



ISLAMIC SOCIETIES AND THEIR INFLUENCES ON ISLAM IN EKITI STATE IN THE 20th CENTURY

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Abstract

Islamic societies are the major pillars behind most of the achievements recorded by Islam in Nigeria. The result of western education brought by the Christian missionaries had untoward effect on Muslims who sought to have western education, most especially in the 40s. It was the formation of Islamic societies that contributed in no small measure in quenching the trend of the conversion. In Ekiti State, the first set of Islamic societies established helped in putting into a halt the conversion of Muslims to Christianity as a result of Christian evangelical approach of western education brought by the Missionaries. The new generation Islamic societies are more of the prayer group type. Some people always refer to them as Modern Pentecostal Islamic groups. This may be as the result of their modern approach to Islamic revivalism which resembles the Christian Pentecostal groups. They are providing a modern approach to da wah activities as a means of forging ahead the frontiers of Islam. It is on this premise that this work intends to study the establishments of these Islamic societies in Ekiti State with the view to determining their influence on the growth of Islam in the State.

Keywords: *Islam, influence, societies, Ekiti State.*

Introduction

It has been opined that the reason for the formation of Muslim Organizations is the desire to spread the Islamic knowledge through an improved way of combining between Islamic and western education without deviating from Islam and its culture.¹ According to Al-Ilori, Muslims come together to form Muslim organizations for the purpose of putting Islamic education in the right channel.² The first generation Islamic organizations in Nigeria include the Ansar -Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria which was established in 1923, Zumratul Islāmiyyah in 1926, Nawa'irud-Deen Society in 1934 and Ansar-Ul-Islam

Society in 1945. All these organizations were able to establish Muslim schools. Though the schools established by these organizations were to a very large extent, western in style but were Islamic only by their names and by having Islamic Religious Knowledge as a main subject in their curricula.³

With the advent of the Christian Pentecostal churches, more Muslims were converted into Christianity. The Muslims too sought for what could be a counter measure, the modern *Asalatu* groups were formed. They introduced praise-worship centers for their member. As a strategy that could

curtail the allurements of singing and dancing by the Christians which has been one of the reasons identified for young Muslim children's attending churches, their *Asalatus* were scheduled for Sundays during the Christian service hours.

Based on the above, Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria (ADS) and Nawairud-Deen Society of Nigeria (NUD) which belong to the first generation Islamic societies as well as Nasrul-Lahi-l-Fathi Society of Nigeria (NASFAT) and Alfathu-l-Qareeb Muslim Organization of Nigeria that are dominant in the State as the leading *Asalatu* groups would be the focus of this discussion.

Ekiti Etate, Geography and Religion

Ekiti State is one of the states in Nigeria, it was created on October 1, 1996, with an estimated population of about 1.87 million., out of the old Ondo State⁴ Ekiti, meaning "hilly country side" is situated North of Yorubaland in the South West of Nigeria. It is bounded by Osun State in the West, Kwara State in the North, Kogi State in the North East and Ondo State in the South East. Ekiti is situated in the heart of the tropics between longitude 4.⁰ and 4.15⁰ East of the Greenwich Meridian and latitude 7.15⁰ to 8.5⁰ North of the Equator. Ekiti State is mainly an upland zone. It rises 250 meters above the sea level and lies within a beautiful area underlain by metamorphic rocks of the basement complex. It has a rhythmically undulating land surface.⁵ It is interesting to know that Ekiti is the only State in Nigeria with a single

ethnic group. Hence, it is homogenous in its ethnicity. Perchance, this has been responsible for its unity and growth. Three principal religions are dominant in the State; these are African Traditional Religion, Christianity, and Islām. Like most communities in Yorubaland, adherents of these religions are socially interwoven and do so many things together including their festival and worships in some cases.⁶

The *Ansar-Ud-Deen* Society of Nigeria (ADS)

Literally, the name 'Ansar -Ud-Deen' means "helper of the cause of Islāmic Religion." In the universal history of Islam, the term *Ansar* was coined to refer to the companions of Prophet Muhammad from the inhabitants of Al-Madinah who embraced Islam and supported it and who received and accommodated the Muslim emigrants from Mecca and other places during the *Hijrah* of Prophet Muhammad. It was this word that was used by the founders of Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria in 1923 to designate the Islamic body that was formed in Lagos. The founders of the Society were passionate about promoting the cause of Islam in Lagos and they were committed to helping and enlarging the frontiers of Islam in Lagos.^{7,4}

