

**EXPLORING THE REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIMS IN EKITI
STATE GOVERNANCE: A SURVEY FROM 2014 TO 2024**

By

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Abstract:

This study critically analyses the involvement of Muslims in Ekiti State governance particularly since the inception of the current democratic dispensation in 1999. They are persistently not adequately represented in the affairs of the State. This work aims to find out the reason for the low level of Muslims' involvement in the State administration and performance of their secondary schools to enable their children to acquire educational qualifications for public service. The research method adopted is historical and analytical. The historical method is adopted to look into past events that shaped the contemporary situation of Muslims in the State while the analytical method is for examining the implications of the current situation. To this end, data are collected from the Secondary Schools established by Ekiti Muslims about six decades ago to equip their children for public service. This is to establish the extent to which the Schools have achieved the aim. Among the findings is the fact that the Schools are dominated by non-Muslims in terms of both management and staff strength with the effect that Muslims have little or no say in running them. In the light of this, the Schools cannot maximally perform to address the challenge of inadequate educational qualifications of Muslim children into the public service. To round off, it is recommended that special attention should be paid to create awareness among both indigenous and immigrant Muslims with respect to importance of education as a means to achieve political representation. To that effect, concerted efforts should be made to ensure that Muslim teachers are posted to the Schools especially at the management level and establishing private Muslim schools to give Muslim children motivation and a sense of belonging.

Keywords: Ekiti State, Governance, Muslims, Representation, Education

Introduction

Since the inception of democratic rule in Ekiti State with the Alliance for Democracy Government under the Governorship of Otunba Niyi Adebayo (1999-2003), Muslims in Ekiti State had been expressing concern against inadequate representation. Imams and opinion leaders had taken advantage of public outings to draw attention to this challenge. In addition, there were delegations to Government on the same issue.

This study is a critical assessment of the apparent inadequate representation of Muslims in Ekiti State administration both in the areas of political appointments and carrier offices. There has always been a single Commissioner or Special Adviser in the State cabinet. Among the sixteen Local Government Chairmen and Members of Ekiti State House of Assembly respectively, there has always been a Muslim among them. Even when we talk about Permanent Secretaries and Judges in the State who have attained the peak of their carriers by promotion, Muslims hardly feature among them. Thus, it is clear that Muslims are dimly visible in the governance of Ekiti State. The question now arises: Is this a reflection of the true percentage of the Muslim populace because democracy is a game of number? Or as a result of marginalization or inadequacy of educational qualifications to compete favourably with others for the posts?

This paper is made up of six sections, this introduction inclusive. It discusses the contemporary situation in Ekiti State, Muslims' representation in Government, challenges facing Muslims, the way out and recommendations. It rounds off with concluding remarks.

Contemporary Situation in Ekiti State:

The Muslim Community of Ekiti State, having been persistently disappointed and embarrassed by the poor representation in the governance of the State, had been taking steps to better its lots. Among such was the meeting convened by the League of Imams and Alfas in Ekiti State in conjunction with Nigerian Council for Islamic Affairs, Ekiti State, on Thursday, January 18, 2018. The main objective of the meeting was to deliberate on how to ensure better representation of Muslims in the various arms of government. Many Muslim groups and societies put up programmes to mobilise their members for this purpose. Among such groups were the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN), Ekiti State Area Unit, National Council of Muslim Organisations (NACOMYO) and Naşru'l-Lāhi'l- Fātiḥ Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), just to mention a few.⁴

Challenges Facing Muslims in Ekiti State

The agitation for political relevance is just the summation of the grievances of Muslims in Ekiti State. There are apparent cases of discrimination against Muslims and their religion. For instance, there were cases of Muslim ladies being discriminated against because they use *Hijāb* in Government offices, although this has been addressed; harassment of Muslim students especially in schools initially founded by Christian denominations with a view to dissuading them from Islam, refusal to teach Islamic Studies in such schools even though Christian Religious Studies is taught in all schools established by Muslims.⁵ In fact, being side-lined in political representation is just a tip of the ice bag. Of course, the whole situation cannot be viewed in isolation without relating it to the historical antecedents paving the way for the planting of Islam and Christianity in Ekiti and the unfolding events that shaped the outlook of the socio-political landscape in the State.

