

ISLAM IN THE NON-MUSLIM AREAS OF NORTHERN NIGERIA, c.1600-1960

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Abstract

The introduction and spread of Islam into the areas known in Nigeria today as the Middle Belt or Central Nigeria spanned over centuries. It began initially as a gradual process, but later accelerated with the Jihad and the imposition of British colonial rule in the region. In the early period, particularly from 1600 to 1804, centralized polities, trade and commerce, missionary activities, migration and settlement, and the utilization of Muslim clerics as court officials by non-Muslim rulers, were the main avenues and dominant features in the introduction of Islam. The major part of the 19th century saw jihad forays carried into the non-Muslim areas, although they did not witness the Jihad in the real sense of the term. Jihad raids partly for slaves uprooted some ethnic groups from their original homelands and relocated to non-Muslim areas where they continued to practice Islam. Alliances with one non-Muslim state against another were utilized by the Jihadists in their attempts to spread the religion of Islam. Up to 1900, the spread and acceptance of Islam were limited to the ordinary citizens, whilst most rulers remained 'animists'. Colonial conquest and imposition, the imposition of Muslims as District and Village headmen, the establishment of Quranic and Islamiya schools, inter-marriages, and the effects of the world-wide economic depression of the 1930s and the Second World War were among the factors in the acceleration of the spread of Islam from 1900 to 1960. However, some of the paramount rulers in the areas did not convert to Islam until far into the 20th century.

Introduction

Islam is an ideal religion because of its claim to universality, just like Christianity. Islam became the fundamental basis for socio-political values and organization. It influences and informs conception of identity, authority and legitimacy. Islam was the only available ideology in the 19th Century West Africa for a vast multi-ethnic state which Empire builders used. The term non-Muslim areas or groups refer to the multi-ethnic groups in the Southern part of Northern Nigeria. This study is limited to the non-Muslim groups in the present Kogi, Plateau, Taraba, Southern part of Kaduna State, and Benue states in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. During its long history in Northern Nigeria, Islam appears to have occupied different positions and taken up different attitudes towards the people. The pace of the expansion and indeed acceptance of Islam in this part of Nigeria varied significantly from one area to another, one period to another and from being relatively slow in the early stages and then becoming much quicker in the later period.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

African conversion to universal religions (especially Islam) had been an age long phenomenon, but the process of religious change had been a gradual one and often took a prolonged period of incubation regardless of a few cases of warfare. However, following colonial intrusion into the affairs of Africans, the process of conversion became accelerated and many Africans began to change their religion for the universal ones more than ever before. The massive and accelerated conversion of Africans had provoked various explanations from scholars. Engels regarded the Almoravid movement as a clash between the impoverished, morally upright nomadic Berbers of the Sahara, and the wealthy, morally lax Muslim merchants of the towns.¹ He also considered all Islamic movements as having their source in economic causes but clothed in religion.² Weber believed that religious ideals, interests and beliefs, as well as material interests play a significant role in the emergence of religious movement.³ Durkheim wrote that traveling and migration affect one's views of the world, particularly on issues concerning religion.⁴ Levtzion looked at the method of conversion from the individual and communal perspectives. The individual conversion involved a slow space by individuals or small groups, whilst communal conversion involved no definite crossing of religious frontiers and there was hardly a break between past traditions and customs.⁵

Horton opined that the conversion of Africans to Islam or Christianity was due to the development of their traditional cosmology in response to their socio-economic condition under colonial rule. He maintained that Islam only acted as a stimulator and accelerator of change, and that it gained more converts because it seemed to have fairly contended with the catalytic role by accommodating traditional practices.⁶ Fisher is of the notion that Muslim pattern of conversion is characterized by three stages: quarantine, mixing and reform. Quarantine was the stage when the faith was upheld only by migrant community traders, or refugees, or clerics at the service of their non-Muslim hosts. Because the participants were entirely foreigners, orthodoxy was relatively maintained. The stage of mixing was when the hosts began to convert to Islam in large number, but the converts still combined Islamic tenets with their traditional practices. The reform stage emerged after centuries as a result of the urgent need for the establishment of “the rule of the Saints”. According to him, Africa was already a conducive ground for the spread of Islam.⁷ Watt pointed out that religious change could only take place through economic changes, as well as changes in the tradition of the people. Because African traditions are similar to those of Islam, many Africans favored and preferred Islam.⁸ The importance of trade and commerce in Islam has made some scholars to believe that the religion of Islam was first and foremost a religion of trade. Trimmingham credited trade and centralization for the spread of Islam. States that were structurally organized were prone to easy Islamic conversion than the stateless societies. Equally, centralized states fostered and protected trade both internally and externally. In effect, Islam largely spread through the activities of traders.⁹ Lewis asserted that the rulers and the ruled in a centralized polity opted for Islam in order to enhance their position.¹⁰

