

# **MODERN TRENDS IN ARABIC AND ISLAMIC STUDIES**

*A Book in Memory of  
Professor Ismail Ayinla Babatunde Balogun*

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## FOREWORD

### *In the Name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful*

Ismail Ayinla Babatunde Balogun (1930-2007), Emeritus Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Ilorin, left his large footprints in the sands of time. He was a reformer for every intent and purpose, working along with his contemporaries and confreres in the academia in relay with the generations of cultivators of Arabic and Islamic learning in southwestern Nigeria. Such forerunners were Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilory, Shaykh Kamalud-Din Al-Adabiy, Shaykh Murtada Abdussalam, Shaykh Abdulbaqi Muhammad and Shaykh Khidr Apaokagi, among many others in southwestern Nigeria and its neighbours.

The opportunity seized by Professor I.A.B Balogun, along with Professor John Hunwick, Professor Mohammed S. El-Garh, Professor Musa O.A. Abdul and Professor Fathi El-Masry, among others, was to create a future for the products of those luminaries of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Western system of education. With these efforts, it enabled the confluence of the oriental and occidental schemes of education. The proceed from this effort created a high breed who is found to be reasonably balanced in both fields. Many of such products contributed to the making of this book.

The life of Professor Balogun was tailored for this purpose as can be seen. The University College, Ibadan, an affiliate campus of the University of London, was established in 1948 by the British Colonial Authority. In 1954, a German librarian, William Kensdale, took interest in the collection of Arabic-written manuscripts, including those in Nigerian languages, written in Arabic scripts for the purpose of unlocking the past of local history. This kindled the interest of the University College in the need to study Arabic.

Through the commendable efforts of the emirs in the north, with the Emir of Kano leading, a decision was made to establish the Kano Arabic Law School in 1932. It was later proposed by the British colonial rulers that the school should be an affiliate of the University College, Ibadan, when it has gained its footing, though this proposal was resisted. The accreditation the Kano school enjoyed from the British from its inception was sustained. Accredited teachers continued to be sent from the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) to join local teachers in teaching and administration. Notable among such was Mervin Hiskett who finished his career in SOAS and was met there by the present writer.

What this institution midwifed by the emirs and colonial masters in the survival of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the face of challenges posed by the advent of Western education in Nigeria was what the proprietors of private Arabic schools listed above did, out of sheer defence of Islam and its language of diffusion. It was through the intervention of the University College, Ibadan, with its plan of action to take the Gown to the city, that a new horizon was created. This

was done by admitting their products after obtaining a minimum of two O' Levels in Arabic and English. Where this is lacking, a concessional admission window was opened for a larger number of products of such schools. This is an entrance examination in Arabic and English for the admission of successful candidates. During a one-year intensive training, courses were offered in different branches of Arabic language and literature, aspects of Islamic Studies and education, both through the medium of English.

With this grounding and wider exposure to the use of English, the students were well prepared for future growth. The training enlarged their education, gave them university certification and widened their horizon to undertake more self-training and examinations. They proceed to the world to prepare for examinations in appropriate and minimum ordinary level and advanced level certificates. This enabled them to qualify for admission into the degree in Arabic, Islamic Studies or any other course of choice. This done, the tide was changed for the better for the products of Arabic and Islamic Studies in southwestern Nigeria and beyond.

It was that Kano Arabic Law school, established two years after his birth, that Professor Balogun attended to obtain his Grade II Certificate after having completed his Grade III Certificate in the southwest. It was the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London that Professor Balogun proceeded to obtain his Bachelor's and PhD in Arabic and Islamic Studies degrees in 1966. He then returned to take up teaching and research appointment at the University of Ibadan. Here, he taught, impacted on willing students and raised them.

Professor Balogun was not a one-time wonder nor a flash in the pan. For over a decade here, he produced many of the contributors to this Festschrift and their teachers. He rose through the academic ladder from Lecturer II to Senior Lecturer of Arabic and Islamic Studies, serving in loco parentis for many indigent students. He achieved this by spending from his pocket and working with his senior and equal colleagues to attract scholarship and prizes from the Arab world for deserving students.

He relocated as Reader to the University of Ilorin in 1976 where he became a mighty oak. He was a founding Head of Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies and a pioneering Head of the Department of Religions, after the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies was enlarged to include Christian Studies and Comparative Religious Studies. He was voted second Dean of the Faculty of Arts. Through those offices, he attracted the best brains from the University of Ibadan and beyond to the Department of Religions and his Faculty. The difference made by Professor Balogun is that his own concept of Department of Religions is where each religion studied here is undertaken from its own unbiased perspective.

He went to Lagos State University on sabbatical and accumulated leave, 1984-85. Here, he was appointed as Dean to establish the Faculty of Arts. On the heels of his success as Dean of Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, achieving this was easy. He also introduced his concept of a peaceful coexistence of different disciplines in the Department of Religions. It is well established that the

Faculty he established at LASU thrives admirably. To prove his care and concern for his students universally and his total commitment to pedagogy, he brought his PhD supervisee Muhib Opeloye, to whom he had introduced the concept of inter-religious dialogue at the University of Ilorin, to pioneer the teaching of Islamic studies in LASU during his sabbatical leave here.

Six years of training at the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) is significant to make a scholar and carrier of a rich British tradition out of I.A.B Balogun at the time he straddled from a strong Upper Second Bachelor's degree to a PhD degree at his alma mater. No wonder he came to the University of Ibadan to join the doyen of Arabic literature in Africa, West Atlantic, John Hunwick, who had earlier made a First Class in SOAS, a British who crossed to Sudan after graduation to strengthen his Arabic after which he came to University of Ibadan to head the Department. The relay of SOAS products was unbroken with M.O. Ajilogba Abdul, with his Bachelor's degree, and M.S. El-Garh, after his nine-year training in SOAS. He had the glory of strengthening the Department.

During Professor El-Garh's headship, the Department started awarding two degrees: B.A. Arabic Language & Literature and B.A. Islamic Studies. Professor Isaac Adejoju Ogunbiyi completed the circle of first generation of scholars, so to speak, who attained a PhD from SOAS. Professor John Hunwick – after proving his mettle, from Nigeria to the University of Ghana where he was editor of the Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, at the University of Legon, Ghana, from where he went to NorthWestern University, USA – came to SOAS to submit his PhD degree on Abdulkareem Al-Maghili, in the early 70s of the twentieth century. The beloved tutor Professor Harry Thirwall Norris did supervise the PhD of Professor I.A. Ogunbiyi, then Professor John Hunwick, after the latter had reached the status of a full Professor for decades with his Bachelor's degree and acclaimed as tutor of tutors. It was after a couple of years later, 1977-1980, that Professor Norris also supervised the thesis of the present writer. Another product of Ibadan, supervised by Professor Norris for his PhD and taught by Professor I.A.B. Balogun at the undergraduate level, was Professor Moshood Raji of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Other mates of Professor I.A.B. Balogun at SOAS were Professor Shehu Ahmad Galandanchi, Professor Abdul, Justice Abdulkadir Orire, Dr Hasan Gwarzo, Alhaj Bashir Sambo, Alhaj Shaykh Ahmed Lemu, and Alhaj Mohammed Dodo, at their undergraduate level. As can be seen, only three of the above great Nigerians, numbers 1-3, were in the academia. The remaining were grand Khadis of different states across Nigeria.

The global pride that the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies of the University of Ibadan is today was laboured for and earned by those giants of scholarship in Arabic and Islamic studies. Whoever met Professor I.A.B Balogun will attest to the fact that he was a great representative of those qualities of a confident user of impeccable English, handling matters with dignity and decorum. He was a lion at any intellectual forum. He walked straight, acted with straight behaviour and often demonstrated his teaching training of Grade III and Grade II. To illustrate this, he normally

wiped all lessons when commencing lecture, then wrote the title of the course, then communicated his thoughts on a clean board.

The title of this Festschrift sends a subtle nostalgia to the psyche of a good student of Professor Balogun. This is because he always taught the course to the final year students who majored or minored in Islamic Studies. His other choice, of course, was Islamic Culture II, which is history of the development of the Islamic law. He handled difficult titles of theses, including the annotated translation of a bone among the legal books of the Sunni Islam, Jawaahiru '1-Ik lil for PhD by another supervisee Is-haq O. Oloyede.

The period 1976 to 1992 is outstanding in the academic and administrative trajectory of Professor I.A.B. Balogun. The sixteen years were devoted nearly equally to mentoring in the art of teaching and research and in academic administration and beyond the university, both at the state and national levels. Before his retirement, he had produced three full professors of Arabic, two of whom joined as Assistant Lecturer and one as Graduate Assistant. To be added to this were four professors of Islamic Studies, two of whom joined as Assistant Lecturers and two as Graduate Assistants. The Professor of Christian and Comparative Studies who attained this status was ahead of the most senior professor of Arabic who came next to him by one year. He, a product of Ibadan, also joined as an Assistant Lecturer. It is instructive to note that a further analysis of the above would reveal that two of the professors of Arabic earned First Class from Ibadan. One of the professors of Islamic Studies graduated with First Class from Ibadan, and the other with First Class from the University of Ilorin. The most senior professor in the Department of Religions under Professor Balogun also earned a First Class from the University of Ibadan. All professors listed here graduated from the University of Ibadan, except one in Islamic Studies. The bottom line is that all of the professors passed through the University of Ibadan even if it was for doing a certificate course in Arabic and Islamic Studies mentioned above.

In the light of the activities of this giant of a teacher, it became spontaneous for his students, mentees and research collaborators, as well as his unmet students who studied under his direct students all over Nigeria and beyond, to contribute scholarly papers and give tokens for its publication. May it be acceptable to Allah SWT as a job well done and make it useful in moulding the characters of men and women till the end of time, amin.

***Professor Razaq 'Deremi Abubakre, FAR, FASN***  
***14 August 2025***

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication, *Modern Trends in Arabic and Islamic Studies*, represents yet another evergreen token in memory of the predecessors of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigeria, and by extension, West Africa and beyond. Acknowledging the trailblazing roles of such distinguished personalities remains a cardinal objective of the present leadership of the Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS), as part of its commitment to immortalise the legacy of the eminent scholars through whom Allah, *subhānahu wa ta'ālā*, laid the solid foundation of these twin academic disciplines in Nigeria. May Allah reward them abundantly.

Among these pioneers, Prof. I.A.B. Balogun stands tall. He was not only a dedicated intellectual and mentor but also a pragmatist who translated the ethos of Islam taught in lecture halls into concrete acts of philanthropy, mentorship and counselling. His generosity was vividly demonstrated during his sojourn at the University of Ibadan, where he went as far as paying for hostel accommodation of some of his students. He extended similar gestures at the University of Ilorin and Lagos State University. All thanks belong to Allah for granting us the privilege of paying this well-deserved tribute to a successful family man, scholar, administrator and uncompromising disciplinarian.

This commemorative publication also coincides with the conclusion of the tenure of the present National Executive Committee of NATAIS. It is our hope that those who will succeed us will continue to recognise and honour other founding fathers of these disciplines and build upon this legacy. To Allah belongs all thanks and adoration for this humble achievement in the annals of our Association.

While it is impossible to duly recognise every individual who contributed to the realisation of this project, Allah knows them all and will reward them accordingly. Nonetheless, I find it necessary to acknowledge the indispensable roles and sacrifices of some eminent personalities, despite the constraints of time and space.

Foremost among them is Prof. M. O. Opeloye, a former National President of NATAIS and one of the privileged mentees of Baba Balogun. He used his close association with the honouree to connect the Association with members of Baba's family, students and associates, whose financial and moral contributions to this publication remain invaluable. Prof. R.D. Abubakre, with his characteristic diligence, wrote the foreword, not as a matter of routine, but to add quintessential value to the work. Prof. Oyeronke Olademo not only contributed a chapter but also made a

significant financial contribution. Professors Z.I. Oseni and M.A. Muhibbu-Din deserve recognition for their consistent encouragement.

It is also heartening to note that some of Baba Balogun's mentees are now at the helm of affairs in public and private institutions of learning and have made substantial contributions to this project. They include Prof. I. O. Oloyede, Registrar, Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and a steadfast supporter of NATAIS; Prof. Shaykh-Luqman Jimoh, Vice-Chancellor, Kwara State University, Malete; Prof. Sa'adat Liman, Vice-Chancellor, Nasarawa State University, Keffi; Prof. R. I. Adebayo, Provost, Federal College of Education, Iwo; and Prof. Lateef F. Oladimeji, Vice-Chancellor, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, among others.

I am personally indebted to my predecessors in office as National Presidents of this Association, particularly after its resuscitation in 1999. They include Professors M.O. Opeloye, the late M. A. Ajetunmobi, J.M. Kaora, M.A. Muhibbu-Din, and S. U. Musa. My heartfelt appreciation also goes to the esteemed family of Baba Balogun, both at home and abroad, his siblings and numerous associates who have stood by this cause.

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Appreciation is extended to the printer for the commitment and diligence in completing the work on schedule, as well as to the members of the National Executive Committee and the State Branches of this Association. We also recognise with gratitude the Management and Staff of Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, for their support.

May Allah continue to bless, uplift and reward you all abundantly.

**Prof. Musa Adesina Abdu-Raheem**

National President

Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS)

*September 10, 2025/ Rabī'u'l-Awwal 17, 1447 A. H.*

## PREFACE

قَدْ مَاتَ قَوْمٌ وَمَا مَاتَتْ فِضَائِلُهُمْ ..

وَعَاشَ قَوْمٌ وَهُمْ فِي النَّاسِ أَمْوَاتٌ ..

-الإمام الشافعي

*Indeed, dead, a group (of people) may be, though resultant of their good deeds, are actually alive, While others, among people, may be alive but in reality are deceased.*

*-Imam Al-Shafii*

*“The debt we owe to the past is not remembrance. It is renewal.” - Anonymous*

Every age reencounters its ancestors differently. Sometimes in gratitude, sometimes in revolt, but most meaningfully through intellectual inheritance. What a sacred transaction the latter is; a transaction whereby knowledge once received becomes a seed sown forward. Such is the spirit that motivated this volume - an honorific volume that does not merely look backward in reverence, but forward in responsibility; a book that sends us into reflections to and deflections from the past – a past to which we are so indebted such that instead of mere reminiscences we are drawn inexorably into acts of renewal; rather than consider the past as perfect, we are seized by the necessity to relive that very past in the present.

Yes, the name Professor Ismail Ayinla Babatunde Balogun needs no ornate embellishment. In the garden of Arabic and Islamic scholarship in Nigeria, he was neither a fleeting flower nor a seasonal bloom. He was, and remains, according to Professor R.D Abubakre, an oak, and for filiative reason, like the date palm. His life straddled different eras: colonial shadows and postcolonial awakenings; Grade III chalkboards and SOAS lecture halls; Ibadan’s pioneering academic circles and Ilorin’s growing constellation. His brief sojourn at the Lagos State University (LASU) was to sow seeds of the future. In other words, his scholarly peregrinations before his transition were not happenstances; they were for the transmission of knowledge and the counteraction of ignorance.

It is precisely the phenomenon of transmission - not only of texts and traditions but of intellectual temperament, moral clarity and the promotion of interfaith dialogue - that this volume seeks to

reflect. But how does one memorialise a man who, in giving all, asked for nothing? What is the ethical grammar of such a gesture? This is the enduring paradox of this memorial, of this book with which its editors and contributors attempt to ‘give back’ to one who never ceased ‘giving’ even from the otherworld.

