ibn Abdul Wahhāb among other scholars are given serious attention. Among the modern scholars, works of Ibn Bāz, Al-Uthaymīn, ShaykhFawzān and Al-Bānī among others that are *Salafiyyah* inclined across the world are studied at various *ḥalaqāt*.³⁵

Furthermore, *Uṣūl-Fiqh* is another aspect of Islamic studies that attracts the attention of the *Salafiyyah* scholars in their *ḥalqah*. *Uṣūl-Fiqh* is a noble science of utmost importance, which gives the ability to dissect the underline reasons for Islamic ruling and offers the capacity to extract legal injunctions from evidences on a sound foot. Therefore, the importance of the subject cannot be overemphasized. *Ḥalqah* of Professor Alaro focuses on *Uṣūl-Fiqh*. The class makes use of the book '*ilmUṣūl-Fiqh* authored by Dr. Abdul-Wahhabibn Khalāf.³⁶

ʿAqīdah(Creed)

Another major topic of discussion at various *ḥalaqāt* in Ilorin is Islamic tenet or creed (*ʿaqīdah*). It forms an integral aspect of *Salafiyyah*

discourse and their major point of identity. They are fondly referred to by locals as *awonalakida* (people of *‘aqīdah*).³⁷ The *Salafiyyah* holds the issue of *‘aqīdah* in high esteem due to its centrality to Islam and the importance of harbouring the right type of belief about Allah and other pillars of faith. *‘Aqīdah* has necessitated their exponents on the concept of *Bid‘ah* (innovation), *takfīr* (infidelity), *tawhīd* (monotheism) among other important discourses. Works of various scholars, especially those of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Abdul-Wahhāb are widely studied among the *Salafis* in their various *ḥalaqāt*.³⁸

Tafsir

The Quranic hermeneutics is one of the critical discourses of the *Salafiyyah* in their various *ḥalaqāt*. Understanding the message of Al-Qur’ān is central to comprehending Islam. This is because Qur’ān is the primary source of Islam and every source of Islamic legislation is linked to it. The *Salafiyyah* scholars in their bid to fathom the messages of Al-Qur’ān relied on the *tafsir* works of the likes of Ibn Kathīr, Al-Qurtūbī, Aṭ-Ṭabarī and As-Shinqītī, among other scholars of classical and modern times. This is because many of these *tafsīr* are *Mathurāt* (traditional) with reliance on either the Qur’ān itself, *ḥadīth* or explanations of the people of *Salaf* to drive home the message of Al-Qur’ān or a particular verse or *Surah*.³⁹

The Impacts of Ḥalaqātu ’s-Salafiyyah on the people of Ilorin

The emergence and consolidation of Salafism in Ilorin, which culminated in the formation of different *Salafiyyahḥalaqāt*, has shaped and still shaping the major fabrics of the city. In other words, the movement has gained high momentum and impacted specifically on the youth through its various activities, especially *ḥalqah* classes. The impacts thereof are numerous but will be indexed as social, political, economic, spiritual and intellectual for the purpose of this discourse and for better assessment.

Religiously, Ilorin before the coming of the *Salafiyyah* was dominated by the Sufis. People hardly identified the difference between Sufism and Islam that was being practised in the early days. It should be remembered that the entire jihadists of the 19th century that arrived Ilorin, under the headship of Shaykh Alimi, were Sufis. In fact, Shaykh Uthmān bin Fūdī (d.1817), the flag bearer of the Jihad was a staunch Sufi of Qādiriyyah Order.⁴⁰ So, the Sufi-brand of Islam was in vogue. However, with the advent of Salafism in the city, the group stood as a bone on the

throat of the Sufis. They constitute a strong pillar in their resistance to Sufism. They are therefore viewed as anti-Sufis in Ilorin.⁴¹ *Salafīyyah* contended with Sufis and with the time, they started to make visible impacts on the religious lives of the people. One of the areas of noticeable impacts is the aspect of timing system for *Ṣalawāt*. Prior to the advent of Salafism, there were generally fixed time for each of the five daily compulsory *Ṣalawāt* in the city. For instance, *Zuhr Ṣalāt* was fixed at 2pm daily, but the *Salafīyyah* has given a reorientation in effect of which people now observe *Zuhr* at 1pm and virtually observed by many mosques in Ilorin. They equally brought the attention of Muslims in the city to the right direction of *Qiblah*, which led to slight bending position while observing *Ṣalāt* in many mosques.⁴²