According to Paden, changes for a universal religion might be due to changes in political culture and the structure of a society.¹¹ Ayandele maintained that Islam began conversion from the top and permeated through the already converted chiefs and down to the ordinary people.¹² Clarke claimed that Islam spread first among the ruling classes, merchants and the town dwellers before being carried to the rural areas. He further added that Islam’s main strength in West Africa had been among the privileged classes, the rulers, the administrators, the scholars and the merchants.¹³ Inalegwu blamed the lack of spread of Islam among the Idoma on the fragmented structure of the society.¹⁴ These contentions are to some extent true of certain societies in Africa and communities in

Nigeria, but certainly not among the non-Muslims in Northern Nigeria.

Islam in the Non-Muslim Areas in Northern Nigeria: c.1600-1804

Centuries before the outbreak of the Jihad in Hausa land in 1804, the non-Muslims in Northern Nigeria, like any other ethnic groups in Nigeria, were familiar with Islam. Political centralization, warfare, trade, migration and settlement and missionary activities were responsible for the introduction of Islam during this period. The Jukun Empire was politically very influential around the non-Muslim areas of what later became known as Northern Nigeria. Between the 14th and the 17th centuries, the Jukun carried out military expeditions against Zaria, Borno, and in 1670 raided Kano (the major important cities in the core North). After the 1670 raids, the Jukun carried a substantial number of Hausa Muslim slaves back to Kwararafa (the capital) and settled them in separate parts of the town. Although the Jukun were animists, the presence of the Muslim settlers became very important. By about 1800, the Aku of Wukari (the King) began to use an Islamic title of ‘*mallam*’ as part of his installation ceremony.¹⁵

Early indication of Islamic penetration and presence of foreign Muslims in the Igala Kingdom was in the 19th century during the Igala-Jukun war of 1865. It was during this period that some Hausa Muslims from the North, particularly Bebeji in Kano, were invited by the then non-Muslim *Attah* (King) Ayegba Omi-Idoko, to assist the state.¹⁶ The Igala success in the war which materialized as a result of the charms said to have been prepared by the Muslim Hausas, led to the settlement of these Muslims in Idah (the ancient capital of the Igala Kingdom) and subsequently in the several areas. They became the first ‘official’ Muslim community in the Kingdom. This invitation seems the first ‘official’ royal contact with the Muslims. In fact, Muslims had featured prominently in the *Attah*’s court as scribes, interpreters, advisers and judges. Like in Jukun, over the centuries the number of these Muslim settlers increased as the Igala evidently accommodated them. The incidence of soliciting the magical aid of foreign Muslims by African rulers against formidable enemies is not unique to Igala. A typical example was the Emir of Kano, Yaji, who solicited the aid of the Wangara Muslims in his wars against Santolo, in which Kano won as a result of the Muslim prayers. Other African rulers who utilized the services of settler Muslims to prepare amulets for personal protection, war and so on included the Tlikxes of Mandara in Borno, the Ashantehene of Ashanti and the King of Bussa.¹⁷