In tracing the birth of this Society, Adekilekun opined that the urge to get Muslim children educated in schools free of Christian indoctrination gave birth to a society known as the Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society. It was a non-political and non-sectarian organization. It was this organization that is later renamed as Ansar-Ud-deen Society of Nigeria.⁸ He went

further to say that the Christian Missionaries who introduced secular education to Nigeria came with the primary aim of propagating Christianity and therefore would do their best to get as many converts from among the pagans and Muslims who attended their schools as possible. He stressed the fact that the campaign was so much intensified in the nineteen twenties that Muslim children found it very difficult, if not impossible, to attend schools where Western secular education was being taught, unless they changed their names.⁹

According to Gbadamosi, the young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society was founded to:

- i. build and operate educational facilities;
- ii. encourage literacy and intellectual pursuits among its members;
- iii. promote the religious and moral advancement of the Muslim community;
- iv. eradicate all forms of evils and corruption that have crept into Islam and foster brotherhood among all members of the Muslim community;
- v. spread the great message of Islam and disseminate true knowledge of the Holy Qur'ān among all people;
- vi. translate the Holy Qur'ān and other Islamic books into local languages and circulate these among Muslims and non – Muslims;¹⁰
- vii. maintain a library for the use of members;

viii. undertake generally other things that may tend to promote education¹¹

In the then Ekiti province, the first contact with Ansar –Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria was Igbemo Ekiti in 1946.¹² A major factor that brought the society to Igbemo Ekiti was its educational policy.¹³ It was the same year in which the society was introduced to Ado-Ekiti Muslims. Other towns that joined the society before its official recognition in the state in 1949 were Awo Ekiti, Ido Ekiti, Ilawe Ekiti, Otun Ekiti and Emure Ekiti.¹⁴ Like what happened in Lagos where the society was founded, the need for the Muslim children to acquire Western education without being converted to Christianity led to the establishment of its branches in Ekiti.¹⁵

The formation of the society brought every Muslim community in Ekiti together as a united body with one voice; the result of the en-mass joining of the society was its rapid spread to every nook and cranny of Ekiti land. Agbetola stressed that the largest strong hold of Ansar-Ud-Deen in the then Ondo State was Ekiti Division.¹⁶

The major achievement of this Society could be linked to the educational advancement of Muslims. As can be found in the society's aim and objectives identified above, the educational advancement of Muslims was very dear to the founding fathers of Ansar-Ud-Deen Society. In assessing the effects of Ansar-Ud-Deen on the growth of Islāmic education in Ekiti State, Adigun pointed out that the introduction of

Ansar-Ud-Deen Society in Ekiti saw a gradual positive effect towards the growth of Islamic education in the State.¹⁷ The society is the pacesetter for other Islamic societies in the State.

The society has both primary and secondary schools across Ekiti State in order to solve the problem of conversion of Muslims into Christianity through admission into Christian schools. Therefore, one of the outstanding achievements of the Society was the establishment of Ansar-Ud-Deen primary and secondary schools throughout Ekiti State in which many Muslims and non-Muslims have been trained.¹⁸ It has public primary schools established and run by government in its name that spread across fifteen out of the sixteen Local Governments of the State. The establishment of these schools started in 1945, though, majority were established in 1950s. The public secondary schools established by government and named Ansar-Ud-Deen in the State include; Ansar-Ud-Deen Comprehensive High School, Ikole Ekiti, 1959, Ansar-Ud-Deen Comprehensive High School, Ire Ekiti, 1976, Ansar-Ud-Deen Comprehensive High School, Ado-Ekiti, 1980, and Ansar-Ud-Deen Comprehensive High School, Ikere Ekiti, 1980. It is apt to say that the rate of establishing schools by the Society has reduced since 1980.¹⁹

Most of the buildings in the existing schools are now dilapidated. Though this is greatly associated to failures on the path of government running the school, and at the same time, the society in whose name the schools were established were not always on

ground to see to the development of these schools. Also, the products of the schools are not ploughing back to their *alma-mater*. A typical example in this regard is Ansar-Ud-Deen Comprehensive High School, Ado-Ekiti, which has no formidable Old Students Association for over three decades.²⁰

Ansar-Ud-Deen Society is doing a lot of Islamic programmes in various communities in the State. Each town is involved in various *da'wah* programmes. Apart from the state council jointly sponsoring radio and television programmes most especially during *Ramadan*, different local governments and towns do sponsor programmes. Other means of *dawah* that are general in all local branches include the celebration of important Islamic religious festivities like *Laylatul Qadr*, *Mawlud Nabiyy*, *Nisfu Sha'ban* and a weekly *Asalatu* prayers to supplicate for Allah's favours to meet the needs of members.²¹

On the face value, the society could be said to be developing. However, the reason behind its establishment is now being neglected. It has derailed from its laudable educational programmes as most of the schools established under their names were not properly monitored. A good example is the Ansar-Ud-Deen High School, Ado-Ekiti. The leadership of the society has not been participating in the developmental projects of the school. For over a decade, they have not come to the school on official visit.²²

Struggling for leadership is affecting the progress of the society in the State.

