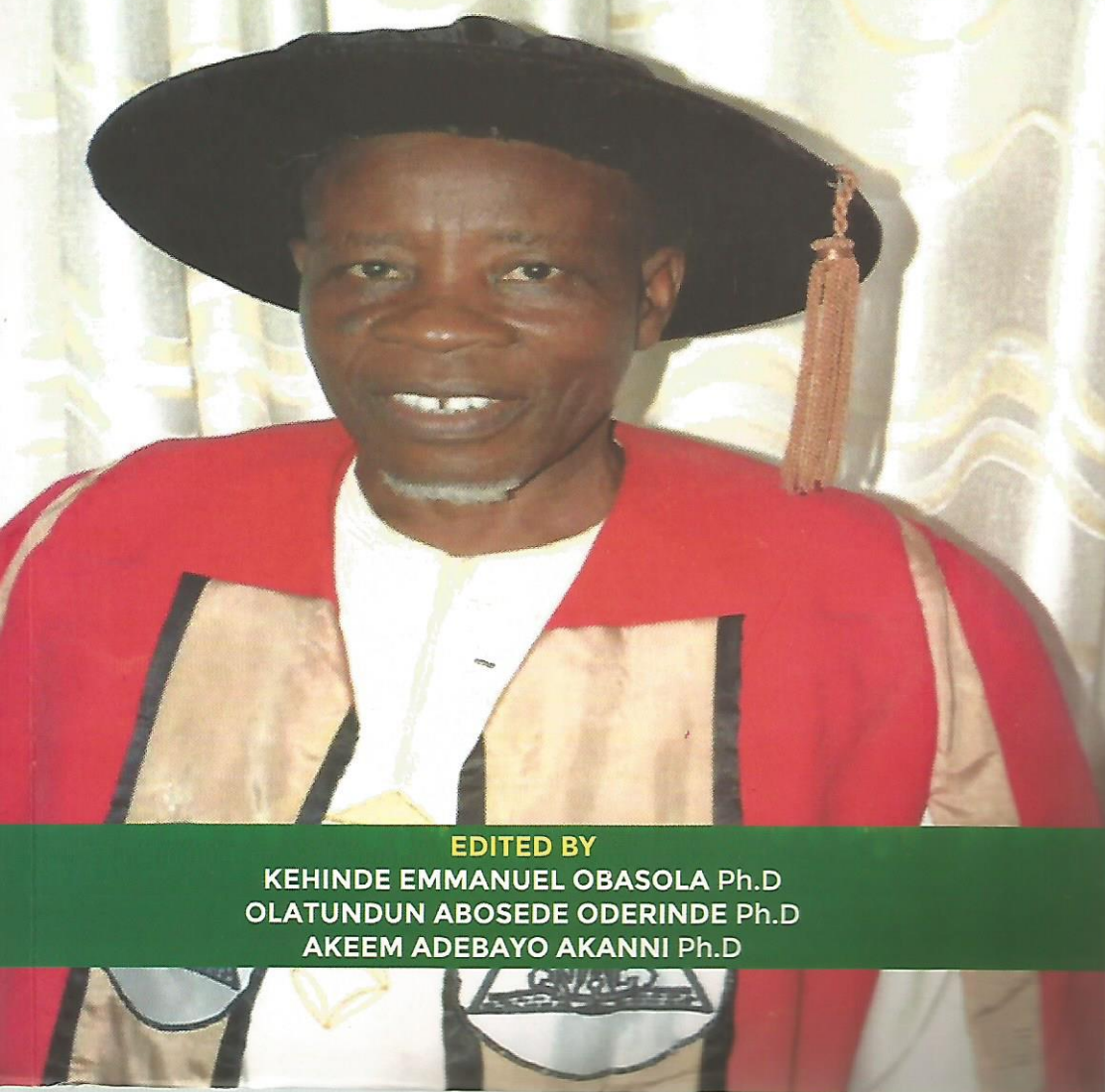


ISLAM'S RESPONSE

TO THE QUEST FOR PEACE, ORDERLINESS AND WELL-BEING IN NIGERIA

A FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOUR OF PROF. KAMALDEEN ABDULAZEEZ BALOGUN



EDITED BY

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FOREWORD

The one in whose honour this Festschrift is published is a man of nobility and integrity in both the academic circle and the society. He wields so much influence in both the gown and the town to such extent that I consider it a rare privilege to write the "Foreword" to a book in his honour.

Professor Kamaldeen Balogun is an accomplished academic, a seasoned university administrator and a great Islamic scholar. He is a leading figure and personality in his chosen field of study - Arabic and Islamic Studies - in Nigeria and beyond. His scholarly works have brought honour and dignity to the University system and his contributions to the development of OlabisiOnabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, Ogun State are unquantifiable, having served in various capacities including being Head of Department, Sub-Dean, Dean of Faculty, Dean of Post-Graduate School, Director of Centre for Sandwich Programmes (CESAP), and Chairman of many University committees. He has also served the Federal and State governments in various capacities. He is a big pillar of support and encouragement to previous and current administrations of OlabisiOnabanjo University, Ago Iwoye. Perhaps, his greatest contribution is the formation and leadership of the OlabisiOnabanjo University Muslim Community, having nursed it from infancy with less than ten (10) members, during very unfavourable and hostile eras, to hundreds of membership today. His positions as the Chief Imam of Egba Gbagura, Abeokuta and the Grand Mufti of Egbaland attest to the fact that he is a community person.