Peaceful contacts, travels, communications and commerce had existed between the Northern Muslims and the peoples of the non-Muslim areas. One of the most effective means of diffusing ideas, including those of Islam, was trade. The existence of markets at the Niger-Benue confluence principally populated by the non-Muslims and which attracted Muslims traders as far as Kano, Zaria, Gobir, Katsina, Borno, Nupe and Arabs from North Africa, is an indication that the indigenous population were becoming familiar with the religion of Islam. Before the 19th century, Kano and Katsina had coordinated the Hausa (Muslim) commerce with the non-Muslim South through several routes and trading networks. For example, the ivory trade route to Hausa land from Mandara went through the Taraba valley via Gashaka, Bali and Bakundi down to the Benue (all in non-Muslim region). Other routes linked Fombina with Muri, Gombe, Bauchi (Muslim areas) to Lafia Beriberi, Keffi and Eggan (non-Muslim areas). The most important market centers at the confluence included Ikiri, Gbobe, Panda (with some 30,000 inhabitants, one ninth of whom were Muslims), Rabba, Gori, Koton-Karifi and Umaisha.¹⁸ The non-Muslims and the Muslims traded together in these markets and also along the trading networks. Equally, some of the Muslim merchant families from Northern Katsina, particularly the Agalawa, Tokorawa and Kambarin-Barebari commercial groups traded as far as the Igala Kingdom and Igbo land.¹⁹ On the Jos Plateau, Muslim Hausa traders had long been interacting with the societies in the Jos area. In fact, some of these Muslim traders later settled and inter-married with the host communities. The visit of these Muslim groups to and settlement around the confluence region and the hinterland meant that non-Muslim groups like the Igala, Ebira, Kakanda, Jukun, Idoma, Doma, Tiv, Bassa Nge, Bassa Komo and several others were in contact with Islam. Thus, the main agents of early diffusion of Islam were at first the Muslim traders and then missionaries.

The religious influence of Islam was in evidence among the people including their rulers. The extent to which early Muslim traders and missionaries were directly engaged in the propagation of Islamic faith among the non-Muslims is very difficult to ascertain. Indeed, the early presence of Islam was through the migrant settlers and traders who were very much concerned with trading and selling of charms. According to a source, *“The mallams are not merely teachers, they still carry on trade. Their former occupation, however, is undoubtedly the most lucrative of the two since ministerial labors consist chiefly of selling charms.”*²⁰ Even more important was the fact that some of the *mallams* (teachers) were not

literate enough. Records indicate that some of them read the Koran up-side down.²¹ This could be as a result of ignorance. The failure of the *mallams* could also be attributed to the influence of indigenous beliefs and ideological views, as well as the strength of the local authority. The Muslim visitors/traders/settlers needed a cordial relationship for the achievement of their main goals rather than trying to convert the people which could have naturally brought them into serious confrontation with the rulers (especially the Attah of Igala and the Aku of Wukari) who were, in the main, religious leaders. No doubt, these two powerful and contending rulers utilized the services of Muslims during warfare and in preparing charms for their personal well-being. In return, these rulers cheerfully participated in some Muslim festivals and Islamic rites though they remained non-Muslims. They also appointed Muslims as secretaries and administrators, especially because of their (rulers) participation in the long distance trade. The most important reasons for the lack of receptivity of Islam in certain communities such as the Ebira and Idoma, was the non-centralization of their polity and thus the absence of a powerful king. On the Jos Plateau, it appeared that Muslims lived with the non-Muslims in a condition of social symbiosis in which no attempt was made to convert the people. So the indigenous life was little influenced by Islam at least until the colonial period.

The reasons adduced were very much responsible for the lack of propagation of Islam by the early Muslim communities in the non-Muslim areas of the North and the little Islamization of the people. Thus the new faith only represented just one strand in the pattern of the non-Muslim culture. It had little or no significant influence on their manners, and of course, their education and belief systems.

Islam in the Non-Muslim Areas of Northern Nigeria: 1804-1900

This period started with the Sokoto Jihad through to the imposition of British colonial rule in the non-Muslim areas of the North. Discussions here center mostly on the role of the Jihad in the extension of Islam to these areas. The Jihad which started in 1804 had by 1810 overran almost all the former Hausa states. The Jihad reached Nupe in 1810, and in 1818 the Muslim Nupe state became engaged in many raids against non-Muslim neighbours. Between 1830 and 1856, the entire northern bank of river Benue from Nupe, Nassarawa, Bauchi and Zaria Emirates came under Fulani rule. Nupe raided and sacked Panda, Eggan and Ikiri markets. The Jihadists from Nupe took over Lokoja, Ebira and Kotonkarifi along the

river Niger in 1853.²² Those from Zaria and Jama'a raided the Kaje, Jaba, Kagoma, Katab and other non-Muslim areas in Southern Kaduna.²³