For instance, in Ikere-Ekiti, it was the struggle for *Imāshīp* that made some group of people to secede from the society to form Nawair-Ud-Deen Society. The same thing happened in Igbemo Ekiti where some of their members went away to form what is known as Central Mosque. At Odo Otu branch in Ado-Ekiti, the process of getting a new Imam has not only caused problem within the *Jama'ah* but also within the rank and file in the society.²³

When government took over the control of missionary schools, the Christian counterpart in the state shifted towards establishment of private schools. This idea is seriously lacking in Ansar-Ud-Deen Society as a major Islamic organization in the State. The only private Nursery and Primary school established by Ado Branch is not witnessing a desired development. Though the school has moved to its permanent site, the development of the school is very low compared to other private schools within the state capital that were established around the same time.²⁴

Nawairud-Deen Society of Nigeria (NUD)

The Society was established on the 4th of November, 1939, in Abeokuta Ogun State. It was said to have been necessitated by the open discrimination against the Muslim Community by the early Christian Missionaries especially in the areas of education and promotion of commerce in Southwestern Nigeria.²⁵ The discrimination resulted into easy conversion of Muslims to Christianity. Therefore, just like the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, one can

aptly say that the pursuit of Western/secular education was the main reason for the formation of Nawairud-Deen Society of Nigeria.

An account reveals that the society came to Ekiti in 1955 through Pa Gidado but later became defunct.²⁶ Its re-emergence came in 1986 as a result of the dispute in filling the vacant position of Imām in Ikere Ekiti.²⁷ Kareem M. A has an account of what transpired during the installation of Imam A. K. Ibrahim that led to the splitting of the Ansar-Ud-Deen mosque, Ikere Ekiti into two and the consequence emergence of Nawairu-deen Society from the Mosque. The main agitators who were not pleased with the emergence of Imam A. K. Ibrahim were the Oyopejus of Ikere Ekiti who later broke out to form the Nawairu-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Chapter in 1986²⁸ Also in Ise Ekiti in 1987, there was internal dispute in the town within the executives of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Central Mosque which led some members to pull out to form Nawairu-Deen Central Mosque in the town. Other towns where the Society established branches in the State include Ikole Ekiti, Odo-Oro Ekiti and Odo-Ayedun Ekiti.²⁹

Among the major achievements of this Society in the State was the building of *Jum'ah* Mosques (these are Mosques specially dedicated only for Friday services) in all its five branches in the State. At Ikere Ekiti, the headquarters of the society in the State, the Society was formally using a *ratibi* Mosque (a mosque specially dedicated to observance of five daily prayers only) for *Jum'ah* services

before they moved to their own permanent Mosque of a story building. Other achievement of the Society was the establishment of six ratibi Mosques at Oke Igele, Ile Abaoyo, Isa Oye, Oke Musulumi, Ile Alajiki and Ayedun quarters in Ikere Ekiti.³⁰

The harmonious relationship between the Society and other major Islamic Societies in Ikere Ekiti has led to the development of Islām in the Local Government. The Executive Committee of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Ikere Local Government was formed from the representatives of Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, Nawairu-Deen Society, Islahu-Deen Society, Zumratul-Mu'min and the Ahmadiyyah Jama'at. Youth of all these organizations were members of the Local Government branch of National Council for Muslim Youth Organizations (NACOMYO). In the Area of education, the Society has a Government owned primary schools established on its name in Ikere Ekiti and Aramoko Ekiti.³¹

***Nasrul-Lahi-l-Fathi* Society of Nigeria (NASFAT)**

NASFAT is one of the leading prayer groups among the Muslim prayer groups in Nigeria. It is the first to become famous and widely accepted among all the modern Muslim prayer groups. Some people refer to it as a Muslim Pentecostal group.³² It has been observed that many Muslims were converted to Christianity in the early 80s. Two factors have been identified for this. They are;

- i. The agenda of salvation for all and sundry including the elites by the

prevailing Pentecostal Christian groups.

