

MUKHTAR UMAR BUNZA

ABDULLAHI MUSA ASHAFA

RELIGION AND THE NEW ROLES OF YOUTH IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA:  
THE HAUSA AND EBIRA MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN  
NORTHERN NIGERIA, 1930S-1980S

**Mukhtar Umar Bunza**

Department of History, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria.  
Email: mbunza@hotmail.com

**Abdullahi Musa Ashafa**

Department of History, Kaduna State University, Kaduna, Nigeria.

**Abstract:** This paper is a comparative study of two northern Nigerian Muslim societies (the Ebira in central Nigeria and the Hausa in the North-west) in which the youths contested religious traditionalists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in the process brought about transformation in their societies. In the religious sphere, which was hitherto considered an affair of the elderly, the youth have equally come to assume a dominant place, especially in their assertive activist posture. In these two case studies, the youths have managed to assume leadership in religion and subsequently have used religion to transform and redefine their roles and status in the societies in a manner that challenged the existing norms.

That could be seen as a tradition in the religious convention of the northern Nigerian area that occurs repeatedly through this period. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo and his cohorts in their youthfulness championed a reform and transformation that continue to inspire other reforms to date in the region. Religious actors in the contemporary Muslim societies of Nigeria are young men and women. It is important to note that these youths are people who possessed both Islamic and Western education and often have international networks and connections, largely through the educational institutions they have attended and/or literature they have studied.

Among the Ebira, for instance, the youth subscribed to the religion of Islam, and converted their parents who largely professed African traditional religion to Islam. In Hausaland on the other hand, the youth, unlike the elderly, subscribed to “modern” rather than the “traditional” Islam that the latter do. In both cases therefore, the young engaged the elderly in a struggle to change their conception and practices of Islam. The process has had a tremendous impact on the relationship between the groups in an atmosphere being somehow defined or determined by the young adults in the two northern Nigerian societies being examined.

**Key Words:** Hausa, Ebira, Muslim Communities, radical Muslim youths, Nigerian Muslim societies, role and status, traditional Islam, modern Islam, Beliefs, Social Structure, African traditional religion, Nigeria

*Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 9, no. 27 (Winter 2010): 302-331

ISSN: 1583-0039 © SACRI

## Introduction

This study aims to bring out the salient changes in the roles of young men and women in societies previously predominated by the elderly. The study addresses several key questions, namely: what was the conception and status of the youth in the traditional and religious arrangement in the areas of study? What factor(s) contributed to the changed status and roles of the youth in the two societies in the period of study? To what extent could it be said that the new status and roles of the youth influenced their changing attitudes away from the generally known socio-cultural beliefs and practices in their societies? Why does change bring about generational conflict in northern Nigeria? These and other related issues form the focus of this chapter.

The methodology adopted to achieve this goal was field observation of the area of study, as the researchers are from northern Nigeria, home to the Hausa and Ebira peoples, collection of colonial records and reports, especially on the Ebira society, from the archives in corroboration with interviews with notable persons of the two areas, and study of the published literature relevant to the problems raised above.

The Hausa and Ebira societies were among the Muslim populations that witnessed remarkable social transformation in twentieth century northern Nigeria. This transformation was in the religious landscape, and its impact was far reaching. Though the two communities share some elements of similarity, they also differ in many, in a manner that makes this study both interesting and deserving. Islam served as the basic motivating factor for change through which the youth in Hausaland made themselves the champions and vanguards of religious reform. In Ebiraland, Islam was the major cause of transforming the role, status, and conception of the youths themselves. Although Islam was introduced much earlier among the Hausa than the Ebira, the role, status, and conception of the youth in these societies were in most cases similar and differed only in degree.

The acquisition of a combined Islamic and Western education by these two groups of young people, often chided as “new” Ulama’a elite, created a high degree of disparity between them and scholars who only possessed an Islamic education. The possession of the two forms of education provided the fundamental background and basis for the emergence of the new and often radically defiant *Ulama’a* in Hausa land, and the frequently ebullient young Muslim converts in the Ebira land.

The choice of the two case studies, albeit with different historical, cultural, and linguistic practices, was informed by the fact that religion was a platform especially in northern Nigerian to bring about change, even in completely homogeneous communities that share the same culture, history, and beliefs. The 1930s was a period of unprecedented

conversion to Islam and challenge to traditional Ebira religion and culture, championed by Atta Ibrahim, the paramount Chief of Ebiraland (reigned 1917-1948), while the 1980s was the apex of religious rejuvenation led by Abubakar Gumi and his disciples. The two periods were important landmarks in the socio-religious transformation of northern Nigeria wherein the youth featured prominently.

### The People, Beliefs and Social Structure among Ebira and Hausa

Ebira is a term that refers to the people who speaks the Ebira language. It also refers to their language as well as their geographical location. The Ebira people settled in their present settlement in Kogi state, in central Nigeria, in the late seventeenth century. They were initially residents of hilltops, and had social and political structures based on clans, groups, and lineages. Situated within a hilly stretch of land south-west of the Niger-Benue confluence area, Ebiraland, which is made up of Okene, Okehi, Adavi and Ajaokuta Local Governments (counties), shares boundaries with Yorubaland to the south and south-west, the Nupe to the north, and the River Niger to the east.<sup>1</sup>

In this study, the Ebira we have treated were those in the four local governments of Okene, Okehi, Adavi, and Ajaokuta, who though linguistically related, differ from their Ebira kith and kin in Koton Karfi of Kogi State, Toto and Umaisha in Nasarwa State, Mozun in Bassa Local Government, and Ebira Etuno of Igarra District of Edo State.<sup>2</sup>

The Ebira were part of the decentralized political communities of central Nigeria. The people were governed based on family, clan, and lineages. According to A. Y. Ibrahim:

Each head of an *Ohuoje* or an *Ovovu* exercised strict administrative discipline over members of his family. He determined all questions of marriage for his sons, daughters, and grandchildren. He was the judge of all disputes between the members and he presided over all important occasions. Disobedience to him was considered as disobedience to the ancestors and people feared this because the ancestor punished for such guilt-*ohiku a'ayuvi*.<sup>3</sup>

Traditionally in Ebira land, elders were exclusively in control of the entire factors of production as well as the production system within the family structure: land, farm produce, and general activities of the clan. On this, Ibrahim further stressed thus:

“The administration of all clans constituting a clan group lay on the hands of the elders, influential individuals and the priest chief (Ohiniyo Oto). The group of elders consisted of the clan heads, kindred heads, and other people whose age maturity and wisdom commended themselves to the other elders. The composition of this group was more or less

constant because if the representative of a clan died his place was taken by another (elderly) member of the same clan. For this reason, the group may in fact be termed as the council of elders.”<sup>4</sup>

The elders in Ebiraland determined and controlled the entire activities of their family members. The male before getting married was required to remain in the family compound and to work for his parents in farms until he attains forty years of age. In this way, it was taboo for any male member of the family to settle outside the clan’s compound. The socio-political hierarchy of the society could be summarized in the following: *ohi-ohuoje*- head of family, *ohiku*-ancestor, *Abara*- unified family units/ lineage, *ohi-Abara*- head of lineage, *Iresu*-the clan, which comprise two or more *Abara*.<sup>5</sup>

The organization of the religious sphere in traditional Ebira society was highly structured. The ideas of religion and God centered on ancestor worship and the rites associated with it. The Ebira, according to Ibrahim, “originally seemed to have no word for religion, and had no mythology of creation or how God made the world.”<sup>6</sup> However, this does not mean that they had no religion. Instead, like other followers of African traditional religion,<sup>7</sup> the Ebira had their own system of belief and practices that in essence constituted their religion. In line with this, Okene states:

“Religion (among Ebira) was centered on *Ekuechi*, which perceived God though as supreme being but too high to be reached by mortals. The Ebira worshipped God through spirits, mother earth, and ancestors as a venerated form of *Ekuechi*, which in addition served as a link between the world of the living and world of the dead. Law and social mores were enacted and sanctioned on behalf of the ancestors.”<sup>8</sup>

Ancestor worship reached its peak in the nocturnal *ekuechi* festival during which the dead were believed to be resurrected and returned to earth as *ekuechi* to give advice to the people. A particular attention was given to women during the feast, who were told to be good and obedient to their husbands, as children were also told to obey their parents, while the wicked people and spirits in the society were warned against any evil doing.<sup>9</sup>

What was apparent in Ebira religious rituals was the absence of a particular form of worshipping God if removed from the ancestor cult rites (*ekuechi*). The religion therefore, revolves round the ancestor, and each community corresponded with its own ancestors in its own way through the *ekuechi*. The religious conception and rites were confined to the family and people affiliated to this geographical entity. Thus, the environment influenced the religious as well as the cultural practices of the Ebira. Robin

Horton aptly identified a connection between religion and environment that appropriately fit the Ebira situation, which contrasts strongly with the universalistic outlook of Islam and Christianity.<sup>10</sup>