The Niger and Benue rivers and other tributaries and the general topography (forest, hills, swamp etc) served as formidable barriers to Jihad incursions into the core non-Muslim areas. Thus despite continued Jihad raids for several decades after 1810, most non-Muslim areas were not directly affected, and where this happened, the relationship between the indigenous people and the invading Muslim armies was that of tribute payment and some in cases vassalage. The Emir of Bauchi, Yaqub (c.1805-1843) was apparently the first Muslim ruler who attempted to wage the Jihad against the non-Muslim in the Benue region. The raids were mostly directed against the Jukun. Further military campaigns against the non-Muslim peoples were attempted by the Emirates of Gombe, Muri, Zaria and Lafia. The raids carried out by Emir Buba Yero of Gombe brought the Jukun towns of Pindiga, Gwona and Yangkari under Fulani control. In late 1860s and 1870s, there were military campaigns against the Tiv conducted by the Emir of Muri. For instance, the Emir of Muri, Buba (c.1869-1873) assisted the Aku of Wukari, Agudu Manu (c.1872-1902) against the Tiv. The Bauchi's vassal, Emir of Dutse, Suleiman (c.1843-1874) also organized unsuccessful campaigns against the Tiv. The Emir of Keffi, Abdullahi, who was a vassal of the Emir of Zaria, fought several wars against the non-Muslims. Equally, Umoru, the Emir of Nassarawa, raided and conquered the surrounding non-Muslim peoples and extended into Ebira and Bassa territories and destroyed the town of Panda.²⁴ It should be stated that a number of these military campaigns and conquests were not consolidated and the conquered people were not compelled to practice the Islamic faith.

The issue of tribute payment featured prominently in the Muslims extension into non-Muslim areas. For example, in 1854, the Aku of Wukari paid a tribute of between 35 to 40 slaves to the ruler of Muri. Jukun rulers also gave corn, horses, slaves, cloths and so on as tribute to the Emir of Bauchi, but they maintained their traditional religious beliefs. At the end of the Nupe raids against the Ebira from the 1860s to 1880, the latter agreed to pay an annual tribute in slaves to Bida (capital of Nupe Emirate). Equally, following the declaration of the Jihad and the establishment of Bauchi emirate, the Anaguta people of Jos Plateau entered a mutual pact with the Emirate administration to pay tribute. But when the local people stopped paying tribute in 1873, Bauchi sent an army against them but failed to re-enforce tribute payment.²⁵ The failure of the

Bauchi campaign rendered impossible the attempt by the Jihadists to penetrate the interior of Jos Plateau. In 1854, the Jihadists from Nupe took over the control of Lokoja from the Igala kingdom.

Despite constant incursions and raids into a few areas in the non-Muslim areas, there is no evidence of the propagation and spread of Islam in the whole of the region. Granted, the raids and occupation (in the case of Lokoja) might have witnessed increased Muslim immigrant population who settled in non-Muslim areas, but the spread of Islam by migrant groups was very minimal. The reasons for the limited spread of Islam by the Muslims and refusal by the people (especially the ruling class) were varied and complex.

The rulers of the Caliphate wanted to control the lucrative North-South trade in order to increase their revenue. The Caliphate was aware of the wealth accruing to the Igala Kingdom, which had earlier controlled this trading network. Thus, the Caliphate wanted to control the trade and trade centers under the banner of Islam. However, it would be wrong to suggest that wealth was the only incentive. Certainly, the acquisition of firearms and preventing enemies from acquiring them were similarly paramount. Earlier experience had shown the importance of firearms. For example, because of the possession of firearms by Panda, it effectively resisted the Jihadists' attack in 1824.²⁶ In the 1850s and 1860s, Nupe Emirate under Masaba wanted to acquire European arms and ammunition in order for Nupe to "control the commercial intercourse between Europe and the Western Sudan, and subsequently dominating the surrounding areas with European firearms."²⁷

Furthermore, the importance of slaves encouraged the Jihadist forays. At first, the Jihad was centered on Hausa land and was mostly religious in outlook. Later, this changed because of restrictions on enslaving Muslims, and so the religious principle which enjoins and encourages Muslim states to enslave non-Muslims was vigorously pursued. In fact, Muslim raids into non-Muslim areas were usually justified on theological basis and on religious grounds, as least as stated in the Jihad Manifesto.²⁸ Consequently, the Jihad in non-Muslim areas witnessed a substantial increase in slave raiding. The need to supply slaves as tribute and farm labourers to Sokoto, Gwandu and Zaria by the newly emerged Emirates of Nupe, Nassarawa, Agaie and Lapai explains the extensive slave raids. In fact, paying tributes in slave meant waging war against non-Muslim neighbours. In addition, slave labour was the life blood of the Nupe economy, and since its plantation agriculture was based

on slave labour, a dependable supply of slaves became very important. The major aims of the Rabba army expeditions to Kakanda and the Ebira Kingdom of Panda from 1830-1833 were partly meant to acquire slaves for the Nupe economy. It has been estimated that between 1857 and 1901 (when the British conquered Bida) there were 1601 slave villages in Nupe. Also the demand for slaves in Hausa land was so high because the economy of Hausa states was based mainly upon slave labour. Consequently, slave labour on plantations, especially for shea butter, was central to the process through which the Muslim Emirs became increasingly important and wealthy and through this maintained their political power and control, as well as sumptuary standards.²⁹