Just like other parts of Yoruba land, the people responsible for the spread of Islam to Ekiti, to a large extent, were merchants, scholars, preachers, medicine men and clerics. That was accentuated by the political logjam that led to the establishment of Ilorin as the outpost of the Sokoto *Jihād* and the subsequent incursions to extend the frontiers of the Caliphate to Yoruba land. The moves were halted in the Osogbo war of 1840. Raids and military expeditions to Ekiti settlements along or close to the borderlines between Ekiti and Ilorin Emirate had both positive and negative effects respectively on the fortunes of Islam in Ekiti later.⁶

Some places like Òtùn, Erínmòpé and Ìkùn had early close interactions with Muslims on the socio-economic front, a situation which enhanced the spread of Islam in such areas. Ekiti men and women who had to stay in the midst of Muslims as a result of being enslaved or voluntary relocation to predominantly Muslim areas outside Ekiti land came back home as converts to sow the seeds of the new faith. Such people laid the foundation for the subsequent consolidation and stabilization of Islam.⁷

The vestiges of military confrontations between the Muslim warriors and Ekiti people led to the victimisation and persecution of new Muslim converts in many towns. They were sometimes labelled as collaborators with the common enemies of the people and moles who compromised the community security. The fact that the theological teachings of Islam were the direct opposite of the principles and tenets of the Traditional Religion which largely enjoyed the status of a State religion at the time exposed Islam and its adherents to stiff opposition and confrontation. It was their unflinching faith and commitment that sustained them to withstand the onslaught and

intimidation.⁸ Despite all the odds, Islam survived. It gained wide acceptance before the advent of colonialists and missionaries who ushered in a new wave of challenges subsisting to date.

Preliminary attempts to persuade Ekiti people to give their lives to Christ did not succeed as anticipated. Loyalty to the Traditional Religion and suspicion of the intention of the white men were among the factors responsible for that. With cessation of hostilities as a result of the end of Kiriji war on September 23, 1886 and free movement from one settlement to the other, many Christian missions were able to firmly establish their footholds in Ekiti land. Prominent among them were the Christian Missionary Church (Anglican Church), Catholic Church and Baptist Mission. Others were Seventh-day Adventists and Methodist Church.⁹ Of all strategies used to attract Ekiti to Christianity, education became the most potent.¹⁰ The story is the same with what took place in other parts of Yoruba land. The various denominations competed with one another in establishing elementary schools in the nooks and crannies of Ekiti. Christian Missionary Society took a giant stride by establishing the first secondary school formally in 1933, having successfully established and run an elementary school since 1896, also in Ado-Ekiti.¹¹ With that, Anglican Church recorded a lead, a feat the landmarks of which are clearly visible in formal and informal sectors of the public life in Ekiti “as hundreds of Ekiti sons, who eventually occupied reputable posts all over the country, graduated” from it.¹² Muslims established a post-primary institution of learning for the first time in 1959, after about 23 years.¹³

Among the greatest challenges facing Muslims in Ekiti land in the colonial days up to the time of independence is the unwarranted criticism of Islam and its adherents by associating them with illiteracy, barbarism and backwardness. As at the time, many Muslim families refused to allow their children to acquire Western education because of the fear of getting them converted to Christianity. The children of many Muslim parents who took the risk lost their Islamic identity. Those who boycotted school ended up having their children marginalised in the public sector because, without formal education, they were not considered for Government jobs. Nor did they fit in the informal sector of economy. They mostly ended up in petty trading and farming for which they had to depend on crude implements. They had no access to loan facilities. They thus had to get used to deprivation and penury.¹⁴

The political landscape in Ekiti land shortly before and after independence was exclusively dominated by non-Muslims. The result of the establishment of the first elementary school in March, 1896, by the Church Missionary Society/Anglican Mission at Oke Ori Omi, Aremu, Ado-Ekiti, St. George's School at Agere, Ado-Ekiti, in 1917 by the Roman Catholic Mission,

and others established by the remaining Christian denominations became apparent as the products of the schools took over from the colonialists and missionaries in the various sectors of the public life.¹⁵

The first selection into the Western House of Assembly at Ado-Ekiti on September 24, 1951 produced Mr. E. A. Babalola (Oye-Ekiti), Rev. Canon Adesuyi Ajayi (Ado-Ekiti) and Barrister S. A. Adeoba (Iyin-Ekiti) as the winners. Mr. J. E. Babatola, a former Principal, Ekiti Divisional Teachers' Training College, Ikere-Ekiti, won the election into the second Regional House of Assembly in 1956. He assumed office as Parliamentary Secretary to Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Premier of Western Region in 1957. In 1959, he became Minister of House Affairs. Ewi of Ado-Ekiti, Oba Aladesanmi II, and Oloye of Oye-Ekiti, Oba Michael Oluwale Ademolaju II, won elections into the second House of Chiefs.¹⁶ None of them was a Muslim.