Titled *Modern Trends in Arabic and Islamic Studies*, this book reflects the tension and harmony between permanence and change - between the classical foundations of Arabic and Islamic learning that the late Prof. Balogun exemplified and the modern inquiries that his legacy has enabled. Consequent upon the call for entries issued in 2024, close to forty manuscripts were submitted for review. Eventually, only twenty-six scholarly essays found ‘spaces’ in this volume. Arranged across five thematic sections, each of the entries speaks to a facet of the ever-evolving and engaging landscape of Arabic and Islamic scholarship. These are *Interfaith Dialogue, Religious Pluralism and Peacebuilding; Islamic Legal Thought, Ethics and Public Policy; Global Islam, Conflict and Reformist Trajectories; Arabic Islamic Traditions in the Digital Age*, and *Islam Technology and Emerging Epistemologies*. Though the chapters may differ in theme and method, they are united in their anchorage - in that singular, towering legacy of a man who taught not only with words, but with the weight of a life well-lived. In other words, each chapter in this volume is, in essence, a testimonial - not of flattery, but of fidelity; fidelity to a tradition of inquiry shaped by minds like late Professor Balogun’s; fidelity to a model of scholarship that underscores the inseparability of the intellect from integrity, that emphasises the nexus between knowledge and service.

If it is true, as the ancients said, that “the ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr,” then this book is a sacred offering. It is an offering from generations whose pathways to scholarship were illuminated by the scholarly gravitas of late Prof I.A.B. Balogun. Burdened by the necessity to give back, to negotiate their own immortality through intellectuality, those generations have found a resort in this publication. The overarching goal is not to rival the legacy of our late teacher. No. It is not to match it. Never could that be. Rather, we seek to mirror it, to prevent it from escaping intellectual inquiry.

Thus, this book, written in memory of Prof I.A.B. Balogun, is not and cannot be the conclusion of efforts to reread his scholarly and intellectual legacy; rather, it is a continuation.

**Professor Afis Ayinde Oladosu, FLAN**

*On behalf of the Editors*

*October, 2025*

**SECTION ONE**

**INTERFAITH DIALOGUE, RELIGIOUS PLURALISM  
AND PEACEBUILDING**



# CHAPTER 1

## Dialogue and Interfaith Relations: An Assessment of Professor I.A.B. Balogun's Contributions

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### Introduction

Nigeria, as a country, is uniquely a plural nation. Archbishop Cardinal John Onaiyekan describes the country as the greatest Islamo-Christian nation in the world (2013). This, according to him, is because of the equally structured large population of adherents of the two faiths. Notably, Nigeria is among the countries of the world with the largest reported cases of religious upheaval, which can be traced to the post-civil war period. Dialogue has been recognised worldwide as a potent instrument to curb the menace. Professor Balogun, as an Islamic scholar, was an ardent believer in utilising dialogue to resolve interfaith crises and promote religious harmony, as will be seen in this chapter.

*Chamber's Dictionary* defines dialogue as a 'conversation between two or more persons, especially of a formal or imaginary nature; an exchange of views in the hope of ultimately reaching an agreement'. Interfaith dialogue, on the other hand, is different from syncretism or alternative religion, in that dialogue often involves promoting understanding between different religions to increase acceptance of others rather than to synthesise a new faith. According to Godfrey Onah (2002), interfaith dialogue is first a dialogue between human beings before being a dialogue between religions. It is an encounter between human beings in order to share with one another things that concern them intimately in their relationship with God, with the world and with one another (Omonokhua, 2014).

Interfaith engagement has a long history, dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Emperor Akbar encouraged tolerance in Mughal India, a diverse nation with people of diverse faith backgrounds, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism and Buddhism. However, the origin of formal interreligious dialogue in the modern period can be traced to the 1893 World Parliament of Religion, which brought together people of different religions from different parts of the world. It was held as part of the Columbian exposition in Chicago ([newworldency.com](http://newworldency.com)). The Muslim and Christian initiative in this engagement is worthy of note. In 1965, during Vatican II, it was decided that relations with all religions should be developed. Hence, Pope Paul VI established a special secretariat (a Pontifical Council) for relations with non-Christians. In like manner, in 1981, a Pakistan-based international organisation founded *Minhajul Qur'an* to promote peace, tolerance, interfaith harmony and education, as well as to tackle extremism and terrorism. There is also the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) established in 2012.

Justifying the necessity for interfaith dialogue, Friar James Heft ([en.m.wikipedia.org](http://en.m.wikipedia.org)) observes that relations among adherents of the three Abrahamic faiths have been characterised by conflict, discord and acrimony. He opines that there has been little genuine dialogue between them, arguing that the sad reality has been that most of the time, the Abrahamic faith adherents have remained ignorant about each other, or worse still, they have been waging war against one another. It is a matter of serious concern that the problem is no longer confined to adherents of the Abrahamic faiths; it has extended to the practitioners of African indigenous religion, as recently experienced in some parts of southwestern Nigeria.

Nigeria as a nation has its own experience. The nation's experience of acrimonious Muslim-Christian relations within the past few decades is traceable to the controversy associated with the *Sharī'ah* debate on the eve of the Second Republic. The controversy generated by the proceedings of the 1977/78 Constituent Assembly resulted in a stalemate and walkout by the Muslims, in protest at the manner in which the matter was being handled. The Christian lack of understanding of what *Sharī'ah* portends for the Muslims, to my mind, is the major reason for the Christian opposition to the concept. The debate generated by the *Sharī'ah* controversy is described by Auwalu Yadudu as a debate of the deaf because the controversy continued to recur at every instance of constitutional review, as witnessed in 1977/78, 1988/89 and 1999/2000.

The raging *Sharī'ah* controversy and the ensuing debate in the late 70s were enough reasons to stimulate academic interest in interfaith dialogue. At this point in time, the urgency of interfaith dialogue and the need to be knowledgeable about the faith of others became inevitable. This was the period Professor Balogun joined the service of the University of Ilorin. If coming to the university at this point in time was a coincidence, it was a good coincidence because it afforded Balogun a good opportunity to genuinely cultivate and propagate the interfaith dialogue he envisioned for harmonious Muslim-Christian relations. This paper, therefore, aims to examine Balogun's academic contributions towards interfaith dialogue and its impact. The paper, which is divided into four sections, examines: how he restructured religious studies programmes in the nation's universities in a manner that promotes interfaith dialogue; how he utilised the Nigeria Association for the Study of Religions (NASR) to foster religious harmony; how he used his inaugural lecture to articulate his vision and mission for harmonious Muslim-Christian relations in the country, and above all, it examines the impact of these efforts on the emergence of bodies for the promotion of harmonious Muslim-Christian relations in the country.

### **Religious Studies as an Academic Discipline**

The Religious Studies Department started with the establishment of Nigeria's premier university, the University of Ibadan, in 1948, thus making the Department the oldest of all Religious Studies Departments in Nigeria, with Rev. J.W. Welch as Head of Department. As contained in the departmental brochure (1948-1998), the department trained students to become ordained ministers of various church denominations and heads of churches. They could also work in the public and private sectors. Anyone familiar with the curriculum content would know that it was 95 percent Christian studies loaded. The Islamic component of the curriculum was not only scanty, but the handlers were, in most cases, either biased against Islam or lacked competence in the field of study, which invariably led to the impartation of caricatural contents of Islam. The

products of the Department, when they graduated could not exhibit sound knowledge of Islam even when they claimed to be graduates of Religious Studies. This can be attested to from the list of courses offered, viz: Biblical Studies; Christian Theology; African Traditional Religion; Philosophy of Religion; Church History; Phenomenology of Religion; Sociology of Religion; Ethics; Comparative Study of Religion; Interaction of Religions in Africa, focusing attention on African Religion, Christianity and Islam. Also listed separately were core Christian religious Studies courses. This model was replicated in other first-generation southern Nigerian universities, including Obafemi Awolowo University and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

In 1961, when the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, as a historian, realised the relevance of the Arabic language to the understanding of Nigerian history, he decided to introduce Arabic Language as a unit in the History Department of the university. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor K.O. Dike, opined that it was through the aid of the Arabic documents that the scholars were aided in their task of unlocking the secrets of the African past. When in 1962 Arabic became a department, it was considered reasonable to add Islamic Studies since the discipline was not included in the Religious Studies curriculum. Thus, till date, at the University of Ibadan, the Department of Religious Studies coexists with the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Faculty of Arts.

The first bold attempt at restructuring the academic study of religion in Nigeria was taken by Professor Balogun at the University of Ilorin in 1976 when he left the University of Ibadan to join the University of Ilorin. Though his intention was to replicate the Arabic and Islamic Studies Department as it existed at the University of Ibadan, seeing Kwara and particularly Ilorin as a predominantly Muslim community, but the Christian community in the state resisted this and insisted on the Religious Studies model. Rather than succumb to this, Professor Balogun introduced a structure which made each religious tradition an independent degree-awarding unit and named it the Department of Religions. As can be perused from the departmental handbook (2020-2023), the department offers three independent degree programmes, viz: Islamic Studies, Christian Studies and Comparative Religion. The programmes are designed to provide the manpower needed for national development. Students enrolled in any of the programmes are expected to be trained to uphold moral values and ethos for national revival and reformation, the ultimate aim being to lay a solid foundation to promote religious understanding and peaceful co-existence. Within the structure, full complements of courses in each of the three programmes are mounted, allowing students to graduate in any of the three. The arrangement makes it mandatory for students to borrow courses in the other religion to be fairly knowledgeable in the religion other than their area of expertise. Pursuant to achieving this noble objective, Professor Balogun encouraged some of his postgraduate students in Islamic Studies to develop an interest in the study of interactions of the living faiths, known in other climes as comparative religion. This is what led this writer to research into Muslim-Christian scriptures, leading to the award of Master's and Ph.D degrees in Islamic Studies in 1982 and 1988, respectively. If this writer today claims expertise in the study of Muslim-Christian relations or Comparative Religion, the foundation was laid by Professor Balogun at the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin. This is the result of the structure put in place by the Professor in the department to promote harmonious interfaith relations and inter-religious understanding.

The Ilorin model was replicated at Lagos State University (LASU) in 1984 when Professor Balogun came to the University on sabbatical as the foundation Dean of the Faculty of Law and Humanities. The desire to keep the flag of the Unilorin model flying at LASU would have informed Professor Balogun's decision to bring this writer as a pioneer Islamic Studies lecturer in the Department of Religions. The model is working perfectly at the university to date.

It is noteworthy that most universities in the southwest which replicated the model include Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye; Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti; and lately Osun State University, Osogbo, Ikire Campus, as well as the University of Lagos, Akoka. However, in the other parts of the country, the system remains unpopular. For instance, in the eastern part, which has a predominantly Christian population, the emphasis is on Christian Studies, while the northern states, populated predominantly by Muslims, have a preference for Islamic Studies and Arabic. An exception is the University of Jos, which adopted the Ilorin model probably because both Ilorin and Jos started as campuses of the University of Ibadan.

There is another scenario in which some universities have separate departments for Islamic and Christian Studies, as it obtains at the University of Abuja and Nasarawa State University. This, to say the least, is absurd. Such universities are creating the impression that the two religious traditions cannot co-exist as a department, and that is not good for a multi-religious nation like Nigeria. Such universities have missed the opportunity of utilising the two faith systems to promote harmonious interfaith relations. The Balogun model, in my considered view, remains the ideal for a multi-religious and multi-cultural nation like Nigeria.

### **Nigeria Association for the Study of Religion (NASR)**

This is an academic association that brings together university scholars in the three main religions practised in Nigeria. Founded in 1975, at the time the country was preparing for a return to democratic rule, the Association was prepared to face the challenge of nation building in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious setting. At the inception, the Association was led by Professor J.O. Awolalu of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, as President, and Professor A.R.I. Doi of the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) as Vice President.

The Association has the following aims and objectives:

1. To involve persons and institutions concerned with the study of religion;
2. To promote national cohesion through the propagation of mutual religious understanding;
3. To encourage research into the world's religions, especially the religions practised in Nigeria, for nation building;
4. To get government, religious institutions and the general public involved in its activities;
5. To cooperate and collaborate with similar international organisations.

The table below shows NASR leadership succession from its inception in 1975 to date.

<b>S/N</b>	<b>President</b>	<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.	Prof. J.O. Awolalu (Unibadan)	Prof. A.R.I. Doi (Unife) 1975-1977 Prof. M.O.A. Abdul (Unibadan) 1975-1979	1977-1979
2.	Prof. I.A.B. Balogun (Unilorin)	Archbishop John Onaiyekan (St. Peters Seminary Ibadan)	1979-1984
3.	Prof. S.U. Eriwo (Unilorin)	Prof. R.D. Abubakre (Unilorin)	1984-1988
4.	Prof. R.D. Abubakre (Unilorin)	Prof. Ikenga Metu (Unijos)	1988-1994
5.	Prof. P. Ade Dopamu (Unilorin)	Prof. M.T. Yahya (Unijos)	1994-1998
6.	Dr. M.T. Yahya (Unijos)	Prof. Ade Odumuyiwa (Ogun state)	1998-2002
7.	Prof. Odumuyiwa (Ogun state)	Prof. R.A. Raji (Unilorin)	2002-2006
8.	Prof. R. A. Raji (Unilorin)	Prof. Ona Odey (Uniuyo)	2006-2010
9.	Prof. Ona Odeh (Uniuyo)	Prof. M.O. Adeniyi (OAU)	2010-2014
10.	Prof. M.O. Adeniyi (OAU)	Prof. Olu. Alana (Akungba)	2014-2018
11.	Prof. Olu Alana (Akungba)	Prof. Lateef Adeyemo (Uniben)	2018-2022
12.	Prof. Lateef Adeyemo (Uniben)	Prof. Glory Alamu Akiti (Unilorin)	2022– date

The following observations can be made from the table above:

- i. The leadership structure is such that when the President is a Christian scholar, his Vice will be a Muslim, and vice versa. The first Vice to the first President was Professor Rahman Doi, who had to leave for his country after two years and was succeeded by Professor Abdul. Thus, it can be said that NASR took off from the south-west, more so that the first conference of the Association took place at the University of Ife.
- ii. NASR, though a national association, is active only in four out of the six zones of the federation, viz South-West, South- East, South-South and North Central. The Muslim-dominant zones of North-West and North-East are not very active in NASR.
- iii. The University of Ilorin has from the onset been the most active Nigerian university in NASR. Right from the period of Professor Balogun as President, university has consistently produced leadership for NASR, which can be attributed to the commitment of the Department of Religions to ‘harmony in the study of religion’ as a means of promoting Muslim-Christian harmonious and peaceful co-existence in the country. This is the academic cause to which Professor Balogun was thoroughly committed.

- iv. It is apparent from the table that Archbishop Onaiyekan served as Professor Balogun's Vice, which may look odd, Onaiyekan not being a university don like all others in the table. Balogun's wish for collaboration with a catholic bishop as Vice must have been motivated by the passion that Catholics have for interreligious dialogue. He believed that their collaboration would help achieve his desire for harmonious Muslim-Christian relations.
- v. It can be observed that Professor Abubakre and Professor Raji, who are scholars of Arabic Studies, were NASR Presidents in 1988 and 2002, respectively. This is because Arabic was an academic unit in the Department of Religions at the University of Ilorin until recently; as such, they had to show interest, more so that they have expertise in the twin disciplines. The same applies to Professor Yahya of the University of Jos, who was NASR President in 1998. This further corroborates an earlier assertion concerning Ilorin that Arabic and Islamic Studies was the intended department for the university, following the Ibadan model, before succumbing to pressure to change to the Department of Religions.
- vi. The Association has the tradition of making the Vice President become President after serving his term. There are, however, three exceptions out of the twelve teams. The first was the failure of Professor Abdul to emerge as President after Professor Awolalu; rather, Professor Balogun emerged. The second was Archbishop Onaiyekan's failure to assume the leadership position after Professor Balogun; instead, Professor Erivwo emerged. The third was Professor Ikenga Metu's failure while Professor Dopamu emerged. Political manoeuvrings cannot be ruled out in the deviation from the norm.