This Festschrift published in his honour has rightly been titled *Islam's Response to the Quest for Peace, Orderliness, and Well-Being in Nigeria*. The various articles from the various aspects of Arabic and Islamic Studies and some from the perspectives of other religions and disciplines, rightly address the subject matter of the title of the Festschrift. In fact, it must be said that no other subject matter could have been apt for discussion in an academic piece of this nature about Nigeria than those addressed in this Festschrift, especially at this period that the

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Interactions Among Muslims and Non-Muslims in Ikorodu Local Government Area of Lagos State as Purveyor of Peaceful Co-Existence

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Abstract

In a pluralistic society and environment like Nigeria where religious freedom and inter-religious dialogue are recognized to be important for national development, the significance and relevance of interactions among adherents of the three major religions, Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity to foster healthy living and peaceful coexistence in the society is essential for the growth and development of the society. However, some communities in Nigeria often experience religious crises and intolerance due to lack of cordial relationship among practitioners of various religions within those communities leading to bloody clashes and destruction of properties. This study, through historical and descriptive approaches, examines the level of religious, economic, social and political interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu. It was revealed that there is a healthy interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu. Also, it was discovered that adherents of Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity have lived mostly in peace since the introduction of the religions (Islam and Christianity) into the area. The study anticipates impending challenges to the interactions of Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu through unemployment, ignorance, and hate speech. It is, therefore, essential for the community to uphold dialogue, accommodation, and tolerance because this level of interaction builds camaraderie and understanding.

Keywords: Interaction, Muslims, Non-Muslims, Peaceful coexistence

Introduction

Interactions are essential in every society because crisis is a product of human relationships as a result of the imperfection that is affixed with human creation; therefore, it is an inevitable and integral part of human life. Its ubiquitous nature makes it a concern of all people, bringing about various creative responses to its management, regulation, resolution and transformation. The complexity of Nigeria makes it difficult to experience a healthy relationship among members of the society at all time. Part of Nigeria's complexity stems out of its diversity and multiplicity in culture and religion. This study agrees that Nigeria is a domain of multiplicity and diversity which makes the country volatile to conflict in the interrelationship among members of the society. Although there are various kinds of multiplicity, the most obvious are in the areas of religion, ethnicity and politics and they all have generated crisis all over the country (*Uhumwuangho & Epelle, 2011*).

Interaction is the activity of talking to other people and understanding them. It is a reciprocal action. Religious interaction is the understanding between two or more religions. Recent research works within the Nigerian context have situated the religious interaction to be more feasible in respect of Muslim-Christian relationship. Arikewuyo (2017: 347) stated that:

the two are close rivalry and more at war against each other than any-one else. Two, because a number of the traditionalists have leanings towards either Islam or Christianity by reason of link with extended family relations or marriage bond.

However, for the purpose of this study, the interactions among Muslims, Christians and Traditionalists in Ikorodu will be our focus. This is because in Ikorodu today, there is evident of practice of these three religions and the need to maintain peaceful coexistence among the practitioners of these religions is essential to avoid conflict in their dwellings. The work therefore, recognises the need for urgent solidarity and cooperation among the adherents of the three religions to ensure peaceful interactions for the purpose of development of Ikorodu.

Ikorodu is a city in Lagos State, Nigeria. Ikorodu lies approximately 36 kilometers north of Lagos; the town is bounded on the south by the Lagoon. In the north, Ikorodu shares a common boundary with Ogun State, while in the east, it has common boundary with Agbowa-Ikosi, a town in Epe Division of Lagos State (Idahoroa, 2009).

Ikorodu is a city that is found in the north eastern part of Lagos state. In senatorial district, it belongs to the Lagos East Senatorial district with major towns which include Imota, Isiu, Liadi, Egbin, Ijede, Igbocho and Boyeku. Ikorodu is one of the five administrative divisions of Lagos State; the five divisions of Lagos State include Ikeja, Badagry, Ikorodu, Lagos and Epe. These divisions are collectively known as *IHH* (Adeyemi & Junaide-Eko 2007).

The study focuses on the interactions of Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu, Lagos State. Having identified the need for a peaceful relationship between various religious adherents who are residents of Ikorodu and Nigeria at large, the conduct of this work becomes imperative. It is however important to note that the aboriginals of Ikorodu were practitioners of African Traditional Religion before the emergence of the two missionary religions; Islam and Christianity. This is evident in their various traditional festivals, sacrifice, the belief in the practice of magic and medicine among others which are still practised today. Consequently, the coming of Islam and Christianity led to conversion of some members of the community into either of these two missionary religions. As a result of this, Ikorodu community has witnessed various forms of interactions among these adherents. These interactions are what this work aims to assess analytically and phenomenologically.

It is however, important to point to the fact that, various forms of interactions have been going on among adherents of the three major religions in Nigeria, these interactions have been either healthy or unhealthy religiously, socially, politically and economically. Today in Nigeria, there is inter-religious marriage, inter-religious dialogue, business partnership by members of various different religions as well as the interplay between religion and politics. This work will however focus on assessing the various forms of interactions of Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu Local Government Area of Lagos State in Nigeria.

The Practice of African Traditional Religion in Ikorodu

One cannot trace the origin of the practice of African Traditional Religion in Ikorodu. However, from what we have gathered so far in this work, it is unarguable that the first religion practised by the aboriginals of Ikorodu was Yoruba Traditional Religion which was handed over to them by their forbearers through oral sources, folktales, songs among other

sources of transmissions. However, we will restate here that, the most practised form of African Traditional Religion among the aboriginals of Ikorodu before Islam and was the worship of Ifa, Magbo and Live (O. A. Ifagbemiro, Personal Communication, December 25, 2018). According to Ifagbemiro, the first religion practised in Ikorodu and all of its environments is the traditional religion. The first of which is *Ifa*, which he said that one of the *odun* the *Ifa* corpus was used to establish the settlement, which is today known as Ikorodu (O. A. Ifagbemiro, Personal communication, December 25, 2018). After *Ifa*, comes *Eluku*, then *Oro Magbo* from Abeokuta and then *Live* from *Majidun* before the establishment of the practice of Islam and Christianity in Ikorodu (Ifagbemiro, Personal Communication, December 25, 2018).