- ii. The non-availability of Muslim group that is propagating Islam and calling for salvation especially to the elites such that they could introduce short time fellowships.³³

It was in response to this that a group of bankers was said to have gathered on Saturday 28th July, 1984 in Ibadan to form a corporate prayer group that would cater for the spiritual needs of Muslims in urban areas and building in them the confidence that they could also attain their goals in life without converting from Islam. This group named themselves *Yusrullah* Association of Nigeria.³⁴ which later metamorphosed to NASFAT

The Society was brought to Ekiti State in March, 1988. It started its preliminary operation at the residential house of Alhaji Oluwatoki who later became the State Missioner for the Society.³⁵ In the year 2000, members moved to Ereguru Mosque, Ado-Ekiti, for the weekly prayer meeting. This was said to be due to increase in members that could not be contained in the residential house. At present, the society could boast of fourteen branches within Ekiti State.³⁶ Other achievements of the society in the state include:

- i. Acquisition of landed properties:
At present, the society has land at Ado Ekiti, Ikere Ekiti, Iworoko Ekiti, Omuo Ekiti and Are Ekiti. While Ado Ekiti and Ikere Ekiti branches have moved to their sites to hold their programmes, work is on-going at Iworoko site while others are yet to commence construction.

- ii. *Da'wah*: There are various forms of *da'wah* activities embarked upon by this society in Ekiti State. The major one is the weekly *Asalatu* prayer. This affords members the opportunity to go out for a spiritual prayer meeting every Sundays which is in tandem with the mission of the society. Also, the society organizes other programmes like *Laylatul Qadr* where thousands of members and non-members come to witness the benefit of the blessed night. Other *da'wah* programmes of the society include youth camps, missioner training and conferences. All these are geared towards mobilization of Muslim youths in the State. The resultant effect was a drastic reduction in the rate of conversion of Muslim youths into other religions.³⁷

List of NASFAT Branches and their *Asalatu* Locations in Ekiti State

SN	Branch	<i>Asalatu</i> Locations
1	Ado	NASFAT Village, Iworoko Road, Ado-Ekiti
2	Ayegunle Ise	Ayegunle Ise Central Mosque
3	Ikere	NASFAT Praying Ground, College of Education Ikere Road, Ikere Ekiti
4	Emure	Emure Central Mosque, Emure Ekiti
5	Ile Ona	Ile Ona Central Mosque, Ile Ona, Aramoko Ekiti
6	Aramoko	Aramoko Central Mosque, Aramoko Ekiti
7	Obada Ise	Obada Central Mosque, Obada, Ise Ekiti
8	Iworoko	Iworoko Central Mosque, Iworoko Ekiti
9	Are	Are Cenral Mosque, Are Ekiti
10	Ekiti East	Kota Central Mosque, Kota Ekiti
11	Otun	Otun Central Mosque, Otun Ekiti
12	Ido	Ido Central Mosque, Ido Ekiti
13	Efon	Efon Central Mosque, Efon Ekiti
14	Ilawe	Ilawe Central Mosque, Ilawe Ekiti.

Nasrul-Lahi-l-Fathi Society of Nigeria, Ado-Ekiti Branch, Brochure for the Formal Inauguration Ceremony of the Zonal Executive officers Ekiti Zone & Ado-Ekiti Branch March, 2016.

Alfathu-l-Qareeb Muslim Organization of Nigeria

Alfathu-Qareeb Muslim Organization of Nigeria was founded on Sunday, June 20, 1999. Alhaji Abdu-Muni^cm Taiye Tijani who established the society was its pioneer missioner and remains its missioner until his demise sometime in 2010. The Society has been growing in leaps and bounds since the period of its establishment,

many branches have been established within and outside the country.³⁸

In Ekiti State, the organization got to the State on the 21st of November, 2003, through Alhaji Abdulhakeem Afenifere. Since then, he has been the State Missioner.³⁹ Alhaji Abdulhakeem Afenifere traced the history of the organization since inception. He claimed that the Ado-

Ekiti branch of the organization which was the pioneering branch initially occupied Iranlowo Oluwa Mosque, Isato, Ado-Ekiti, between 2003 and 2007. There was a rise in the population of members to the extent that the venue could not contain them. This prompted them to move to another bigger mosque known as Fiwakesin Mosque at Irona, Ado Ekiti, which they used from 2007 to 2013.⁴⁰ The society later constructed its own Mosque along 132KVA Omisanjana, Ado Ekiti, where they are permanently using for their programmes to date.