In Hausaland<sup>11</sup> on the other hand, religion was very central and influential in all facets of lives of the people: socially, economically, politically, and culturally. Religion in Hausaland could fit the definition and statement of Dennis when he argued that:

“Religion and religious ideas are related to the universal human need to make sense of the world we live in. These ideas are therefore central to our understanding of our society and how it works. It follows that religious ideas will play a crucial role in determining how people explain and react to change in their society, influencing the direction in which their society will continue to change.”<sup>12</sup>

Before the introduction of Islam among the Hausa, they were practitioners of traditional religions like most African communities. The worship of the Supreme God, as well as spirits possession and exorcism (Bori) were practiced in all parts of Hausaland. Male adults dominated religious practices, although women were the main actors, practitioners and entertainers especially in the *Bori*- spirit possession.<sup>13</sup> Hausaland started becoming largely Islamic particularly in the political sphere in the 1490s during the reign of Sarki Muhammad Rumfa of Kano, who demolished shrines and erected mosque in their places.<sup>14</sup> However, the power of the traditional religion and practices persisted, and despite conversion to Islam, many visit traditional occultists when facing difficulty in life, especially for seeking of magical and mystical powers.<sup>15</sup> Unlike the Ebira community, Hausaland was highly politically structured and arranged in a hierarchy with the existence of offices distinguished in duties and responsibilities at different levels. Nevertheless youth, apart from farming and defensive activities as in warfare, were relegated to the background without much role to play in the socio-cultural development of the community.

The social transformation brought about by Islam signified a transformation of the society from traditional religious practices to an Islamic-oriented polity. Obaro Ikime noted the role of traditional religion on governance and politics of the various societies of Nigeria before the advent of Islam and its concomitant practices. He observed that religion and government were intertwined in the history of the people of the Nigerian area since the earliest time, especially among the Hausa *Sarakuna* kings (singular *Sarki*, king).<sup>16</sup> With the advent of Islam, this situation became reinvigorated rather than replaced. In this vein, Islam became highly entrenched in governance as related to regulating peoples' private and public behavior.

## The Concept of Youths in Hausa and Ebira Societies

Nigerian communities have different views of the term “youth” corresponding to differences in their orientation, worldview, circumstances, and roles attached to the appellation. For their exuberance and energy, young people in most Nigerian societies constitute the most important age group for providing labor and military services for defence and other state functions that require physical valor.<sup>17</sup> However, despite these important functions of the young adults, and perhaps because of their youthful exuberance, they have been considered negatively among the elderly as a group of people associated with trouble making, if not lawlessness. That probably explains, for example, De Waals’ description of the Ebira attitude:

“Youths are not typically conceived of as productive and constructive social actors nor, as they often are in reality, as victims, but rather, as potential sources of political disruption, delinquency, and criminality.”<sup>18</sup>

This type of negative conception about young adults had tremendously influenced the attitude of the older generation towards them. Leading to doubt about their ability to be entrusted with leadership responsibilities.

In Ebira tradition, youths were considered as unfit to be entrusted with any leadership responsibility due to customary and cultural perceptions of them being too troublesome as well as the lawlessness associated with them. They were not expected, according to tradition, to venture into independent economic activities such as farming, except through their families, until they attain the age of forty. Moreover, only those who died above forty years old would receive the normal burial rites and funeral celebrations in line with the tradition and culture of the land. That was because only the elderly deceased could help, protect, and offer ancestral guidance to their progeny through the *eku* after their bereavement. Indeed, in the Ebira custom and tradition, young people were second-class citizens whether dead or alive, despite their physical and productive capacity and contribution toward the development and by extension the survival of their respective families and clans.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, among the Hausa, although Islam was established in the region for centuries, cultural and superstitious beliefs that ideologically contradict Islam have continued to influence the attitude of the elderly regarding the role and status of the youth and women in the society. Murray Last found that the concept of *Yara* or *Matasa* among the Hausa refers to the youth as people who were not yet complete human beings and who could not be trusted with responsibility, especially in the political and religious spheres, which naturally has disputed and rejected



by the youths.<sup>20</sup> This attitude was an extension of the Hausa traditional beliefs that impacted on the understanding and practices of Islam. The concept of *Samari* (Youths) or *samartaka* (youthfulness) in Hausa depicts the period of exuberance, excessive energy characterized by lawlessness, and enjoyment of crime and irresponsibility that is demonstrated by youths in almost all issues related to governance, religion, and social responsibility.<sup>21</sup>

That was the concept of youth in Hausaland among the elders even before the 1804 Jihad that the Shehu and his disciples had to challenge and subsequently transformed after the victory in the Jihad. The Shehu and his disciples in the *tajdîd* movement provide an example from the young adult class, most of whom were in their twenties and thirties. The Shehu himself, at the time of his *Da'wa* tours to Kabbi and Zamfara in 1774, was only twenty years of age. It was quite uncommon for people of his age to lead people in religious activities in Hausa land, not to mention preaching and delivering sermons. One of the reasons for opposing the Shehu especially among the *Ulama'a* of his time was his youthful age rather than that what he was saying was wrong in the true sense.<sup>22</sup>

The majority of young men in the two societies (Ebira and Hausa) began to overcome the barrier that the traditional religious practices or the superstitious and conservative form of Islam raised against them. Moreover, the character and characteristics of these two distinct groups of youths were similar. The ability of these people to combine Islamic and Western education for the first time in their various societies served as the basis for them to assert their presence and this gave them the confidence and power to challenge the existing practices that relegated them to the background. It also paved a way for the emergence of a new class of Muslim clerics, which later became very powerful in mobilization and subsequently influential in the society.

### The Changing Roles of Youth in Hausa and Ebira Societies

Young Hausa and Ebira Muslims faced the dynamics in their societies, most of which resulted from elements of historical context, that encouraged them to contest the status quo. This was to mark the *sine qua non* in them assuming a new status and role in their communities. What were spectacular were the underlying factors that made the change possible, if not inevitable. In Hausaland for example, the new generation of *Ulama'a* elites, such as Abubakar Gummi, his colleagues, and their disciples in the late 1940s began to challenge the traditional *Ulama'a* on many aspects of religious doctrine and practices.

One of the important causes in changing the role of the young in the society was the acquisition of both Islamic and Western education by the Muslim youth. Already in Hausaland, patrimonial forms of consciousness had enhanced the efficacy and solidarity as well as a common ground for

religious resistance against the British conquest in the earlier part of the 20th century. That is to say, the violent conquest and incorporation of northern Nigeria into the capitalist world economy by articulating the power and positions of the emirs generated societal concern that was to reinforce the role of Islam as an ideology not only against the British but particularly against their indirect agents, the emirs. Even young politicians whose background as teachers in colonial government schools had a strong Islamic leaning, such as Malam Aminu Kano and Abubakar Gumi, upgraded this in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, the behavior of the youth was strongly determined by the modes and quantity of collaboration between indigenous rulers and the colonial regime as well as the problem of alienation in the colonial system. This has continued up to this date, in the sense that resistance in the polity today depends on this level of alienation or involvement in governance.

The massive conversion to Islam of youths among the Ebira from the late 1920s and 1930s and following marked the beginning of the end of the old order. The centralization of authority in Epiraland started in 1917 with the appointment of Attah Ibrahim as the Native Administrator (N.A.) for the Ebira District and was later upgraded to be the sole Administrator for the newly created Ebira Division in 1924 in spite of stiff opposition from the older generation, which viewed the prospect of a young man of Attah's age ruling over them as taboo. Under the replica of the warrant chief system introduced in Igboland during that period, the British policy of articulation (bringing changes in the colonies in line with the views and interests of the colonial world) aimed to use Ibrahim to unite the various segments of Ebira clans for effective colonial governance.<sup>24</sup>

Already, at the age of 30, Attah Ibrahim had attained both Islamic and Western education and was in the service of the British officials on tours as an interpreter, being a fluent multilingual speaker of Ebira, Hausa, English, and Yoruba. He was quick to realize the potential role of Islam in establishing the centralized administration the British were desperate to see established among the Ebira. As the chief, he tried and used many tactics to convert people to Islam, and as many converted simply because it was the religion of the chief and they expected to receive certain official favors by so doing.<sup>25</sup>

Up to the early 1930s, Islam was limited to those close associates of the Attah. However, from the late 1930s onward, some young Epiras graduated from primary schools with new ideas at a time the area had been transformed into a centralised polity based on the colonial indirect rule system. The number of converts had begun to increase significantly, when at same time Christian Missionaries became attracted to the area because of the opening of new roads and other factors. This was to generate serious competition for the allegiance of the Ebira youth.<sup>26</sup>



The Ebira youth, many of whom were converted to Islam through the vigorous efforts of the Attah, became radicalized when they took offense to the Christian competition for converts, especially from the 1950s when the latter showed great zeal in opening schools and colleges and succeeded in winning converts based on a “catch-them-young” approach.<sup>27</sup> This success is attributable to the fact that people in the area were becoming more and willing to attend Western schools as a means to enhance their status in the colonial social and administrative system to which indigenous educated people were being appointed.