The question then arises: To what extent has NASR, as a professional body, been serving as a platform for inter-religious dialogue in Nigeria? That the body has an internal mechanism for mutual religious understanding is not in doubt. Besides the fact that membership is open to all scholars of religious traditions, the leadership structure of the Association is a living testimony to this. Although a convention not written down in the constitution, the presidency is rotated between adherents of the two major religions in the country, viz: Christianity and Islam. Even when the age-long tradition was to be perverted or compromised at a recent annual general meeting held at Benue State University, Makurdi, the then outgoing President, Professor Olu Alana, and another past President, Professor Augustine Odey, stood their ground, insisting that the tradition must be respected and preserved. In the light of this, for the Association to sustain its tradition of alternating its presidency between a Muslim and a Christian, Muslim scholars' participation in NASR activities should be invigorated. As reported by the current President, Professor Lateef Adayemo of the University of Benin, Muslim scholars' attitude towards NASR has been lukewarm, leaving much to be desired.

It should be stated that during the formative years of the organisation, and to date, the conference themes have always reflected contemporary issues such as: 'Religion and Peace', 'Religion and Development' and 'Religion and Politics'. For instance, in the early eighties when the Buhari/Idiagbon military administration was waging war against indiscipline, the theme of the NASR

conference held at the University of Nigeria, Nsuka, in 1984, was ‘Religion and Discipline’. To date, this has been the trend, as can be seen in the recent conference themes tabulated below:

S/N	Year	Venue	Conference Theme
1.	2015	OAU, Ife	Religion and Democratic Sustainability in Nigeria
2.	2017	Adeleke, Ede	Religion, Corruption and Governance in Nigeria
3.	2019	Port Harcourt	Religion, Resource Control and Restructuring
4.	2022	Makurdi	Religion, Ethnicity and National Integration
5.	2023	Kaduna	Religion, Politics and Digital Economy

The Association will be celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, 2025. The University of Calabar will be hosting the conference, with the theme “Religion, Humanity and Economic Development.”

### **IAB Balogun’s Ideas of Peaceful and Harmonious Muslim-Christian Relations in a United Nigeria X-rayed**

This writer dealt briefly on this subject at the 4<sup>th</sup> Ismail Balogun Memorial Lecture delivered at the Lagos State University, Ojo, on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2011. According to Opeloye (2011), harmonious and peaceful co-existence being uppermost in the mind of Professor Balogun influenced him in 1978 to organise a seminar tagged ‘Religious Understanding and Cooperation in Nigeria’. The seminar, which attracted erudite scholars of the three religions, had the following as its aims: (a) to provide an academic forum for a discussion on the principal religions practised in Nigeria (African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam) to promote mutual understanding and cooperation among the people, and (b) to examine the role of religion as a solution to the social ills prevalent in the country. The papers presented emphasised aspects of the different religions that are capable of promoting unity and harmonious coexistence.

Prof Balogun, in his presentation, asserts that certain elements are common to all religions at varying degrees and extent, arguing that such elements include rituals to perform, formulas to recite, tales to narrate, objects to manipulate, places to visit or avoid, holy days to keep, prediction of the future through natural phenomena, charismatic leaders to follow, truths to affirm, a literature to ponder, and precepts to obey. Above all, the most universal element that cuts across all religions is worship, which within itself includes such activities as supplications, contemplation, sacrifice and incantations, among others (Balogun, 1978: 52).

Professor Balogun attaches serious importance to the three religions’ recognition of God as the Supreme Being, and that being the case, it should be easy to foster harmonious and peaceful co-existence among their adherents. As a specialist in the field, I have always canvassed that the different conceptions of God, notwithstanding, God remains who He is regardless of whatever conceptions of Him we may have.

Professor Balogun goes further to explain why religious bitterness and bigotry should be eschewed, the reason being that man enjoys freedom to follow the religion of his choice in which he finds solace and tranquility, since the final arbiter in the matter of faith is God. According to him, God has not put the judgment of a person in another person's hands; rather, He is both gracious and merciful to all His creatures, whatever their religions might be. After all, whatever faith we profess is not without the permission of God, as contained in many passages of the Qur'an, including Surah 10:99-100.

Furthermore, Professor Balogun's burning desire for peaceful and harmonious co-existence to promote the unity and stability of Nigeria influenced the subject of his inaugural lecture titled 'Utilising Religions for Peaceful Unity and Progress in Nigeria'. The lecture, delivered on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 1981, was the 5<sup>th</sup> in the series of the university's inaugural lectures. An inaugural lecture, traditionally, is a public academic ceremony where a newly appointed professor presents their research and academic achievements to the university community. The lecture serves as a public platform for the professor to showcase his research achievements, intellectual contributions and future research direction to the university, essentially marking a significant milestone in his academic career. According to I.O. Oloyede, an inaugural lecture can be retrospective or introspective (2012: 5). This being the case, such lectures can be dedicated to proffering solution to an identified societal problem. Here lies the significance of Professor Balogun's lecture.

In the 27-page lecture, Professor Balogun (1981), being retrospective, gives a narration of how the world developed, leading to how man appeared on earth; how man developed religious consciousness and how God revealed Himself to man at different stages of man's existence according to man's varying capacities for understanding the divine nature. The lecture also examined the situations of the three religions practised in the country and posited that the basic aim of the adherents of the religions is towards the Ultimate Reality, who is considered by the different religions in different perspectives. What is certain, according to him, is that whatever anyone of the religious groups might do, it cannot have the Ultimate Reality exclusively to itself. Convinced that God is the Ultimate Reality, He is equally kind and merciful to the adherents of all different faiths, Muslims, Christians and Traditionists, at least here on earth. In the light of this, it is a futile exercise to confront one another in the name of God, as it often happens in Nigeria. According to the Quranic passage earlier quoted, if it had been God's will, we would have all been in one and the same religion, but He does not will it so. Balogun then argues that if differences in religion have come to stay, there must be a recognisable common bond for a mutual relationship. The bond, according to him, is our Nigerian nationality. It is the bond that binds us together within the country. No one can claim to be a world Muslim, or a world Christian, or a world Traditionist, and be accepted as such. He draws an analogy between that and international organisations, where participants are identified with their nations.

Since our identity derives from Nigeria, it becomes compelling to recognise her as our common heritage and, therefore, strive to preserve and protect the heritage. Our religious leaders, therefore, must recognise it as a duty to inculcate this principle in their followers. If any religious leader

would incite his followers against the other religions, such a leader must be suffering from spiritual myopia. Such leaders should be seen as not only offending God but also the nation.

Professor Balogun opines that if religion is to be utilised for the nation's peaceful unity, stability and progress, the government will have to play a major role to actualise this. He believes that decisive government intervention is the right step to take to forestall the worsening religious crisis of the period. In his belief, if the religious rivalries, jealousies and fanaticism that are staring the nation in the face were not nipped in the bud, they were capable of plunging the nation into a crisis similar to Lebanon's.

According to B. B. Oderinde (2023), when the Nigerian Studies in Religious Tolerance (NARETO) was born at the end of the 1987 seminar on religious tolerance, under the auspices of the Dictionary of Philosophy project, under the Chief Co-ordinatorship of Dr. C.S. Momoh of the University of Lagos, the official treatise of NARETO, written in 1987, bore so much resemblance to Professor Balogun's ideas and principles enunciated in his writings.

As expected, Professor Balogun's lecture concluded by making far-reaching recommendations which have the propensity to promote peaceful unity and stability in Nigeria, many of which have been implemented and are still being implemented to date. This is the aspect that makes the lecture introspective. The recommendations are as follows:

1. The Federal Government should set up an agency to coordinate the efforts of religious bodies in the country with a view to emphasising the factors that foster mutual understanding and cooperation among them, and tempering to the barest minimum, if not eradicating completely, those factors that tend to alienate religious groups from one another.
2. Since dialogue is key to peaceful co-existence, the agency mentioned above should encourage better understanding and cooperation among religious bodies in the country by arranging a programme of truthful and beneficial dialogue among the religious groups in the nation.
3. Since the Nigerian nationality is the common heritage of all Nigerians, it constitutes a strong factor of unity. Consequently, it will be part of the assignment of the agency to ensure that the unity of the country is not sacrificed on the altar of religion.
4. The ministries of education all over the country should ensure that religious and moral education is taught in all schools at all levels, with emphasis on discipline, self-reliance, patriotism, cooperation, kindness, love, loyalty, generosity and obedience to constituted authority.
5. In order to encourage mutual understanding and cooperation in religious matters among Nigerians, both the federal and state governments should expand their pilgrims boards to cater for different religious groups in the country.
6. Religious groups and individuals should always ensure that in performing their worship and in their evangelisation exercise, they do not molest others or infringe on their rights in any way.

7. For effective understanding and cooperation, religious leaders in particular should not confine their knowledge only to tenets of their own religions, but should also learn something of other religions with a view to appreciating the other religionists' points of view.

### **The Emergence of Inter-religious Dialogue Bodies**

It sounds logical to reason that Professor Balogun's advocacy is what has crystallised in the formation of Dialogue Bodies for peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. As if heeding Professor Balogun's counsel, the Federal Government by Decree No. 30 of 1987 (amended by Decree No. 2 of 1988) established an Advisory Council on Religious Affairs (ACRA) comprising 12 members to represent each of the Christian and Muslim groups. As reported by Oderinde (2023), the Council could not take off due to its inability to appoint its principal officers ( i.e. Chairman and Secretary) out of arrogance and intolerance. It is worthy of note that Professor Balogun assisted in putting an end to the stalemate with his advice. He advised that the council be disbanded and that members be replaced with more liberal members who were ready to make the council function. Rather than leave the appointment of the Chairman and the Secretary to the Council, the Government should make the appointment of the principal officers while MAMSER could help with the nomination of members. This arrangement was to continue till the Council was mature enough to appoint its officials without government intervention. The functions assigned to the council to perform were so important for national survival but unfortunately it became moribund in no time.

In 1999, a more enduring body committed to national unity and peaceful co-existence emerged, known as the Nigeria Inter-religious Council (NIREC). As a member of NIREC and a participant in the NIREC weekly webinar, I am privy to details about the Council. The Council was formed to create a forum for religious and traditional rulers in the country to promote understanding and interaction with the citizenry as well as to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and religious harmony in the country. Formed on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1999 and inaugurated on 29<sup>th</sup> September, the Council from inception was co-chaired by their Eminences Alhaji Muhammadu Maccido, CFR, the President of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) and Sultan of Sokoto, and Dr Sunday Nbang, CON, the then Primate of the Methodist Church and President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). NIREC is a voluntary Association that was made up of 25 Muslim members and 25 Christian members formed by representatives of the two main religions practised in Nigeria. The figure was reviewed in 2019 to accommodate more members; hence the current membership stands at 30 Muslims and 30 Christians, making 60 members drawn from the 36 states of the federation. This was the time this writer became a member of NIREC. The Youth Wing of the Council (also 30 Muslims and 30 Christians) was inaugurated on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2022.

The establishment was occasioned by the incessant ethno-religious crisis which punctuated the socio-political life of Nigeria as a country. Though a voluntary organisation, it enjoyed the support and encouragement of the Government right from the inception, as evident in the involvement and participation of President Olusegun Obasanjo in its inauguration in Sokoto.

Article 3 of NIREC's constitution spells out its mission statements as follows:

- i. To promote honestly and sincerely the true understanding of the two religions;
- ii. To promote dialogue between the adherents of the two principal faiths practised in Nigeria;
- iii. To inculcate moral, ethical, social and cultural values of the two religions for the rebirth and rebuilding of a better Nigerian society;
- iv. To provide a forum for mutual cooperation and understanding of Muslims and Christians;
- v. To promote the welfare of the citizens;
- vi. To create channels for peaceful resolution of friction and misunderstanding that may arise from time to time;
- vii. To serve as a forum to achieve national goals, economic growth, national unity and political stability;
- viii. To consider and make recommendations to governments of the federation on matters that may assist in fostering spiritual development and national integration;
- ix. To serve as an avenue for articulating cordial relationships among the various religious groups and between them and the government;
- x. To assist in emphasising and accentuating the positive role religion should play in nation building and development.

Arising from the foregoing, the Council performs multifarious functions including:

- i. Supporting people that are marginalised because of their religious identity through advocacy and capacity building;
- ii. Advising and empowering through the provision of legal protection for those suffering from religiously motivated violence;
- iii. Investigating and reporting on religious tension to the legitimate organs of government for proactive measures;
- iv. Working out strategies for collaboration in support of human dignity and for religious freedom;
- v. Monitoring and identifying potential hot spots for religious intolerance and violence.

In reference to Roman V in the foregoing, it is pertinent to appreciate the role played by NIREC in checkmating the crisis associated with the alleged demolition of the Trans-Amadi mosque in Port-Harcourt in September 2019. The Dialogue Committee of NIREC met with the religious leaders invited to Abuja from Rivers to thrash the issue out. The committee's findings revealed that the problem was not between the Muslims and the Christians; rather, it was a problem between the Rivers State Government and Trans-Amadi. Moreover, there was no standing mosque demolished as reported by the media; rather, the mosque was given an injunction by the court to stop construction. The government destroyed the mosque's foundation. The matter was amicably resolved, thus averting the crisis that could have been catastrophic.

Another intervention was the September 2021 incident in Jos, Plateau State, during which a band of travellers, believed to be Fulanis, was ambushed and killed. The planned reprisal attack by the aggrieved group was averted by the leadership of NIREC, supported by the representatives of the Governors' Forum. With the team's intervention, the potential escalation of the crisis was nipped in the bud while far-reaching resolutions were made as follows:

- i. Government's determination to restore peace and a sense of justice;
- ii. Assurance that the government remains determined to continue to protect all peaceful and law-abiding citizens and their communities;
- iii. Assurance of the determination of the government to continue to promote peaceful co-existence and religious tolerance through dialogue and engagement.

There is no gainsaying that the frequent conflicts between Muslim-Christian that often lead to the burning of houses of worship in the country have been reduced to the barest minimum. With NIREC, Nigerians can now make a distinction between what conflict is political, ethnic, economic or religious.

Occasionally, as circumstances warranted, NIREC has had cause to wade into issues of national concern. Sometimes it would require visiting the President of the federation. For instance, during the tenure of President Goodluck Jonathan, NIREC visited the Presidency to address the problem of Boko Haram insurgency. The main purpose was to advise the government on steps to take to end the menace. Similarly, during the tenure of President Muhammadu Buhari, the Council visited the Presidency to discuss the multifarious problems confronting the nation, including insurgency, insecurity, unemployment, inflation, electricity and infrastructural deficit. The Council took advantage of the visit to advise the government to reduce unemployment by creating job opportunities, restructuring moribund companies, increasing agricultural facilities, improving electricity and ensuring accessibility to funds for small-scale industries. In the education sector, the recent protracted industrial action by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) attracted the Council's attention. The Council left no stone unturned, tackling the intricacies involved in the dispute by engaging the ASUU leaders and relevant government functionaries to resolve the problem. This did not leave out the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Education and the Finance Minister, among others.

For the running of NIREC affairs, a committee system is deployed and this has proved to be efficient and effective. The following are the committees put in place: Dialogue and Peace Building, Education, Public Policy, International Relations, and Research and Planning. Each of the committees has its chairman and secretary. The NIREC secretariat coordinates the activities of all the committees, aside from the fact that it has specific functions it performs, including monitoring the media on a daily basis, calling to order those who make hate speeches, identifying potential violent spots, drawing the attention of security agencies to potential dangers, enlightening the public through the media (Echoes from NIREC), etc.

Through international networking, NIREC is involved in international engagements. The Council collaborates with international organisations not only at the global level but also at the continental and regional levels. The Council collaborates with the Religion for Peace, based in New York, the African Council of Religious Leaders, based in Nairobi, and the West African Interreligious Council, of which our own Afebu Cornelius is the Executive Secretary.