In the post-Independence era, the activities for the representation and defence of the political and social rights of Ekiti have also not involved many Muslims. The struggles for establishing a tertiary institution of learning by the Federal Government, a Federal Medical Centre, a 233 KVA electric sub-station and even Ekiti State Government in October, 1996, record prominent roles played by notable non-Muslims, taking charge as Chairmen, Secretaries and contact persons.¹⁷

With the creation of Ekiti State in 1996 up to date, Muslims have been agitating against marginalization. It has always been that a single Muslim would be a member of the State Cabinet as a Commissioner or Adviser to the Governor, a member of the State Assembly out of 16 Honourables and Chairman of a single Local Government Council out of 16 Local Government Councils in the State. In the second Fayose administration (2014 – 2018), the executive, legislative and judicial arms of Government were almost totally exclusive to non-Muslims. There was no single Muslim Judge in any High Court in the State. There was no Muslim among the 16 Permanent Secretaries. There was no Muslim in the membership of the Boards of State Government parastatals and Governing Councils of tertiary institutions in the State, including Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti, College of Health Technology, Ijero-Ekiti. The post of Chancellor of the University occupied by Oba Abdul-Azeez Olu Adeyemi, the Alara of Aramoko-Ekiti, a Muslim, is ceremonial. In the area of basic and secondary education, there is no Muslim in the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and Teaching Service Commission (TESCOM). All the 16 Education Secretaries are non-Muslims.¹⁸ The situation marginally improved in the subsequent regime under Governor John Kayode Fayemi and Biodun Abayomi Oyebanji as shown in the Table below:

S / N		GOVERNOR AYODELE FAYOSE (2014-2018)	GOVERNOR JOHN KAYODE FAYEMI (2018-2022)	GOVERNO R BIODUN ABAYOMI OYEBANJI (2022-)
1	Secretary to State Government SSG	NIL	NIL	1
2	Commissioner	NIL	1	1
3	Senior/ Special Adviser SSA/SA	1	2	1
4	Senior/ Special Assistant	NIL	2	30
5	Chairmen/ Members of Boards& Agencies	5	5	25
6	16 Local Government Education Secretary	NIL	NIL	1
7	Chairman/Member of Governing Council of State Higher Institutions	1	NIL	2

Source: Data collected by the researchers from each office concerned.

In the political chess game that led to the gubernatorial election in July, 2018, very few Muslims came out to declare their intention to contest. At least, 33 contestants openly expressed their interest in the Governorship seat from All Progressives Congress (APC) alone, bringing the total number of contestants to 63. Of the few Muslims in the race, Dr. Tae Lawal had been a Deputy Governor under Segun Oni, while another person was Babafemi Ojudu, a former Senator, serving as a Special Assistant to President Muhammad Buhari. At last, 35 contestants took part in the race and Muslims were just 4 among them.¹⁹

When the leadership of the People's Democratic Party in Ekiti State announced Hon. Kazeem Ayodeji Ogunsakin as the running mate of Prof. Eleka in the gubernatorial election, the President General of the League of Imams and Alfas in South West, Edo and Delta States and Grand Imam of the Central Mosque, Ado-Ekiti, commended Governor Ayo Fayose for considering a Muslim for this post.²⁰ Earlier on September 1, 2017, when Governor Fayose

attended the *‘Īdu’l-Kabīr* Prayer with a turban, the Grand Imam used the opportunity to request for a Muslim successor to the Governor.²¹

To further drive home the point, the Grand Imam had taken advantage of other available opportunities to demand for the post of Deputy Governor, at least, for a Muslim. In a special *Jumu‘at* Prayer to mark the third anniversary of the Fayose administration on Friday, October 13, 2017, the Imam presented the request to the Governor, his Deputy and other government functionaries who graced the occasion.²² The climax of such attempts was the assembly of Muslim groups across the State at the instance of the League of Imams and Alfas and Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs which held on Thursday, January 11, 2018 in the Central Mosque, Ado-Ekiti, under the leadership of the Grand Imam. He personally signed the release after the meeting emphasising the demand for the post of Deputy Governor in the new Cabinet to take over governance in Ekiti State after the Fayose regime.²³

Out of the 17 political parties that presented Governorship candidates and their Deputies for the June 18th 2022 governorship election in Ekiti State, no Muslim contested for the post of governorship either because they have not been political empowered or financially strong enough. In the end, only two (2) picked Muslims as their deputies. They are Onile Ibrahim Yusuf of Labour Party and Olaseni Nureni Babatunde of Young People Party. Labour party later decided to support All Progressive Congress reducing the number of contesting political parties to 16. Mr. Biodun Abayomi Oyeboji of APC emerged as the Governor Elect.