By 1954 the Ebira Muslims became further radicalized when the Attah was dethroned. Muslim youths pointed accusing fingers at indigenous Christian converts of the Catholic Church for sending negative reports to the colonial governments. Their fear was that, with the Attah out of power, the fate of Islam was being jeopardized and they would lose the official protection and patronage to which they were accustomed.<sup>28</sup>

In this, we can say that Islam enhanced the status and empowered youth, making them more visible in both the practice of the religion as well as in societal activities where they were hitherto absent. In fact, from their newly acquired history of Islam and the tradition of reform as a legacy of the Danfodiyo led reform, they discovered that the religion had from its inception relied on youth for its gradual progression in the Arabian Peninsula to elsewhere. This explains why Murray Last observes that young Muslims have been a factor of change in the history of northern Nigeria when he noted thus:

“Islam is a religion for the young. At critical periods in the history of northern Nigeria, Islam has empowered a particular segment of Hausa society- namely- its youths- and given it a specific political role. But more generally, it has been the young who have converted their fathers to Islam and away from a traditional religion the reserved powers of the old, and not vice-versa. As a result, religious practices can be understood as a part of youth activities, rather than the young being considered just acolytes within the religious structure of adult.”<sup>29</sup>

Mohammed Dahiru Suleiman, in his study of the Confluence area Ebiraland, noted the capacity of Islam in providing what was required in society, and offering alternatives to all the pagan practices and rites, which significantly contributed to its success, especially among the youth and the generally among the Ebira people. Practices such as initiation, secret cult, burial ritual, and witchcraft, were substituted with the Muslim circumcision, brotherhoods, *janaza*-Islamic rituals for the dead, dowry, etc.<sup>30</sup> In the new setting, however, knowledge was paramount in

regulating societal activities; youths who acquired the know how of the religion thus enjoyed new opportunity in this new situation.

Accordingly, a new class of Muslim clerics who were dissatisfied with the activities of the older generation in their subtle relations with the Emirs as agents of colonialism began to emerge from the new schools in Nigeria after 1940 and became more popular in the 1970s and 80s. The major characteristics of this group of Muslim clerics was their ability to speak fluent Arabic like native Arabs due to their attendance at formal schools of Arabic studies in either Nigeria, the Sudan, or the famous al-Azhar University in Cairo. Among the first cohorts of students who studied in the Sudan from Hausaland were Sheikhs Abubakar Mahmud Gummi and Haliru Binji and Sheikh Abdulqadir Orire. These later became Grand Qadis of Northern Nigeria, former Sokoto State, and former Kwara State respectively. Orire was the first Epira man to attend such a formal Arabic/Islamic institution outside Nigeria.<sup>31</sup>

After independence, these three scholars laid the foundation for modern *Da'wa* and religious reform in twentieth century Nigeria. Their use of electronic media such as radio and television, especially from the 1970s when the oil boom in Nigeria and the creation of multiple states led to the establishment of radio and television houses across the nation, was utilized to gain an unprecedented following. This largely consisted of young Muslims who were struggling to find a niche for themselves by proving that the older generation needed to give way. These modern facilities were used to great advantage for a popular orientation of the youth into Islam, with a blend of North African and Middle Eastern revivalist movements, radicalism, and responses to Euro-American imperialism, especially considering the stance of the Western powers regarding the Arab-Israeli conflicts since the 1970s.<sup>32</sup>

In their effort to control and utilize the modern media for the new Islamic movement, especially from the late 1970s, those scholars used the Ramadan *tafsir* as the main avenue for mobilization of the youth. During Ramadan, listening and viewing the radio and television respectively has become a popular cultural phenomenon in Hausaland. Abubakar Gummi was the first to start a radio *tafsir*, at the Sultan Bello mosque in 1963 with the support of the Sardauna, and this continued until his death in 1992.<sup>33</sup> It was not only an important activity in seeking a new knowledge of Islam from Ulama'a regarded as competent authorities in rendering *fatwa* on controversial or complex issues, but the *tafsir* was equated with a *jihad*, in a secular society that every ordinary Muslim must be seen to strive to support. Furthermore, the young clerics, unlike the other *Ulama'a*, enjoyed an economic independence because they earned salaries as civil servants and/or enjoyed the patronage of foundations from the Middle East and did not depend on *sadaqa* (charity) for their survival and the progress of their activities as the older generations often had to.<sup>34</sup>

Because of these opportunities the young and modern Islamists were equipped to advance a radical transformation the goal of which was to attain an egalitarian Islamic society. This is aptly captured by Robin Horton in the following extract:

“In many instances, indeed, they appeared willing to destroy the little that existed in the way of an order transcending the boundaries of these microcosms. As scholars having access to ancient historical sources written in Arabic, the holy men (revivalists) must have found the situation particularly exasperating; for such sources would have made it clear for them just how wretchedly in this respect, the political system of the day compared with the great empires of the past. Here, then, lay a powerful spring of motivation for militancy (and anti-traditionalism).”<sup>35</sup>

That was perhaps why Murray Last also observed:

“The young scholars earnestly recognized that excellence in religious learning that brings considerable reward in terms of power and wealth; whereas the young may be physically strong and able to use the threat of violence to get their way, the threat of superior religious insights or claims, to a moral superiority over adults is a much less risky route to success.”<sup>36</sup>

Most young Hausa *Ulama'a* therefore subscribed to the *Salafy* mode of Islam, which was radical and revivalist in nature, adopting the Saudi and Middle Eastern *Wahhabi* discourse, Egyptian *Ikhwan* style, or the Iranian *Shiite* model of reformism.<sup>37</sup> As noted by Launay and Soares, the experience of the French colonized Muslim areas was similar to the situation in Hausaland from the 1970s. The group of young students who returned home after study from al-Azhar or Medina, and had as a result been exposed to the writings of Ibn Taymiyah, Ibn Qayyim, Muhammad bin Abdulwahhab, Rashid Ridah, Muhammad Abduh, Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb or even the Egyptian *Da'i*, Abdulhamid Kishq, continued to spread their newfound Islamic doctrines, which were becoming fashionable among the young.<sup>38</sup> Launay and Soares state that these young scholars denounced all forms of Sufism as an illegitimate attempt to introduce intermediaries between God and believers; they rejected all forms of veneration of holy men dead or alive. They opposed any reason whatsoever in the utilitarian value of magic or for the manufacture, use, or sale of amulets as was practiced among the traditional *Ulama'a*.<sup>39</sup> Louis Brenner also made a remarkable illustration of the activities of the new

class of clerics in the Soudan Français, which appropriately fitted the Hausa society. Gummi and the *Yan Izala* (anti traditional Islam), as identified by Mules and Loimeier, were the champions of the new movement.<sup>40</sup>

Muhammad Sani Umar identifies another contributing factor to the young scholars in northern Nigeria / Hausaland in his study on the impact of new systems of education in the region. He says:

“This engagement with modern global discourse is likely to continue in view of generational change. Whereas the old Ulama’a are guided in traditional Islamic education, the young Ulama’a are trained in at least two of the following educational systems: traditional Islamic, Modern Islamic and Western Education up to university level in Nigeria and abroad. This experience to different educational systems acquaints the younger Ulama’a with modern ideas and institutions, hence, they are likely to continue modernizing the traditionalism of Ulama’a, a development observable in the form, style and substance of public roles of the younger Ulama’a.”<sup>41</sup>

Unlike in the traditional Hausa Islamic practice where the acquisition of an Islamic education and even religious practices had certain restrictions for women, the activities of the young Ulama’a was characterized by the emergence of a considerable number of schools for adult women operating both during the day and at night. In addition, Islamic women’s organizations and associations emerged, subscribing to these new ideologies since they were identified with giving women access to education. In their preaching they argued that since the ultimate desire of every Muslim after death is to gain accommodation in paradise, there should not be any distinction and restriction in efforts to struggle for paradise, which makes the acquisition of education as a criterion in worship a compulsory issue without the kind of discrimination the traditional Ulama’a were known to have imposed on women.