Currently, there is a proposal being considered by the Council to make interreligious dialogue a General Studies (GNS) programme compulsory for university undergraduates, with a view to helping the students understand that the two religions have commonalities that are capable of uniting their adherents. That this proposal has come at the insistence of this writer is not surprising; it is an ideal propagated by Professor Balogun. This being the case, by implication, Professor Balogun could be said to have impacted on NIREC. The reason for this is not far-fetched; first, this writer, a mentee of the Professor, is an active member of NIREC, and second, Professor Ishaq Oloyede, another mentee of Professor Balogun, was the coordinating secretary of the Council during its early years. Moreover, Archbishop Cardinal John Onaiyekan, a veteran advocate of religious harmony, former CAN President and Co-Chair of NIREC, who has continued to serve as stabiliser in the Council, was Professor Balogun's friend and working partner in dialogue for peaceful co-existence dating back to the formative years of the Nigeria Association for the Study of Religions (NASR) where Professor Balogun served as President and Bishop Onaiyekan was his Vice. The invaluable contributions of Bishop Onaiyekan to the growth of NIREC are without doubt a carryover of the duo's commitment to inter-religious dialogue.

NIREC is not without its challenges. Cornelius Omonokhua (2014) identifies three, the most fundamental of which, in my view, is funding. Though a non-governmental organisation, NIREC depends on the federal government for the funding of its operations. The government releases money to the Council to host its quarterly meetings, pays for hotel accommodation and members' sitting allowances. With the experience in the year 2024 when the Council met only two times (rather than four times) due to the government's failure to make available the needed fund, it has become obvious that NIREC will have no choice but to source for funds to run its affairs outside government circles, if the Council is not to die prematurely.

Another challenge is the leadership structure, which allows for co-chairmanship by the *Amirul Muminin*, the Sultan of Sokoto and President of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), and the President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). While the NSCIA President's tenure is permanent, that of CAN is a 2-year term renewable once. Sultan Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, since taking over from Sultan Maccido, has been the Co-Chair of the Muslim wing, a position he has been holding creditably as a leader committed to peaceful co-existence and national unity. The leadership of the Christian side has also been largely progressive since its inception, particularly when we have Christian leaders who work in harmony with the Muslim leadership. This was true of Bishop Sunday Mbang (Methodist Church Primate), Bishop John Onaiyekan (Catholic), Bishop Samson Ayokunle (Baptist) and the Current CAN President, Bishop Daniel Okoh of the Christ Holy Church International. The story was different with Pastor Ayo Oritsejafar of the Pentecostal denomination, whose tenure could not hold its regular meetings due to the crack within the leadership hierarchy.

The third is NIREC's inability to impact the grassroots. Though meetings of the religious leaders of both faiths are held quarterly in Abuja, with the resolutions made at the meetings published in the form of a communique in the national dailies, their effects are never felt at the grassroots level. This is a serious limitation to the laudable efforts of NIREC.

### **Conclusion**

We have in this chapter tried to x-ray the contributions of the doyen of Islamic Studies, Professor Ismail Ayinla Babatunde Balogun, to the growth and development of inter-religious dialogue and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria, for which reason he was known as an apostle of religious interaction and harmonious co-existence. This was the message he vigorously propagated as a scholar in his various capacities as leader of his professional associations, head of academic departments and through his academic writings. It has been argued, and plausibly too, that his advocacy, enunciated in his well-articulated 1981 inaugural lecture, contributed to the emergence of dialogue bodies, especially the Advisory Council on Religious Affairs (ACRA) established in 1987, and the subsequent Nigeria Inter-religious Council (NIREC) established in 1999. If Professor Balogun's academic legacy in dialogue is to endure, efforts should be made to tackle the identified challenges facing NIREC, and I have the following recommendations to make in this regard:

1. To solve the problem of funding, NIREC should endeavour to source its funds outside government circles. With the credibility of NIREC leadership, it should not be difficult to get public-spirited philanthropists to come to the financial aid of the Council. The Council's records of achievements are enough to showcase and win the support of well-meaning Nigerians who believe in the vision and mission of NIREC.
2. Co-Chairmanship is the best leadership structure for NIREC. The incident that once happened, which stalled NIREC meetings for some years, could have been prevented if the Government had intervened. The implication of this, therefore, is for the Government to show keen interest in NIREC's affairs in view of the invaluable service it renders to the nation.
3. Activities of NIREC have to be cascaded to the local government level if it is to impact the grassroots. In other words, state and local government chapters must be inaugurated by the central body.
4. NIREC must pursue vigorously the plan to introduce interreligious dialogue as a General Studies programme for university undergraduates. Though already approved in principle, there is still a lot to be done to make it see the light of day. The ultimate goal is to develop reading texts and secure NUC approval.
5. In view of the fact that many southern state governments are beginning to accord recognition to the indigenous religion, there may be need to widen the scope of religious dialogue to incorporate indigenous religion at least at the state level. For instance, for more than five years now, nearly all the southwestern state governments declare holiday for *Isese*. Moreover, the southwest has been experiencing rampant religious conflicts involving the traditionalists. In the light of this, any religious dialogue that excludes the traditionalists may not be welcome by the government.

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## CHAPTER 2

### Sulh (Reconciliation) and Peace Building in a Heterogeneous Society: An Example of Lagos State

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#### **Introduction**

The pursuit of peace in heterogeneous societies remains a critical challenge in today's globalised world. Lagos State, as Nigeria's economic and cultural hub, embodies this complexity with its diverse ethnic, cultural and religious composition. The state serves as a microcosm of Nigeria's pluralistic society, where interactions among various groups often generate both opportunities for enrichment and risks of conflict. Managing these interactions to promote harmonious coexistence is crucial for social stability and development. In Islamic thought, the concept of *Sulhu*, which translates to peace, reconciliation and amicable settlement, offers a profound framework for conflict resolution and social harmony. Derived from the Qur'an and *Hadith*, *Sulhu* promotes dialogue, mutual understanding and the resolution of disputes through peaceful means. These principles transcend religious boundaries, offering a universal model for addressing conflicts in multicultural environments. This paper investigates the relevance and application of *Sulhu* in fostering peace and reconciliation in Lagos State. By examining the socio-religious dynamics and established dispute resolution methods in the state, the study explores how Islamic reconciliation strategies can be utilised to mediate conflicts in multi-ethnic and multi-religious contexts. Additionally, the study employs qualitative research methods to collect data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the practical implications of *Sulhu* in peace-building efforts.

#### **An Examination of the Heterogeneous Nature of Lagos State**

Lagos State is a microcosm of Nigeria's vast ethnic and cultural diversity. The state's role as an economic powerhouse has attracted millions of migrants from all over the country and beyond, fostering a heterogeneous population characterised by a broad spectrum of ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The urbanisation process, rapid population growth and socio-economic dynamics have compounded the challenges of managing such diversity.

One of the most defining features of Lagos is its demographic diversity. The state's population includes individuals from nearly every ethnic group in Nigeria, with the Yoruba being the dominant ethnic group. However, the inflow of migrants from other parts of Nigeria, such as the Igbo,

Hausa and Fulani, has created a melting pot of cultures and languages. In addition to the indigenous Yoruba culture, Lagos hosts numerous migrant communities, including other Nigerians, West Africans and global expatriates. The role of migration in shaping the heterogeneous demographic profile of Lagos cannot be overstated. Urbanisation, spurred by the promise of economic opportunities, has led to a significant influx of rural populations from other Nigerian states. This mass migration has resulted in a population that is not only ethnically diverse but also characterised by a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, contributing to both the vibrancy and challenges of governance in Lagos (Sanni, 2006).

Cultural diversity in Lagos is reflected in its food, language, festivals and daily practices. The coexistence of multiple cultural identities presents both opportunities for enriching the social fabric of the state and challenges in terms of social integration and cohesion. Lagosians speak a variety of languages, with English and Yoruba serving as the main languages of communication. However, Pidgin English is also widely used as a unifying language among various ethnic groups, facilitating intergroup communication in both formal and informal settings. Despite this, cultural tensions occasionally arise as different groups vie for recognition and resources (Oyebade, 2018). The urban setting, with its growing population and demand for space and resources often exacerbates intergroup competition. Social integration programmes and initiatives aimed at bridging the gap between Lagos' diverse communities have been implemented, though with varying degrees of success (Adeyemo, 2019).

In addition, Lagos is home to a large number of religious groups, including Christians, Muslims and various traditional religious practices. The state government has policies that promote religious tolerance, as seen in its observance of religious holidays for both Muslims and Christians, such as the public holidays for *'Eidul Fitr*, *'Eidul Adhaa*, *Mawlidun-Nabiyy*, *First Day of Islamic Year*, *Easter*, Christmas and Gregorian New Year celebrations. Also, the state has a public holiday for Isele Day for the traditionalists.

Lagos State stands as the economic hub of Nigeria, contributing significantly to the nation's GDP. It is home to a wide range of industries, including finance, entertainment, trade, and manufacturing. This economic diversity further compounds the heterogeneity of Lagos, as it attracts professionals, traders, artisans and labourers from diverse economic backgrounds. The result is a stark contrast between the wealthy elites in areas such as Victoria Island and Lekki, and the sprawling informal settlements and slums in regions like Ajegunle and Mushin. The presence of both highly affluent individuals and those living below the poverty line underscores the economic segmentation within the state. The rising economic inequalities create a polarised society, where access to basic services such as education, healthcare and housing is determined largely by socio-economic status. Additionally, while Lagos is a major centre for entrepreneurship and innovation, many of its residents remain excluded from these economic opportunities due to systemic barriers and a lack of access to capital or education (Olayemi, 2021).

The governance of Lagos is shaped by its demographic and socio-economic heterogeneity. Managing such a diverse population requires policies that address the needs and aspirations of

various groups, while also maintaining social harmony and economic productivity. However, Lagos faces significant governance challenges, including issues related to resource allocation, infrastructure development and public service delivery. Urban planning in Lagos is a particularly complex task, as the rapid expansion of the city outpaces the development of necessary infrastructure. The state's infrastructure, including roads, transportation systems and healthcare facilities, is often strained by the ever-growing population. This is further complicated by the high levels of migration, which bring about changes in population density, spatial distribution and land use patterns. Additionally, the heterogeneous nature of Lagos also complicates the governance of security and law enforcement. Diverse communities sometimes have differing expectations and experiences of the state's legal and policing institutions, which can lead to tensions. The challenge for the Lagos State government is to create inclusive policies that promote equitable development and ensure that all residents, regardless of their ethnic or socio-economic background, feel represented and included in the governance process.

### **Lagos State Legal Framework on Ethnic and Religious Rights**

Lagos State has specific policies and laws that reinforce the constitutional protections of ethnic and religious rights, including the following:

- i. Lagos State laws and anti-discrimination:** Lagos State has enacted laws that promote inclusivity and diversity, such as the Lagos State Anti-Discrimination Law. This law prohibits discrimination based on ethnicity, religion or other protected characteristics in various sectors, including employment, education and public services. For example, the Lagos State Special People's Law, chapter 21(1), explicitly states: "no person living with disability shall be discriminated against on the ground of his or her disability by any person or institution in any manner or circumstances whatsoever" (Lagos State Government, 2011).
- ii. Ethnic diversity and political representation:** Given the multicultural nature of Lagos, ethnic minorities are provided with avenues for cultural expression. The state recognises and promotes the preservation of ethnic identities through cultural festivals, language preservation initiatives and political representation. For example, the Eyo Festival, which celebrates the Yoruba ethnic culture, is one of ways the state supports ethnic traditions. Lagos also has a Ministry of Local Government and Community Affairs which helps foster inclusivity at the grassroots level.
- iii. Political participation:** The Nigerian Constitution and Lagos State policies also provide for the inclusion of ethnic and religious groups in political processes. Political offices in Lagos State are designed to accommodate various ethnic groups, and elected officials are expected to represent the interests of their constituents, regardless of ethnicity or religion (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, Section 14(3)).
- iv. Freedom of association:** The Constitution guarantees the right to form associations. As a result, ethnic and religious groups in Lagos State are free to organise themselves into cultural, social and religious groups, promoting their traditions, beliefs and practices (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, Section 40).

- v. **Lagos State religious and ethnic councils:** Lagos has established councils, such as the Lagos State Christian Pilgrims Welfare Board and the Lagos State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, to cater to the specific religious needs of Christian and Muslim residents, respectively. These boards ensure the well-being of religious adherents and facilitate religious pilgrimages (Lagos State Ministry of Home Affairs, Religious Affairs (available on Lagos State Government website)).

### **Some Recorded Ethnic Conflicts in Lagos State**

Lagos State, Nigeria's most populous and ethnically diverse region, has experienced several conflicts rooted in ethnic tensions. Notable examples include:

- i. **Yoruba-Hausa clashes:** In March 2016, the Mile 12 Market in Lagos became a flashpoint for violent clashes between the indigenous Yoruba community and Hausa traders. The conflict, which resulted in multiple fatalities and significant property damage, was reportedly triggered by a dispute between a Hausa commercial motorcyclist and a Yoruba resident. The altercation escalated into broader ethnic violence, leading to the temporary closure of the market by the Lagos State government (Vanguard News, 2016). In 1999, Lagos witnessed significant ethnic violence between the Yoruba and Hausa communities. The clashes, which resulted in numerous deaths and widespread destruction, were part of a series of ethnic confrontations that year, reflecting deep-seated tensions and the fragility of inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria's urban centres (Human Rights Watch, 1999).
- ii. **Yoruba-Igbo tensions:** Tensions between the Yoruba and Igbo communities in Lagos have occasionally surfaced, particularly during election periods. In the 2023 general elections, there were reports of anti-Igbo sentiments, with instances of violence and intimidation aimed at discouraging Igbo participation in the electoral process. Such incidents have exacerbated ethnic divisions and highlighted underlying resentments related to political influence and economic competition. (BBC News, 2023).
- iii. **Awori-Ewe land dispute:** In recent years, disputes over land ownership have arisen between the Awori and Ewe communities in Lagos. The Ewe people have accused the Awori of intimidation and unauthorised leasing of land, leading to heightened tensions and confrontations. These conflicts underscore the complexities of land rights and the challenges of cohabitation among different ethnic groups in the state (National Accord, 2022).

These incidents highlight the challenges of managing ethnic diversity in Lagos State. While the city is celebrated for its multiculturalism these conflicts underscore the need for continuous efforts in promoting dialogue, understanding and equitable resource distribution among its diverse populations.

### **Prominent Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Institutions in Lagos State**

In Lagos State, several mediation programmes aimed at resolving disputes efficiently, reduce court case backlog and promote peaceful coexistence have been established. Below are some of the key mediation programmes in Lagos State.

- i. Lagos State Multi-Door Courthouse (LMDC):** LMDC is one of the most prominent alternative dispute resolution (ADR) institutions in Lagos. It seeks to offer alternative channels for resolving disputes outside the formal judicial process. This helps in reducing congestion in the courts. It provides mediation, arbitration and negotiation services for a range of disputes, including commercial, civil, family and land-related matters. The LMDC operates under the Lagos State Judiciary, providing access to both mediation and judicial processes, hence its name “Multi-Door” (<https://www.lmdc.gov.ng>).
- ii. Lagos State Judiciary Mediation Services (LSJMS):** The LSJMS is designed to offer court-annexed mediation services. It aims to reduce the number of pending cases in courts and promotes access to justice by resolving disputes more efficiently. Mediation services are available for various cases, including civil, commercial and family-related issues. Mediation is conducted by trained professionals and is available at various courts in Lagos State (<https://www.lagosjudiciary.gov.ng>).
- iii. Community Mediation Centres (CMC):** The Community Mediation Centres (CMC) are established in various local government areas of Lagos State to offer dispute resolution at the community level. This initiative is designed to address local disputes, enhancing peace and harmony within neighbourhoods. These centres resolve conflicts relating to family disputes, neighbour disputes, land issues and other community-based conflicts. The centres provide a localised approach to conflict resolution, offering a more accessible and informal setting for mediation (<https://www.lagosstate.gov.ng>).
- iv. Lagos State Citizens Mediation Centre (CMC):** The CMC is a key institution providing mediation services to the general public. It helps citizens resolve personal and community-related conflicts without resorting to formal litigation. It offers mediation for a range of issues, including family matters, land disputes and commercial conflicts. The centre also handles community-related disputes, offering solutions to challenges that arise between neighbours or within families. It is designed to be a first point of contact for individuals seeking to resolve conflicts outside of court proceedings (<https://www.lagosstate.gov.ng>).
- v. Lagos State Land Dispute Mediation Programme:** This programme addresses the growing number of land-related disputes in Lagos, which often result in litigation, fraud and violence. The programme aims to create a more peaceful environment for resolving land issues. It focuses on resolving land ownership disputes, boundary issues and illegal land acquisitions through mediation, as opposed to lengthy and expensive litigation. It is designed to address specific land disputes that are common in Lagos, particularly in high-density areas (<https://www.lagosstate.gov.ng>).