Idowu proposes a five-fold classification of African Traditional Religion viz: Belief in God, belief in divinities, spirits, ancestors, and the practice of magic and medicine (Idowu & Cornwall, 2001). Evidences of these have been found all over Ikorodu among the followers of the Yoruba Traditional Religion. For the purpose of our research, the summary of the major practices of followers of traditional religions in Ikorodu include:

Sacrifice

The study revealed that the followers of traditional religion in Ikorodu now have a shrine dedicated to the worship of their deities (Ifagbemiro, personal communication, December 25, 2018). When it is time for the celebration, they go to the shrine to offer sacrifices to their deities. Items like goat, dog, and yam, among others are offered in the shrine. This is a long age practice till today. However, one will agree that the practice of open sacrifice at T-Junctions where items like eggs, yam, palm oil and many others are put together in a container and dropped in an open place; an act has been credited to the followers of traditional religion.

Festivals

Opoku (1990: 71) states: '...festivals are rituals which recur at regular intervals and which have as their purpose the expression of beliefs held by a particular community. The celebration of traditional festivals is important to worshippers of traditional religion in Ikorodu because they use them to commemorate historical, cultural and religious

events that are of great importance and significance to the community. They equally use them to express gratitude to the spiritual realm, they are usually celebrated annually and a particular date is fixed for the participations. The people of *Liwe* holds their festival in June and the followers of *Eluku* hold theirs in June. There is also *Egugun* Festival, *Eyo* Festival and many more. The annual yam festival is also celebrated in honour of the King of Ikorodu (Ifagbeniroro, personal communication, December 25, 2018). During these celebrations, the whole of the community is in state of celebrations and enjoyment for the traditional worshippers.

Secret Society/Occultism and Oro Cult

Fadipe (1970) claims that the need to form association among the Yoruba is a natural tendency; this is derivable from people living in one compound. Their purpose ranges from promoting and protecting the common interests of their clan in all fields of human endeavour. Occultism is derived from the word 'occult' which means 'mysterious practices and powers involving magic and spirits' (Mayor, 2009:1133). According to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, the word 'occultism' is from 'occultare' 'secrete' or 'occulere' 'conceal'. It therefore means '...supernatural or magical powers; both in its practices and phenomena' (Soanes & Stevenson, 2006:988). The word 'occult' is from the Latin word 'occultus' which means clandestine, or secret, all referring to knowledge of the hidden' (Soanes & Stevenson, 2006:988).

The word *Oro*, according to Ellis means 'fierceness' or 'provocation' (Ellis, 1966). This is another cultural aspect of the Yoruba practiced by the traditional religion adherents in Ikorodu. It is a cult and not a religion. It is exclusively male, it has no special conclave of its own, and it is done to ward away all sorts of evil spirits within the vicinity (Jelaple 1970). The cult of *Magbo* is the most prominent participant of *Oro*, the period is called the *Oro-Magbo* and it is usually done in the month of May of every year (Ifagbeniroro, personal communication, December 25, 2018).

During this performance, women are not allowed to come out, any woman who comes across the cult during the period of the practice of *Oro*, will be captured, killed and sacrificed by the Oro priest. In the past, it used to be done for seven days, but with the pressure from Muslims and Christians, it was reduced to three days except Friday and Sunday,

Recently, the *Oro-Magbo* only takes place in just a day with the exception of Friday and Sunday Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018).

Practice of Magic and Medicine

Magic is the use of the power of the devil or invocation of evil spirits for evil purposes (as opposed to white magic which is used for good purposes) (Soanes & Stevenson, 2006). The use of charms and spells is a major practice peculiar to the followers of traditional religions in Ikorodu. According to Ifagbeniroro, the followers of traditional religion in Ikorodu have *oogun* to avert illness and spiritual attack (Ifagbeniroro, personal communication, December 25, 2018). He noted further that the use of magic and medicine acquired from *Onisegun* like him can help to fight against the activities of the witchcraft who may plan to cause us harm especially at night (Ifagbeniroro, personal communication, December 25, 2018). It is important to note that, the practitioners of traditional religion in Ikorodu believe in the existence and practice of witchcraft which they believe are majorly dominated by the women called *Awon Iya Aje*.

Consultation

This has to do with the consultation of the Oracle or Diviners, Oracle is from the Latin word *oraculum*, taken from *orare*, to speak; it is also seen as a priest or priestess acting as a medium for divine advice or prophecy in a classical antiquity or an infallible authority (Mayor, 2009). Diviner is also an expert in medicines and herbs, in addition to his work as a seer. This study work reveals that the people consult the diviners to help them pry into the spiritual realm to know what the future holds for them or what could possibly be a cause of a predicament they are currently facing and what can be done to solve their current problem. Despite the spread of Islam and Christianity, many people in Ikorodu still go to the diviner to seek assistance in one way or the other. The traditionalists believe that *Mfa* Oracle is capable of identifying the source and solution of any problem (Ifagbeniroro, personal communication, December 25, 2018).

Islam in Ikorodu

The practice of Islam in Ikorodu started long time ago. It has been observed from the various sources consulted for this study that no pristine time is given for when the practice of Islam started in Ikorodu. However,

one of our sources revealed that it was the elders of that time that brought Islam to Ikorodu; these elders include Balogun Mobaluje, Kamoju in Ijumu, Egun Aya from Iumori and Alhaji Osho Aala (Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018). Gradually, they helped to spread Islam to several other towns in Ikorodu.

In an attempt to trace the date the practice of Islam became pronounced in Ikorodu, it was said that the first mosque was built by an Iyagba man called Suberu Onashokun, a ward of Balogun Jaieosimi Mobaluje about two hundred years ago before the civil war between the Egbas and Ikorodu Community which broke out on the 29th of March 1864

(Ligali Mustapha A. Olowo-Idiamu & Ajofoyinbo. n.d). The point of note here is that, Islam had already been established and practised about two hundred years ago before the civil war (Ligali et al n.d).