The Way Out:

There is no doubt that Muslims are hardly visible in the public space in Ekiti. Is this a reflection of their numerical strength as democracy is a game of number? This is a difficult question to answer. There are many towns and villages where Muslims apparently constitute minorities. This is the case mostly in areas to the south-eastern borders of Ekiti land where the accident of geographical location and overwhelming Christian missionary activities of mainstream and African Churches have held sway especially in the period shortly preceding Independence. For instance, Christ Apostolic Church, with its aggressive evangelical and healing crusades, has a large following in Efon Alaaye and adjoining towns and villages to date. On September 29, 1930, Oba Solomon Aladejare, the Alaaye, was converted by Apostle Ayo Babalola and that led to the conversion of almost the whole populace to the Church.²⁴

As for those in towns near the Northern borders, it is evident that Muslims constitute a substantial percentage of the populace although it is not

established that they are in the majority. As far as official records are concerned, in the 1952 census, Muslims in what is known as Ekiti State constituted 8.2%. The figure slightly increased to 10.6% in the 1963 census being “the last censuses that gathered data on religious affiliation”.²⁵ The difference apparently resulted from the concerted efforts of Muslims in the last two decades before Independence to halt the sweeping tide of mass conversion of Muslim children to Christianity. By then, Muslims had started to build schools. The first Muslim Primary school, the Muslim Jama’ah Primary School (later renamed Ansar-Ud-Deen Primary School, Igbemo-Ekiti) was established in 1942.²⁶

Unfortunately, Muslim schools are too few to take care of the interests of Muslim children. Worse still, many communities did not have any of the schools while the few available ones are many at times headed by non-Muslims. Christian denominations vigorously competed with one another in using education to win converts. As a result, the lopsided growth in the numerical strength of Muslims and Christians respectively is largely due to conversion to Christianity. According to a survey report on the population of Muslims in the study area,

The survey’s revelation of the dramatic shift from Islam towards Christianity among those aged 60 and younger in 2012-13 – those born in or after 1952 – also indicates that universal primary education, introduced in Yoruba-speaking states except Kwara in 1955, encouraged conversion. Although the introduction of universal primary education was a secular policy, the dominance of mission education during the colonial period meant that by the 1950s the vast majority of teachers were Christian and often associated successful education with Christianity. While not all children who started school during that period converted, Muslim observers were disconcerted by the fact that many did. The survey data show that within each age bracket the percentages of Muslims and Christians have remained relatively stable since the 1950s. This suggests that many of those who converted as children retained and passed on their Christian identity as they grew older, thus contributing to an incremental growth of Christianity in the overall population.²⁷

Unfortunately, the gap is getting wider with each day passing. This leads to the issue of the importance of education as an empowerment strategy for liberation and recognition.

Contrary to expectations, many Muslim communities hardly pay attention to the educational needs of their children in an Islam-friendly

atmosphere. Most parents send their children to mission or community schools where no provision is made for Islamic Studies or even recognise Islam as a religion to be accommodated in the school programmes.

There are dangers in sending Muslim children to non-Muslim schools in the contemporary situation in Ekiti State. Three of them are apparent. They are as follows:

- i. **Domination of teaching by non-Muslims:** The situation is such that it is self-evident that Christian teachers dominate the teaching profession in Ekiti State. Even in public schools, most of them do not hide their activities of taking advantage of their official posts to promote their religious denominations. With this, many innocent children are inundated with pressure to attend one programme or the other to recruit converts. This is in addition to intermittent harassment and embarrassment in the assembly and in class. Clergymen of the denominations that established schools are invited to preach to children in assembly, and on special occasions, under the guise of moral exhortation. It is self-evident that such Muslim children would lack motivation and incentives in school to be more serious about their religion as they are exposed to Christian indoctrination.
- ii. **Owner missions holding on to the administration of schools:** All the schools established by the various Christian denominations are in the firm grip of such groups. The control is so much that Christians of any other denomination, not to talk of Muslims, are not allowed to head the schools as Principals or Vice-Principals. Even though there is no policy of Government to that effect, it is a convention strictly complied with by the officials in the Ministry of Education. For instance, since 1933 when Christ School, Ado-Ekiti was established, only members of the Anglican Church have been its Principals. With this, it is clear that there is no religious tolerance for Muslim students in the school to form any association or offer any religious service while in school.
- iii. **Group influence:** Most of the students in such schools are apparently Christians. Muslims sharing classes with them will have to join them in the various social and religious activities. By and large, such students are exposed to non-Islamic influences as a result of which they get converted or compromise their religious consciousness.

Agitation for returning schools to some denominations started in Ekiti State with the Anglican Communion reclaiming ownership of Christ School, Ado-Ekiti, at the beginning of 2020 Session. By September 2021, the Catholic Diocese of Ekiti was granted the ownership of three schools in the State namely: Annunciation School and St Louis Grammar School, both in Ikere as

well as Mary Immaculate Grammar School, Ado-Ekiti. Likewise, the Baptist High School, Ado-Ekiti was released to the Baptist Missionary Society. Salaries of both teaching and non-teaching staff of these schools are paid by the State Government until the last set of students admitted by the State Government would pass out and the schools would become fully privatized.