These mediation programmes aim to ensure more accessible, efficient and cost-effective dispute resolution in Lagos State. They play a crucial role in the overall justice system by reducing case backlogs and encouraging peaceful conflict resolution.

### **The Deficiencies of ADR Institutions in Lagos**

The deficiencies of the alternative dispute resolution institutions in Lagos State can be explored through several legal, institutional, cultural and operational lenses. Mediation is a key alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism, but its effectiveness in Lagos is limited by a number of factors:

- i. Limited public awareness and education:** Many citizens are unaware of their right to mediation or the availability of mediation centres such as the Lagos State Citizens' Mediation Centre (CMC). Mediation is sometimes misunderstood as informal or non-binding, discouraging people from using it. A study by Omotola and Adeyemi revealed that less than 40% of surveyed Lagos residents were aware of mediation services provided by the government (Omotola & Adeyemi, 2020). This lack of awareness means that people often resort to litigation or self-help methods rather than exploring peaceful settlement options.
- ii. Insufficient number of trained mediators:** Although Lagos has trained mediators through institutions like the CMC, the number is inadequate relative to the population and volume of disputes. Some mediators lack deep legal or cultural understanding, especially in complex family, land or commercial cases, while others lack specialised training in modern ADR methods, leading to poor case handling. For example, in a family inheritance dispute in institutions in Lagos, the mediators reportedly lacked knowledge of applicable Islamic succession rules, leading to an ineffective resolution attempt (LMDC, 2020).
- iii. Inadequate funding and resources:** Many mediation centres are underfunded, leading to delays, poor facilities and limited outreach, especially in rural or riverine areas of Lagos State. Lack of modern infrastructure (e.g., online dispute resolution platforms) hinders efficiency. For example, in Ajegunle and Epe branches of the CMC, cases have reportedly been delayed due to power outages, lack of stationery and insufficient office space (CLEEN Foundation Report, 2021).
- iv. Cultural and religious biases:** In many communities, there is a preference for traditional rulers, religious leaders or family elders over formal mediation. Some parties resist mediation because it doesn't align with their belief in adversarial justice or "winning" a dispute. There have been complaints from users about perceived favouritism or lack of neutrality from some mediators, especially in politically or socially sensitive cases. For instance, reports from Alimosho and Ikorodu areas indicate that disputants sometimes accuse mediators of bias, especially when one party is more influential such as landlords versus tenants (Vanguard, 2023).
- v. Limited jurisdiction and authority:** Mediated agreements are voluntary and may not carry the same legal weight as court judgments unless filed in court. If one party fails to comply, the

other may still have to go to court, undermining the purpose of mediation. In 2022, a case involving a land boundary dispute mediated at the Ikeja CMC fell apart after one party refused to comply, knowing the agreement wasn't enforceable until a formal registration at the high court (Arinze-Umobi, 2019).

- vi. Corruption and political interference:** In some instances, mediators or local leaders involved in informal mediation processes are influenced by political affiliations, ethnicity or financial inducement. Many Lagosians, especially in marginalised or low-income communities, do not fully trust government mediation institutions, perceiving them as bureaucratic or favouring the powerful.
- vii. Delay in case resolution:** Popular centres like the CMC are often overwhelmed with cases, leading to long wait times and administrative delays. Lack of case management systems slows down dispute processing. A business dispute reported in 2023 took over six months to resolve at the Ikeja CMC due to multiple adjournments and administrative backlog (Punch Newspaper, March 2024).
- viii. Western-centric methods:** Western-centric methods dominate the ADR system in Lagos and alienate some grassroots communities. This causes low trust in formal institutions among certain ethnic and religious groups, while the lack of spiritual or moral persuasion makes some disputants disregard the judgments of the institutions.

While the Lagos State mediation system plays a vital role in access to justice and peace making in Lagos, the deficiencies mentioned above, in our own view, indicate that there is a need to reform the mediation operation in Lagos with the view of the Islamic mediation system called *Sulhu*.

### **Islamic Concept of *Sulhu* (Reconciliation)**

*Sulhu* is an Arabic term that refers to a form of peace, mediation or reconciliation, often employed in the context of resolving conflicts in Islamic societies. The concept of *Sulhu* can be understood as an informal or formal process of dispute resolution, focusing on the restoration of harmony and peace through dialogue, negotiation and compromise, typically between individuals or groups (Abootalebi, 2012). The Islamic concept of *Sulhu* (reconciliation or settlement) is central to conflict resolution and peace building, particularly in heterogeneous societies where multiple groups co-exist. In the Quran, *Sulhu* is often mentioned as a way to end disputes peacefully and amicably. For instance, *Surah Al-Hujurat* (49:9) advocates for reconciliation and settlement in the case of disputes among believers. It says:

If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allah's command; then if it returns, make peace between them with justice and act equitably; surely Allah loves those who act equitably (Q.49:9).

The believers are but brethren, therefore make peace between your brethren and be careful of (your duty) to Allah that mercy may be had on you (Q.49:10).

Moreover, Sulhu also appears in the Hadith, where the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have said:

“Shall I not inform you of something that is better than fasting, prayer, and charity?”  
When asked what it was, he responded, “It is reconciliation between people; corrupting the relations between people is the shaver” (Abu Dawood, trans. Hasan, 2000, 3:4919).

The Islamic concept of *Sulhu* can also be observed in Islamic history in the pivotal event called *Sulhul Hudaibiyyah* (Treaty of Hudaibiyyah). It took place in 628 CE. It was a peace agreement between the Prophet and the Quraysh tribe, making a crucial point in the early days of Islam. The story behind the treaty was a disagreement between a group of 1,400 Muslims, who moved peacefully towards *Makkah* to perform *Umrah*, and the Quraysh, who sent their representatives to stop them at the skirt of *Makkah*, a place called *Hudaibiyyah*. Having foreseen the conflict that could lead to mass death, the prophet resorted to negotiation and solved the disagreement between them by drawing a treaty rather than resorting to warfare. After the negotiations, the two parties agreed to a treaty which included a ceasefire for ten years, return of fugitives, no fighting during the years, allowing the Muslims to return the following year, and tribal alliances (Abdul, 1978).

*Sulhul Hudaibiyyah* paved the way for Islam’s peaceful expansion across Arabia. Two years later, the *Quraysh* broke the treaty by attacking a tribe allied with the Muslims. In response, the Prophet gathered an army and marched to *Makkah*, resulting in the conquest of *Makkah*. *Sulhul Hudaibiyyah* is often viewed as a key moment in the strategic growth of Islam. It illustrates the importance of diplomacy, patience and foresight in conflict resolution (Abdul, 1978).

Abu Nimar refers to *sulhu* as “the event or ritual of reconciliation rather than the process”, and refers to the process as *Masalaha* (Abu Nimar, 2003: 99). *Masalaha* is an authentic conflict resolution mechanism in the Middle East, dating back to pre-Islamic times, that attempts to reconcile conflicts between rival parties. According to Jordanian judge Abu-Hassan, there are two types of *sulhu* processes: public *sulhu* and private *sulhu*. Private *sulhu* takes place when there is a conflict between the members of a community who know one another. The aim of private *sulhu* is to avoid revenge and to restore harmony within a community. The outcome of private *sulhu* can be total peace, where the two parties to the conflict forgive each other, forget what happened and do not hold any resentment towards each other. The outcome of private *sulhu* can also be partial or conditional, where the conflict between two parties ends according to the agreed conditions set in the peace process. Public *sulhu*, on the other hand, can be compared to the signing of a peace treaty between two countries to end conflict for a period of time. It takes place to resolve conflicts between tribes, communities or different religious groups (Irani & Funk, 1998: 64). In Islamic history, the Hudaibiyyah Treaty, which was signed between the Prophet (PBUH) and the Makkans, is an example of a public *sulh* aimed at establishing a period of 10 years of ceasefire. The Madinan Charter, Constitution of Medina established by the Prophet in the 7th century, is also often cited as an example of peaceful coexistence and *Sulhu* in

a pluralistic society. The Charter recognised various religious groups (Muslims, Jews and others) as part of a unified society, emphasising peaceful cooperation and conflict resolution based on mutual respect and shared interests. The following paragraph contains the contents of the constitution.

### **Key Articles of the Agreement**

- i. Protection for converts to Islam:** Anyone who follows and embraces Islam shall be entitled to help and assistance without discrimination. No one shall oppress or incite others to oppress them.
- ii. War expenses:** In the case of the defence of Madinah, the Jews must contribute their share of the expenses for war.
- iii. Unity of Jews and Muslims:** The Jews of Bani Awf (a tribe of *Ansar*) are considered allies of the Muslims and are viewed as one nation. Both groups are free to follow their respective laws, except for those among them who are sinners and oppressors. Such individuals ruin themselves and their families.
- iv. Equality of Jewish tribes:** The Jews of *Bani Najjar*, *Bani Harith*, *Bani Sa'adah*, *Bani Jahsham*, *Bani Aws*, *Bani Tha'alaba* and *Bani Sha'ibah* are granted the same rights and privileges as the Jews of Bani Awf. Similarly, the tribe of *Ja'fah*, a branch of *Tha'alab*, and the branch of *Bani Sha'ibah* share the same status.
- v. Promotion of virtue:** Signatories of the agreement should ensure that virtues triumph over sin.
- vi. Friendship and confidence:** Those who are not on friendly terms with or confident in the Jews are to part ways with them.
- vii. Commitment to the agreement:** No one has the right to abandon the agreement without the permission of the Prophet Muhammad.
- viii. Respect for life:** The blood of everyone, particularly the oppressed, is respected. Anyone who kills is liable to pay blood money, which could ruin their family and allies, especially when the murder involves an oppressed person.
- ix. Joint responsibility for war:** The expenses of wars fought jointly by the Jews and Muslims are shared equally. When a third party fights against the agreement's signatories, it is their collective duty to fight together.
- x. Ethical conduct:** Relations between the parties are based on goodness, and all must refrain from evil.
- xi. Prohibition of oppression:** No one should oppress those who have entered into this agreement. If oppression occurs, the oppressed must be helped (Farman & Yucel, 2023).

## **Peace and Reconciliation in Al-Andalus**

The principles of the Madinah Charter were reflected later in *Al-Andalus* (Islamic Spain), where Muslims, Christians and Jews coexisted for centuries. The concept of *Sulhu* (peace and reconciliation) played a pivotal role in ensuring harmony.

- i. Legal systems for coexistence:** Different religious and cultural groups were protected under Islamic governance. Disputes were resolved through peaceful negotiations based on fairness.
- ii. Mutual respect and collaboration:** Intellectual and cultural exchange flourished, with contributions from all communities. Religious freedom and mutual respect were central to societal order.
- iii. Shared responsibilities:** Communities worked together to address common challenges and maintain peace. The Madinah Charter and the practices in *Al-Andalus* demonstrate the enduring relevance of Islamic principles in promoting peace, justice, and coexistence among diverse groups. These examples highlight the importance of dialogue, mutual respect and shared responsibilities in building harmonious societies ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_and\\_cultural\\_exchange\\_in\\_al-Andalus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_and_cultural_exchange_in_al-Andalus)).

## **Sulhu and Peace Building**

According to Johan Galtung, often referred to as the “father of peace”, peace is the absence of violence (Galtung, 1969). Galtung defined peace as the absence of violence, not the absence of war. The usefulness and validity of the definition depend solely upon the definition of violence. According to Galtung, violence is a somatic and mental human potential. Violence is anything which produces a gap between the physical and mental potentials of human beings and their actual conditions. As posited by Galtung, elimination of violence should be viewed as an important peace value or a necessary condition of peace (Galtung, 1969). Baruch Spinoza also views peace as not the absence of war, but a virtue that arises from the strength of character (Spinoza, 1677/2000). Galtung further defined peace as the presence of conditions that fosters social justice, equality and harmony (Galtung, 1969). *Sulhu* can play a critical role in peacebuilding, particularly in post-conflict societies or communities facing deep divisions. It provides a framework for addressing historical grievances, fostering reconciliation and rebuilding trust between individuals or groups that may have been at odds. *Sulhu* can contribute to peacebuilding in the following ways:

### **I. Building Trust through Justice and Compassion**

Islam emphasises the importance of trust, *amaanah*, justice, ‘*adl*, and compassion, *rahmah*, in fostering harmonious relationships within diverse societies. The Qur’an and the Hadith provide guidance on maintaining trust and coexistence among people of various backgrounds. Trust can be built by recognising diversity as a divine plan. The Quran says:

O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you with Allah is the most righteous of you” (Qur’an 49:13).

In Islam, the concept of *sulhu* (reconciliation) is deeply rooted in the principles of fostering peace, understanding and harmony among individuals and communities. In a heterogeneous society, where people from diverse backgrounds, beliefs and cultures coexist, building trust emerges as a fundamental aspect of achieving *sulhu*. Trust acts as the cornerstone for harmonious relationships and is a means to bridge differences, dispel prejudice and promote coexistence. Islam emphasises the importance of mutual respect, justice and fairness in all dealings, as these are essential for trust to flourish. The Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) provide numerous guidelines for establishing and maintaining trust. For instance, Allah commands Muslims to uphold justice and truth, even if it is against themselves or their loved ones. The Quran says:

O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives” (Quran 4:135).

Justice, as an impartial and equitable principle, lays the foundation for trust, as it assures all members of society that their rights and dignity will be safeguarded. Moreover, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exemplified trustworthiness in his interactions with people of different faiths and cultures. His title Al-Amin (the Trustworthy) was earned because of his consistent honesty and reliability, even before his prophethood. In a heterogeneous society, Muslims are encouraged to emulate this example by being truthful, fulfilling their promises and honouring their agreements. Such conduct not only builds trust but also enhances the reputation of Islam as a faith that values integrity and ethical behaviour.

Another critical aspect of building trust as a form of *Sulhu* is the promotion of dialogue and mutual understanding. Islam encourages constructive communication to address conflicts and misunderstandings. The Quran states:

And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend” (Quran 41:34).

By responding to hostility with kindness and engaging in sincere dialogue, individuals can transform adversarial relationships into ones founded on trust and goodwill. Additionally, trust in a heterogeneous society is nurtured through acts of compassion and solidarity. Islam places great emphasis on helping others and maintaining the bonds of humanity. Acts such as feeding the hungry, aiding the needy and standing with the oppressed transcend religious and cultural boundaries, fostering trust and unity among diverse groups. These actions reflect the Qur’anic injunction to cooperate in righteousness and piety: “And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression” (Quran 5:2). Building trust also involves avoiding behaviours that erode it, such as deceit, backbiting and prejudice.

The Quran warns against suspicion and negative assumptions, stating: “O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin” (Quran 49:12). By fostering an environment of transparency and sincerity, communities can prevent the seeds of mistrust from taking root. In essence, building trust as a form of *Sulhu* in a heterogeneous society aligns closely with the core Islamic values of justice, honesty, compassion and mutual respect. It requires a commitment to ethical conduct, active engagement in reconciliatory efforts, and a genuine willingness to understand and embrace diversity. Through these efforts, Muslims can contribute to creating a peaceful and cohesive society that reflects the universal message of Islam: unity in diversity under the guidance of divine principles.