The advent of Islam in Ikorodu would be incomplete without mentioning the concerted efforts of Soberu Onashokin who was the first person to make the *Adhan* (call to prayer) in the whole of Ikorodu community. History has it that, there was a strong opposition against him after the act by his fellow men and Osugbo in the town. This act resulted to his arrest by the Osugbo Cult, later Balogun Jaieosimi, Egun Aya, Kamoju and other notable persons in the town went to rescue him and he was then released.

It is on record that, Muslims previously made call to prayer secretly. But as a result of the act of Soberu, they could then make the call to prayer publicly without being persecuted by the Osugbo's Cult. Balogun Jaieosimi then gave Soberu a portion of land in his land located in Obun-Oke to build mosque to practice Islam. Soberu made a tent close to the Balogun's palace which was later converted to mosque known as Obun-Oke mosque with Mud Block (Atebo) by notable personalities who had interest in practicing Islam like Kamoju from Ijumu, Egun Aya from Itumori and others. This was the only place where Muslims in Ikorodu town made their five daily prayers. They came from towns like Ijumu, Isele, and Aga to observe their prayers in this mosque (Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018).

The first person that led the Muslims in their *Jumu'ah* Service was an Ilorin man named Alfa Aliyu from Aga ward but was not turbaned;

he is because he was only an acting Imam and was not an indigene of Ikorodu (Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018). The first chief Imam to be turbaned in Ikorodu was Alhaji Bakare, who became the first indigenous Chief Imam of the entire Ikorodu Muslim community of the Central Mosque sited in Oriwu Road, Ikorodu in the year 1907 (Ligali et al n.d). In the history of Islam in Ikorodu, the following Muslims have been appointed chief imams:

- Alhaji Bakare Odu-Ikan (1907-1923)
- Alhaji Mohammed Ibraheem Ogumetun (1923-1944)
- Alhaji Mohammed Ahmad Olohunyo (1944-1976)
- Alhaji AbdulGafar Andu (1976-1999)
- Alhaji AbdulRaheem Omotola Olorunmbé (1999-2006)
- Alhaji Sheikh Seifudeen Oloworibi (2006 till date) (Ligali et al n.d)

As the practice of Islam expands and spreads all over the communities of Ikorodu. Many things happened that are worth mentioning. First the practice of Islam spread fast as many *Ratibi* mosques were established, for Muslims to observe their five daily prayers (Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018). These mosques were established in several parts of Ikorodu communities and are headed by the Imam Ratibis. This played significant role in bringing Islam closer to all members of the communities. The Ratibi Imams also play significant role in the nomination of new Chief Imam when an incumbent dies. The chief Imams are assisted by office holders such as the *Alaga Adini*, *Balogun Adini*, *Iya Egbe Adini* among others.

To further expand the practice of Islam in Ikorodu, central mosques for *Jumu'ah* service have been established in some areas within Ikorodu, among which are Igbo Central Mosque, Baiyeku Central Mosque, Imota Central Mosque, Ipakodo Central Mosque and many more. All of these are under the control and leadership of Ikorodu Central Mosque where the Chief Imam is the leader of other Imams and the Chairman of the Ikorodu Muslim Community.

One thing that is peculiar to the practice of Islam in Ikorodu is the contribution of the Muslims towards the construction of various mosques. It is on record that, the sources of fund of the various mosques constructed are "*fisebilillah*" – contribution towards the cause of God. This is done during the daily prayers, Friday prayers. In essence, Muslims have been the major contributors to the establishment of mosques in Ikorodu.

In another development, Islamic organizations and associations equally contribute to the development of Islam in Ikorodu. Some Raitibi mosques are constructed by these organizations where they hold their Sunday weekly prayers and monthly vigil as the case may be. The *Kamaldeen* Society for instance put a large basin at Oju-Ogbe Junction for money to be contributed towards the construction of Ikorodu Central Mosque. It is on record that since the basin was in a public place, both Muslims and non-Muslims contributed towards the construction of the mosque (Ligali et al n.d).

Another practice to note about Islam in Ikorodu is the missionary activities of the leaders of the religion in Ikorodu. During the reign of late Alhaji Ibrahim Ogumefun as the Chief Imam, Alhaji Mustapha Oke-Osola was the head missionary of the Ikorodu Central Mosque. As the head missionary, he preached Islam to different parts of the community and this made so many people to start practising Islam (Ligali et al n.d). As a result of the success of his missionary efforts, he introduced Ansarullahi Society of Nigeria in Ikorodu. This led to the establishment of several groups such as Badruddeen Society of Nigeria by Sheikh Tijani Adebayo, *Shamsudeen* Society among others. These societies embarked on missionary work of preaching Islam to the people from one community to the other. In Ikorodu today, there are societies like *Ansarudeen*, *Nawairudeen*, Muslim Women Association in Nigeria, Association of Muslim Professionals, *NASEAT*, *Quareeb*, *Ridwanullahi* Missionary Association of Nigeria, *Ahlus-Sunnah* Organisation and many others that have also been embarking on the mission to spread Islam to members of Ikorodu and its environs.