Contrary to the distinctive features identified with non-Muslim schools mentioned above, the case of Muslim schools is the direct opposite. Most of them are headed by non-Muslims. Most of the teachers are non-Muslims. The Muslim communities in which they are located hardly visit or influence how they are administered. The following table gives the details:

Muslim Secondary Schools in Ekiti State Sampled during Fayose Administration 2014-2018:

S / N	Name	Location	When Established	Principal's Religion	No. of VPs and their religion	Islamic Studies Teachers	CRS Teachers	Staff and No. of Muslim among them
1	Olaoluwa Muslim Gramm Schl	Ado-Ekiti	1970	Muslim	4; No Muslim	2	2	96; 15 Muslims
2	AUD Compr. High School	Ajilosun, Ado-Ekiti	1980	Christian	6; 1 Muslim	3	7	108 11 Muslims
3	Muslim College	Oke-Ila, Ado-Ekiti	2000	Christian	5 Christians No Muslim	2	4	120; 9 Muslims
4	AUD High School	Ikole-Ekiti	1959	Muslim	2; 1 Muslim	2	2	52 4
5	AUD Compr. High School	Ikere-Ekiti	1980	Muslim	2; No Muslim	3	2	69 9 Muslims
6	AUD High School	Ire-Ekiti	1975	Muslim	2; No Muslim	4	2	45; 7 Muslims
Total				4 Muslims 2 Christians	Muslims 2 Christians 21	16	19	490 55 Muslims

The Table speaks for itself. Out of the 6 schools established by Muslims, 4 were headed by Muslim Principals. There were only 2 Muslims among 21 Vice-Principals in the schools. There were 16 teachers for Islamic Studies while 19 teachers were for Christian Religious Studies. Out of the total of 490 teachers in the Muslim schools, only 55 were Muslims, translating to about 11.2%. These data apparently show that Muslims were not in any position to influence the decision-making process in their own schools not to talk of being in charge of them. Unfortunately, the situation forms the foundation for how the State would look like in terms of those to take charge of the State affairs about two decades to come. Worse still, the number of students in the schools goes the same way like that of their management and staff. This is a danger sign. The schools were built in those days with a lot of sacrifices in cash and kind to liberate Muslim children from religious persecution. The children of those days are now at the helm of affairs apparently incapable of living up to the challenge of sustaining the legacy bequeathed to them, not to talk of expanding it and breaking new grounds. That is a major factor responsible for marginalisation.

With the victory of the APC candidate, Dr. Kayode Fayemi, in the gubernatorial election, there was every hope that efforts of the Ekiti Muslim Community would yield some positive results. Achieving that may, after all, not be on the platter of gold. With the constitution and inauguration of Ekiti State JKF/APC Governorship Transition Committee, it was clear that the membership tilted, as usual, in favour of non-Muslims. There were only three Muslims out of 32 members with non-Muslims clinching the key posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary.²⁸ Although the membership of the Committee might not necessarily show the pattern to be followed in allocating offices, there was no doubt that having 3 out of the 32 members is a far cry from the expectations of Ekiti Muslims. All the same, that arrangement was marginally better than having only 1 out of 16, if Local Government Areas Chairmanship and membership of the State House of Assembly at the time were to be used as the yardstick.

At the tail end of the administration of Governor Fayemi in 2022, the situation in Muslim schools is as follows:

Muslim Secondary Schools in Ekiti State Sampled during Dr. John Kayode Fayemi Administration, 2018-2022:

S/N	Name	Location	When Established	Principal's Religion	No. of VPs and their religion	Islamic Studies Teachers	CRS Teachers	Staff and No. of Muslims among them
1.	Olaoluwa Muslim Grammar Schl	Ado-Ekiti	1970	Islam	4; No Muslim	6	4	124; 16 Muslims 4%
2	AUD Comprehensive High School	Ajilosun, Ado-Ekiti	1980	Islam	6; No Muslim	6	3	104 12 Muslims
3.	Muslim College	Oke-Ila, Ado-Ekiti	2000	Islam	4; No Muslim	5	5	93; 9 Muslims
4.	AUD High School	Ikole-Ekiti	1959	Christianity	2; No Muslim	3	2	37 11 Muslims
5.	AUD Comp High School	Ikere-Ekiti	1980	Islam	2; No Muslim	4	2	64 6 Muslims
6.	AUD High School	Ire-Ekiti	1975	Christianity	2; No Muslim	2	1	32; 6 Muslims
Total				4 Muslims 2 Christians	No Muslim; 20 Christians	26	17	454 63 Muslims

Source: Data collected by the researchers from the schools.