Spiritually, as part of human society which is beacons on different forms of challenges, many of which are spiritual or metaphysical and sometimes medical in nature, there had been different traditional approaches to solving the challenges of these nature, hence the prominence of *Jalabists*⁴³ in the city. Oloruntele and Balogun designated Ilorin as the home of *Jalabi* scholars who have been solving many spiritual issues across Yorubaland.⁴⁴ The inclination to Salafism by some individuals in the city had brought about difference. To the medicals, people have now acquainted themselves with prophetic or Islamic medicines. This has drastically reduced the rate of proliferation and reliance on *Nakali*⁴⁵ among the Muslims. The *Jalabi* practitioners now record low patronage. The city is flooded with many stores for the sales of relevant Islamic medicine ingredients. The names of Islamic medicine products like *habatu Sauda* (black seed), *zaytun* (Olive) and *Ruman*, among others are gradually becoming a household in the city. In the metaphysical parlance, Salafism has brought *Istikhārah*⁴⁶ to prominence as against sand divination and other methods of finding spiritual solution to metaphysical issues among others.

Socially, the *Salafīyyah* make the use of *Niqāb* (veil) and *khimār* (long Hijab) in a way that is different from the “*Eha*” (*purdah*) that is generally known in the city, as it is majorly used by the *Zumuratul-Mu’minin* also known as *Makondoros*. There is increase in growing of beards and wearing of *Nisfu s-Sak* (trousers above ankles). Thus, these modes of dressing are peculiar to the *Salafīyyah* in the community.⁴⁷ In addition, the unrelenting efforts of *Salafīyyah* scholars in preaching against bowing, kneeling and bending as manners of greeting, which were declared as tantamount to *ḥarām* (forbidden) or *shirk* (polytheism) is gaining momentum as many people take to greeting without bending.

Also, it is noticed among the people nowadays that *kunniyah* (Nickname) such as Abu Ubaydah, Abu Salamah among others before *Nikkah* (marriage) or birth is becoming a common practise in the city.⁴⁸

Another aspect of social change *Salafiyyah* has brought to bear in Ilorin is the aspect of ceremonies and festivities. Traditionally, naming of a new born baby used to hold on the eighth day of birth. It is on that day that the scholar would gather to give name to the baby. *Salafiyyah* has introduced a shift to seventh day, with little or no ceremonies. The names are first pronounced by the father himself instead of *Mallam* as it used to be. This is in line with a celebrated tradition of the Prophet as reported by At-Tirmidhi (No.1522), Abū-Dāwud (No.2837) and An-Nasā'i (N.4220) among others, which direct the naming, shaving and slaughtering of animal on seventh day of birth. Many festivities, like *Mawlid*⁴⁹ and *Hijrah*⁵⁰ among other celebrations that were held in high esteem by the people before the coming of *Salafiyyah* are going into oblivion, while some now celebrate in a low-key manner. Also, mosques are now named after the companions of the prophet, like Umar bin Al-Khaṭṭāb mosque, Mu'awiyah mosque among others, contrary to the previous practice of naming mosque after a compound, or an individual.⁵¹

Intellectually, the *Salafiyyah* advocates in Ilorin have brought about many changes in terms of intellectual reawakening among Muslims. Part of their intellectual activities and engagements is the subject of this discussion, which is the formation and springing up of different *ḥalaqāt* across the city. Significantly, the movement has helped to eschew dogmatism in religion, blind imitation and arbitrary veneration of scholars. The presence of Salafism has in a way changed the *status quo*. *Ḥalqah* has assisted in institutionalising a method of *Da'wah* laced with substantial evidences from the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* in line with submission of scholars of note as against the previous system where scholars boast of *Nakali* and narrate strange stories while delivering lectures. In fact, the non-Salafis have imbibed the culture of substantiating their *Da'wah* with evidences, quoting authentic *ahādith* and verifying them with the claim of classical and modern scholars. *Ṣiḥāḥusitta* (six authentic compilations), *Muwatta'a* of Malik and *Musnad* of Ahmad among others, therefore gained more prominence.⁵²