The practice of Islam was also promoted by members of the community who hold leadership posts in different sectors in the community. Mosques and Muslim social groups were established as part of their efforts to establish a Muslim community where Muslims can come together and foster the brotherhood the religion emphasizes on. It is on record that Alhaji Abdulrazzak Alagogo who was the principal of Government Training College, Oke-Ota Ona, Ikorodu (now Government Technical College) established Muslim Students Society of Nigeria and a mosque in the school. While he was also the Principal of the Oriwu College, he established a mosque in the school where *Jum'at* Service was also observed. He also joined hands with prominent Ikorodu Muslims like Alhaji L. F. Adebayo, Alhaji Sheikh R. A. Sambo, Alhaji Azeez Ajasa

among others to establish Muslim Association of Nigeria (MAN) in Ikorodu since 1999 (Ligali et al n.d). The Muslim Association of Ikorodu according to Alhaji R. A. Sambo has been a forum where Muslims in Ikorodu are united under one umbrella (Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018). In an interview with Alhaji Sambo, he noted based on the activities of MAN:

...the major practices of Islam in Ikorodu are what Islam enjoins us to do as Muslims; we pray five daily prayers without discrimination. This means that, where any part of the daily prayer meets you, you observe it in any nearby Raitibi mosque. The Muslims in Ikorodu help the less privilege and in most cases the Imams of various mosques are sponsored by members of their congregation who are rich people in the society. There are many practices of Islam in Ikorodu, even the non-Muslims in the community accord us with respect on Friday, during the period of the Jum'at Service; you will see the beauty of Islam where almost all activities in places like mosques and offices will be suspended because the Muslims are observing their Salat. During the festive period too, we are all over the community showcasing the pride of our religion. We celebrate and even members of the community who are not Muslims celebrate with us (Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018).

The indication of the above is that Muslims in Ikorodu practise what is obtainable in Lagos state where the three religions in Nigeria dominate the society. In addition, the Muslims celebrate the Birth of Prophet Muhammad on yearly occasion, different mosques fix their own date for the celebration from the date of the official recognition, 12 Rabi-ul-Awal (the third month on the Islamic Calendar), they invite one and other and major point of the events include lectures, prayers, praising and Islamic songs (Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018).

We are informed that in Ikorodu, the Ramadan period, a period when Muslims fast for the period of twenty nine or thirty days, the Muslims gather in the Mosque to attend the teaching of the Qur'an, this is

known as the *Tafsir* (Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018). The gathering will further explain the messages of the Quran to the members of the congregation. It is usually held between the *Asr* Prayer and *Maghrib* prayer when they will then break their fast after the conclusion of the lecture. During the same Ramadan period, Muslims gather in the night after the special *Taraweeh* prayer to attend special Ramadan lectures and prayers, this happens between 10pm and 12 am. It is therefore not unusual to see Muslims in the middle of the night coming from night prayer or lectures in Ikorodu environs. Similarly, different mosques organize their own Ramadan lecture during the day, which they invite others from different locality to come and grace the occasion. The special vigil known *Laylatul Qadari* prayer during the last ten days of Ramadan is also organized by different mosques and Islamic organizations (Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018).

The formation of Ikorodu Muslim Association during the reign of the fifth Chief Imam of Ikorodu, Late Alhaji Raheem Omotola was also another forum that brings Muslims especially the religious leaders in Ikorodu together. This association is a forum for unity of the Muslim Community in Ikorodu Township. The forum helped a lot of people to enjoy their fundamental rights especially when they are forced or threatened to leave Islam and return to the religion of their "fore-bearers" (Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018). The association helped Muslims to become enlightened that they have the right to practise any religion of their choice based on their conviction and acceptance. The Chairman of the Association is the Chief Imam of Ikorodu Central Mosque. Many Muslims affiliated associations have also become members of the association today. Ifagbeniro (2015) noted that "they take us to court to avoid fight when we try to take back our followers who have become Muslims". Emphasizing on this, Alhaji Sambo noted that the need to involve the court arose in situation of conflict when it was obvious that the King usually supports the traditionalists in such cases and they have no other option than to accept the judgment of the King.

Christianity in Ikorodu

Christianity came to Ikorodu more than two hundred years after Islam has been established in various communities in Ikorodu. Christianity emerged in Ikorodu around the year 1851 through the Church Missionary Society (CMS) which was headed by a missionary known as

Gollmer (Dosumu, 2018). The main event that marked the establishment of Christianity in Ikorodu is the establishment of churches. It is on record that the missionaries like the Baptist Mission, Methodist Mission and Anglican Mission also came to Ikorodu to establish Christianity; this led to the establishment of many churches in Ikorodu which consequently promoted the practice of Christianity in the locality.

Later on, there were establishments of churches of Africa Pentecostal origin among which are Bethel, Christ Apostolic Church, Cherubim and Seraphim, Four Square Gospel Church, Church of Lord (Aladura), Jehovah Witness, Jehovah Witness, Living Faith Church and Redeemed Christian Church of God. These churches have branches across streets in Ikorodu and the religion of Christianity without prejudice is practised in every street in Ikorodu Local Government of Lagos State. Many of the branches are also headed by pastors and most of them too have headquarters in Ikorodu where all the local branches get directives and report on regular basis, usually monthly (Pastor John, personal communication, December 24, 2018).

It is important to restate here that, giving the large number of denominations we have in Ikorodu Community just like we have noted earlier, examining the practices of all denominations will be a tedious effort. However, it is our hope that Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Ikorodu can give an overview of the religious practices in Ikorodu. The Secretary of CAN in Ikorodu who is a member of Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), noted therefore that having different denominations will make it difficult to access the practice of Christianity in Ikorodu, he said "if you ask me about RCCG, I will tell you in details about our practices, when you go to other churches you will find same thing but the way they do theirs might just be different" (Pastor John, personal communication, December 24, 2018). This shows clearly that most of the practices of different denominations of Christianity in Ikorodu are similar, however they only differ in the ways they perform them.

The practice of Christianity became more prominent when churches started the establishment of many branches and Zonal provinces. The RCCG for instance by 2010, had planted many parishes in Ikorodu, The Overcomers Parish, being the first Church established and the Provincial Headquarters, was big enough for expansion. As such, another Provincial Headquarters was created known as Province A Open

Deer Parish at Odogunyan, Ikorodu. In 2015, due to the continuous expansion of parishes, another provincial headquarters was created, province 58 known as General Assembly Parish at Ginti on the way to Ibeje. Also, Liberty Parish also became a provincial headquarters for province 62. In total the Redeemed Christian Church of God has four Provinces in Ikorodu, Province 22, 33, 58 and 62, each Parish governs numerous Areas and Parishes throughout Ikorodu. These four Provinces were birthed by The Overcomers Parish (Pastor John, personal communication, December 24, 2018). Similarly, this is what other churches do in order to expand the scope of their membership in a particular locality.