The formation of the Federation of Muslim Women Associations in Nigeria, (FOMWAN) in October 1985, Muslim Sisters Organization (MSO), Women in *Da’wa*, etc., followed subsequently as part of a general Muslim women’s awakening and departure from the reactionary traditionalism that had hitherto denied to them participation.<sup>42</sup> The leaders of these women’s organizations were mostly Muslim women who were graduates of universities and colleges. The purpose was to show the extent of women’s liberty in Islam against the wrongful perception of many. Furthermore, they desired to show to the Muslim community, especially to those who frowned at women acquiring a Western education, that

educated women from universities and colleges can intelligently serve Islam in contrast to those who never went to school.<sup>43</sup>

The development of Islam among the Ebira during the colonial period, especially among the youth, significantly changed the social and political landscape of Ebiraland. According to Ahmed Rufa'i Mohammed, Islam in Ebiraland, unlike other Islamised regions of northern Nigeria, developed and became well established during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Almost all the structures established by the new colonial system favored Islam over the traditional religion, which was in decline and was drastically losing its relevance. It was not surprising, according to Rufai, that Ebiraland was not Islamised at the same pace as the Nupe and Yorubaland, two neighbouring areas that were Islamized since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>44</sup>

According to Okene, the most influential people of the Ebira such as Omadivi and Agidi, though not Muslims themselves, invited Muslim scholars from Ilorin and Bida, and supported them while they spread the religion in the area. Moreso, they enrolled their children and those of other influential Ebira elders in the Qur'anic schools established by the clerics.<sup>45</sup>

Therefore the children of the most well to do Ebira became the first category of youth to accept Islam, even though their parents remained practitioners of the traditional religion. Atta Ibrahim for example, who later became the *Ohinoyi* of Ebiraland, was one of those Ebira youths converted and trained under this system. For this Y. A. Ibrahim argued that the reign of Atta Ibrahim marked the triumph of Islam among the Ebira. Thus by the 1930s there were several Qur'anic schools with hundreds of pupils in attendance in Ebiraland due to the encouragement and support given by Atta. More so, the same Muslim children attending the Qur'anic schools were the pupils of the elementary schools established by the colonial administration. It is no wonder that Ibrahim further observes that:

“In 1929 all the pupils of the Native Authority (NA) schools were Muslims. In 1926, the Provincial Supretendant of Education expressed surprise that the school should be so uniformly Muslim in a division so yet slightly conquered by Islam and the Division Officer suggested that this was due to the pupils being completely drawn from Atta's family, dependants, and other influential Ebira people who already gave their support to Islam.”<sup>46</sup>

In essence, this shows that early Muslim converts among the Ebira were youths and were the first to have acquired Islamic and Western education in the region. This marked the foundation for young Muslims to engage in their societal transformation, with an unprecedented youth

empowerment in the traditional Ebira society. The new educated Muslim youth started assuming important social, political, and religious roles due to their literary prowess. They were patronized by the colonial officers in the administration of government affairs, and supported by Atta, the most powerful ruler in Ebiraland, who was himself a progressive Muslim. Consequently, it then occurred “to the missions, colonial administrators, and the traditional institutions that whoever influenced the (Muslim) youths would determine the leadership and future of the Ebiraland.”<sup>47</sup>

The colonial government also favored the literate Muslim class, as they were used for administrative and other purposes in local government. Moreso, the activities of the traditionalists, such as the secret cult system, burial rites, and other anti-social activities, as well as the combative stance of the young Muslims against these, inclined the colonial government to support them. This was aptly captured by M. D. Sulaiman when he stated that colonialism in no small measure contributed to the power of the Muslim youth and decline of the traditional system in Ebiraland. He put it thus:

“Colonialism led to the weakening of some traditional restrictions and even the destruction of those that could not agree with the new order. The consequence of this was the triumph of monotheism as expressed by Islam, which came to be accepted by an increasingly large number of the Igala and Ebira people.”<sup>48</sup>

Colonialism undermined or upset some of the powers of the old system and created a new Islamized class that enjoyed the backing of the colonial officers on one hand and the Atta on the other, which contributed to the institutionalized changes in the Ebira society. The fact remains that the colonial government wanted to articulate a certain level of structure that the literate Islamized young people more than any other group provided, as has been noted by Attah among others.

The forces of Christianity, Islam, and the colonial administration fought and displaced some repugnant traditional Ebira practices. Ibrahim noted that some Christian converts such as Mr. Damisa, Alabi, and Emmanuel rebelled against the family setting of Ebira by trying to establish their separate houses as against the compound system where all members of the family must live together. They, together with some Muslims, continued to resist the traditional sacrifices and veneration of features such as mountains, trees, or in such activities as torture of the young and burying of slaves alive with the dead (presumably to accompany the deceased to his or her ancestors).<sup>49</sup> These were condemned as uncivilized and barbaric in a century of African “Enlightenment.”

On the whole, Nigeria in the 1980s witnessed massive conflicts and turmoil. During the mid-1970s, the stupendous oil wealth of the boom



period not only increased modern consumerism but traditional economic activities were abandoned even as people massively migrated to urban areas to enjoy Nigeria's newfound wealth. This was when the military held sway in the polity and their repressiveness and corruption in government made people eager to fight to settle scores. It was a time when civil societies were either non-existent or had disengaged from the state, leaving the Nigerian version of the "Young Turks," who were in a state combativeness, of sharpened aggressiveness, to fill the vacuum.

By this time, the action of these young Muslim activists connected religious beliefs to wider societal problems of sociological, economic and even political solutions and seemed to use religion to demand the provision of meaning and a sense of coherence and welfare to social life, all at a time life itself was difficult to live. The Structural Adjustment Programs adopted by the Nigerian governments gave this class of young scholars the ability to use Islam to explain the precarious situations, and were sometimes messianic in their activism. They were able to bring about change in the religious practices and perceptions, and the establishment of new schools and mosques, through which they propagated their ideologies, constituting a new anti-traditional religion or anti Sufi movement, and recruiting women as a vanguard of religion through various associations and organizations to that effect. Finally, the youth started to independently execute their own affairs, both religious and temporal, as they were empowered by their new level of education. All these served as major factors in changing the roles and status of the youth in our areas of study.

### **Religious ascendancy and the Authority of Youths among the Hausa and Epira Communities**

The assumption of new status by youths among the Muslim Hausa and Epira societies was the outcome of the new opportunity opened for them by the religion of Islam to display their potential for authority and leadership. Thus, as new opportunities became available to the youths, especially in the religious sphere, their roles and influences over certain social and political aspects of life became astute. Consequently the old who were hitherto the sole custodians of the socio-political realm of the society felt seriously challenged by the increasing sway of the young in the society. Thus generational multidimensional conflicts appeared in Epira and Hausa societies between the emerging power and influence of the youth and the existing traditional and cultural fabrics of their societies.

By the 1940s, the wind of change had started to blow in Hausaland by challenging the status quo among some of the young Muslim scholars who combined clericalism and government work at the same time. The leader of this group of Ulama'a was Abubakar Gumi. They were very critical of the colonial administration on one hand and on the other were against the

traditional rulers (emirs) on whose back the Native Administration, based on the indirect rule of colonialism, thrived. The advantage they had in mastering Arabic as well as Western education enabled them to publicize and popularized their ideas in the media as well as to teach their followers – especially the elite. For instance, Abubakar Gummi had his first clash with the Sultan of Sokoto in the 1940s when he criticized the Sultan for applauding the colonial government in some of his speeches at ceremonies including the *Eid* celebrations, and in the reference to colonial administration as a “just” system. One of these speeches was published by the local tabloid *Gaskiya ta fi Kwabo*, and included the statement:

“I wish to begin this speech by saying my thanks to the Almighty God and His prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him), to Sheikh Uthman, who strived to establish Islam in our land, and the King of Britain under whose flag we live in peace and justice.”<sup>50</sup>

Abubakar sent a confidential personal letter to the Sultan Abubakar III, pointing out some of the objectionable religious and political implications latent in the speech. Unfortunately, the message of the letter was misunderstood to mean a personal vilification of the integrity of the Muslim supreme leader (the Sultan). According to Gummi, that was when the public begin to accord respected to the young in most religious and political issues because of their boldness.<sup>51</sup>

In the same vein, Gummi and Aminu Kano (the leader of the radical Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), 1946-1960s, and later the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), 1978 until his death in 1983), started to challenge the British for destroying the legacies of the Sokoto Caliphate, especially social justice and moral rectitude among the Muslims in northern Nigeria. Similarly, the power of the young scholars was visibly exhibited as they continued their assault against the traditional institutions and colonial policies. The awards of honor and medals that the colonial government used to confer on the Sultan and the emirs also came under severe attack and condemnation. Gummi and his colleagues declared the awards as unlawful for a common Muslim to accept, let a lone a Muslim leader. Such titles include the Knight of the British Empire (KBE) conferred on most emirs, and the Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG), which was conferred on the overall Muslim leader in Nigeria, the Sultan of Sokoto in 1947, and later, on the emir of Kano Sanusi. From Maru, where Aminu Kano and Gummi were then serving as college teachers, Aminu wrote a very strong article condemning the honorary awards that was published in the *Gaskiya ta fi Kwabo* in 1949. According to Gummi, ‘Malam Aminu had the article published and he sent copies to all the emirs and other important personalities in northern Nigeria. This shocked the British colonial administration greatly and from

then on there was great care in awarding such controversial honors to the emirs.<sup>52</sup>

As the colonial government and the emirs were under attack and criticism, so also Gummi and Kano directed their attention to the mode of religious practices among the Muslims with the aim of transforming these. One of the traditional practice of Muslims in the defunct Sokoto province was the performance of prayers with *taymama* – sand ablution, without genuine religious reason not to use water in the normal *wudu*' ablution. The objection to the practice was what first brought them in conflict with the Banaga (chief) of Maru town, and the Chief Imam of the central mosque.<sup>53</sup>

The waves of change from the Maru central mosque extended to other areas in northern Nigeria through the college students influenced by Gummi, Aminu Kano, and other Islamic scholars who received lessons under him and accepted his new form of teaching. The debate and later disagreement over the matter became very tense and serious enough to be reported to the high commissioner for appropriate disciplinary measure to curb the spread of this ideology that was generating conflicts with traditional scholars and Muslim rulers in Hausaland. The high commissioner set up a commission of inquiry to investigate the incident.<sup>54</sup> The report never indicted Gummi and his disciples; rather it was recommended that he be transferred from the college. That was the first recorded young Muslims defiance of religious practices in the region during that time.