In addition, around the non-Muslim areas, the Jihadists were more concerned and pre-occupied with slavery, economic and political expansionism than the spread of the Islamic faith. All forms of alliances came into being, but economic considerations were paramount. Thus, even when they sided with the non-Muslim Jukun against the non-Muslim Tiv or the Igala against the Jukun, the alliances did not translate into converts to Islam from among these peoples. In fact, the Jukun-Muri alliance against the Tiv was meant to check their expansion to the North and South of the Benue region, including the neighboring Jukun as well as to prevent their control of all the trade routes in the middle Benue region, as well as the salt mines at Awe and Keana in Jukun.

Despite the increased utilization of Muslims as scribes, administrators, charm makers and so on, the Attah of Igala and the Aku of Wukari and their chiefs remained less receptive to Islamic faith. The most central consideration for this attitude was the conflict between Islam and the religious, economic and political power bases of these rulers and their subordinate chiefs. Traditional religion was one of the supporting pillars of these powerful monarchs' control (as well as their chiefs) since many of their functions were spiritual. Religious control involved a threat of famine, of fertility of the land and disease, earth cult, medicine, masquerades and so on. These were some of the instruments for the rulers' control over the ordinary people and the society at large. Indeed, the Attah and the Aku were the chief priests, ritual figure heads, constitutional monarchs and 'semi-divine' political and religious Kings, whom the people considered as God's representatives in the areas.³⁰ The claim to divine rule was not unique to the rulers in the centralized societies in the non-Muslim areas. For example, the people of south-Eastern Africa venerated and honored their Kings, whom they considered divine and the

greatest and best in the world. The King of Urua, a large region to the West of Lake Tanganyika, arrogated to himself divine honors. The King of Loango was honored by his people who called him *Sambee* and *Pango*, meaning god. They believed that he could let them have rains when he liked. The King of Mombassa was considered spiritual and divine on earth. A monarch of Burma, Badonsachen, conceived the notion that he was something more than mortal.³¹

The paramount rulers of the Igala and the Jukun were responsible for, and led ritual celebrations at the national earth shrines at Idah and Wukari respectively. The ritual of earth cult expressed the theme that the rulers were responsible for the arrival of new people, for the fertility of the land, as well as political aspects in terms of economic support, allocation of land, avoidance of conflicts and the support of a given class or cultural system. Since Islam challenges some of these privileges and prerogatives of the rulers, it was natural that conversion became difficult from the top and then to the ordinary people, despite the hierarchical nature of the society. In many societies, fertility of the land was seen as inter-related, and this accounted for the almost universal existence of the ‘earth-mother-goddess’ in post-Neolithic cultures. The earth-cult was a fertility cult, and the people recognized the roles of their Kings in guaranteeing rain, peace, prosperity, fertility, health and safety. Thus, to ignore this role would have been dangerous for the agriculturalists like the Igala and the Jukun. And the Muslims being largely non-agriculturalists were therefore thought of no use or help from the point of these considerations.

Considering their religious roles *vis-à-vis* the economic and political benefits inherent in them, it was natural that the ruling class saw Islam as a threat to their political, and more especially, economic existence and survival. Thus, it was not in the interest of the ruling class to embrace Islam or encourage their subjects to do so, since it would challenge their legitimacy and the basis of their powers. As a religion of trade, Islam enabled the Muslims to maintain a monopolistic position in certain respects – especially through credit, writing and communal ties outside the areas. It also assisted them in the selling of charms and purveying of other skills as fortune telling and medicine making. The rulers did not appreciate these because it would cause divided loyalty among the people.

It is clear that despite the ‘conducive’ atmosphere for the conversion like the centralized and hierarchical nature of the Igala and Jukun societies, the availability of semi-divine Kings and the existence of

a trading ruling class with monopolistic positions, the ruling class and the majority of the people remained less receptive and unconverted to Islam. Indeed, since their roles were connected through rituals and festivals, these would have been compromised by their acceptance of Islam.