Most of the indigenous churches use the indigenous language to preach the message of the gospel, when one attends any open preaching of any of these churches such as retreat or crusade, one will find out that they give the message with the local language. The Yoruba interpreter is always assisting the pastor during sermon and teaching of the message from the Bible. On a visit to one of the programmes organised by the Living Faith Church and Christ Apostolic Church for the purpose of this study, it was observed that the people are given Bible written in Yoruba Language to help them read and understand the messages in the Bible. Some have also been able to preach the message to the members of their family, at places of work because they understand it due to the fact that it is written in their local language, Yoruba. One will not dispute the fact that the use of Yoruba to teach the people helps to spread the practice of Christianity in Ikorodu.

The Christian Association of Ikorodu from inception many decades ago has been a strong body in Ikorodu which unite members and leaders of various churches in the community. The leaders of the churches meet quarterly and the allocation of leadership post is based on the equal representation of the leaders of various denominations (Pastor John, personal communication, December 24, 2018). The former chairman was an elder of The Apostolic Church while the incumbent is Reverend Father of the Catholic Diocese of Ikorodu. As for the whole membership of the Christians in Ikorodu, there is always a period on yearly basis where the CAIN will declare that all members should fast and pray for the peace and development of the community. For instance, when the *Hardoo Boys* were terrorising the whole of Ikorodu and its environs,

CAIN declared fasting specially for God's intervention to root out the perpetrators of this mischievous group. According to Pastor John, today "God has answered our prayers and fasting", these boys have gone with the relentless efforts of the Lagos Command of the Nigerian Police Force. On several occasions, the denominations have come together to organize crusade in playgrounds that accommodates members of their large congregations, during events like this they preach and emphasis is laid on the togetherness of the Christians and peaceful relation with other members of the society.

It is interesting to note that the Yoruba people who dominate the Ikorodu are lovers of miracles and wonders. Having believed that the indigenous churches are capable of offering miracles and wonders, most of them became Christians because they wanted miracle in their lives (RSambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018). Some Muslims and traditionalists have become Christians in search for miracles, signs and wonders. According to Pastor John, miracle is not really what spread Christianity in Ikorodu, but some people believe that they are comfortable when they are in membership in a religion that can offer them tranquil, salvation and prosperity. But our observation shows that some churches during their congregations cannot do without mentioning wonders and miracles. To this end, miracle cannot be taken away from the practices of Christianity in Ikorodu. During a programme, it was said that people gather in that programme because of the claim that the Pastor is capable of performing some miracles for those who need help in one way or the other, the said programme was tagged "Hours of Wonders and Miracles".

Similarly, Christians in Ikorodu organize special prayers for security, prosperity and salvation (Pastor John, personal communication, December 24, 2018). Such prayers may last for 2-7 days; it involves prayer and fasting for a particular period of days, week or months. Information gathered reveals that, such prayers which may be in form of crusade had helped the expansion of Christianity when it was employed by the Christian leaders of the past.

One of the most important practices peculiar to Christianity is the preaching of the gospel through the schools. Having realized that the most vital tool used by the Christian missionaries of the past was western education, they began the establishment of schools. Today in Ikorodu, schools

are owned by Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Methodist Church, Redeemed Christians Church of God (RCCG), Living Faith Church (Winners Chapel), Assembly of God and many other churches. It is interesting to note that many of the schools are located in the Church premises; in fact, some developing Churches will divide the Church auditorium into class rooms during the weekdays. They dedicate time to teach the students about Christianity so that they can have better understanding of the gospel (Pastor John, personal communication, December 24, 2018).

Similar to the above there is what is called "Sunday School"; this practice is put in place to teach students and adult the Bible vigorously. During Sunday school, passages of the Bible are treated and explained succinctly to those in attendance, it is usually held very early in the morning before the commencement of the normal Sunday service. Churches organize their Sunday school either in the early hours before the church service for the children and in the evening of Sunday for adults and children to attend. The purpose of the Sunday school is to spread the practice of Christianity through those that are not even Church Pastors (Pastor John, personal communication, December 24, 2018).

Another practice similar to most Churches in Ikorodu is the practice of weekday's fellowship. These are done in the evenings of the weekdays; it may be just an hour service. In some churches, it is done in form of house to house fellowship where people will gather in the compound of a particular member who will host other members of the church, the fellowship will then be taken to another member's house as agreed upon by the members of the fellowship. Other churches have their own church weekday's programme in the church especially in the evening for the sake of those who have gone to work or schools. There is also practice of special session for the housewives and children whose shops are close to the church's location; this could be held in the morning or midday, depending on the agreed time and the programme of the church.

One will also find in the market of Ikorodu, where traders and pastors of different churches preach to the buyers and sellers in the market, the emphasis of such preaching is always on morality, good conduct and enlightenment about political situation the country. Many of those who preach in this kind of situation must have been taught in the

duty (Pastor John, personal communication, December 24, 2018). The festivals mostly celebrated by Christians in Ikorodu include the Christmas/New Year and the Easter Celebration. During these festive periods, the Christians attend the church in their best dress to praise God and then return home joyfully and then prepare the best of their meal for members of their family to consume.

Lastly, another important practice of the Christian church in Ikorodu is the provision of health care services for members and non-members of the Christian group. Churches organize pre-natal, anti-natal and post-natal services to members of their churches. They even assist through their midwives to assist pregnant women during delivery (Pastor John, personal communication, December 24, 2018). Most of the churches in Ikorodu have been offering free health care services in different parts of the community. The people benefit from this service in one way or the other. Most of the churches have made this part of their practices and as such health care services such as test for blood group, genotypes, HIV/AIDS among others are sponsored by churches especially annually. Similarly, the churches have counseling units where couples are counseled before and after marriage ceremony. It is important to note that Marriage Ceremonies of Christians are also organized in the church of the bride, sometimes, even the church premises are used for reception.

