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NOTES AND COMMENTS

THE COUNCIL OF MUSLIM YOUTH ORGANISATIONS (COMYO) IN OYO STATE

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed an unprecedented rise in Nigerian Muslims consciousness of their pathetic situation, particularly in the Western region. (The Present Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Bendel and part of Lagos states). This consciousness was expressed through the formation of a number of pressure-groups-Muslim Organisations. Such organisations included the Ahmadiyya Movement in Lagos (1911). Anṣār-Ud-Deen Society (1923) and the Ijebu-Ode based, Muslim Friendly Society (1927). Others which came later were Muslim Association of Nigeria (MAN). Nawair-Ud-Deen Society (N.U.D.) and Isabatudeen Women Society of Ibadan, among others.

Prominent among the objectives of each of these organisations was Integration of Western and Islamic Education. The opinion of Alhāja Humuani Alaga, a prominent Ibadan Trader and leader of the Society, concerning the objectives of the Isabatudeen Women Society (IWS) represents, to a very large extent, the aims of other Organisations. According to her, "she found it difficult to get her daughters into (Christian) mission schools and that girls in mission schools changed their names and religion." (Clarke 1982, 225) The resolve to raise the "standard of education among Muslims" (Clarke 1982, 169) was dictated by the conviction of the Nigerian Muslims of the need to acquire necessary skills to participate in the political and economic order, as much as it was dictated by the Christian Challenge.

Of particular significance is the formation of the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria in Lagos on the 18th of April 1954. The Society is the first national Muslim organisation in Nigeria, to have its members across all parts of the Federation. Furthermore a spectacular feature of the Society lies in the fact that its membership is almost 100% literate. Armed with the traditional youthful zeal and vigour the Society launched (and is still launching) a formidable tirade against the attack of non-Muslims and the sad "ineptitude of the Muslim elders." (Oloyede 1979).

Initially, the Society drew its members from secondary schools, mostly Christian mission schools; but later attracted members from Universities and other tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The founding members of the Society are presently leaders of various Muslim organisations which are currently engaged in *da'wah* activities in Nigeria. Prominent among these personalities are Professor Nurudeen Alao, a Professor of Geography in the University of Lagos; Prof. (Mrs.) Mabogunje, Professor T. Gbadamosi and Dr. Hussein Kareem, all of the University of Lagos. Others include Dr. Lateef Adegbite, the first National President of the Society, and a former Attorney General of Western Nigeria; Alhaji Shehu Musa, Secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria from 1979 to 1983 and a host of others. (MSS 1979) The society is the spring-board of other Youth Organisations which were formed mostly by old members of the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (M.S.S.).

These Muslim organisations provided an impetus to *Da'wah* activities and renewed conscious vigilance of the Muslims in Southern Nigeria (which is, to some extent, also true of Northern Nigeria). However, these organisations have their limitations which were/are occasioned by the 'students-status' of the members of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria and the fear of victimisation on the part of members of the elder organisations, majority of whom were civil servants or employees of private concerns, the upper echelon of which were occupied almost invariably, by Christians. Ignorance of Islamic tenets and superficial approach of some of these organisations constituted another obstruction. This situation persisted with little change uptill the end of the first military rule in Nigeria, from January 16, 1966 to September 30, 1979.

THE CONDITIONS OF THE MUSLIMS IN OYO STATE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC IN 1979

The problems which beclouded the Muslims in Southern part of Nigeria as at 1979 October, included disunity, religious liberalism to the point of stupidity; selfishness; lack of adequate Western education among majority of the Muslims; gradual but pronounced de-Islamisation of the few Muslims who had the 'fortune' of Western Education and the apparent lack of co-ordination of missionary activities of Muslim individuals. Of course, the external problems as represented by the numerous obstacles placed on their path by non-Muslims were more enormous and more devastating than the internal problems. These external storms included mass conversion of Muslims to Christianity through the aid of governmental machinery, particularly through educational facilities; persecution by some non-Muslims who happened to hold important positions in the state; and apparent hostile posture of some mass media to Islam.