Similarly, the known and popular observance of the Sufi brotherhoods, especially the Qadiriyya and Tijjaniyya order, came under assault by the radical young clerics. The anti-Sufi teachings of Gummi and his followers later turned to be the major cause of contestation and conflict between the young and the old in Hausaland. In order to make his anti-Sufi advocacy more pronounced he published a book titled, *al-Aqidah al-Sahihah bi mawafaqa al-Shariah*, which served as the basic reference work for anti-Sufi preaching in Hausaland.<sup>48</sup> In it Gummi criticized the mode of Sufi practices as well as the feast associated with wedding and naming ceremonies, as well as the *Maulud annaby* – celebrations of the birthday of the prophet – as *Bida'a* (innovation). According to Gummi:

“...soon after *al-Aqidah Sahihah* had gone into circulation, however, I became apprehensive about the consequences among members of the public...this at once generated a lot of controversy, which in no time spread to many parts of the country... Subsequently, Malam Ismaila Idris continued his preaching... citing *al-Aqidah Sahihah* as authority to attack negative practices which had been introduced into the religion. He called for the return to orthodox Islam, based on the true

teaching of of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah. He also condemned the traditional rulers for their corruption... I returned to Kaduna from Saudi Arabia at the height of the crisis... the whole city was on fire, with Tariqa followers fuming because they had been told that their Sufi beliefs were inconsistent with true Islam.”<sup>55</sup>

One of the consequences of these activities championed by Gummi and his young followers was the observance of prayers (*Salat*). The young started opening their new mosques following their version of Islamic practices, which they claimed was the only correct one. The new clerics abandoned the mode of prayer with hands spread (*Sadl*) for holding the hand around the chest (*qabd*). In their Friday sermons, they introduced translation in local languages to carry the people along, instead of reading the *Khutbah* only in Arabic, which the traditional Imams rarely translated into the vernacular (for the public to appreciate the import of the sermons). The new mosques, unlike “traditional” ones, became more than just ritual ground, but also centers of social and political discourse.<sup>56</sup>

*Ta'alim* programs where adult men and women as well as children receive lessons on various Islamic disciplines were introduced in the mosques. These started taking root with the activities of Abubakar Gummi, first under the Jama'atu Nasril Islam and later the Izala movement, of which he also became the founding father. These nearly turned the society upside down, because all that which was hitherto considered and practiced as the tenets of Islam were condemned as heresy by the new scholars.<sup>57</sup> This wave of transformation, which transferred power and influence in the religious activities of Hausa societies to the young, was what Abubakar Gummi himself termed as a change of the BOTTOM AGAINST THE TOP.<sup>51</sup> A similar general overview of the new wave of Islamization as discussed by Rosander, which he termed, “Islamization of Tradition and Modernity.” This depicts the switchover from traditional to an Islamist form of religious practices among Muslims during the last quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>58</sup>

Further, the traditional rulers (Emirs) and the Sultan of Sokoto, the temporal and spiritual leaders of the people, could not absorb the shock when (according Gummi) one of the young clerics, Malam Sirajo, insisted the Emirs should resign their responsibilities as they contributed to the degeneration of the Islamic religion and fell short of their duties as custodians of the religion (*deen*). As the criticism and tension became tense between the two generations, an emergency meeting was convened that brought the Sultan of Sokoto, the Shehu of Borno, Emirs of Kano, Zazzau, and other influential people of the region to discuss and explore a possible solution to safeguard the traditional rulers whose reverence and esteem among the people were fading away. Gummi located the basis for

the young challenging both the old and the old system of the practice of religion on the nature of Islam itself. According to him:

“In Islam, nothing has been left to chance; every law has been carefully laid out, so that one is not left in doubt with regard to one’s responsibilities as a Muslim. It is not a question of choice or that of selective application. One is either a Muslim or not, since it is not possible to accept Islam half-heartedly. This is why for Muslims too, the person who stands in the way of the religion is not allowed to force others to go along with him, instead he is knocked down to make room for all to pass freely.”<sup>59</sup>

As the source of disputes in Hausaland was the correct practice of Islam, in Ebiraland, the Atta led the new breed of Muslim youth (1917 to 1948) to boycott traditional religious practices and abolished rites such as the *eku* cult, *Epochi*, *Otumakere*, etc., that were the bedrock of the traditional Ebira cultural and religious rites. These practices were condemned by the Atta himself (the paramount rulers in Ebiraland) and his new Muslim elites as against Islam and repugnant to natural law and order. These two societies (Hausa and Ebira), therefore, provide a favorable climate for understanding the interplay of religious as well as educational forces in societal change in twentieth century Nigeria. In Ebiraland, there was the radical break with traditional religious practices and adoption of the teaching of Islam by most young Ebira against the old who clung to their traditional practices. Some of the areas of controversy included the traditional burial feasts, the *eku* festival, and other customary practices. According to Ibrahim, Muslim and Christian converts alike in Ebiraland revolted against the tradition and rites associated with burial of the dead. That was because it was contrary to the teachings of their newly embraced religion.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the young refused to obey the old order in the burial of the parents. Ibrahim sums this up as follows, “The elders among them (Ebira) would curse their sons if they knew that upon their death they would not perform the traditional funeral rites for them.”<sup>60</sup>

It was part of Ebira custom to bury the dead in the compound premises, and slaves were buried alive along with the corpse, with all kinds of provisions to entertain the dead, who was believed to be alive and to continue to provide protection to its progeny. It was also part of the old belief that the body of the deceased must be buried in a secluded place, i.e. not the public cemetery. The burying of an older deceased person under the sun would attract the wrath of the dead. So according to Ebira tradition only the bodies of infants and those condemned to death for grave offence could be buried under the sun.<sup>61</sup> According to Ibrahim:

“There was another belief that when a person died his soul would continue to linger in the house (near his grave) for about three months or longer. To have carried the body to *Oganya* (a public cemetery) for burial would mean to force the soul to go and stay near its body’s grave in the wilderness, and this also could invite the wrath of the dead.”<sup>62</sup>

The young converts to Islam could never accept nor practice any of those rituals, nor could they believe in the power of dead ancestors to intercede with their families in the world. The elders vehemently resisted establishing separate houses by the young. The elders of *Obehira* and *Ituaha* communities were unanimous in their opposition to any young person establishing his home away from the family compound, and the youth persisted in their defiance to the tradition. The conflict continued even against the intervention of the District Officer (DO).<sup>63</sup> These are some of the major factors for conflicts and continued struggle between the older and younger generations. However, the young succeeded in making headway and won an unprecedented level of respect and dignity in the Hausa and Ebira societies hitherto dominated by their elders.

Towards the 1980s the Nigerian political landscape was experiencing an atmosphere characterised by tension among the various communities. This was when the military regime indicated seriousness about transitioning to civil rule. The military coup d’état that ushered in General Murtala Mohammed had made serious pronouncements in that regard, and when he was assassinated in a botched military coup, he was succeeded by General Olusegun Obasanjo, then Chief of Staff of the Supreme Military Headquarters. The planned transition, however, continued with the launching of a Constituent Assembly to fashion a civilian constitution for the country. The Assembly became seriously polarized along confessional divides between the Muslim group of proponents of an expanded Islamic Shariah in the Nigerian Courts of Appeal and some of its Christian opponents.<sup>64</sup>

While the political and especially economic problems in the country were the underlying factors in the religious disagreement that held up the democratization process in Nigeria at that time, the religious factor in which the Muslim youth in both the Hausa and Ebira communities was to become a watershed in the transformation of subtle grievances to an open protestation, contestation, and even conflagration. In this manner, apart from the fact that the relationship between religious and cultural groups became strenuous and complicated, the youth on both divides appointed themselves as the vanguard for changing Nigeria within the limit of their conceptualized purview. The radical interpretations of revolution as then exemplified by the Iranian type that ushered in an Islamic Republic were to become the dream of most Muslim youth, in particular in Northern



Nigeria. Though *Ulama'a* like Gummi were after a different kind of societal change from the typically traditional Hausa setting, other emerging youths, networking with radical Islam outside the country, were after a kind of national change that goes beyond the traditional Hausa setting.<sup>65</sup>