Religious Interaction

Religions interaction is the understanding between two or more religions. It can also be seen as the interfaith dialogue between people of different religious tradition. Religious interaction of adherents of various religions is necessary in order to promote understanding between different religious beliefs to increase acceptance of others. The result of this work has shown clearly that there is high level of religious interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu. However, it is on record that the attempt and quest to put an end to the clashes between Muslims and followers of the traditional religion in the past resulted to the positive religious interactions amongst the religious adherents in Ikorodu today. It is reported that many years back, 1943-1944, a case of clash between Muslims and traditionalists was recorded as given below:

...the Muslims in Ikorodu were celebrating Muharam Day festival in the midnight after leaving the Imam Jamii Ibrahim Ogumefun's house at Iunwolo to perform homage visit. They decided to end at Obun-Oke Mosque – the then Central Mosque. Incidentally, the Eluku cult members who had a mission at that night ran into the Muslim Congregation celebrating the Muharam (Hijrah) Festival. Having been misinformed that the intention of the Muslim is to disrupt their activities the traditionalists clashed with the Muslims and it took the intervention of Balogun and Imam Ogumefun to put an end to the clash (Ligali et al n.d).

The indication of the above is that prior to this time, the *Eluku*, *Liwe*, *Oro* and *Magbo* Cults, Egungun festivals among other traditional religious activities were being organized, celebrated or performed without having regard for the rights of both the Muslims and the Christians. In response to this, the Muslims took a peaceful and legal action towards tackling this menace. Consequently, the court's judgment favoured the Muslims (Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018). The court ruled that nobody should disturb the other or any party and that the cults of *Eluku*, *Liwe*, *Magbo* and *Oro* should give room to others to perform their religious activities anytime without hindrances. What we can deduce from this is that from the onset, there has not been a friendly religious interaction between Muslims and traditionalists in Ikorodu. However, the exposure of the Muslims to take legal actions facilitated the peaceful religious interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims. The action consequently result to respect for freedom of religion and practices with no hindrance of other religions especially during the practices and activities of *Egungun*, *Eyo*, *Oro*, *Magbo Liwe*, *Eluku* and many other religious functions of the followers of traditional religion.

In recent times, Muslims and non-Muslims' religious interactions have been cordial with no report of religious clash, riot or violence in Ikorodu. The Muslims respect the Christians and show understanding to one another, likewise the Christians too. Having understood that the community is dominated by the three religions, they consider other religious

followers in their activities (Pastor John, personal communication, December 24, 2018). In fact, members of the Mosques, Churches and Shrines do not concern themselves about what is happening in others' places of worship (O. A. Ifagbemiro, personal communication, December 25, 2018). *Magbo* Cult for instance who used to hold its activities for seven days when women are not allowed to go out throughout the period reduced the days to three except Fridays and Sundays, recently, the cult activities is done in just a day (R. A. Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018). This development can be credited to the religious interaction existing between the worshippers of traditional religion and other two religions in Ikorodu.

In another development the religious interaction of Muslims and non-Muslims have been cordial due to the virtue of patience Muslims in Ikorodu are known for. It is reported that there have been cases whereby Muslims will be observing their religious obligations or other functions in the mosque and are disturbed by some other religious group singing and dancing in their procession around the mosque venue. In most cases, when the Christians pass by the arena of the mosque in procession, singing and dancing, the Muslims never respond in violent manner or stop them from practicing their religious activities (Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018). This is so because the Christians living in Ikorodu respect the Muslims and will not do anything that will lead to religious misunderstanding (Pastor John, personal communication, December 24, 2018).

It is instructive to note that during religious festivals such as *Liwe*, *Magbo*, *Eluku*, *Eid*, Christmas and New Year and other religious celebration, Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu celebrate together peacefully. They wine and dine together (Ifagbemiro, personal communication, December 25, 2018). There has not been any record of clash during religious festival in Ikorodu. The places of worship where most of these festivals are kick-started are respected. It has been recorded that when the date of any of the traditional festival coincides with that of any of *Eid* or Christmas, the followers of the traditional religion will shift their date in order to honor either the Muslims or the Christians and celebrate with them because it is believed that the Muslims and Christmas will also join them in celebrating theirs.

Furthermore, the traditional ruler in Ikorodu plays significant role in ensuring the religious interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims

in Ikorodu. The current Oba of Ikorodu Township, Oba Bashiru Shomokun is said to be a Muslim but many of our informants made us know that the King does not have a specific religion. The claim is due to the fact that the King does not favor one religion above other. During any festival celebrated by any religion, the King participates. Both Muslims and Christians visit the King's palace during their annual festivals during which they pray for the King and for the peace and security of Ikorodu Township.

In addition, the people of Ikorodu have interaction by attending or participating in the religious activities of each religion. Example of the type of interaction we have in view is the attendance and participating in religious festivals of each religion such as harvest and special services. Muslims attend Harvest festivals of Christians on invitation and vice versa without any discrimination.

Economic Interaction

Ikorodu is a society of different people with different religious ideologies but united for the sake of their welfare. As a group therefore, they are duty bound to interact together economically despite the fact that they have different religious leanings. As a result of this, the economic interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu is directed towards ensuring the wellbeing of all and sundry in the community. First in the area of employment, especially by private owned organization, there is no record of religious bias, Muslims employ non-Muslims and vice versa. This is why in most private organization in Ikorodu, there are members of the three religions (Abisoye, personal communication, December 23, 2018). Similarly, Muslims and non-Muslims are members of same cooperative society, a society that caters for the financial and economic needs of the members.