That was the time when it became obvious to the Muslims that Western education which had, for long, been almost exclusive confined to the Christians was a necessary tool against politico-religious domination. The hotly debated *Shari'ah* issue in the Constituent Assembly in April 1978, which resulted into a four-day withdrawal of ninety-three Muslims from the Assembly, also generated, in the Muslims a considerable level of religious awareness.

The lift of the ban on political activities ushered in the era of political campaign. At first, an impartial observer had no problem in identifying some parties which were likely to be pro-Islam and some which were considered Pro-Christianity. This belief we must state, is fraught with over-generalisation, miscalculations and unjustified suspicion.

Nevertheless the opinion that National Party of Nigeria (N.P.N.) was likely to have Pro-Islamic leaning, while Unity Party of Nigeria (U.P.N.) and National People Party (N.P.P.) would be Pro-Christianity was, either rightly or wrongly, up held by a large percentage of Nigerians. (Credence is lent to the hypothesis by the fact that while the N.P.N. had a firm grip on some Muslim dominated parts of Nigeria, The U.P.N. did not.)

As the campaign continued, it became clear that many, if not most Muslims in Oyo State were convinced of the viability and superiority of the U.P.N. over other parties. Many reasons were advanced for this posture. Some attributed it to the "free education promise of the U.P.N., some claimed it was as a result of tribal sentiments, while some political analysts saw it as a reaction of the Yoruba-Muslims to the unattractive attitude of Hausa Muslims towards the former. Whatever reason one attributes to the situation could hardly be devoid of prejudice and subjective individual judgement. The decision to embrace one particular party or the other had various reasons which could hardly be streamlined along ethnic and religious sentiments. For instance, the Yoruba natives of Ogbomosho, despite the preponderance of Christians in the town, were mostly committed N.P.N. members, while the Muslim dominated-city of Iwo was made up of a large number of avowed U.P.N. loyalists. Another local dimension worth mentioning, was the fact that the local leaders of N.P.N. in Oyo State were mostly Christians (and largely Muslims who were converted to Christianity, for instance Richard Akinjide (formerly Rashid Akinjide), the 1979 gubernatorial candidate of the N.P.N. in Oyo state. The paradox of the complex situation which also lent credence to the popular belief of religious classifications of the parties was the songs, utterances and slangs of the N.P.N. local leaders who were mostly Christians. An example of such local Yoruba songs is "Apoti Anabi ni e so si²ce beri ti janama e ma ya sibe, Apoti Anabi ni e so si". (Meaning: Cast the vote into the box of the prophet (Muhammad

[S.A.W.]]-shun that of *Jahannum* (hell-fire), drop your vote into the ballot box of the Prophet (Muhammad) [S.A.W.]]. The Arabic word *Jahannum* portrays the Islamic sentiment against an abomination. It also makes a sarcastic reference to the symbol of the U.P.N. which included rays of light which the opponent interpreted as fire. Another poser was the loud and unconcealed condemnation of known committed Muslims, who were U.P.N. supporters, by some Muslim Yourba elders who considered membership of Unity Party of Nigeria as an active demolition of what such Muslim U.P.N. supporters "had laboured to build." Mr. Ishāq Kunle Sanni, who later became the co-ordinator of council of Muslim Youth Organisations in Oyo State, was one of such highly criticised U.P.N. supporters. he was the first Kaduna State Public Relation Officer of the defunct U.P.N.

The U.P.N. won decisively, and this heightened the trend of internal recriminations and wranglings largely within the Muslim circles, with the effect that some congregations (mosques) were torn apart on political grounds. It is to the credit of Nigerian Christians that, as far as this writer knows, there was no case of such pronounced division within the Church. Alhaj D.O.S. Noibi, Senior lecturer, University of Ibadan, aptly described this situation as an indication of the Muslims employing Islam to promote politics while Christians employ politics to promote Christianity.