The Society has to its credit the following programmes:

- i. Sunday Asalat: This is a weekly programme where members recite various *adhkar* in *jama'ah* led by the Missioner. It takes place between 8:30am to 12noon. The congregational *adhkar* (litanies) is followed by *wa'azi* (admonition) and after which, members were allowed to ask questions on various issues on Islam.
- ii. Friday Prayer: This group prides itself as the first *alasalatu* group in the State with its own *Jum'ah* mosque. Members and non-members from far and near to attend *Jum'ah* service with this group.
- iii. Laylatul-Qadr: A date is chosen between the twenty first and twenty ninth of Ramadan to mark the night of majesty when the glorious Qur'an was revealed. They claimed that the reason for the celebration was their love for Allah who is the Author of *Al-Qur'an*. The usual venue is Olaoluwa Muslim Grammar

School playing ground, Ado-Ekiti. Members and non-members of the group attend with high expectation of supplicating to Allah. Prayers were offered individually and in group throughout the chosen night. An Islamic scholar is equally invited each year to deliver a special lecture. In most cases, the lecture centers on the importance of the night.

- iv. Mawlidu'n-Nabiyy: This is the commemoration of the birth of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). It is an avenue where members listen to lectures on the life of the Prophet, his way of life, and the lessons thereof for the present generation.
- v. Hijrah Celebration: *Muharram* is the first month of the lunar calendar. Some Muslims groups commemorate the journey of prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) from Macca to Medina and the eventual establishment of Islamic community in this month. Alfathu Qareeb celebrates this day in their own organization by delivering lectures on various topics. They also join NACOMYO, the umbrella organization of Muslim youths in Ekiti State in the celebration of the day.
- vi. Hajj Performance: One of the programmes that this organization embarks upon is Hajj programmes. Pre-Hajj lectures are organized for members who intend to perform Hajj in a particular year on the way and manner of carrying out the Hajj rites. They equally celebrate with their members who return from Hajj. This gives them the opportunity to educate

members on how to behave after returning from Hajj.

vii. Celebrating the Islamic Festivals:

Apart from the fact that this organization performs her *‘Id* prayers at their own *‘Id* praying ground, at Omisajana, Ado Ekiti, it also organizes a get together for members to celebrate within themselves.⁴¹

The major goal of any Islamic organization is its involvement in *da‘wah*. This organization has been active in the spread of Islam in Ekiti State. Within the period of the organization’s establishment in the State, twenty non-Muslims have been converted to Islam. Many nominal Muslims too have become more committed to the religion. The Ado-Ekiti branch has also constructed its own mosque after previously using two different mosques for their programmes. The mosque is used by members for *Jum‘ah* prayer and other programmes of the Society. The Ayede Ekiti branch of the organization has equally built its own mosque for their programmes.⁴²

The organization put up various programmes for settling family disputes, re-uniting families and promoting kinship based on religion. One of such programmes as explained by the State Missioner is birthday celebration. Members whose birth days fall within a particular month were made to celebrate together on a particular chosen day in the month. This he said is creating more harmony in homes. They equally organize marriage seminars for members to discuss on various challenges faced in different homes. Another major

achievement of the organization is that it has established many branches across the State, prominent among the towns where it has a branch include Ogotun Ekiti, Igbara Odo Ekiti, Ikoro Ekiti, Ilupeju Ekiti, Ise-Ekiti, Ayede Ekiti and Omuo-Oke Ekiti. There are other centers that are now moribund; they include Ijero-Ekiti, Igede-Ekiti and Ikere-Ekiti.⁴³

Despite the above achievements, the Society is faced with challenges of funding. The state missioner reported that many of their members are not responding to the dues by the Society. A greater challenge is the drive for membership. Some of their members have low commitment to attending programmes regularly. This is as a result of similar organizations organizing similar programmes at the same time. For example in Ado-Ekiti, there are so many Sunday *Asalatu* programmes and *Laylatul Qadr* during Ramadan, which are traditional programmes of the Society, thereby giving alternatives to member to attend at the expense of their own organization.⁴⁴

Conclusion

This paper has been able to discuss the establishment of some Islamic organizations in the State and their contributions to the development of Islam in Ekiti State. While Christianity brought the Western education through the Church Missionaries, Islam, on the other hand, brought development to its members and the State at large through the formation of different Islamic societies. The work has also been able to bring to the fore some of the achievements by the Islamic

societies in Ekiti State such as establishments of schools, building of mosques, evangelism through different study circus, media *da'wah* through radio and television stations and meeting the needs of members through various empowerment programmes.

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