As shown in the Table, there are 4 Muslim Principals in Muslim Secondary Schools while only 2 are headed by Christians. There are 20 Christian Vice-Principals without any Muslim among them. There are 26 teachers for Islamic Studies while those teaching Christian Studies are 17. The total number of teachers in all the Muslim Secondary Schools is 454 while there are only 63 Muslims among them. A comparison of the data above under both Governors Fayose and Fayemi respectively shows that the number of Muslim Principals heading Muslim Secondary Schools remains the same, being 4 out of 6. Instead of having 2 Vice-Principals as Muslims under Fayose out of 23, there are 20 Vice-Principals under Fayemi and none of them is a Muslim. Islamic Studies has 16 teachers as against 19 for Christian Religious Studies under Fayose whereas the figures respectively are 26 and 17, showing a marginal improvement of 10 for Islamic Studies under Fayemi. The total number of Muslim teachers in the Schools under Fayose is 55 out of 490 whereas it is 63 out of 454 under Fayemi, being 13.9% instead of 11.2% previously under Fayose. The difference is marginal and the situation of the Muslim Schools is still critical and calls for attention, a situation which portends greater dangers of lack of representation in future since Muslim children lack educational empowerment as the main objective for establishing the schools.

The Way Forward:

The analysis above shows that advocacy, agitation and even making demands of Government should not be condemned because they are necessary to create awareness and mobilise the rank and file of Muslims to the need to find solutions to the nagging problem of marginalisation. All the same, the importance of education as the immediate cause of the wide gap between Muslims and Christians in the public space in Ekiti State should be given adequate attention. The result of efforts in this respect may not be immediate but it will certainly come and bring about sustainable achievements. It is in the light of this that the following recommendations are put forward:

- i. **Massive investment in education:** Both informal and formal forms of education are required for emancipating Ekiti Muslims. In terms of informal education, there is need for massive mobilization of the generality of Muslims and creating awareness among them on their political relevance. Most Muslims do not see religion as a factor to influence their political choice. All Muslim children whether of Ekiti origin or of immigrant parents should be enrolled in schools and be encouraged to excel in their studies by giving them scholarship and other forms of motivation. All efforts should be made to have no Muslim child out of school preferably until after graduating from a tertiary institution. To this end, special accounts should be opened by

each Muslim community to award scholarships or bursaries to children in need of financial assistance.

- ii. **Proper care of existing Muslim schools:** The various Muslim communities and organisations that established primary and secondary schools should buckle up and live to the expectation of being the trustees of the schools through regular visitation, provision of necessary instructional materials and employment of required manpower. The institutions should not be left as orphans without guardians. The various Islamic umbrella organisations in the State should make this a cardinal programme in their meetings and activities. With this, the efforts of the founding fathers of the schools will not go in vain.
- iii. **Establishing vibrant alumni associations:** Just like the case of schools founded by Christian denominations, there is need to encourage the former students of the various schools to come together and restore the glory of their alma maters that nurtured them to become eminent personalities. After all, those at the helm of affairs in the State might have been their contemporaries in school. More importantly, their coming together will give them an opportunity to pool resources and carry out projects in aid of the schools. This will go a long way to motivate children currently in the schools and inspire them to attain lofty heights. It should be noted, however, that alumni associations are already in place for many of the Muslim schools in the State. For instance, the alumni association of AUD Comprehensive High School, Ado-Ekiti, has been organizing sponsored extra lessons for JSS III and SSIII students to enhance their performance during certificate examinations. They also organize annual prize giving ceremonies across all classes to boost students' morale. Also, AUD Comprehensive High School, Ikere-Ekiti established its alumni association in 2002 with Mr Sulayman O. Ganiyu as President and has been contributing immensely to the development of the school. Similarly, A.U.D. High School, Ire Ekiti, and Ola-Oluwa Muslim Grammar School, Ado-Ekiti, have just formed their Old Students' Associations in 2018 and 2016 respectively. The Associations had since then started making meaningful contributions towards the development of the schools.²⁹ There is need for these associations to boost their activities to the extent of being able to take over the running of the schools like their Christian counterparts mentioned earlier.
- iv. **Establishing private schools:** Among 1565 private nursery and primary schools in Ekiti State, only 54 belong to Muslim individuals and groups.³⁰ Worse still, many Muslim parents enrol their children in Christian schools giving excuses for avoiding Muslim schools. Apart