EMERGENCE OF COMYO IN OYO STATE

The above formed the general background to the formation of Comyo. The immediate cause could, however, be attributed to two major incidents. First, some Muslim elders, among whom were Drs. K.K. Oloso, S.H. Malik, and D.O.S. Noibi, all from the Department of Arabic and Islamic studies University of Ibadan, observed and informally discussed the uncoordinated and at times contradictory responses of the various Muslim Youth organisations which were springing up in large number in different parts of the state. The elders resolved that there was need for co-ordination. According to information, (Sanni 1983) it was at this very time of the elders' observation, that Mr. A.R.A. Shittu, a former President of the M.S.S. University of Ife branch (1977/78 Session) who was elected into the Oyo State House of Assembly in 1979, raised a motion in Parliament, proposing that the Assembly should pass a motion to entrench religious equity in the state and to call on the executive to design and execute a "crash programme for the training of Islamic Religious Knowledge teachers", the dearth of which was highly pronounced in Oyo State post-primary institutions.

Majority of the legislators, some of whom were 'liberal' Muslims, did not only oppose and subsequently disallow the motion but also passed some uncomplimentary comments on Honourable

Shittu who, according to one of them, was a religious fanatic. (Shittu 1983) In the evening of the day Alhaji Yisa Yagboyaju who was/is the Oyo State grand patron of the M.S.S.; Mr. Rasheed Aderiooye, who was an M.S.S. activist; Bro G. Agbaje and Dr. K.K. Oloso, the then National President of the M.S.S. incocidentally met at Hon. Shittu's house where each of them had gone to personally express his disappointment over the lost motion and pledge his support and that of the M.S.S. to his co-M.S.S. member. Discussions at that informal meeting led to an agreement to form a body of Muslim organisations which shall present a united voice against any government decision which the Muslim Youth might consider unfair to Islam. (Abbas 1983)

Dr. K.K. Oloso who attended both the first elders' meeting and the second informal meeting, was charged with the responsibility of convening a meeting of representatives of all the Muslim organisations in the state. Consequently the meeting was held at the department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan on the 30th of March 1980. The meeting was attended enthusiastically by many Muslim elders who also addressed the gathering on the day. The establishment of the Council, which was resolved at that meeting, marked the birth of a principal formidable front which, with the strong support of Muslim elders in other organisations, resisted the religious oppression against the Oyo State Muslims in the second republic.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COUNCIL

The objectives, according to Kunle Sanni and Hon Shittu included the following:-

- (i) Presenting a united voice of the Muslims, particularly the Muslim youth, to the government as and when necessary.
- (ii) Resisting, in collaboration with the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria, any religious oppression in educational institutions in the state.
- (iii) Enlightening the Muslim elders in particular and Muslims in general on the modern strategies of the Christians, particularly those in government, to dominate and suppress the Muslims.
- (iv) Launching a campaign to encourage the Muslims' participation in Party-politics, specifically urging the Muslims to be involved in the activities of any party which had majority support in their respective areas. (Sanni 1983, Shittu 1983)

STRUCTURE OF THE COUNCIL

The Council is, for the purpose of effective administration, divided into five zones namely Ibadan/Ibarapa. Ife/Ijesha; Oshun I; Oshun II and Oyo zones.

The officers at the Headquarters are Principal co-ordinator, General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary, Treasurer and a number of co-ordinators who shall serve as special advisers to the Principal Co-ordinator who is the head of the Council. The officers constitute the State executive Committee. According to the unwritten convention of the Council, the Executive Committee shall be constituted on the basis of individual member's ability and acceptability but not more than one executive member shall be elected from a single Organisation.

The Presidents and Secretaries of organisations within each zone constitute the Zonal Working Committee which shall co-ordinate the activities of the Organisations at the local level and which shall be responsible to the State Headquarters. No provision is made for zonal officers because, "we do not want to proliferate hierarchical structure and we also want to guard against erosion of the individual organisation's independence and autonomy within the frame-work of a type of confederation." (Adrinoye 1982).

ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNCIL

Immediately after its formation the Council went into operation under the leadership of its Principal-Co-ordinator, Alhaji Is-haq Kunle Sanni and the close supervision of few Muslim elders, the bulk of whom are the Muslim lecturers of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies of the University of Ibadan. The initial pre-occupation of the Council was underground enlightenment of the Muslim parents on the plight of their children in educational institutions. The first fruit of such effective underground campaign was the Council's public press declaration of support for the Iragbiji (a town in Oshun division of Oyo State) Muslim parents who withdrew all their children from all primary schools in the town on the 10th of March 1980, because the Government did not make any provision for the teaching of Islamic Religious Knowledge (I.R.K.) in the schools despite constant requests by the Muslims and in spite of the teaching of christian Religions knowledge (C.R.K.) in the schools. The courage displayed by the Council, particularly its leader, in making such pronouncement gave the Council some respectability among the Muslims in the state. Understandably, the government was embarrassed and it quickly took some measures to recruit Arabic teachers for primary schools in Iragbiji.

The Council holds monthly *da'wah* which are rotated among towns and villages in the state. In the morning after the night *da'wah*, which is always principally directed towards exposition of the religious discrimination within the state, particularly in educational institutions; the Council holds meeting with important Muslim elders in the town or village to discuss their local problems and inform the elders of its activities within the state. The support of the elders is always expressed at such meetings. The *da'wah* is held on the last Saturday of every month.

The Council also encourages members of the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria to establish Central branches of the Society to cater for ex-M.S.S. members who have graduated from various institutions and who are working in cities but do not belong to any youth organisation.

The Council also uses the monthly *da'wah*, particularly the morning meeting, to settle any intra-and inter-Muslim communities' disputes which are promptly reported to the Council by its zonal working Committee. The result of such settlements are, in most cases, marvelous. Peaceful strategies are also employed by the Council to convince the authorities of the need to grant the Muslims a fair treatment.

Towards the end of 1980, the Council, at one of its meeting which was attended by the present writer, resolved to cash the known cordial relationship which existed between the then civilian Governor of Oyo State, Chief Bola Ige and the Are Muslumi of Yoruba-land (one of the titles created to involve wealthy Muslims in Islamic propagation). In a letter dated 26th. of September 1980, the Council called the Are Musulumi's attention to a number of acts of religious intolerance which were being perpetuated by the Oyo State Government, the acts included;

- (a) Refusal to make provision for the teaching of I.R.K. in schools.
- (b) Refusal of the government to post teachers of I.R.K. to all schools. Rather it saturated the few Muslim schools with an disproportionately high number of I.R.K. teachers.
- (c) Changing the names of some Muslim schools to Community schools. Cases of Muslim Grammar School Ilero which was changed by the Oyo State Ministry of Education to Ilero Community Grammar School and the Muslim Grammar School Igbeti which was forcefully changed to Marble Grammer School, Igbeti were cited as examples.
- (d) Conversion of school mosques which were being built through personal efforts of the M.S.S. members, to other

uses. Instances were cited of Ire Baptist Grammar School mosque which was turned into a cultural centre, despite appeals by the large number of Muslim students in the school and the case of Ibadan Grammar School Mosque, which according to a reliable report, close to the principal of the College, was to become a classroom with effect from 3rd October 1980.

- (e) Deliberate refusal of the government to post I.R.K. graduates to teachers' colleges which could have helped in producing I.R.K. teachers for primary schools.

Characteristic of youthful zeal, the Council concluded the letter with "We are prepared for this task at the risk of even our personal lives."

This strategy, surprisingly, yielded no positive result. Kunle Sanni also took advantage of his political party affiliation with the Governor, to lobby the government but without any success. Honourable Shittu continued to raise dissident opinions in support of religious freedom for the Muslims in the Assembly without any visible fruition.

Consequently the Council sent an official letter to the governor in November 1980, asking for talks with the government. Rather than responding to the request, the Governor, his deputy and the Speaker of the State House of Assembly were said to be making nocturnal visits to the houses of some selected Muslim elders, who were known supporters of the U.P.N., with a view to discredit the council and impressing on these elders a false claim that the Council was being instigated by another political party to confront the U.P.N.