## II. Mediation and Dialogue

Mediation, a nonviolent dispute resolution approach involving a neutral third party who aids disputants through negotiation, is widely used in conflict management and resolution. It is also a common mechanism in the Muslim world, where it plays a significant role in resolving conflicts in countries like Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Turkey (Kadayifci-Orellana et al, 2013). Mediation is often associated with formal diplomatic interventions between states, utilised by Muslim states and organisations like the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to resolve inter-state conflicts. It is also a prevalent informal tool for addressing family and communal disputes in Muslim communities. According to Paramole, there are various ways through which conflict may arise and these include: ideological fronts, land border and political interest. However, the outlook of a conflict determines the approach of its resolution, personnel and the instruments deployed. Some of the methodologies for conflict resolution include making political and diplomatic analysis with the opposing parties with a view to mediation (Paramole, 2022: 331). The practice has roots in Islamic conflict resolution traditions dating back to the early days of Islam. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) frequently mediated conflicts, earning trust through his reputation as “the Faithful One” (*al-Amin*). His role as a mediator-arbitrator was pivotal in resolving disputes, including his well-known intervention during the relocation of the Black Stone, where he suggested a collaborative solution that satisfied all the disputing Makkan tribes (*Ibn Kathir*, 1976, vol. 1, pp. 220-222). His mediation practices, inspired by Islamic principles and values derived from the Qur’an and Hadith, continue to influence conflict resolution efforts in the Muslim world.

An essential aspect of mediation in Muslim communities is the identity of the mediator. The effectiveness of mediation efforts often hinges on who the mediators are, as their identity, status and reputation play critical roles. Third parties typically emphasise community unity and invoke Islamic values such as patience, acknowledgement of mistakes, apology, compensation, forgiveness and reconciliation to manage emotions and rebuild relationships. They often cite Qur’anic stories, Prophetic wisdom and Islamic historical examples to highlight the importance of peaceful conflict resolution and restoring harmony (Olatunji, 2016). As Muslims strive to align their behaviour with the Qur’an and *Sunnah*, Muslim conflict

interveners aim to restore Islamic principles by addressing misconceptions and negative practices. Mediation in Muslim communities can involve a single mediator or a delegation, depending on the nature and complexity of the conflict. Religious leaders, such as *Imams*, *Shaykhs* and *Aalims*, along with respected local figures like *Zaumas* in Lebanon or *Mokhtars* in Turkey, frequently serve as mediators due to their high status and prestige (Kadayifci-Orellana et al, 2013). However, younger family members, friends and neighbours increasingly mediate marital disputes, reflecting a shift in mediation practices. The mediators, often regarded as cultural insiders, are trusted for their understanding of local customs, collective community values, and conflict dynamics. Qualified mediators, referred to as *Hakam*, are chosen for their trustworthiness, impartiality and deep knowledge of the conflict and customs. Their wisdom and credibility grant them the authority to set procedures and establish ground rules for mediation.

### III. Healing and Reconciliation

*Sulhu* allows for the acknowledgement of wrongdoings and the potential for forgiveness, which are essential for healing in communities that have experienced violence or prolonged conflicts. The principle of *'Afwu* (pardon), considered as an act of *Ihsan* (goodness), is repeatedly emphasised in the Qur'an, which urges Muslims to adopt *'afwu* as a way to reconcile. The Qur'an stresses that forgiveness is of a higher value than maintaining hatred or vengeance as the believers are urged to forgive when they are angry (Q42:37). It was also noted that there is a clearly articulated preference in Islam for nonviolence over violence, and for forgiveness (*Musamaha*) over retribution (Said, 2000: 8). The Qur'an relates that human life on earth started with an act of forgiveness by God (Q2:36–38). The Qur'anic narration of the story of Joseph (PBUH) and his brothers emphasises how he forgave them and treated them with respect and honour. Also, as the most forgiving, God has constantly forgiven the Children of Israel and indicated that those who seek the forgiveness of God should also cultivate the habit of forgiveness. The Qur'anic verse, "the recompense of an injury the like thereof: but whosoever forgives and thereby brings about a reestablishment of harmony, his reward is with God; and God loves not the wrongdoers" (Q42:40), advocates sincere forgiveness as the preferred path to establish God's harmony on earth.

### IV. Inclusive participation

Inclusive participation is a vital approach to achieving *sulhu* (reconciliation) in a heterogeneous society. Islam, as a religion that advocates for justice, equity and peace, underscores the importance of involving all members of a community, regardless of their backgrounds, in decision-making and social processes. This principle ensures that every individual feels valued and respected, thereby fostering unity and resolving conflicts. The Quran emphasises the concept of *Shuura* (consultation), which is a form of inclusive participation. Allah commands:

...and those who have responded to their master and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and they spend from what We have provided for them (Quran 42:38).

This verse highlights the importance of engaging diverse voices in discussions and decisions that affect the community. When people feel heard and included, trust and harmony naturally develop, which are essential for achieving *sulhu*. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exemplified this principle in his leadership. He often consulted his companions, including those from different tribes and backgrounds, on matters of governance, warfare, and community welfare. For instance, during the Battle of the Trench, the Prophet adopted the strategy suggested by Salman the Persian, highlighting the value of diverse perspectives (Ibn Kathir 1976, vol. 1, pp. 220-222). Such inclusivity not only resolves conflicts but also strengthens bonds among people of different cultural, social and religious identities. In a heterogeneous society, inclusive participation addresses the root causes of division by promoting mutual understanding and respect.

Inclusion also involves recognising and addressing the unique needs of various groups. As mentioned earlier the Prophet, as the head of Madinah, which is an Islamic state, established a constitution which protects the rights of the Muslims and Jews in Madinah. Islam encourages compassion and care for the vulnerable, such as orphans, the poor and minorities. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) consistently advocated for the rights of marginalised groups and ensured their voices were heard. For example, Bilal and Salman Al Farsiyy, Abissinian (Ethiopian) and Persian companions, were given high ranks in the community (Hisham, 2001). His example serves as a reminder that reconciliation is only possible when the concerns of all members of society are acknowledged and addressed. Inclusive participation as a way of *Sulhu* requires humility, patience and a commitment to the greater good. It calls for creating spaces where dialogue is encouraged, differences are respected and common ground is sought. This approach not only resolves existing conflicts but also prevents future ones by building a culture of trust and cooperation. In embracing inclusive participation, a heterogeneous society can achieve the essence of *Sulhu*.

## V. Non-Violence

Non-violence is a powerful and essential means of achieving *Sulhu* (reconciliation) in a heterogeneous society. Islam, as a religion of peace and mercy, emphasises the importance of resolving conflicts through peaceful means rather than resorting to violence. In diverse communities where differences in culture, religion and ideology exist, non-violence serves as a practical and moral approach to fostering harmony and unity. It reflects the Islamic values of patience, compassion and justice, all of which are critical for sustaining peace in a pluralistic society. The Quran explicitly advocates for peace and reconciliation, urging believers to respond to hostility with goodness. Allah says: *Repel [evil] with what is better, and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend*” (Quran 41:34). This principle teaches that violence only perpetuates

hatred and division, while non-violence and kind actions have the power to transform adversaries into allies. In a heterogeneous society, this approach is especially crucial, as it prevents conflicts from escalating and encourages mutual understanding.

The Prophet exemplified non-violence in his interactions with people of different faiths and backgrounds. Despite facing persecution and hostility during his mission, he consistently chose patience and dialogue over retaliation. One notable example is the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, where the Prophet negotiated peace with the *Quraysh*, even accepting seemingly unfavourable terms for the greater good of avoiding bloodshed (Abdul, 1980). This treaty not only prevented conflict but also opened the door for peaceful interactions and the eventual spread of Islam. Such examples highlight the effectiveness of non-violence as a means of achieving *Sulhu* and resolving disputes. Non-violence also aligns with the Islamic principle of justice, which requires fairness and the protection of human dignity. The Quran commands believers to stand firm in justice, even in the face of animosity: “*And do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness*” (Quran 5:8). Violence, in contrast, often leads to injustice and the violation of rights, undermining the very foundations of a harmonious society. By rejecting violence and promoting peaceful solutions, individuals and communities uphold the Islamic ideals of equity and respect for all. In a heterogeneous society, non-violence fosters an environment where differences can be addressed constructively. Islam encourages dialogue and consultation as means of resolving conflicts, as reflected in the concept of *Shu'raa* (mutual consultation). Through dialogue, misunderstandings can be clarified, grievances can be heard, and compromises can be reached without resorting to aggression. This approach not only resolves disputes but also strengthens the bonds between diverse groups, promoting coexistence and mutual respect.

Moreover, non-violence requires patience and perseverance, qualities highly valued in Islam. Allah praises those who exercise patience in the face of adversity when He says: “*And We will surely give those who were patient their reward according to the best of what they used to do*” (Quran 16:96).

In a pluralistic society, patience allows individuals to navigate differences and challenges without resorting to harmful actions. It demonstrates a commitment to peace and a willingness to work towards reconciliation, even in difficult circumstances. Non-violence as a way of *sulhu* also involves addressing the root causes of conflict, such as injustice, inequality and discrimination. Islam calls for the protection of the vulnerable and the eradication of oppression, as these are often the underlying factors that fuel violence. By addressing these issues through peaceful means, communities can create a more just and equitable society where *sulhu* becomes a natural outcome. Several examples highlight the role of *Sulhu* in both historical and contemporary peacebuilding. In many post-colonial Arab countries, *Sulhu* has been employed to resolve disputes over land, family or community issues that may arise after the upheaval of colonial rule. For instance, *Sulhu* processes have been instrumental in maintaining local peace amidst broader political instability.

*Sulhu* processes have also been used by Islamic clerics and community leaders in countries like Syria, Iraq and Yemen, where communities have been fractured by war. These processes, though informal, have sometimes led to effective ceasefires or local peace deals. In situations involving sectarian conflict, such as Iraq or Bahrain, *Sulhu* processes help in bringing together members of different sects or ethnicities by creating common ground through religious or cultural norms of forgiveness and reconciliation (Kadayifci-Orellana et al, 2013). *Sulhu*, as a method of conflict resolution and peace building, offers a valuable approach to resolving disputes through voluntary agreements, the restoration of social harmony and the involvement of community leaders. Its integration into formal peace building processes can contribute to more durable and inclusive peace agreements, particularly in contexts where violence has fractured relationships. By emphasising restorative justice, dialogue and reconciliation, *Sulhu* represents a key element in fostering long-term peace in conflicting societies (Iran & Funk, 1998).

### **Integration of *Sulhu* Principle into Legal System to Enhance Peace Building in Lagos State**

Integrating *Sulhu* into the Lagos State legal system provides a culturally rooted, spiritually grounded and practically effective way to improve dispute resolution. It enhances legitimacy, increases compliance, empowers communities and aligns mediation with the moral fabric of many Lagosians. As Nigeria seeks more effective alternatives to litigation, *Sulhu* offers both a divine directive and a practical solution. This can be achieved through the following ways:

- i. Cultural and religious legitimacy:** *Sulhu* resonates deeply with many Lagos residents, particularly among Muslims in places like Agege, Mushin, Ikorodu and Epe. Incorporating *Sulhu* enhances legitimacy and acceptance of the mediation process as people see it as spiritually sanctioned. It therefore encourages acceptance of mediation outcomes. Religious leaders and Imams can act as community-based mediators or advisors with the aid of legal certification and recognition. This will increase participation of disputants who are sceptical of secular approaches. For instance, in a 2022 case in Mushin, a land boundary conflict between two Muslim families was settled swiftly when the Imam of the local mosque used *Sulhu* principles. The case was later referred to the CMC for formal documentation (LSCMC Annual Report, 2022).
- ii. Community-based mediation:** *Sulhu* promotes the decentralisation of conflict resolution. This aligns with grassroots justice principles. Mosques, Islamic centres and traditional settings can be used as community mediation forums. Training Imams and community leaders in formal ADR techniques, while grounding them in *Sulhu*, creates hybrid systems with a stronger impact. This will enhance cost-effectiveness and accessibility, as *Sulhu*, rooted in local customs, can function informally and affordably, reducing pressure on courts and formal ADR centres. In communities like Ikorodu and Ajegunle, where legal literacy is low, *Sulhu* can resolve issues at early stages, avoiding escalation. According to Gatawa, the Agege Muslim community plays an important role in conflict management in the local government area. Its intervention has helped to forestall or minimise intra- and inter-group conflicts, which have the potential for snowballing into wider conflagrations (Gatawa, 2013).

- iii. **Emphasis on reconciliation over victory:** *Sulhu* shifts the focus from “winning” a dispute to restoring relationships. This principle helps reduce post-mediation resentment and increases compliance with agreements. A Yoruba adage says: “We don’t become friends after we arrive from court”. Much emphasis should be laid on forgiveness and reconciliation, which is one of the principles of *Sulhu*, in the process of settling disputes. Parties are encouraged to prioritise long-term harmony over short-term gains, especially in family, land and business disputes. *Sulhu*, promotes not just dispute resolution but healing, apologies, restitution, sincere forgiveness and rebuilding broken social ties in families, markets and neighbourhoods. For example, a market dispute in Agege between two Hausa traders was resolved by a community Islamic scholar through *Sulhu*. Both parties resumed business, avoiding prolonged animosity.
- iv. **Simplification of procedure:** *Sulhu* encourages informal, dialogue-based processes. This reduces bureaucratic bottlenecks and appeals to low-income or less-educated individuals who may find court-like mediation intimidating. *Sulhu* solution allows flexibility and informality. It is non-adversarial and does not follow rigid procedures but gives room for informal discussions rooted in communal values. This would suit market women, artisans and low-income parties who are intimidated by formal legal language.
- v. **Trust-building and spiritual accountability:** In *Sulhu*, resolution often involves moral and religious accountability. Invoking Allah’s name in agreements and swearing on the Qur’an enhances compliance. When parties believe Allah is a witness to the settlement, they are more likely to honour it and accept the judgment of the institutions. *Sulhu* traditionally employs respected local figures such as Imams, elders or family heads as neutral reconcilers. Their moral authority and familiarity with the parties build trust and encourage sincere participation. The Prophet regularly appointed trusted community leaders to settle disputes locally, enhancing credibility (Ibn Hisham, 2001, pp. 221–223).
- vi. **Inclusiveness and fairness:** Some ADR mechanisms struggle with religious or ethnic tensions due to a lack of cultural sensitivity. *Sulhu* mandates that all parties be fully heard and that mutual consent be prioritised. In multi-ethnic Lagos, this ensures ethnic minorities, women and vulnerable groups are treated with dignity. The Prophet’s model, such as the treaty of *Hudaybiyyah*, resolving issues with Jews and Christians of Madinah, shows how to make just, inclusive agreements. *Sulhu* solution respects cultural and religious diversity. It promotes mutual respect, even with non-Muslims. Muslim scholars and Imams who are conversant with the different languages of the Lagos people can be trained in ADR techniques in order to interpret discussions concerning disputes among different ethnic parties and settle their disputes amicably.

## Recommendations

Due to the above submissions and in order to achieve an effective application of *Sulhu* in a multi-religious society like Lagos State, this work recommends the following:

1. The government should encourage open and structured dialogue between various religious groups in Lagos to foster mutual understanding and respect and create more awareness about ADR institutions;
2. Islamic principles of *Sulhu* (reconciliation) should be used as a model for resolving interfaith and inter-ethnic conflicts;
3. Religious leaders should establish interfaith councils that include representatives from Islam, Christianity and traditional religions to address societal grievances and disputes;
4. The Lagos State mediators and community leaders should be trained in *Sulhu* principles, emphasising forgiveness, mutual compromise and reconciliation, and empowered with legal certification;
5. Traditional Islamic conflict-resolution mechanisms, alongside modern legal frameworks, should be used to handle disputes in heterogeneous communities;
6. Peace education that highlights the Islamic principles of peace and reconciliation should be promoted in schools while educational programmes that teach citizens about the importance of peaceful coexistence in a multicultural and multi-religious society like Lagos should be developed;
7. The influence of Islamic scholars (*Ulamas*), Christian clergy and traditional rulers should be leveraged to advocate for peaceful coexistence by urging these leaders to use their platforms to mediate disputes and disseminate messages of unity, tolerance and reconciliation;
8. Equitable resource distribution should be advocated in Lagos State to prevent grievances among various religious or ethnic groups, because conflicts often stem from issues such as poverty, unemployment and inequality;
9. Government should develop policies that incorporate Islamic *Sulhu* principles in conflict resolution frameworks and create platforms for regular consultations between government agencies, religious leaders and civil society organisations; and
10. Ethnic and religious leaders should encourage joint community activities that bring people from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds together to foster collaboration and harmony.