In a related development, Muslims and non-Muslims are partners in businesses. There are organizations in Ikorodu that are jointly owned by Muslims and non-Muslims (Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018). They partner without considering their religious differences but to achieve a common economic goal by putting their resources together. Many private institutions such as schools and skill acquisition centers owned and established by Muslims are not managed only by Muslims.

In another development, many communities in Ikorodu have specific market days (fagbemiro, personal communication, December 25, 2018). During such days, Muslims and non-Muslims traders buy and sell goods to one another to meet their economic ends despite their religious differences. It is not uncommon to see non-Muslim traders in Ikorodu selling Islamic-related items in their shops and Muslims patronize them. Also, shop owners rent shops to traders without religious consideration (Pastor John, personal communication, December 24, 2018).

Social Interaction

The mode of social interaction is seen in the way the people live together as an entity. They stay in the same family house, share family discussion together and hold political position in the community in spite of their different religious affiliations. They have interaction in different ways through customs, social activities, education and dialogue (McGuire, 2008). In Ikorodu, traditional age group, community and social services join the people together irrespective of their religious affiliation. They are all duty bound to serve the community when a call for such work arises. In this way, the people interact together.

It should be noted that, it is not common to find a family in Ikorodu without present of any of the three religions, either in the nuclear or extended setting (Abisoye, personal communication, December 23, 2018). The children of the same family may belong to three different religions, yet they interact together at home when they return back from their different places of worship. In this way, one would see that family solidarity is much more important than religious solidarity thus tolerance and understanding exist among the religionists. Also, we discover that there is high level of inter religious marriage in Ikorodu especially between Muslims and non-Muslims (Pastor John, personal communication, December 24, 2018). All the informants consulted for the purpose of this study agree to allow inter religious marriage by any of their family members provided the parties are not forced to marry each other.

Furthermore, the Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu coexist peacefully through inviting one another in social events such as wedding ceremonies, turban ceremony, naming, burial rites among other activities that facilitate social solidarity irrespective of their religious differences. In fact, they even seek financial assistance from one another to organize such events. Muslims are also visited by non-Muslims during Islamic festivals.

In term of community development, Muslims and non-Muslims jointly partake in such activities like environmental sanitation, repair of community property and contributing towards providing some services to Ikorodu society. Some of such services that have been jointly supported by Muslims and non-Muslims include community borehole, recruiting and financing local vigilante groups among others. During the disturbances of the *Badoo* cult group in Ikorodu which lasted for many days, the Muslims and non-Muslims jointly fought their common social enemy physically and spiritually (Pastor John, personal communication, December 24, 2018). They assisted the Nigerian Police Force to put an end to the nefarious activities of the group. In a nutshell, in Ikorodu Muslims and non-Muslims are like brothers that keep the properties of one another safe. They live in peace and harmony to foster communal development and societal growth.

Sport is one of the social activities that bind people together to live in unity. Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu engage in various sporting activities. Teams are constituted by Muslims and non-Muslims who work together to achieve a common goal. There is a football league for Ikorodu youths sponsored by one of the political representatives in the town (R. A. Sambo, personal communication, December 24, 2018). Such competition brings people of different religions together and members of each team are made up of Muslims and non-Muslims. The Ikorodu Youth Development Association is also a social group that binds youths in Ikorodu together with no preference to a particular religion. Members come together to discuss issues bothering the community and they sponsor sports and entrepreneurship programmes. The landlord association is another social group composed of Muslims and non-Muslims who interact to provide solutions to problems bothering the society.

Political Interaction

Political ideology joins the people together. There are people of different religious affiliations that belong to the same political camp not minding their divergent religious views. There are avenues for meeting in the society for social and political activities. The Quest for peace, unity, development and stability in the community necessitates political interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu.

There are many political and civil groups in Ikorodu which are not affiliated to a particular religion. Muslims and non-Muslims with similar

political ideologies come together to achieve a common cause in the society. Leadership of such groups is constituted based on acceptance by the members of such group and not based on religious affiliation.

One important thing to note is respect for fundamental human rights of all. The Muslims and non-Muslims respect the right of one another and one religion does not impede others from enjoying or exercising their human right as stipulated in the constitution. During elections, people take away their religious differences and elect leaders with integrity and have contributed to the development of the society. Muslims in Ikorodu will prefer to vote for a non-Muslim in Ikorodu during elections if they are satisfied that the non-Muslim will perform better than the Muslim candidate. Similarly, Pastor John noted that many Christians have been voted into various political offices not because they are Christians and many Muslims have also won political elections because of the trust the people have in them.

Conclusion

This study establishes the fact that there is a healthy interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu Local Government of Lagos State. We have noted the religious, social and economic interactions that exist between Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu. It demonstrates that there exists a cordial relationship and interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu. In our findings, it is discovered that adherents of Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity have lived in peace since the introduction of the religions into the area. It is noted in these findings that religious friction has not degenerated into bloody clash or disturbance of peace in this area in spite of religious diversity among the people. To this end, the interactions of various kinds have helped to facilitate peace, progress and unity in Ikorodu.

We anticipate impending challenges to the interactions of Muslims and non-Muslims in Ikorodu through unemployment, ignorance, hate speech among others. The people of Ikorodu should employ dialogue, understanding, accommodation, tolerance and recognition of the Supreme Being whom they all worship in different ways (Balogun, 1978; Bidmos, 2006; A. T. Dopamu, 2007; Quadri, 2013). We, therefore, share the view of Mustapha Abdul-Hamid that it is the "dialogue of life" that ensures peace between two faiths rather than conference meetings and half-hearted hand-shakes. The theory of "dialogue of life" states that life itself offers opportunities for people of

different faiths, ethnicities and background to interact as they go about their daily activities (Abdul-Hamid, 2011). This is essential for every society to uphold because Interaction builds camaraderie and understanding.

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