The Council launched an immediate propaganda effort to counter this falsehood and it was after one of such enlightenment-trips that the late Chief Imam of Ibadan, Alhaji Muili, who had also been confused by the government propaganda, agreed to personally seek an audience with the Governor to discuss the problems of the Muslims in the State. The Governor, in his prompt response to the chief Imam's request scheduled the meeting for the 13th of January 1981 at the Government Executive Chamber.

The Muslim delegation which included members of the various Islamic Youth Organisations and few state-executive members of COMYO, was led by Alhaj Elshinmenta, a representative of the Chief Imam of Ibadan. The then, Governor, Chief Bola Ige led the government team of politicians and government officials. The Co-ordinator of COMYO read the Muslims' address which mentioned a number of government policies which the Muslims considered unfair to Islam. Apart from problems which had been

mentioned in the Council's letter to Chief Arisekola The Are Musulumi other problems mentioned were that many heads of schools (some were established by Christians missioneries and some were founded by Government or communities) were conducting the early morning school Assembly with christian prayers which included the singing of songs from the *Christian Songs of Praise* which students, including Muslims, were being compelled to purchase." Muslim women who were attending public maternity and health centres for prenatal and post natal treatments were made to sing some songs which contain certain Christian beliefs which are against basic tenets of Islam, and that Muslim students were being prevented from attending Friday worship by certain principals of schools. The Governor, who initially denied most of these allegations, later agreed that changes whould be effected. The Muslims gave him specific instances of these unfair incidents.

At the end of the joint meeting the Governor promised that the government will keep in touch with Muslim representatives, through the Ministry of Education to ensure the organisation of a crash programme for the training of I.R.K. teachers. He also pledged that efforts would be made to teach I.R.K. in all the government tertiary institutions where Christian Studies was offered and that a circular would be sent to all schools to warn head teachers against religious injustice particularly the practice of making students sing Christian songs irrespective of the religious persuasion of the students.

The Muslims, after a month of anxious expectation, wrote, vide a letter from COMYO on the 13th February 1981, to remind the Governor of his promises which, as far as the Muslims knew, had not been fulfilled. The Council, in support of its allegation of continuous religious oppression in schools, gave an instance of one Azeez Aderemi, a student of Ibadan City Academy who was allegedly slapped on the face, by the principal of the college, Mr. Gabriel Adeyemo during the school Assembly on the 23rd of January 1981, because the former refused to recite the Christian "Our Lords Prayer." After informing the government, in the letter, of the thorough investigation which the council had carried out on the incident, the letter was concluded with "Your Excellency..... our patience is being over taxed..... It is our fervent hope that you would expedite action on the circular and the public statement you promised to make....."

On the 13th of March, exactly two months after the meeting, the Council despatched another letter to the then Governor reminding him of his promises and that "We do not want to believe, as it is being rumoured in certain Christian quarters that your pledge to us on January 13, 1981 was a ruse and with no genuine intention of finding a lasting solution to the problems. And

that a master plan is under way which would make non-sense of all our moves towards a peaceful solution." (Comyo 1981).

This letter, as the first one, was not even acknowledged by the governor not to speak of responding to its contents. The first government reaction was a letter from the then Commissioner for Education which, informed the Council that "it would take some time before the issue could be resolved." (Education 1981/410) Further to that, the long awaited circular was released towards the end of April 1981. The circular placed a ban on the activities of the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria and the Scripture Union (a Christian body) in Oyo State schools; it stated that there would be separate morning Assemblies for Muslims and Christians and that "all schools should allow Muslims who wish to do so to attend Jum'at prayer..... It must be made clear that no child is forced to do so..... and that the school must close at the normal time." (Education 1981/412)

The injustice which the circular contained is very obvious. The M.S.S. (the only Muslim society in schools) was banned, the Scripture Union which was just one of the Christian groups in schools was banned but Christian activities continued through other Christian groups and the organisation of "signing group" which immediately sprang up in schools, without being affected by the "ban." While Christians were/free on Sunday for religious worship, a Muslim who chose to attend mosques on Friday must do so at the expense of his/her studies because "schools must close at normal time."