These radical Muslim youths with a network that was beyond tribal “nationalism” for solidarity towards the desecularisation of the country were to embark upon a conscious mobilization in the electioneering that was to follow. The level of mobilization was further manipulated due to the serious economic problems of the 1980s under civilian rule, which led to an unusual movement led by Maitatsine in the name of reforming Islam, but clearly as a contestation to the seeming failure of the regime to redeem the campaign promises of transforming the country into an Eldorado.<sup>66</sup> This was to inaugurate a wave of violence in most urban and semi-industrial northern Nigerian cities like Kano. The way the Hausa and Epira came into this scenario is to be understood from the fact that Kano and other semi-industrial northern cities had attracted labour migrants, pushing them out of their traditional localities or pulling them into a much better sources of livelihood, which the economic problems frustrated, so that they became easy prey for improbable interpretations of their role in bringing about change that democracy and democrats had failed to bring about. The failure of civilians to redeem their promises in solving the difficult situation that dates back to the previous military rule was attributed to the secular nature of Nigerian society. Then the struggle changed from transforming local communities to a larger context of national change.<sup>67</sup>

This continued until the civilian government was sacked by another military junta in 1984, which ushered in the regime of Muhammadu Buhari, a Muslim from the northern part of the country, who subsequently was overthrown by another led by Ibrahim Babangida who introduced the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) as a World Bank package to solve the economic problems that engulfed Nigerian society. The Nigerian labour class among others responded with waves of strikes and demonstrations that prompted the government to become more repressive in a manner that, within a short period of time, saw almost all vocal groups dealt with and silenced. Due to the sensitivity religion has in the country various religious groups exploited it to become the only vocal groups voicing “dissident” opinions on the government and were able to continue with little or no repression from the government. Already, the government had wanted to manipulate the sensitivity of religion to its advantage when in 1987 it initiated an open debate on whether Nigeria as a secular country should go for full-fledged membership in the Organisation for Islamic Countries (OIC), which once again brought a serious contestation between Muslims and Christians.<sup>68</sup>

The manner in which the youth in Hausa and Epiraland were catapulted into this was in their increasing mobilization to ensure only

good Muslims were voted into any elective office as a means of clearing the mess secularism seemed to be perpetuating or aggravating.

## Conclusion

This chapter attempted a comparative analysis of the underlying factors in the generational contestations that characterized the Hausa and Epira communities in northern Nigeria from the 1930s to the 1980s. It argues that the traditional setting of pre-Islamic Ebiraland as well as the conservative Hausa Islamic practices did not allow youth any space and role in the social, political, and religious landscape in these societies. The tradition persisted since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the Shehu Usmanu Danfodiyo and his young supporters rose up against the old order and instituted reform in 19<sup>th</sup> century Hausaland. Amongst the Epira, especially during the colonial period, the youth had accepted Islam *en masse*. This rather set them against the traditional section of the society where African traditional religious practices thrived. The appointment of the young Attah in 1917 as an agent of a new centralised authority hitherto based on a clan cluster system transformed into a colonial indirect rule structure pointed to the significant power of youths to bring about change after a generational shift in political authority in the Epira society.

In both Hausa and Ebiraland, most youths were empowered and placed on an exceptionally unprecedented advantageous position above the elders, and had their status changed in the society due to their acquisition of both Islamic and Western education; economic independence as salary earners; their fearlessness and outspokenness in public and open air preaching; and above all maximum utilization of modern electronic and print media, all of which put them at a great advantage over their older counterparts. The consequence of this shift was characterized by the establishment of new mosques, modern schools of the Islamiyyah model, especially for adult men and women, and the prominent emergence of Muslim women's organizations and activities. Moreover, there was increasing resistance against the traditional eku cults by the colonial government backed by the Atta and Muslim and Christian converts. In the same way, Gummi challenged the Sultan and the Emirs in Hualand throughout the 1940s and challenged the Sufi and general religious practices of land up to 1992 when he died.

However, inter-generational contestation at its apex also gave way to intra-generational conflict among the youth; as all segments (the Sufi and anti-Sufi, traditionalists and modernists) now mobilized and recruited youths who were able to match the vibrancy and radicalism of the modern Islamists, especially among the elites, including university professors and civil servants.

Overall, the twentieth century marked the beginning of the phenomenon of youth wresting power from the elders and taken the

position of influence in Hausa and Ebira Muslim communities in northern Nigeria. The contestation continued to the beginning of the twenty first century and beyond under different forms and with a variety of ramifications, so that even among the “modernists” there are now splinter groups who today challenge not only Western education, but also Western-oriented values such as democracy, university education, and the use of ICT, which today are broadly being referred to today as *boko haram*.<sup>69</sup>

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup>A. A. Okene, *The Transformation of Ebiraland, 1880-1960*, (PhD diss., Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria, 1995), 34-36.

<sup>2</sup>A. A. Okene, *Colonialism and Labour Migration: The Ebira Owo in Ondo State Nigeria*, (Kaduna: Baraka Press, Kaduna, 2006), 18.

<sup>3</sup>Y. A. Ibrahim, *The Search for Leadership in a Nigerian Community: Igbira Tao, c.1865-1954*, (M A., diss., ABU Zaria, Nigeria, 1968), 42. See also Y. A. Ibrahim, *Ebira-Tao: Lessons from History*, (Zaria: Mumamrak Enterprises, Zaria, 2000). He is a living authority on Ebira history, an Ebira himself, Muslim and elite.

<sup>4</sup>Ibrahim, *The Search for Leadership*, 45.

<sup>5</sup>Ibrahim, *The Search for Leadership*, 48.

<sup>6</sup>Ibrahim, *The Search for Leadership*, 24.

<sup>7</sup>B. Chidili, “African Religion as a Religion: An Africanist Perspective”, *KADA Journal of Liberal Arts*, Vol. 3 (March 2008): 3-5.

<sup>8</sup>Okene, *The Transformation of Ebiraland, 1880-1960*, 34-35.

<sup>9</sup>Ibrahim, *The Search for Leadership*, 32.

<sup>10</sup>See detail discussion on this matter in R. Horton, “On the Rationality of Conversion”, *Journal of International African Institute*, Vol. 45, no. 4, (1975): 219-235, 373-387; L. R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1995); and T. E. Smith, *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion and Authentic Transformation*, (Illinois: Inter Versity Press, 2001), see especially chapter one, ‘Thinking about Conversion’.

<sup>11</sup>M. Adamu in his book *The Hausa Factor in West African History*, (Zaria: ABU Zaria Press, 1978), 20-24 indicates Hausaland to include all the seven ancient Hausa States (Hausa Bakwai), mostly in northern Nigeria.

<sup>12</sup>C. Dennis, “The Role of Religion in Social Change”, in *Social Change in Nigeria*, ed. S. Afonja, and O. Pearce, (Ibadan: Longman Press, 1986), 139.

<sup>13</sup>See details in I. M Lewis, A. Al-Safi, and S. Hurreiz, eds, *Women’s Medicine: The Zabori Cult in Africa and Beyond*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), and A. J. N. Tremearne, *Ban of the Bori*, (London: Frank Cass, 1968).

<sup>14</sup>See details in M. Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa*, (London and New York: Longman, 1984), 78-79.

<sup>15</sup>See detailed discussion on this in M. Last, “Charisma and Medicine in Northern Nigeria”, in *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*, ed. D. B. Cruise O’Brien, and C. Coulon, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 183-205.

<sup>16</sup>Cited by P. A. T. Williams, “Religion, Violence and Displacement in Nigeria”, *Journal of African Asian Studies*, Vol. XXXII, 1-2 (1997): 38-39.

<sup>17</sup> A. Adamu, *British Colonial Agricultural Policies in Northern Nigeria C.1902-1945*, (M.A. diss. A.B.U. Zaria, Nigeria, 1992), 21.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in Afua Twum-Danso, "The Political Child", in *Invisible Stakeholders: The Impact of Children on War*, ed. A. McIntyre, 2004  
<http://www.iss.co.za/pubs/invisiblestakeholders/content/htm>, accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2010, 14.

<sup>19</sup> Dr. Abdulmalik Abubakar one of the leading Ebira ulama' confrimed that in Ebira tradition youth does not even participate in religious observance and rites generally. Interview on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2010, age 69. See also detail discussion on the matter in Ibrahim, *The Search for Leadership* and Ibrahim, *Ebira-Tao: Lessons from History*, 42-50, 18-25.

<sup>20</sup> See M. Last, "The Power of Youth, Youth of Power: Notes on the religions of the Young in Northern Nigeria", *Les Jeunes en Afrique. La politique et la ville*, Tome 2, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992), 386. Generally, the chapter discusses extensively on the concept of youth in Hausa society.

<sup>21</sup> M. Last, "The Power of Youth", 387.

<sup>22</sup> I. Sulaiman, *A Revolution in History: The Jihad of Shehu Usman Danfodiyo*, (London: Mansell Press, 1987), 1-10.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Shaikh Abubakar Gummi, September 23, 1987 at his House in Kaduna, age 60 years.

<sup>24</sup> See Ibrahim, *Ebira-Tao: Lessons from History* for details.

<sup>25</sup> National Archive Kaduna, Nigeria, hencefoth, NAK LokProf 184/1920. Annual Report Kabba Province, 1020.