## **Conclusion**

This work examined the heterogeneous nature of Lagos State and highlighted the legal framework established by the state to ensure peaceful co-existence among its diverse ethnic and religious groups. It also delved into the ADR institutions in Lagos and their deficiencies. This work has been able to present the Islamic concept of *Sulhu* and highlighted it as a viable and culturally relevant method for enhancing peaceful co-existence in Lagos State. Its emphasis on dialogue, reconciliation and community-based peacebuilding aligns well with the social fabric of Lagos, a diverse and rapidly evolving metropolis. This work also elucidated some ways of integrating *Sulhu* with modern peacebuilding practices with which Lagos can address ethnic and religious tensions more effectively and ensure long-term peace and stability. However, challenges related to secularisation diversity and awareness must be addressed to maximise its impact. Ultimately, *Sulhu* offers a model for conflict resolution that is rooted in cultural tradition while contributing to the larger goal of social harmony in Lagos State.

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## CHAPTER 3

### A Critical Analysis of Imām Idrīs ‘Abdul-Azīz Bauchi’s Sermons on Inter-Faith Dialogue in Nigeria

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#### Introduction

The Muslim advocates and participants in inter-faith dialogue in Nigeria are mostly from the south, starting from the time the Church began to invite Muslims to engagements of inter-faith relations in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The protagonists of dialogue with the Christians included this honoree, Prof. Ismā‘īl Ayinla Babatunde Balogun. His sense of engagement in dialogue motivated him to found the Department of Religions at the University of Ilorin, where he brought about an academic dialogue of Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The name of the department was changed, from Arabic and Islamic Studies to Department of Religions in 1976. Prof. Balogun organised an interreligious conference under the auspices of the department between 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> August, 1978 (Kenny, 1979, 181-186). Other notable Muslims who at that time actively engaged in the dialogical meetings with Christians included Professors A. B. Fafunwa, Abdur-Rahman Doi, M. O. A. Abdul, D. O. S. Noibi, MS El-Gharh and, later on, M.A. Bidmos. All these scholars participated in dialogical meetings with Christians in the 1970s, and had written works promoting harmonious Christian-Muslim relations. M.O.A. Abdul published “Islam and Christianity United” around 1971 (Clarke and Linden 1984, 129-130). Also significant to inter-religious dialogue in Nigeria was the establishment of the Conference of Muslim Lecturers and Administrative Staff of Nigerian University, and its journal, *the Nigerian Journal of Islam*, in 1970.

In a 1971 article in the journal, Professor Fafunwa stated that its purpose was to foster communication among Muslims and promote constructive dialogue with Christians, both within and outside Nigeria. Similarly, A. R. Doi, in the same edition, observed a decline in hostile exchanges between Christians and Muslims. He advocated for new writings that acknowledge the best aspects of both religions, encouraging scholars to examine issues collaboratively rather than in an adversarial manner. Doi believed that learning about each other would resolve misunderstandings and lead to positive dialogue between Muslims and Christians. The efforts of Prof. M.O. Opeloye, a protégé of Balogun, in the promotion of inter-faith dialogue in modern times are worthy of note. He wrote in his 2001 inaugural lecture that: “colleagues who are familiar with my studies are not left in doubt that, for more than fifteen years, my research efforts have been geared towards the promotion of harmonious Muslim-Christian relations. . .” (Opeloye 2001, 1).

The Catholic Church, as part of its efforts to domesticate *Nostra Aetate* (a declaration by the Second Vatican Council) in the 1960s, formulated a secretariat for dialogue with Muslims in

Nigeria between 1962 and 1974. The secretariat, under Fr. Victor Chukwulozie, organised various meetings with Muslims. He convened the first at Kano in 1962, and formed a committee to convene further meetings. He organised another one at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in 1963. Other meetings organised by Chukwulozie were held in 1974 and 1978 (Shitu 2020, 22). Protestant Christian denominations also established dialogical projects, which are rooted in the efforts to evangelise the Muslims. The most important project is the Islam in Africa Project, formed in 1959 in Ibadan. The name was changed to Project for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) in 1987 (Shitu 2020, 23).

The Muslim participants from the north are not as many as the southerners. The efforts of Sheikh Ahmed Lemu, his wife, Aisha Lemu, and their organisation, the Islamic Education Trust (IET), are, however, worthy of mention. IET has produced numerous books and pamphlets on Islam and inter-faith relations. Sheikh Lemu's *Religion and Morality in Islam* is a published version of his presentation at Nigeria Interreligious Council's (NIREC) seminar in 2001 (Lemu 2001, iii). He was once invited to the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, in the 1980s, by a Christian clergy to present a paper on Christianity and Islam. Sheikh Lemu's son, Nurudeen, and other scholars, such as Nurayn Ashafa, Muhammad Nuru Khalid, Sani Isa and Abubakar Saddeq Deedat, are currently the protagonists of inter-faith dialogue in northern Nigeria.

The rise of Salafi thought in 1990s northern Nigeria brought about a new position on inter-faith relations, particularly through the graduates of the Islamic University of Medina and their affiliates. They rely on Saudi Arabian religious verdicts to condemn Muslim participation in inter-faith dialogue. They cite literature such as Bakr b. 'Abdullah Abū Zayd's (d. 2008) *al-Ibtāl li Nazariyyat al-Khālam bayn Dīn al-Islām wa Ghayrih min al-Adyān* and the fatwa of Saudi Arabian Permanent Committee for Research and Fatwa (cf. al-Qī 1421 A.H., 1661-1673).

Muhammad Awwal Adam (Albani Zaria) (1960- 2014) was one of the most prominent disseminators from the Salafi ideology in northern Nigeria. He was a major critic of inter-faith dialogue between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. He recorded many lectures condemning the above-mentioned persons from northern Nigeria for participating in dialogue. He saw it as an act of syncretism and *taqrīb* (rapprochement). He held that Muslim partakers in the happenstances will go to hell if they die without repentance. He described King Abdullah b. Abdul-Aziz (d. 2015) as a representative of disbelief for bringing together leaders of faiths for dialogue and for the establishment of the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) (Shitu 2025; Annasiha TV, 2022). These lectures did not generate controversies in northern Nigeria while he was alive, until eight years after he was killed. In 2022, when a major partaker in dialogue with Christians, Sheikh Muhammad Nuru Khalid, was sacked as the imam of the Apo Legislative Quarters in Abuja for criticising the government over insecurity through his Friday sermon, people began to circulate the lectures of Albani Zaria in which he describes Khalid and other Muslim dialoguers as proponents of a new religion which co-mixes between Islam and Christianity. The attention of the scholars and the laity of northern

Nigeria was diverted to debates over the permissibility of dialogue or otherwise. The Ramadan *tafsīr* of 2022 was characterised by heated debates on the matter, especially among the Salafi preachers. While some of them took a moderate stance on the matter, others attempted to correct the late Albani Zaria's position of counting it as disbelief. Sheikh Idris Abdul-Aziz, the imam of Dutsen Tanshi Masjid, Bauchi (d.2025), took a very extreme position, thereby reiterating the position of Albani Zaria. He delivered Friday sermons and additional lectures on the controversy.

This research critically analyses the contents of these fiery sermons and compares them with the opinions of other Muslims who see participation in dialogue with Christians as a praiseworthy endeavour. The methodology of this research is descriptive and analytical of the contents of the sermons.

### **Foundations and Concepts**

Giving additional foundational information on the underpinnings and related concepts is essential for a better grasp of this research. Therefore, this segment gives concise data on the brief biography of Imam 'Abdul-Aziz Dutsen-Tanshi, the meaning and concept of interfaith dialogue, inter-faith dialogue in Muslim thought, Salafism and its conception of interfaith dialogue, as well as the spread of Salafism in Nigeria.

### **Sheikh Idris 'Abdul-Aziz Dutsen-Tanshi, Bauchi (1967-2025)**

Sheikh Dutsen-Tanshi was born in Gwaram, Alkaleri Local Government Area of Bauchi State. He attended the College of Legal and Islamic Studies, Misau, Bauchi State, where he obtained a diploma in Sharia. He obtained another diploma from Bayero University, Kano. He also obtained a degree in Islamic Law from the Islamic University of Medina, a Master of Arts in Islamic Studies from the University of Jos and a PhD in Uṣūl al-Fiqh from Sudan University of Science and Technology (Premium Radio, 2025; BBC Hausa, 2025; Bauchi a Yau TV, 2025). He was a businessman and a philanthropist. He spent over three decades of his active years preaching on defending Salafism and debating with followers of other Muslim schools of thought. His teachings have generated heated debates all over northern Nigeria at different times. He was one of the first scholars who debated extensively with Muhammad Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram, before the group became fully radicalised (Abu Hurairah24 TV, 2021). He faced the challenge of incarceration under successive governments of Bauchi State. He was even declared wanted by the police authorities over contempt of court. Peace and reconciliation were later brokered between him and the Bauchi State government after intervention by federal government agents in 2024. Sheikh Idris Abdul-Aziz died on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2025, after battling with an illness (Doya, 2025).

### **Meaning and Concept of Inter-faith Dialogue**

The word "dialogue" comes from the Greek prefix "*dia-*", meaning "across," and "*logos*", meaning "discussion." Therefore, dialogue literally means "discussion across." It is important to note that "dialogue" is not limited to just two participants (Shitu 2020, 12). Both the Catholic Church and

the World Council of Churches (WCC), which represents the protestant arm of Christianity, have embraced interfaith dialogue, though their approaches and historical paths to it differ. The Catholic Church's engagement with other faiths largely stemmed from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Before this, the Church held a strict view that salvation was exclusively found within its own bounds. However, the document *Nostra Aetate* from the Council introduced a significant change, suggesting that salvation could exist outside the Church while still being connected to Christ. This document also affirmed the truth and holiness found in other religions (Pope Paul VI, 1965). *Nostra Aetate* outlined the Church's vision for dialogue: collaborating with other religions to uphold shared spiritual, moral and cultural values with love and prudence, while still bearing witness to the Christian faith. It specifically acknowledged the respect for Christ and Mary in Islam, as well as Muslim practices like prayer, fasting and charity. The document encouraged moving away from past animosities to work together for "the benefit of all mankind, social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom" (Pope Paul VI, 1965). Twenty-five years after *Nostra Aetate*, the Church issued a *Dialogue and Proclamation* to clarify how dialogue relates to evangelism. This document defined dialogue on three levels: one, at the interpersonal interaction between adherents of faiths for common goals; two, an attitude of friendship and respect embedded in the Church's evangelising mission; three, in diverse societies, building positive relationships with people of other faiths for mutual understanding and enrichment, while upholding Christian truth and respecting freedom of belief (PCID, 1991).

The World Council of Churches (WCC), established in 1948, began its formal involvement in interfaith relations with a sub-unit on dialogue in 1971. Their *Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Faiths* was published in 1979, with *Nostra Aetate* even serving as a preparatory document for early WCC meetings on the topic (WCC, 1992). A key point of contention for the WCC was how dialogue could exist without evangelistic motives. The WCC defines dialogue as an encounter between people of different faith traditions that does not require abandoning one's beliefs or validating another's. This encounter should occur in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, with participants being well-grounded in their own traditions. Overcoming historical biases and enmities is crucial for fostering cooperation for the common good. The WCC emphasises that interfaith dialogue is not just about exchanging ideas; it involves trust-based encounters that respect others' identities and integrity, requiring participants to question their own understanding and be open to understanding others on their own terms (WCC and the Wm. Eerdmans, 2002; WCC, 1992).

The WCC has also addressed confusion regarding the terms "interfaith dialogue" and "interreligious dialogue." While some believe "interfaith" refers to dialogue with non-Christian religions, and "interreligious" to ecumenical efforts among Christian denominations, the WCC clarifies that both terms are used interchangeably for Christian engagement with non-Christian faiths. The WCC brochure notes that the difference, if any, lies in the English spelling. Using "interfaith" without a space or hyphen can imply similarity, leading to accusations of syncretism (the blending of different religions) (WCC 2016, 5). Many Muslim critics share this concern, calling it "*da'wat*

*al-taqrīb bayn al-adyān*” (a call to rapprochement of religions) (al-Qāḍī 1421 A.H.). Therefore, the WCC prefers hyphenated variations like “inter-faith” or “inter-religious,” as these acknowledge the distinctions between faiths. “Inter-faith” is also considered more inclusive, as it can encompass humanists and secularists, and is widely accepted in political and social spheres (WCC 2016, 11).

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has classified dialogue into four categories, called the “traditional four-fold model.” These are the dialogue of life, dialogue of action, dialogue of theological exchange and dialogue of religious experience. I have looked into these from the Muslim point of view in some of my researches (Shitu 2020, 14- 18; Shitu 2014, 119-120). The constitution of the Nigeria Interreligious Council (NIREC) in 2020 under a Catholic Executive Secretary has changed the goals of NIREC to reflect the above-mentioned model of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (Shitu 2024, 76), despite having an equal number of Muslims as its members.

### **Inter-Faith Dialogue in the Muslim Thought before *Nostra Aetate***

Muslims have called for dialogue with adherents of Christianity and Judaism since the rise of Islam, though the encounters were mostly apologetic. It started during the period of Prophet Muhammad. An example is the 9<sup>th</sup> year of Hijra’s delegation of sixty Christians of Najrān, who visited Medina for theological discussion with the Prophet (Shitu 2014b, 1-3). During the Umayyad reign, there were a series of apologetic debates with John of Damascus (676- 749) and Theodore Abū Qurra (740- 825). During the Abbasid period, Nestorian Catholicus Timothy I in the year 782 held lengthy debates with Caliph al-Mahdī (r. 775- 785). This was the situation during the Abbasid age, and it continued for centuries (Watt 1973, 184).

Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d.1897) is considered a prominent promoter of inter-faith dialogue in the modern Muslim world. He posits that the three Abrahamic faiths are united in principles and purposes; thus, he calls for unity among adherents of the religions (al-Qāḍī 1421 A.H., 398). The second important personage who promoted inter-faith dialogue in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, who is also classified as a Muslim modernist and student of al-Afghānī, was Muhammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905). The writings of ‘Abduh show his apologetic approach to the Abrahamic religions and others (‘Amāra 1993, 257ff). His disciple, Rashīd Riā (d. 1935), also took after him in the polemics that characterised inter-religious relations of the Muslims with other faiths in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Riḍā has shared correspondences with ‘Abduh on refutations of Christianity (‘Amāra 1993, 257). He wrote *Shubuḥāt al-Nacāra wa Hujaj al-Islām*, which is a compilation of 16 articles originally published in volumes 4 and 5 of his *al-Manār Journal*. It consists of refutations of misrepresentations about Islam contained in some Christian journals. Other contemporary Muslim scholars who actively engaged in dialogue include Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Mahmoud Ayoub, Hasan Askari, Kurshid Ahmad, Muhammad Talbi, Hasan Hanafi and Ismā‘īl Rājī al-Fārūqī.