Economically, one of the areas of manifestations of impacts of activities of *Salafiyyahs' ḥalqah* in Ilorin metropolis is the aspect of economics. The presence of Salafism has brought about improved economic activities in the city. Prior to the advent of Salafism, it was only in Idi-ape and few other places where the Islamic books and other

materials are sold. However, the formation and proliferation of *halaqātu 's-Salafiyyah* in the city has brought about the establishment of many shops and stores for the sales of Islamic materials, including books, art works and other Islamic materials. In fact, some of the stores have national and international connections in places like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Dubai among others, where they stock their stores.⁵³ Such is the case of Al-Amin stores, As-Shifah international, Al-Madinah, Al-Kawthar among others. Islamic material shops are opened across the city.

Politically, *halaqātu 's-Salafiyyah* has made the discussion about politics and political participation a topic of concern in the city. There are shades of opinions on what should be the rule of engagements for Muslims under political atmospheres. The *halqah* has been used by different scholars to teach their followers on whether or not to be politically relevant. Generally, politics is viewed as an aberration by all the *Salafiyyah* groups, though they differ on participation.⁵⁴ The likes of Alaro opine that politics should be approached as a necessity. Therefore, a Muslim may not be a member of political party but can participate in election by voting for a Muslim candidate. Jabata, Sarumi and Ejigbo on the other hand, hold that both membership and participation are condemnable and Muslims should avoid politics.⁵⁵ In fact, it because of politics that Jabata declared Alaro as a *Kafir*.⁵⁶

Challenges facing the *Halaqātu 's- Salafiyyah* in Ilorin

The existence of Salafism in Ilorin is not without challenges with negative effects on their activities. This is because the group itself is an affront to Sufism, which has been in existence prior to the coming of Salafism. Ordinarily, the advent of *Salafiyyah* in Ilorin was considered as a torn in the flesh of the Sufi scholars who see *Salafiyyun* as their antagonists. Also, the existence of the *halaqātu 's- Salafiyyah* is also a point of concern to the traditional Islamic educational system. So, the founders of the existing *Madrasah* system did not fold their hands to see the *halaqāt* taking over their jobs. Also, there are other challenges faced by the *halaqātu 's-Salafiyyah* in Ilorin which are offshoot of clashes among different *Salafiyyah* groups. These challenges can be understood under the following divisions.

Internal Wrangling

There is presence of factions among the *Salafiyyun* in Ilorin which has caused internal disintegration. This manifests in their respective *halqah* programmes which feature open abuses and condemnation of one

another's views on different issues. Another very relevant example is the issue of protest or demonstration against the government. Alaro holds that it is permissible under certain conditions, while Jabata and Ejigbo factions hold the contrary. Another instance is the issue of *Bid'ah* and its divisibility. Jabata stands alone to argue that *Bid'ah* is not divisible and every innovation constitutes *Kufr*, while others condemned him for that.⁵⁷

Furthermore, another instance to establish that the cord of internal conflict is strong within the blocs of *Salafiyyah* in Ilorin that of Jabata and other *Salafiyyah* scholars in the city. Jabata uses the *ḥalqah* session to refute other *Salafiyyah* scholars and declare many as *Kuffār*. Worst still, is that he is not ready to reconcile with any of them in the city. The same goes for Abdur-Razzaq Ejigbo group. They refute both the Jabata and Alaro's group. Both have refuted Alaro and each other on many occasions. Jabata declared Alaro as a *Kāfir*, while Ejigbo held that he (Alaro) does not belong to *Salafiyyah*.⁵⁸ The other dimension to their conflicts is filing of court cases against one another on the question of defamation of character between the Alaro and the Ejigbo/Sarumi groups in 2019.