<sup>26</sup> NAK Lokprof 708/1950. Annual Report, Kabba Province.

<sup>27</sup> AHA Lok Prof 215B/1945/Education in Non-Muslim Areas.

<sup>28</sup> A. R. Muhammed, *History of the Spread of Islam in the Niger-Benue Confluence Area: Igala, Ebiraland and Lokoja C. 1900-1960*, (PhD diss. Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria, 1988), 377.

<sup>29</sup> M. Last, "The Power of Youth", 390-393.

<sup>30</sup> M. D. Sulaiman, *Politics and Economy in a Rural Society: Lokoja Since the Colonial Era*, (Ph.D diss., Bayero University Kano, 1992), 293.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Shaikh Haliru Binji during a field work in October 1987 while a Professor of Islamic Law in the then University of Sokoto, age 65 years. See, M. U. Bunza, "The North African Factor in *Tajdeed* Tradition in Hausaland, Northern Nigeria", *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 10, Number 3-4, September-December, (2005): 325-338.

<sup>32</sup> See details in B. Louis, ed., *Muslim Identity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (London: Hurst and Company, 1993), M. S. Umar, "Mass Islamic Education and the Emergence of female Ulama in Northern Nigeria: Background, Trends and Consequences" in *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa*, ed. S. R., Scott (Boston: Brill Leiden, 2004), and O. Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Post-Colonial Nigeria: The Society for the Removal of Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition*, (Boston, Leiden & E.J.: Brill, 2003).

<sup>33</sup> See general discussion in Sanusi Muhammad, *The Impact of the Audio Tasfir of Shaikh Abubakar Gummi on the Spread of Islam in Nigeria*, (M.A. diss. Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Sheikh Abubakar Gumi at Kaduna, September 1987, in fact he said he used to contribute sum of money to pay salaries of at least 5 pounds per scholar every month with the Sardauna's support to employ up to six scholars to

teach and preach especially in rural areas around 1961 and 1962, when they formed the Jama'atu Nasril Islam society.

<sup>35</sup> R. Horton, "On the Rationality of Conversion", *Journal of International African Institute*, Vol. 45, no. 4, (1975): 219- 313.

<sup>36</sup> M. Last, "The Power of Youth, Youth of Power: Notes on the religions of the Young in Northern Nigeria", *Les Jeunes en Afrique. La politique et la ville*, Tome, 2, Paris, L'Harmattan, (1992), 388.

<sup>37</sup> M. U. Bunza, "Muslims and the Modern State in Nigeria: A Study of the Impact of Foreign Religious Literature, 1980s- 1990s", in *Islam et Sociétés au sud du Sahara*, 17-18 (2004): 49-63, "The Iranian Model of Political Islamic Movement in Nigeria, (1979-2002)", in *L'islam politique au sud du Sahara: Identities, discourse et enjeux*, ed. Gomez-Perez, M. (Paris: Karthala, 2005), 227-242.

<sup>38</sup> R. Launay, and B. E. Soares, "The Formation of an Islamic Sphere in French Colonial West Africa", *Economy and Society*, Vol. 28, no. 4, November, (1999): 511.

<sup>39</sup> R. Launay, and B. E. Soares, "The Formation of an Islamic Sphere in French Colonial West Africa", 511.

<sup>40</sup> Generally Roman Loimeier discussed in details some of the changes associated with the new Da'wa especially by Abubakar Gummi and Yan Izala in the book, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997), especially chapters 3 and 4, "The Political and Religious Development of the Muslims in Northern Nigeria 1951-1978", and "The Dogmatic Discussion". In addition, some useful information on the matter could be found in D. Westerlund, "Reaction and Action: Accounting for the Rise of Islamism", in *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounters between Sufis and Islamists*, eds., E. E. Rosander and D. Weterlund, (London: Hurst and Company, 1997), 308-333. See also W. F. S. Mules, "Religious Pluralism in Northern Nigeria", in *The History of Islam in Africa*, eds. N. Levtzion, and R. L. Powels, (Ohio: University Press, 2000), 212-214.

<sup>41</sup> M. S. Umar, "Education and Islamic Trends in Northern Nigeria: 1970s-1990s", *Africa Today*, Vol.48, no. 2, Summer (2001): 132. Most of the feature of this group of clerics were the same as articulated by Lasane Kaba in his book *The Wahhabiyya: Islamic Reform and Politics in French West Africa*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 20-45. See also Y. A. Quadri, "A Study of the Izalah: A Contemporary Anti-Sufi Organisation in Nigeria", *ORITA*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, December (1985), 95-108, A. I. Yandaki, "A Synopsis on Jama'atul Izalatul Bi'ah Wa Iqamatis Sunna (JIBWIS) and its Contribution to the Spread of Islamic Education)", *The Beam Journal of Arts and Science*, Vol. 3, March (1998): 28-33.

<sup>42</sup> See an overview of activities of Muslim Women in Hausa Society by Balkisu Yusuf, "Hausa-Fulani Woman: The State of the Struggle", in C. Coles, and B. Mark (eds.), *Hausa Women in the Twentieth Century*, (Wisconsin Press, 1991), 97-105.

<sup>43</sup> M. S. Umar, "Education and Islamic Trends in Northern Nigeria: 1970s-1990s", 132-135.

<sup>44</sup> Discussion with Prof. Rufai one of the leading Ebira scholars in Nigeria, a Professor of History at the Bayero University Kano, on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2004, Abuja, Nigeria, in fact that was the genesis for this study.

<sup>45</sup> A. A. Okene, "The Sokoto Jihad in Eberaland, 1859-1903", in *The Sokoto Caliphate: History and Legacies, 1804-2004*, in H. Bobboyi and A. M. Yakubu, Vol. I., (Kaduna: Arewa House, 2006), 77-78.

<sup>46</sup> Ibrahim, *The Search for Leadership*, 203.

<sup>47</sup> Ibrahim, *The Search for Leadership*, 204.



- <sup>48</sup> Sulaiman, 290.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibrahim, *The Search for Leadership*, 218.
- <sup>50</sup> A. Gummi, and I. A. Tsiga, *Where I Stand*, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1992), 49.
- <sup>51</sup> M. U. Bunza, *Social and Religious Contributions of Islamic Scholars in Northern Nigeria: Life and Works of Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gummi*, (B. A. diss., University of Sokoto, 1988).
- <sup>52</sup> Gummi, 48.
- <sup>53</sup> Interview with Gummi, 1987.
- <sup>54</sup> Gummi, 50-60.
- <sup>55</sup> See further discussion on these issues in M. U. Bunza, *Social and Religious Contributions of Islamic Scholars in Northern Nigeria: Life and Works of Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gummi*.
- <sup>56</sup> G. B. Muhammad, *Social and political roles of the Mosques in Northern Nigeria*, (M.Sc. diss. Bayero University Kano, Nigeria, 1997).
- <sup>57</sup> Gummi, 158-175.
- <sup>58</sup> E. E. Rosander, "The Islamization of Tradition and Modernity", in *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounter between Sufis and Islamists*, eds., E. E. Rosander and D. Weterlund, (London: Hurst and Company, 1997), 1-27.
- <sup>59</sup> Gummi, 175.
- <sup>60</sup> See details on the introduction and development of Islam in Ebiraland and its major consequences in Muhammad.
- <sup>61</sup> Ibrahim, *The Search for Leadership*, 220.
- <sup>62</sup> Ibrahim, 225.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibrahim, 225.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibrahim, 218.
- <sup>65</sup> A. M. Ashafa, "Religion in the History of Democratisation in Nigeria", *Arts and Social Sciences Research Journal*, Vol.2 Sept (1999): 80, and I. M. Enwarem, *A Dangerous Awakening: The Politicisation of Religion in Nigeria*, (Ibadan: IFRA), 32.
- <sup>66</sup> Gummi, 175-180.
- <sup>67</sup> Y. B. Usman, *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria, 1977-1987*, (Kaduna: Vanguard Publishers, 1987), A. Anwar, *Gardawa-Ulama Conflicts and the State in Northern Nigeria: The Maitatsine Phenomenon, 1962-1985*, (PhD diss. University of Maiduguri, 1997), S. Bako, *The Maitatsine Revolts: A Socio-Political Explanation of the Islamic Insurrections in Northern Nigeria 1980-1985*, (PhD diss. ABU Zaria 1993), B. Barkindo, "Growing Islamism in Kano City Since 1970" in *Muslim Identity*, eds., B. Louis and P. Lubeck, "Islamic Protest under Semi-Industrial Capitalism: "Yan Tatsine Explained"", *Africa*, Vol. 55,(1985), 369-389.
- <sup>68</sup> M. T. Ladan, "Nigeria: Sensitive Islam", *Africa Events*, June/July Vol. 4 NO. 6/7
- <sup>69</sup> P. Lubeck, *Islam and urban Labour in Northern Nigeria: The Making of a Muslim Working Class*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). On the impact of SAP on the different aspects of Nigerian society see B. O. Olaniyan, & C. N. Nnoko, *Structural Adjustment in Nigeria and the Economy*, (Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos, 1990); A. O. Olukoshi, *Crisis and Adjustment in the Nigerian Economy*, (Lagos, Nigeria: Malthouse, 1993).