The Council complained to the Governor without any success. Then came a new era in the method which the Muslims, through COMYO, adopted in seeking religious freedom.

(1) *Press War:* COMYO held a series of Press conferences on 21-11-81, 13-12-81, 14-10-82 and 23-6-83 at the press centre, Ibadan and issued a number of press statements to inform the public of the series of unfair treatments being meted out to the Muslims. This measure contributed a lot in enlightening the Muslims about their precarious condition.

(2) *Islamic Occasions:* The Council took the advantage of any Muslim socio-religious gathering to inform the Muslim populace of the activities of the government which appeared anti-Muslim. Most of these reports were strange to a large number of Muslims who hitherto had not taken cognisance of the situation.

(3) *Monthly Meeting:* The monthly meeting of the Council became a politico-religious forum whereby the use of political power to oppress the muslims was constantly mentioned and analysed.

(4) Songs: Meldious Islamic songs were composed in Yoruba (the local language), Language to remind the Muslims of the oppression which the Muslims were being made to suffer. For instance a song goes thus:

"Muslumi ni gomina teko, O si je ki kristiani se esin; Musulumi ni Gomina kwara O si je ki kristeni se 'sin, Bola Ige de Oyo tan ESU gba 'joba.'

"The Governors of Lagos and Kwara States are Muslims but they allow Christians to worship; Bola Ige, wins in Oyo State, and devil reigns."

Any objective critic could hardly blame these frustrated Youths for their seemingly rude and harsh posture, if one appreciates their sufferings and earlier subtle appeals to the Government.

The Government soon felt the effect of the negative propaganda which the Muslim Youths mounted against her. The Government embarked, once again, on a measure that could cause disaffection amount the Muslims. For instance, it was an open secret that, the Government of Oyo State stage-managed the conferment of a religious title "*BASHORUN-Musulumi of Oyo State*" on a U.P.N. Commissioner for Local Government. The title aimed at making the holder the Supreme Muslim leader in the state. On the other hand, some Muslim sycophants also styled Chief Bola Ige as "Muhammad Mustapha" in order to gain personal favours from a governor who had once declared publicly that "I have come into politics to propagate Christianity. (Standard 1981) The government also used government machinery to oppress some known members of COMYO who were Government employees.

It must be noted that while the government of Oyo State remained adamant in her persecution of the Muslims (e.g. the Coordinator of COMYO was compelled to resign from a government company where he worked) uptill October 1983 when the U.P.N. was dethroned in Oyo State, the Muslim Youths did not relent in their efforts to discredit the government and to sustain a cordial relationship between the Council and the Muslim elders whom the government tried to employ against the Muslim Youths. Up till October 1983. Series of religious injustice of the government included (1) that the government which in 1979 outlawed the establishment of missionary schools, approved the establishment of Baptist High School Igboho and New Eden School Bodija in September 1981 but disallowed the establishment of Muslim Grammar school Erin Oshun and Nawair-Ud-Deen Grammar School Kishi in September 1981. (2) the Government distributed copies of the Bible to students in public schools while the Holy Qur'an was neither purchased nor distributed to any group of Muslim students in any

part of the State. A newspaper (*Nigerian Tribune* of 5/9/82,) contained a report credited to the then Governor which claimed that copies of the Qur'ān had been distributed to Muslims students in Oyo State-Schools. On a live Oyo State Radio Programme, entitled "Guest of the month," broadcast on 24-9-1982, two weeks after the report in *The Tribune*, the governor confessed that no copy of the Qur'ān was purchased by the government because copies of "English Qur'ān are not available in the market." The governor was reacting to statement of a Muslim lady, Miss. R. Labaeka (Now Mrs. Sanni) who, during the radio programme refuted the Governor's earlier statement about the distribution of copies of the Qur'ān.