Also, research has revealed that the way and manners of presentation of lectures by many *Salafiyyah* scholars in the *ḥalqah* seem harsh and pessimistic. There is frequent pronouncement of *takfīr* (declaration as infidel), *tabī'c* (declaration as innovator) and *tafsīq* (declaration as libertine) among others that sealed one off to hellfire thereby, creating fears in the minds of many Muslims and getting them discouraged. Many *Salafiyyah* scholars in the city are grossly not moderate and not optimistic in their presentations. Added to this is the instance of inadequate knowledge of some handlers of *ḥalqah*. It is evident that many of the members are scholars of their own and not of standards in terms of age and knowledge acquisition. Some of them did not go to *Madrasah* to learn the rudiments of Islamic knowledge while many did not go beyond the *Iddadiyyah* or *Thanawiyyah* levels. Some even condemn university education on the claim that they are not necessary before one can become a learned person. Many studied Islam on their own, believing that mastery of Arabic language guarantees the knowledge of Islam.⁵⁹

External Challenges

Another major challenges to the *ḥalaqātu 's- Salafiyyah* in Ilorin are from anti-*Salafiyyah* scholars, like Sufis and some members of the community. Prior to the consolidation of *Salafiyyah*, Sufi scholars held the

religious ace in Ilorin. Things however turned otherwise with the springing up of different *Salafiyyah* activities. They (Sufis) therefore in defending themselves against the development explored various means to criticise all *Salafiyyah* activities. Different media programmes are anchored by the Sufis to that effect. Such programmes include *At-Tasawwuf'l-Islami*, sponsored by International Organization of Tijāniyyah Brotherhood, (IOTB), *As-Shari'yyah 'l-Islamiyyah* anchored by Alhaji Toyin Salaty and the recent Al-Islam and Sufism TV. They (Sufis) used these platforms to tag the *ḥalqah* as training grounds for religious thugs, a platform for indoctrinating young Muslims and brainwashing against the existing religious practices in the city.⁶⁰

Furthermore, many young Muslims who attend the *ḥalqah* are sometimes not able to put into practice some of the *ḥalqah* teachings, especially those who stay under the tutelage of their parents. For instance, the issue of refusal to bend while greeting parents and elders as propagated by the *Salafiyyah* and taught in the *ḥalqah* is considered a violation of norms of the city. Therefore, as *ḥalqah* grows in number, majority of parents who are not members of the movement prevented their children from attending their *ḥalqah* as they considered their teachings as repugnant to the true teaching of Islam. More significant, the *Salafiyyun* and their *ḥalqah* are seen in the face of non-*Salafi* Muslims as extremists and religious fanatics who ascribed exclusivism to themselves.⁶¹

Conclusion

This paper discussed the existence of *ḥalaqātu's-Salafiyyah* in Ilorin and their various activities. It is clear from all indication that *ḥalqah* is an institutionalised means of education in Islam which was also used by early community of Muslims. *Ḥalqah* could even be said to have been responsible for the emergence of *Madrasah* system, though it is not formal system of learning. The *ḥalqah* sprang up in Ilorin with the emergence of Salafism and had since become a household name in the city. Different *Salafiyyah* scholars of repute in Ilorin have established *ḥalqah* with sizeable number of attendees. This has greatly influenced the society in different aspects of human endeavour. Also, the existence of *ḥalqah* in Ilorin is not without challenges of different sorts, especially from those who felt threatened with the growing influence of the *Salafiyyah* via *ḥalqah* programmes. Part of the problems is the existence of discord among the *Salafiyyah* advocates, as each is using the *ḥalqah* to attack and condemn others who might have held views that are at variance to theirs. *Salafiyyun* in Ilorin are therefore enjoined to put their house in order as

ḥalqah has the potentials to institutionalise Salafism in the city. From every indication, *ḥalqah* remains a veritable platform for learning Islam in its pristine form and not a venue to undermine Islam as alleged in some quarters.

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2. H.B, Elemosho, “A Survey of *Ḥalaqātu ’s-Salafiyyah* in Ilorin Metropolis” (Long Essay, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 2019), 36.
3. M. Sa’id, *Al-Qamus*, (Beirut, Daru ’l-Kutub ’l-Ilmiyyah, 2009), 356.
4. Quwwatul-islam, *Meaning of Ḥalqah* retrieved from quwwateducationcentre.org.uk/adultcourse/the-ḥalqah-sisters/ accessed on 29/01/2019
5. Islamic shakhsiyah foundation *Ḥalqah* retrieved from isf.education/36-shakhsiyah-education-principles/ḥalqah-islamic-oral-pedagogy2. Accessed on 29/01/2019
6. M.A. Al-Qadiyani, *Hayatu Muhammad waRisalatih* (Beirut, Daru ’l-Ilm, 1390), 79
7. See *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, No.7310
8. Al-Qadiyani,... 80
9. These are some of the observations during the course of visitations to various *ḥalaqāt* for interviews.
10. Elemosho,...28
11. A. Bawa, a prominent *Salafiyyah* advocate in Ilorin, interviewed on 20, December, 2017, at Fatimoh Mosque, Opo-Malu Ilorin, aged 50 years.
12. He used to anchor the programme when he was in active service as a Kadi and Grand Kadi of Shariah Court of Appeal, Ilorin.
13. Bawa,...
14. M.A. Jabata, a prominent *Salafiyyah* advocate in Ilorin, interviewed at his residence Agbo Oba on 27th march, 2019, aged 57 years
15. Jabata...
16. Elemosho,...39
17. Jabata...
18. Jabata...