#### References:

- Adamu, A. *British Colonial Agricultural Policies in Northern Nigeria C.1902-1945*. M.A. diss. A.B.U. Zaria, Nigeria, 1992.



Adamu, M. *The Hausa Factor in West African History*. Zaria: ABU Zaria Press, 1978.

Afua Twum-Danso. 'The Political Child', in *Invisible Stakeholders: The Impact of Children on War*. ed. A. McIntyre. 2004.  
<http://www.iss.co.za/pubs/invisiblestakeholders/content/htm>, accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2010, 14.

AHA Lok Prof 215B/1945/Education in Non-Muslim Areas.

Anwar, A. *Gardawa-Ulama Conflicts and the State in Northern Nigeria: The Maitatsine Phenomenon, 1962-1985*. PhD diss. University of Maiduguri, 1997.

Ashafa, A. M. "Religion in the History of Democratisation in Nigeria". *Arts and Social Sciences Research Journal*. Vol. 2 Sept (1999).

Bako, S. *The Maitatsine Revolts: A Socio-Political Explanation of the Islamic Insurrections in Northern Nigeria 1980-1985*. PhD diss. ABU Zaria 1993.

Balkisu, Yusuf. "Hausa-Fulani Woman: The State of the Struggle". In: C. Coles, and B. Mark. eds. *Hausa Women in the Twentieth Century*. Wisconsin Press, 1991, 97-105.

Barkindo, B. "Growing Islamism in Kano City Since 1970". In: *Muslim Identity*. eds. B. Louis and P. Lubeck.

Barkindo, B. "Islamic Protest under Semi-Industrial Capitalism: 'Yan Tatsine Explained". In: *Africa*. Vol. 55 (1985): 369-389.

Bunza, M. U. "Muslims and the Modern State in Nigeria: A Study of the Impact of Foreign Religious Literature, 1980s- 1990s". In: *Islam et Sociétés au sud du Sahara*. 17-18 (2004): 49-63.

Bunza, M. U. *Social and Religious Contributions of Islamic Scholars in Northern Nigeria: Life and Works of Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gummi*. B. A. diss., University of Sokoto, 1988.

Bunza, M. U. "The Iranian Model of Political Islamic Movement in Nigeria, (1979-2002)". In: *L'islam politique au sud du Sahara: Identities, discourse et enjeux*. ed. M. Gomez-Perez. Paris: Karthala, 2005, 227-242.

Bunza, M. U. "The North African Factor in *Tajdeed* Tradition in Hausaland, Northern Nigeria". In: *The Journal of North African Studies*. Vol. 10, Number 3-4, September-December, (2005): 325-338.

Chidili, B. "African Religion as a Religion: An Africanist Perspective". *KADA Journal of Liberal Arts*. Vol. 3 (March 2008).

Dennis, C. "The Role of Religion in Social Change". In: *Social Change in Nigeria*. ed. S. Afonja, and O. Pearce. Ibadan: Longman Press, 1986.

Enwarem, I. M. *A Dangerous Awakening: The Politicisation of Religion in Nigeria*. Ibadan: IFRA.

Gummi, A. and I. A. Tsigia. *Where I Stand*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1992.

Gummi, Abubakar and Yan Izala. *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997.

Hiskett, M. *The Development of Islam in West Africa*. London and New York: Longman, 1984.

Horton, R. "On the Rationality of Conversion". In: *Journal of International African Institute*. Vol. 45, no. 4, (1975): 219-235, 373-387.

Ibrahim, Y. A. *The Search for Leadership in a Nigerian Community: Igbira Tao, c.1865-1954*. M A., diss., ABU Zaria, Nigeria, 1968.

Ibrahim, Y. A. *Ebira-Tao: Lessons from History*. Zaria: Mumamrak Enterprises, Zaria, 2000.

Interview with Shaikh Abubakar Gummi, September 23, 1987 at his House in Kaduna, age 60 years.

Interview with Shaikh Haliru Binji during a field work in October 1987.

Kane, O. *Muslim Modernity in Post-Colonial Nigeria: The Society for the Removal of Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition*. Boston, Leiden & E.J.: Brill, 2003.

Ladan, M. T. "Nigeria: Sensitive Islam". In: *Africa Events*. June/July Vol. 4, NO. 6/7

Lasane, Kaba. *The Wahhabiyya: Islamic Reform and Politics in French West Africa*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974, 20-45.

Last, M. "Charisma and Medicine in Northern Nigeria". In: *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*. ed. D. B. Cruise O'Brien, and C. Coulon. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, 183-205.

Last, M. "The Power of Youth, Youth of Power: Notes on the religions of the Young in Northern Nigeria". *Les Jeunes en Afrique. La politique et la ville*. Tome 2. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992.

Launay, R. and B. E. Soares. "The Formation of an Islamic Sphere in French Colonial West Africa". In: *Economy and Society*. Vol. 28, no. 4, November, (1999).

Lewis, I. M., A. Al-Safi, and S. Hurreiz. Eds. *Women's Medicine: The Za-Bori Cult in Africa and Beyond*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991.

Louis, B. ed. *Muslim Identity in Sub-Saharan Africa*. London: Hurst and Company, 1993.

Muhammad, G. B. *Social and political roles of the Mosques in Northern Nigeria*. M.Sc. diss. Bayero University Kano, Nigeria, 1997.

Muhammed, A. R. *History of the Spread of Islam in the Niger-Benue Confluence Area: Igala, Ebiraland and Lokoja C. 1900-1960*. PhD diss. Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria, 1988.

Mules, W. F. S. "Religious Pluralism in Northern Nigeria". In: *The History of Islam in Africa*. ed. N. Levtzion, and R. L. Powels. Ohio: University Press, 2000.

NAK Lokprof 708/1950. Annual Report, Kabba Province.

National Archive Kaduna, Nigeria, henceforth, NAK LokProf 184/1920. Annual Report Kabba Province, 1020.

Okene, A. A. "The Sokoto Jihad in Ebiraland, 1859-1903". In: *The Sokoto Caliphate: History and Legacies, 1804-2004*. eds. H. Bobboyi and A. M. Yakubu. Vol. I. Kaduna: Arewa House, 2006.

Okene, A. A. *The Transformation of Ebiraland, 1880-1960*. PhD diss., Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria, 1995.

Okene, A. A. *Colonialism and Labour Migration: The Epira Owo in Ondo State Nigeria*. Kaduna: Baraka Press, Kaduna, 2006, 18.

Quadri, Y.A. "A Study of the Izalah: A Contemporary Anti-Sufi Organisation in Nigeria". In: *ORITA*. Vol. XVII, No. 2, December (1985): 95-108.

Rambo, L. R. *Understanding Religious Conversion*. Yale: Yale University Press, 1995.

Rosander, E. E. "The Islamization of Tradition and Modernity". In: *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounter between Sufis and Islamists*. eds. E. E Rosander and D. Weterlund. London: Hurst and Company, 1997, 1-27.

Sanusi, Muhammad. *The Impact of the Audio Tasfir of Shaikh Abubakar Gummi on the Spread of Islam in Nigeria*. M.A. diss. Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, 2010.

Smith, T. E. *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion and Authentic Transformation*. Illinois: Inter Versity Press, 2001.

Sulaiman, I. *A Revolution in History: The Jihad of Shehu Usman Danfodiyo*. London: Mansell Press, 1987.

Sulaiman, M. D. *Politics and Economy in a Rural Society: Lokoja Since the Colonial Era*. Ph.D diss., Bayero Uiversity Kano, 1992.

Tremearne, A. J. N. *Ban of the Bori*. London: Frank Cass, 1968.

Umar, M. S. "Education and Islamic Trends in Northern Nigeria: 1970s-1990s". In: *Africa Today*. Vol.48, no. 2, Summer (2001).

Umar, M. S. "Mass Islamic Education and the Emergence of female Ulama in Northern Nigeria: Background, Trends and Consequences". In: *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa*. ed. S. R. Scott. Boston: Brill Leiden, 2004.

Usman, Y. B. *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria, 1977-1987*. Kaduna: Vanguard Publishers, 1987.

Westerlund, D. "Reaction and Action: Accounting for the Rise of Islamism". In: *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounters between Sufis and Islamists*. ed. E.E. Rosander and D. Weterlund. London: Hurst and Company, 1997, 308-333.

Williams, P. A. T. "Religion, Violence and Displacement in Nigeria". In: *Journal of African Asian Studies*. Vol. XXXII, 1-2 ( 1997).

Yandaki, A. I. "A Synopsis on Jama'atul Izalatul Bi'ah Wa Iqamatis Sunna (JIBWIS) and its Contribution to the Spread of Islamic Education)". In: *The Beam Journal of Arts and Science*. Vol. 3, March (1998): 28-33.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.