from the fact that most of Christian schools have no provision for teaching Islamic Studies and activities, they involve brilliant Muslim children in Christian programmes such as Christmas carol and plays. Children attending Muslim schools have the opportunity of appreciating the beauty of Islam in class works through Islamization of knowledge and the school environment which is Islam friendly. Most teachers and fellow pupils or students are mostly Muslims. With this, the challenge of the past in which many prominent Muslims married or got married to Christians giving the excuse that they had no Muslim of their choice will not rear its ugly head any longer. In fact the challenge of inter-religious marriages has negative effects, in many cases, on Islam in Ekiti State. The revolution championed by the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Branch, is already yielding good dividends. It established At-Tawheed Nursery and Primary School in Ado-Ekiti, in September 2000, and College in 2005. At present, the number of the schools has increased to six. The products of the schools are in tertiary institutions at present with some of them featuring prominently in public outings of Muslims, the 1444 *Hijrah* Celebration held on Sunday, August 7, 2022 at Ado-Ekiti, for instance.

- v. **Sensitisation on political awareness:** There is need to educate the rank and file of Muslims on the dangers of docility and ineptitude when it comes to politics. Apart from risking lack of representation as a religious group which has adverse effects on their interest and welfare individually and as a group, it creates opportunities for misrule and abuse of political powers. The Muslim populace should be made aware of abundant advantages awaiting them if they can be actively involved in politics. They will thereby gain political power by being elected, nominated or appointed into public offices, a situation that will enable them to put to practice some of the teachings of Islam relating to public service and political leadership. Islam teaches that leaders should regard themselves as servants. This concept is the direct opposite of what characterises contemporary political activities at present. Muslim leaders who carry out their functions as stipulated in the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* will serve as inspirations and models to the fellow citizens to emulate. With this, the trail will be blazed to guide and stimulate upcoming generations.

Concluding remarks:

There is no doubt that there is justification for the agitation of Ekiti State Muslim Community for better representation in the governance of the State. Even if they are a minority group, the governance should be all-inclusive.

The fact that any segment of the society does not have financial capacity to contribute to fund the party and electioneering campaigns is not even the excuse in a democratic government as stipulated in section 14(4) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended. As such, the almost total exclusion of Muslims in governance in the contemporary situation in Ekiti State calls for an immediate redress. The relative improvement realised in the appointments made by the current Governor, Mr. Biodun Abayomi Oyebanji is better compared to what obtained in the past, yet it is below expectation. Muslims occupy only sixty one (61) slots out of over four hundred (400) positions. However, some other appointments are being expected across board.

The long-term solution to the challenge of marginalisation centres on revolutionary approach to education. It is the tool to awaken the Muslim Community from slumber and motivate them to take charge of their schools in the nooks and crannies of Ekiti State to give Muslim children a sense of belonging and instil confidence in them to become vanguards of Islam. Efforts should be intensified to enrol all Muslim children in schools and stop the careless attitude of sending innocent children to non-Muslim schools to avoid being indoctrinated against Islam or converted to the other religion.

Notes and References

1. Up to date, incidents relating to discrimination against Muslim ladies wearing *Hijāb* take place across Nigeria despite court judgements affirming their right to wear it. For further information on various court judgements in favour of the use of *Hijāb*, see *Premium Times* of June 18, 2016 retrieved from premiumtimesng.com and *Daily Post* of February 8, 2017 retrieved from dailypost.ng on October 15, 2018 and *Premium Times* of June 17, 2022 retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/537539-supreme-court-upholds-students-rights-to-wear-hijab-to-lagos-schools.html> retrieved on August 9, 2022.
2. The National Commissioner and Chairman, Information and Voter Education Committee, Solomon Soyebi, unveiled the details of the timetable for both Ekiti and Osun States Governorship elections for July 14 and September 22, 2018 respectively on Thursday, October 5, 2017, in the Commission's headquarters in Abuja, retrieved from inecingeria.org on Wednesday, March 7, 2018.
3. For further details, see National Council of Muslim Youth Organisations, *A Compilation of 1438 A. H. Ramaḍān Lectures* (Ado-Ekiti, Horizon Prints and Publishing, 2017).
4. Part of the oral interview with Shaykh JamiuKeulere Bello, the Grand Imam of the Central Mosque, Ado-Ekiti, and President General of the