Islam in the Non-Muslim Areas of Northern Nigeria: 1900-1960

This section discusses the spread and acceptance of Islam during the colonial period. Some of the factors responsible include the colonial conquest and occupation, construction of road networks and railway lines, imposition of Muslim Chiefs, establishment of Qur'anic schools, observation of Muslim festivals, inter-marriages, the economic depression of the 1930s and the Second World War.

The spread of Islam during the colonial period appeared to have started with the conquest of the non-Muslim areas of the North. During the British invasion, conquest and occupation, majority of the rank and file of the occupying forces were Muslims recruited mainly from among the Hausa, Yoruba and Nupe. Some of them had earlier served the British firms like the Royal Niger Company as intermediaries in the trading relations with the local people, and therefore knew the terrains very well. During the conquest, they were used as spies, carriers and recruits by the West African Frontier Force (WAFF). After the conquest, garrisons of the colonial force were stationed in several areas in the non-Muslim areas. Typical example will suffice. After the conquest of Idah (the ancient capital of the Igala kingdom) in 1896, a garrison was stationed there up to 1900 for the conquest of the rest of Igalaland. The garrison was relocated to Akwacha in Dekina District in 1900, after the conquest of the area. The rank and file of the garrison stationed there numbered 400 as well as 115 carriers and servants. In 1904, the WAFF garrison was moved to Ankpa after conquering the town, where it was maintained until 1933 when they relocated to Enugu. At Ankpa, the garrison stationed there comprised of 262 African rank and file. But the police (comprising mostly of Muslim origin) remained in the town until 1940.³² Although the British were worried of the probable development of Muslim fanaticism among the rank and file, instructions were given for the building of mosques for the troops, as well as the employment of *mallams* to look after their spiritual welfare.³³ This development had contributed to the establishment of a military tradition and a Muslim association and the creation of a cosmopolitan environment that attracted Muslim professionals. A further development was inter-marriages between them and the host communities

and the evolution of a Muslim tradition and culture such as the mode of dress and the giving of indigene children to foreign *mallams* for traditional Koranic education and scholarship. Collectively, these developments greatly contributed to the wide-spread Islamization (conversion) in the area as well as the surrounding region. Indeed, the introduction of Islam to Ibo-Eze Division, the first area that Islam started in the whole of Igbo land, was credited to the Igala Muslims from the Ankpa area as well the Nupe who settled in the area, inter-married with the local community, practiced Islamic teachings and built mosques in Ibagwa-Nkwo close to Nsukka.³⁴

The construction of a network of roads and railway lines equally contributed to the spread of Islam during this period. The dire need for the movement of troops to troubled spots during the early period of British rule, the movement of staff personnel and conveyance of export produce from and imported merchandise to the interior, led to the construction of road net-works that connected administrative headquarters, urban-economic-nerve centers, major markets and river and sea ports. Between 1913 and 1927, important economic zones and the core North were linked by the railway. In 1913, the Bauchi Light Railway connected the Jos Plateau with Zaria. The Port-Harcourt-Kaduna Eastern Extension line connected Kafanchan and reached Jingere, Naraguta, Bukuru and Jos in 1926. The Jos Plateau was the major coal mining center attracting Muslim miners and workers to the area. Equally, before 1921 railway extension from Enugu had reached Igumale and Oturkpo in Idoma land and Makurdi in Tiv land. The establishment of communication networks witnessed the influx of a sizeable number of Muslims to non-Muslim areas. For example, in 1932, there were 12,944 semi-skilled Hausa laborers in Jos Division alone. And by the 1940s, Muslim population had grown in Jos Native Town where they mostly settled and their religious and economic impacts were being felt. The improvement in communications facilitated the growth of Muslim population and the growth and development of Islam.