(3) Three secondary schools which were formerly owned by Christian missionaries were upgraded to colleges of Education (Baptist Grammar School, Iwo, Baptist Grammar School Ibadan, St. Andrews College Oyo) whereas no Muslim or community school was so upgraded. The colleges were fully financed by the "secular" government of Oyo State whereas Islamic Studies could not be taught in these Government Colleges of Education because the "schools were formerly owned by Christians." An example of this policy is the advertisement of St. Andrews Campus of the Oyo State College of Education in the *Daily Sketch*, Ibadan, Nigeria, 21-4-81.

(4) Political appointments were made in such a manner that devout Muslims were not given any sensitive or important position in Government. The Government seemed to have specially searched for and picked Muslims whose commitment to Islam was very minimal. Even then, such Muslims-by-name were very few among political appointees. Among the fourteen state Commissioners only four were Muslims, while ten were, almost without exception, committed Christians. Only one (Pilgrims Board) of the fifteen management Boards of Oyo State Government-Parastatals had a Muslim as Chairman while only one of the thirteen - member schools-Board was a Muslim.

AN APPRAISAL OF THE COUNCIL

COMYO, in its four-year of existence has been able to provide a forum for the co-ordination of activities of Muslim Youth Organisations in Oyo State. over one hundred Youth Organisations are current members of COMYO. Apart from providing a single and united voice on Islamic matters, COMYO, serves as an avenue of informing member organisations of the activities of one another and thereby improving individual performances.

Through prompt action from COMYO, various internal inter- and intra-Muslim communities squabbles are being amicably settled. The politically non-alignment posture of the Council has been a very helpful asset in this direction.

The Council, in collaboration with similar councils, the formation of which was induced by the activities of COMYO in Oyo State, has inaugurated a National Committee for the unification of Muslim Youth Organisations in Nigeria. The committee, which was officially established on the 27th of September 1983, is a positive and courageous step towards the realisation of the much needed unity among the Muslims in Nigeria.

The Council, is currently involved in a propagation mission in the Eastern part of Nigeria which has a strong concentration of non-Muslims. The mission is likely to succeed in presenting Islam to some communities which hitherto have not been able to know what Islam entails.

It is important for COMYO to ensure that the proliferation of Muslim Youth Organisations does not become an agent of quarrels with, and jealousy of one another which may be counter-productive. This observation is more appropriate if one realises the fact that an oppressive government of Chief Bola Ige which served as a common enemy to these Organisations, is now defunct and the present administration in the state, despite its Christian leadership, appears to be making frantic and sincere efforts towards religious freedom and equity in the state. Efforts of the council should now be directed towards massive enlightenment programmes for Muslims in the state.

The circumstances of the inauguration of the committee, understandably, did not leave any room for formation of many rules and regulations to govern the Council. This makes most of the Council policies and activities only conventional and informal the time is ripe for member organisations to jointly provide formal regulations for the Council. The council needs a constitution to govern its activities and structures, and to also formally define its objectives. There is need to specify duration of the tenure of its officers. Lack of formal, firm and strict guidelines for the Council is a potential danger to the success and unity of the council.

The Council also needs to keep more accurate records of its activities. Religious simplicity should not be allowed to over-ride formal and adequate keeping of records which, by our own assesment, the Council currently lacks.

CONCLUSION

The Council is no doubt one of the numerous Islamic bodies which are springing up in various parts of the world to rescue Muslims from religious persecution in various parts of the globe. The achievements which these bodies have recorded to the advantage of Islam could probably not have been if their

respective founders and leaders have been docile. *Jihad* in Nigeria, like in most parts of the world to-day, is an intellectual one. Muslims, therefore, have the enormous task of raising their heads above all odds in order to ensure that Muslims neither persecute nor are they persecuted. The success of COMYO is an illustration of the Prophet's [S.A.W.] tradition that "whoever strives shall attain."

ISHAQ-O-OLOYEDE NIGERIA

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