19. Elemosho,...41
20. Elemosho,....
21. Elemosho,...
22. Abu Ayub, a secretary to Prof. A.A.Alaro, interviewed at As-Sunnah mosque on 20/03/2019, aged 32 years
23. Abu Ayub...and Abu Mas'ab, one of As-Sunnah mosque administrators, interviewed at the mosque premises on 20/10/2018, aged 31 years
24. Jabata...
25. Jabata...
26. Jabata...
27. Elemosho,...45
28. A.A. Al-Imam, a prominent *Salafiyyah* advocate in Ilorin, interviewed at his residence Kulende, Ilorin On 23/03/2019, aged 55 years
29. A.F. Salman, "Salafiyyah Women Programmes in Ilorin Metropolis" (Long Essay, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 2019) 39
30. Salman,...41
31. Salman,...42
32. Salman,...43
33. I. Idris, a regular attendee of Sheikh Ajia's *ḥalqah* interviewed at his residence AS- Sunnah mosque, Tanke Ilorin. On 15/03/2019, aged 25 years
34. Yusuph,...25
35. This was gathered during the course of interviews with various *ḥalaqāt* handlers.
36. K. Fatiu, a regular attendee of *ḥalaqāt* interviewed at University of Ilorin Central Mosque extension on 2/4/2019, aged 23 years
37. The Salaifs are popularly referred to with this title in Ilorin and across the Yorubaland.
38. They are scholars of choice because they are believed to be the founders of *Salafiyyah*. For detail see, D.G. Yusuph, "The Intricacies of Salafiyyah's Belief on 'Arsh (Throne) as contained in the Qur'ān", *Al-Asalah International Journal*, Vol.8, (2018), 202.
39. These are some of *Tafasir* that Ibn Taymiyyah declared as best. For detail see Ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqadimah fi Usuli 't-Tafsir* (Beirut, Daru Maktabtu 'l-Hayat, 1980), 51.
40. Yusuph,...185

41. Jabata....; Yusuph,...196
42. Elemosho,...57
43. Jalabists are the Muslim clerics that people consulted for spiritual and other solutions. For details, see S.A. Aliyu, *Transmission of Learning in Modern Ilorin : A History of Islamic Education 1897-2012* (An Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Universiteit Leiden, 2015), xii
44. Aliyu,...289 See also A.O. Oloruntele, *Evil Forces Among the Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria with Reference to Ilorin City* (An Unpublished M.Phil, Dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2009), 44.
45. *Nakali* is a spiritual formula used by the Jalabists to solve spiritual and other problems. For details, see Oloruntele,...43
46. *Istikhara* is a supplication prescribed by the Prophet for whoever needs to seek counsel or guidance of Allah over a matter for him to be rightly guided and make the best choices.
47. Elemosho,...31
48. Elemosho,...
49. *Mawlidu 'n-Nabiyyis* the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, which used to hold every 12th of Rabiul-Awwal and beyond annually.
50. *Hijrah* is the celebration of migration of the Prophet from Makkah to Madinah in the year 622CE. It hold on every Muharam annually.
51. It is currently a new trend in the city and it is gaining momentum.
52. This is observable in most of the lectures around these days.
53. This is gathered from various interviews conducted with the Islamic Medicine Store owners in Ilorin. The interview was conducted on 14th February, 2020
54. Elemosho,...43
55. Yusuph,...202
56. Elemosho,...43
57. Yusuph,...202 and Abdur-Razzaq Ibn Hassan Ejigbo....
58. Yusuph,...229
59. Elemosho,...45
60. Yusuph,...229
61. Elemosho,...55