The establishment of Native Authority schools by the British equally assisted in the spread and development of Islam in the non-Muslim areas. These schools established mostly in the Southern part of the non-Muslim areas initially had Arabic as the medium of instruction. This was, however, changed to English in 1928 when it was discovered that all pupils were converting to Islam. Despite this change, the medium of instruction remained the Hausa language and Islam was the only religion

taught in the schools. Other subjects were English, Arithmetic, Reading, Writing and General Knowledge. With the spread of Islam among the families of the pupils and their neighbours and the influence of the Muslim teachers posted to the area, there were complaints against the influence from these schools by the 1930s. However, the Divisional Officer (D.O) in-charge of Lokoja and Koton-Karifi, Mr. Cox, wrote in 1935 that *"It is my opinion that Islamic influence should be encouraged to spread"*. Equally, Mr. Squibb, Assistant District Officer (A.D.O) of Kabba Province commented thus *"Proselytizing under these circumstances is inevitable. It will certainly become a source of criticism from Missions as was the admission of pagan boys into government schools staffed by Muslims in Muslim areas...."*³⁵ The administration furthered the interests of the Muslims by giving financial support from the Native Treasuries in terms of grants for the annual repairs or construction of mosques, payment of Central Mosques *Imams* and support during religious festivals. Apart from the NA schools, the period also witnessed the growth of Qur'anic schools where Qur'anic education, Islamic Science and Islamic Jurisprudence were taught.

In the Northern part of the non-Muslim areas, Christian education dominated. Before the colonial conquest, Christian missionaries were operating and spreading the gospel. In fact, some of the areas (like the hilly areas of the Jos plateau) were not conquered until the 1920s, and so the majority still lived in the hills and adhered to the traditional religion. The construction of a network of roads in and the extension of the railway to the area contributed to the influx of missionaries and the widespread of Christianity there. In fact, the arrival of some missionaries around 1909 made Christianity first established its stronghold in Jos. Both Christians and Muslims in the area saw education as an effective means of indoctrinating the children of their converts. Thus schools were built where their religious doctrines were taught among other subjects. However, through the use of education and medical services, Christianity appealed more to the people and eventually attracted large followers than Islam. For example, the 1952 census of Jos Township indicated 85.5% Christians, 12% Muslims and 3.5 traditionalists.³⁶ Thus, although Muslim population had grown, their impact was minimal and restricted to the Native Towns.

The method of employment into the Native Administration by the British assisted the spread of Islam. During the colonial rule in Northern Nigeria, religion became the determinant of social status, political and

administrative recruitment and participation. Within the colonial social strata, Islamic political structure dominated the colonial hierarchical structure while Muslims were given better social status and political role. This was partly because during and even after the colonial era, the entire area of Northern Nigeria was seen through the “Emirate Colored Glasses”. Prejudice against non-Muslims was strengthened by the official pre-occupation with the Emirate system of government. Indeed, between 1900 and 1920, in many non-Muslim areas in the North, where there had been no powerful rulers such as in Ebira, Idoma, Tiv and so on, British Muslim agents, often even their servants, were raised to the status of Chiefs. For example, in Tiv land and specifically in Abinsi Division, a Yoruba Muslim was imposed as the Chief of Makurdi in 1914 and ruled until his death in 1947. He had formally served as a political agent for the District Officers posted to the area. In Idoma land, Hausa, Yoruba and Nupe Muslim settlers were imposed as District Heads. In West Yagba, Nupe Muslims served as District Heads until the 1930s. In Idoma land, nearly all the District Heads appointed were all non-local Muslims. For example, in 1910, Momo, a Nupe Muslim was imposed as the District Head of Agatu. He was followed by Umaru [a Hausa] and then Isa, another Nupe man. Isa ruled over Agatu, Ochkwu, Ojoku and Boju Districts. In 1911, Auta, a Hausa Muslim, was appointed the District Head of Adoka.³⁷ Even in highly organized communities like the Igala, the British deliberately disorganized it in order to impose such Muslim rulers. Between 1903 and 1914, nine of such alien Muslim Chiefs were imposed in several areas in Igala Division.³⁸ Although the imposition of non-local people led to oppositions by the people, it however contributed to the spread of Islam, since Islamic teachers and preachers now felt relatively free and secured to carry out their missionary activities. The District Heads also favored and encouraged policies that guarantee the interests of Islam and the Muslims.