- League of Imams and Alfas in South West of Nigeria, Delta and Edo States on Wednesday, May 2, 2018 at his residence, Agric Olope, Ado-Ekiti.
5. A good example was when Mr. T. M. Faleemu (now Dr.), a teacher of Islamic Studies, was transferred from Oloketuyi Memorial Grammar School, Igbemo – Ekiti to African Church Comprehensive High School, Ikere –Ekiti. He was not allowed to teach Islamic Studies despite the presence of Muslim students in the School.
 6. For instance, Otun, Ora, Ayetoro, Ejiu and other settlements around them were under the Ilorin Emirate up to 1917. For details, see I. Olomola, “Ekiti State: the Land, its People and Culture” in Akin Oyeboode (ed.) *Ekiti: the Story of a Determined People* (Ado-Ekiti, Fountain Newspaper and Publishing Company, 2001), p. 7.
 7. For more information, see M. A. Kareem, “Advent and Spread of Islam in Ekiti, 1256-1421 A. H. (1840-2000C.E.)”, a Ph D thesis submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ado-Ekiti (now Ekiti State University), Ado-Ekiti (2008), pp. 83-169.
 8. I. O. Olomola, *Ekiti State: the Land ...* p. 7.
 9. Kiriji War ended formally on September 23, 1886 after which Christian missionaries gained access to Ekiti. For details, see S. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, (Great Britain, C.S.S. Bookshops, 1976), pp. 437-552, and E. O. Adeoti and A. O. Adeyeri “War and Peace in Eastern Yoruba: Efon Alaye and her Neighbours (1815-1893)” *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration*, 161. 2. No. 1 pp. 1-7 retrieved from www.ea-journals.org on April 15, 2018.
 10. For details, see P. A. Adebisi, *History of Christianity in Ekiti land* (Lagos, CSS Press, 2003), pp. 27-122.
 11. Ven. B. O. Akosile, “Education in Ekiti Anglican Diocese in Diocese of Ekiti (Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion) *A Comprehensive Brochure* (Ado-Ekiti, Yemi Printer and Publishing Services, 2006), p. 32.
 12. Oyewale, “Introductions and Growth of Christianity in Ado-Ekiti” in I. O. Olomola, (ed.) *History of Ado-Ekiti* (Ibadan, S. A. Printers Multiconcepts Co., 2017), p. 143.
 13. P. A. Adebisi, *History of Christianity ...* pp.258-261.
 14. M. A. Kareem “Advent and Spread of Islam ...”, pp. 319-320.
 15. Ven.B.O. Akosile, “Education in Ekiti Anglican Diocese ...p. 32.
 16. I. O. Olomola, “A Panorama of Life in Ado-Ekiti Between 1940s and the Early 2000s” in I. O. Olomola (ed.) *History of Ado-Ekiti* pp.170-172.

17. I. O. Olomola, “ A Panorama of Life in Ado-Ekiti ...”, pp.172-173.
18. I. O. Olomola, “ A Panorama of Life in Ado-Ekiti ...”, pp.176-179.
19. For details, see a paid advertisement in *The Nation* of September 8, 2015, p.57 by the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Ekiti State Council (NSCIA), and the Ekiti Chapter of the National Council of Muslim Youth Organisations (NACOMYO).
20. For an analysis of the governorship candidates, see *Premium Times* of July 13, 2018, retrieved from premiumtimesng.com on August 10, 2018, and *Punch* of July 13, 2018 retrieved from punchng.com on August 10, 2018.
21. For details, see *The Nation* of May 16, 2018, p.6.
22. For more information, see *Premium Times* of September 1, 2017 retrieved from premiumtimesng.com on August 10, 2018,
23. *New Nigerian* of January 18, 2018 retrieved from newnigeriannewspaper.com on August 10, 2018.
24. For details, see P. A. Adebisi, *History of Christianity in Ekiti land* ...pp. 134-144.
25. P. Ostien, “Percentages by Religion of 1952 and 1963 populations of Nigeria’s present 36 States” (Nigerian Research Network Background Paper No. 1, Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford, 2012), p. 4 retrieved from qeh.ox.ac.uk on August 10, 2018. See also *Population Census of Nigeria, 1952-53* (Lagos, The Census Superintendent Census, 1953) and *Population Census of Nigeria, 1963*, (Lagos, Federal Census Office, 1964).
26. M. A. Kareem “Advent and Spread of Islam ...”, pp. 319-320.
27. I. Nolte, R. Jones, K. Taiyari and G. Occhiali “Exploring Survey Data for Historical and Anthropological Research: Muslim –Christian Relations in South-West Nigeria”, *Research Note*, retrieved from watermark.silverhir.com. on August 10, 2018 p. 559.
28. *Daily Post* of July 24, 2018, retrieved from dailypost.ng on August 10, 2018.
29. Interview with Chief Agbaje Jamiu Olufunso, the Osupa Adinni of Ado-Ekiti, a retired principal, interviewed on 27/07/2022. Age 61.
30. Interview with Alhaj Fatai Bakare, Secretary, Association of Model Islamic Schools (AMIS), Ekiti State on 5th June, 2022. Age:45