In addition, most of the junior posts in the Native Administrations like tax scribes, N.A. Police, treasurers, interpreters and messengers were Muslims. The presence of the local-Muslim N.A workers was certainly a contributory factor to the spread of Islam because they influenced others in favour of the religion. The world-wide economic depression of the 1930s witnessed the retrenchment of workers, a 10% reduction in the salaries of workers in Northern Nigeria, fall in the prices of export commodities, starvation and even death in many areas.³⁹ In fact, some of the reasons for turning to Islam were economic hardships, depression, heavy taxes and financial difficulties. It has even been suggested that these

forms of economic hardship, as well as tyranny which the Christians suffered at the hands of their feudal lords made them to look to the Muslim rulers as God's blessing.⁴⁰ In Northern Nigeria, many non-Muslims converted to Islam during this period because professing the religion of Islam and the understanding of the Hausa language appeared to be the only surest way of getting jobs. Thus, many indigenous people who embraced Islam did so because of their quest for jobs and certain social status which they believed they could acquire by doing so. The 1930s also witnessed immigration of a reasonable number of non-Muslims to Muslim dominated economic-nerve-centers like Kaduna and Kano for paid jobs and to escape economic hardships at home. During the Second World War, many people were recruited into the colonial army from the non-Muslim areas and quartered in Kano. Their association with Muslims in the army and the Muslim population in Kano (a predominantly Muslim city) equally contributed to the acceptance and spread of the Islamic religion.

The role of Lokoja town in the dissemination of Islam needs to be stressed. The town was the first headquarters of Northern Nigeria, from where the conquest of most of the North was planned and executed and where the Royal Niger Company and its Constabulary (largely of Muslim origin) were stationed for many years. Lokoja also served as the second 'home' where the recalcitrant Emirs from Northern Nigeria, who were unwilling to submit to the British or opposed their policies, were exiled. The exiled Emirs numbering 12 between 1902 and 1941 went to Lokoja with their Muslim entourages and learned scholars.⁴¹ These Emirs were Abubakar of Bida (1902), Ibrahim Nagwamayse of Kontagora (1902), Jibril Gani (1902), Muhammed Bashir (1903), Aliyu of Kano (1904), Yaro of Katsina (1906), Lamido Bobbo Ahmadu (1909), Ahmadu of Gumel (1915), Kwassau of Zaria (1923), Aliyu Dan Sidi of Zaria (1923), Sule Saleh of Bedde (1941) and Muhammed of Nassarawa (exact date not known). The Emirs, who were scholars as well as religious leaders, dedicated their lives in exile to the teaching of Islam and its tenets. In addition, between 1900 and the 1930s, scholars from the core northern cities like Kano, Katsina, Borno, Sokoto and even Bida went to Lokoja and established Islamic schools. Itinerant scholars, numbering 15 between 1900 and 1940, also visited the town and stayed for a period, teaching and preaching the religion of Islam.⁴² The presence and activities of the exiled Emirs, settled and itinerant scholars gradually turned Lokoja into a haven of a modest center of Islamic learning that attracted non-Muslims from the

Southern parts of the non-Muslim areas. This development greatly enhanced and promoted the spread of Islam and Islamic scholarship not only in the non-Muslim areas, but equally to other parts of Nigeria. Lokoja was equally an important communication provider, especially with the Niger and Benue rivers converging in the town (the Niger-Benue confluence), thereby attracting substantial number of traders, fortune tellers, charm makers and missionaries of different nationalities. As a commercial center and trade emporium as well as a center of Islamic radiation, Lokoja attracted many Muslim traders and Islamic scholars who migrated permanently to the area and intermarried with the local people and extended the spread of Islam beyond the immediate family to a wider audience.

Conclusion

It is clear that trade, commerce, missionary activities, communication networks, political centralization, economic hardships, education, migration and settlement of Muslims in non-Muslim areas as well as colonial rule were some of the important factors for the spread and acceptance of Islam in the non-Muslim areas of Northern Nigeria. Trade has always had a special place in Islamic civilization. Muslim traders and merchants introduced Islam to most of the non-Muslims areas in Northern Nigeria in the course of their business activities, married local women who, with their children, relations and neighbours, became Muslims. This process is very wide-spread. For example, Islam was introduced to Indonesia by merchants from India. The North of Mozambique up to Lake Nyasa is predominantly Muslims, along the old trade routes. In China, Muslim went as immigrants or traders and married Chinese wives. In the non-Muslim areas of Northern Nigeria, colonial, as well as Islamic education played a vital role. Islam strengthened its roots after education had been adopted as an essential means of communication among the local people. Indeed, Islamic teachings and education and the religious quality of Islam helped its spread and success. Communication networks had assisted in the penetration of Islam (through migrant and local teachers) into the hinterland. The differences in the spread of Islam between the Northern and Southern parts of the non-Muslim areas had been partly due to the roles played by the Christian religion and the discrimination against the Christians by the British in employment opportunities.

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