## Salafism and its Conception of Inter-faith Dialogue

Salafism in Nigeria is an outgrowth of Wahhābism. Though they are often equated by many scholars, Alexander Thurston, in reference to West Africa, made a distinguishing remark about the difference between Wahhābism and Salafism. The former adheres to the Hanbalite School of law while Salafism rejects adherence to a *madhhab*. Both, however, share the same creed (Thurston 2016, 7). Salafis believe they embody the practices and dogma of the early Muslims' righteous generation. The term has its origin in the Islamic tradition which is known in mainstream Sunnism as "*Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*" (righteous predecessors). It is to these particular predecessors that subsequent leaders of thought ascribe their practices to assert their legitimacy. The use of the term *salaf* during the early period of Islam did not refer to a particular approach to Islamic legal theory or systematic theology, as the contemporary proponents of Salafism conceive it (Wiktorowicz 2006, 207). 19<sup>th</sup>-century Salafism advocates for the elimination of innovations in the practice of religion and strict adherence to the model of Prophet Muhammad as understood by the Ṣaḥāba. Salafism is not monolithic, yet it insists on a singular, legitimate interpretation of Islam and that there is no interpretative pluralism (Lauzière 2016, 2-3). That is why continuous internal refutations and debates are major characteristics of Salafism.

For certain Salafi scholars, like Bakr b. 'Abdullah Abū Zayd (d. 2008) and Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Ṣaḥmān al-Qādī, the concept of interfaith dialogue is a source of confusion and concern, a direct result of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). They often see it as equivalent to syncretism (the mixing or merging of religions). Abū Zayd, for instance, pointed to Pope John Paul II's 1986 World Day of Prayer for Peace as a major example of this "mixing" (Abū Zayd 2011, 24). These scholars use various terms interchangeably with inter-faith dialogue, all carrying negative connotations; they include a call to bringing religions close (*da 'wat ilā taqrīb bayn al-adyān*), rapprochement between religions (*taqarrub bayn al-Adyān*), religious brotherhood (*ikhā al-dīnī*), unity of religions (*waḥdat al-adyān*), unification of religions (*tawhīd al-adyān*), Abrahamic religion (*al-Milla al-Ibrāhimiyya*) and religious coexistence (*ta 'ayush bayn al-adyān*) (Abū Zayd 2011, 22- 25). Al-Qādī specifically defines "bringing religions close" (*taqrīb bayn al-adyān*) as international and local efforts to forge connections between diverse faiths, which is characterised by acknowledging other religions, disregarding notions of right and wrong in favour of finding common ground and recognising and respecting other belief systems (al-Qādī 1421 A.H., 335).

Al-Qādī identifies two other dimensions of *taqrīb bayn al-adyān* (al-Qādī 1421 A.H., 339ff):

1. **The claim of religious oneness (*waḥdat al-adyān*):** This view suggests all faiths are authentic and lead to the same ultimate truth. He attributes this perspective to extreme Sufi

groups who advocate for pantheistic monism, citing French philosopher Roger Garaudy (d. 2012) as a 20th-century proponent.

- 2. Inter-faith or interreligious dialogue (*al-ḥiwār bayn al-adyān*):** This has become the most widely accepted term among its proponents. The Arabic word “*al-ḥiwār*” means “replying and repeating things in a discussion,” aligning with its Quranic usage, which sometimes equates it with “debate” (*mujādala*). Al-Qāḍī explains that its literal meaning aligns with its technical sense: a deliberation between two or more parties aimed at reaching agreement and a unified viewpoint.

Salafis in Nigeria, in the context of this research, are the graduates of the Islamic University of Medina, their followers and their affiliates, especially those from northern Nigeria, where the university began to record success in recruiting students from the 1980s. The University of Medina is instrumental in the further formation of Salafī thoughts worldwide (Thurston 2016, 17).

### **Contents of Imām Idrīs ‘Abdul-Azīz Bauchi’s Sermons on Inter-Faith Dialogue**

The controversies over the status of faith of the participants in interfaith dialogue in northern Nigeria, which Albani Zaria’s circulated lectures generated in 2022, led to continuous clarifications by diverse scholars. Some Salafis made considerable efforts to correct the extreme position expressed in Albani Zaria’s lectures of counting inter-faith dialogue as disbelief. These scholars included Mansur Ibrahim Sokoto (b. 1969) and Salisu Shehu (b. 1966), both of whom are professors and members of Nigeria’s government-supported NIREC. Sheikh Idris Abdul-Aziz Bauchi reiterated the extreme position of Albani Zaria and provided evidence to support it. He spent weeks giving rejoinders to scholars with opposing views in his Friday sermons, notable among which are those of 15<sup>th</sup> April 2022 (Azzaahiriy TV, 2022a) and 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2022 (Azzaahiriy TV, 2022b). The bottom line of his argument is that inter-faith dialogue negates the doctrine *al-walā wa-l- barā’* (loyalty and disavowal). His lecture of 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022 (Azzaahiriy TV, 2022c) is significant in this direction. He read an essay which he claimed to have written 4 to 5 years before that time. The essay started with the conceptualisation of *al-walā wa-l- barā’*. In reliance on the contents of the Qur’an and Sunnah, the first part, *al-walā*, signifies love and support. The opposite is the second segment of it, *al-barā’*, disavowal. The meaning of the doctrine is, therefore, love of Allah, His Messenger, His religion of Islam and the Muslims. The opposite is resentment of disbelief and disbelievers. Thus, *al-barā’* is disavowing the material and incorporeal false gods that are worshipped in the place of Allah, such as ideologies and views. It entails staying far away from disbelief in its entirety, boycotting disbelievers and expressing animosity towards them. The doctrine stands for inward loyalty and support of Islam, as well as inward disavowal and enmity toward disbelief and the wishing of victory of Islam and destruction of disbelief and its adherents. This inward conviction must be seen in practice. He mentioned that the Prophet never tolerated the keeping of the crucifix. He quoted seven Qur’anic ordinances to buttress his point of view. They are Qur’an 9:114 where Allah gives the story of Abraham who initially sought forgiveness

for his father, but on discovering that he was an enemy of Allah, he dissociated himself from him. Qur'an 60:1 tells believers not to take the enemies of Allah and their enemies as allies with whom they would share love, while they have disbelieved in the truth of Islam. In Qur'an 3:28, Allah tells believers not to take disbelievers as friends and helpers (*awliyā*) instead of believers, except if the believers fear a danger from them.

Other Qur'anic verses quoted by the imam included Qur'an 4:89 in which Allah told believers that it is an antic of disbelievers that they reject faith like them, so that they can be the same. Therefore, believers are enjoined not to take those who reject faith as friends and protectors. The remaining verses include Qur'an 5:80-81; 5:51 and 60:9. While he was reciting Qur'an 5:51, he was reiterating the part that says: "and he amongst you who take them as *awliyā* (friend), then he is of them". This is to indicate that partakers in dialogue may be merged with the disbelievers whom they have turned to in friendship. The Imam then turned to the Ḥadīth literature to buttress his argument of prohibiting association with disbelievers, quoting six of such traditions. One, the Ḥadīth of Jarīr b. Abdullah, who related that he met the Prophet Muhammad accepting oaths of allegiance. He took a commitment to worship Allah, establish *salāt*, give *Zakat*, be sincere to Muslims and separate from the polytheists (al-Nasāī 1999, no. 4177). Upon quoting this Ḥadīth, he remarked in Hausa that "*sannan kayi baranbaran da duk wani kafiri da mushriki*" (then you should have a total boycott of any disbeliever and polytheist). Two, the next mentioned Ḥadīth is what was related from Ibn 'Umar that the Messenger of Allah said: "whoever imitates a people is one of them" (Abū Dāwūd 2009, no. 4031). He thus remarked that any Muslim whose activities look like those of non-Muslims is the same as them. Three, the Ḥadīth of 'Amr b. Shuaib, that the Messenger of Allah said, "whosoever acts like others is not part of us, do not emulate the Jews and the Christians, for greeting the Jews is by pointing the fingers, while greeting the Christians is through waving with the hand" (al-Tirmidhī 1999, no. 2695). He remarked that the Muslim dialoguers even hug Christians against the teaching of the Ḥadīth, especially Nuru Khalid, whom he accused of even hanging the crucifix to please the Christians. Four, the Ḥadīth of Abī Umāma, who narrated the Messenger of Allah said: "whoever loves for the sake of Allah and hates for His sake, gives for the sake of Allah and withholds for the sake of Allah has perfected his faith" (Abū Dāwūd 2009, no. 4681). The imam remarked that the Ḥadīth teaches that a Muslim should disavow a person who hates Allah and also because he is not a Muslim. Five, the Ḥadīth of Anas b. Mālik narrated that the Apostle of Allah said: There are three things that whoever has them has gotten the sweetness of faith; that Allah and His Messenger are most loved to him than anything else, that he loves a person only for the sake of Allah, and that he disdains returning to disbelief after Allah has saved him from it, just as he hates being thrown in fire" (Bhukhārī 16; Muslim 43). The inference of Imam Dutsen Tanshi is that a Muslim must have inward hatred for disbelief and disbelievers. Six, the last Ḥadīth quoted by the imam is that of 'Abdullah b. Mas'ūd, who entered the abode of the Messenger of Allah, who asked him about the strongest bond of faith (*awthaq 'urā al-īmān*). He replied that Allah and the Messenger of Allah know best. The Messenger of

Allah, thus, said: “the strongest of faith is to loyalty for the sake of Allah through love and to hate for His sake” (al-Tabarānī nd., no.4476).

Upon mentioning the above Qur’anic verses and the Prophetic traditions, the imam explains further that the faith of a person will not be completely firm until he becomes loyal to Muslims and disavows disbelievers, hypocrites and the polytheists, as well as all the multifaceted dimensions of disbelief. The views expressed in the lecture are summarily presented in the following lines. He stated that: It is compulsory upon Muslims to react to evil plots and machinations of non-Muslims against Islam (which also include interfaith dialogue). He notes that it is, therefore, an act of foolishness from the group of people who claimed to be Muslims and faithful, while this claim is merely a nominal one, to express loyalty and love towards disbelievers among the Jews, Christians and others, in the name of tolerance and dialogue, with the assumption that such act will bring unity among warring factions of people and ensure peace and harmony among communities. Such Muslim partakers in dialogue do express love and affection towards the *kuffār* (infidels) despite the abundance of evidence from the Qur’an and Sunnah that enjoins believers to move away from and boycott non-believers and to express enmity toward them and their deities. The groups of dialoguers that claim to be peace-makers assemble with the enemies of Allah and Islam, under the guise of seeking peace and harmony among the people. By this act, they have gone incongruous with the teachings of the Qur’an and Sunnah, which is the expression of enmity towards the enemies of Allah, even when they are close relatives.

Just like Albani Zaria, Imam ‘Abdul-Aziz condemned the rise of inter-faith dialogue groups, which he calls *tawā’if wa ahzāb al-Kufriyya* (sects and parties of disbelief) in Muslim societies, including Saudi Arabia. These groups lead people astray and contaminate their dogma and the fundamentals of religion. He further mentions that the activities of Muslims who participate in dialogue are detrimental to the future of Islam, as the children of Muslims will grow without having care for Islam or being devout. This will make future generations count the religions as one and not see anything wrong in changing their faiths.

### **Evaluations of the Above Views of Imam Abdul-Aziz Bauchi**

All Muslims who participate in inter-faith dialogue do not agree with the Christian use of dialogue as a subtle way of evangelism. The argument of some Muslims against the Church’s call to dialogue is that her documents do not conceal the evangelistic intent. The document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue states that: “while entering with an open mind into dialogue with the followers of other religious traditions, Christians may have also to challenge them in a peaceful spirit with regard to the content of their belief” (PCID, 1991). The document went further to say that:

Proclamation and dialogue are both viewed, each in its own place, as component elements and authentic forms of the one evangelizing mission of the church. They are both oriented towards the communication of the salvic truth (PCID, 1991).

Nonetheless, our society is pluralistic in nature and it is not possible to live in isolation from people of other faiths. Interactions at interpersonal and institutional levels are inevitable. Islam does not teach that such relationships should be characterised by hostility. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has shown an exemplary attitude concerning this; he treated peaceful non-Muslims with respect, traded with them, visited their sick ones and collaborated with them for the general good of the common society. The Prophet established a commonwealth of Islam at Medina, and promoted justice, fairness, rule of law and equal rights for all, irrespective of religious affiliations (Shitu 2014, 120-121). The Jews and other non-Muslims were part of the charter signed with the Prophet that all the citizens of Medina should unite against common adversaries.

The opinion of Sheikh Abdul-Aziz Bauchi aligns with the old fatwa of the Saudi Arabian Permanent Committee for Research and Fatwa. Joas Wagemakers, who is an expert on Salafism, studied the root cause of this legal position, which is their perceived threat to Islam from the non-Muslims. Thus, the term *al-walā' wa-l-barā'* is used to warn Muslims against giving their loyalty to non-Muslims in any way. This includes participating in non-Muslim festivals such as Christmas, which is counted as an insult to Islam and a belittling of Muslims' dignity. Other actions counted as loyalty to non-Muslims include greeting them first, having pleasurable meetings with them, unnecessary visit to their country, wearing their types of clothing, bearing their names and participating in religious dialogue with Jews and Christians (Wagemakers 2008, 5-6). The government of Saudi Arabia is not in agreement with the position of this class of ulema. It established the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) in 2015. The students of the Saudi Arabian ulema around the globe still uphold the teachings in their strict sense and, as such, count participation in dialogue as disbelief. Examples of such are the Salafis of America, such as Ahmad Musa Jibril and Ali al-Tamimi (Meleagrou-Hitchens 2018, 72; 115).

It is pertinent to look at the Qur'anic verses quoted by Imam to buttress his argument against dialogue and the contexts in which they were revealed. He quoted Qur'an 60:1 and 9 to insinuate that Muslims should not relate with Christians in a manner of dialogue. What further influences his interpretation is the hostility that the Muslims of his close environment are facing at the hands of some Christians, specifically in Tafawa Balewa. He reiterated that in some of the sermons, where he rebuked Prof. Salisu Shehu for supporting inter-faith dialogue in spite of his relatives being persecuted and sent away from Tafawa Balewa by the Christians (Azzaahiriy TV, 2022b). He, therefore, generalised and counted all the Christians of Nigeria as "enemies of Allah and the Muslims" whom Allah urged believers not to take as friends. Sura al-Mumtaḥana (Qur'an chapter 60) is considered the sura of *al-walā' wa-l-barā'*. This is because it warns against taking the enemies of Allah as allies. Ibn Kathīr, in his *Tafsīr*, gave the reason for the revelation of the initial verses of the chapter. It is about Ḥāmib bin Abī Balta'a, who secretly wrote to the hostile disbelievers of Makkah, telling them about the Prophet's intention to attack them, and the letter got leaked to the Prophet (SAW) (Ibn Kathīr n.d., 4:345-347). The enemies referred to in the verses are the Meccan hostile polytheists who had waged war against the Muslims and driven them away from their homes. The verses are not in any way referring to the peaceful non-Muslim.

The Imam's quotation of verse 9 also gives credence to the highlighted context of his interpretation, because he mentioned that the Christians of Tafawa Balewa fought Muslims and drove them out of their homes. He did not quote verse 8 before it, which particularly mentions that Allah did not stop believers from dealing justly and kindly with non-Muslims who are not hostile to Muslims. The verse was revealed, according to al-Qurtubī, after an incident in which a non-Muslim mother of Asmā' bint Abī Bakr visited her at Medina and she was reluctant to accept her mother's gift, and then asked the Prophet. Upon this, the verses 8 and 9 were revealed (cf. DIN 2009, 2). In the hadith of Bukhārī and Muslim, the Prophet (SAW) told her to "connect with her mother" (al-Bukhārī 1400A.A., no.2620) by upholding the ties of kinship. This explains the contexts of the other verses mentioned by the Imam in his condemnation of dialogue.

Qur'an 3:28 is about preferential treatment to believers when their interests clash with the interests of the deniers of truth. That is, why the verse specifically says, "*min dūni al-mu'minīn*" (i.e. instead of believers). It is, therefore, absurd to take a disbeliever as an ally in such situations against the interests of the believers. This explains the type of alliance which the believers are warned against with the Christians and Jews in other verses. Imam Ṭabarī specifically wrote concerning this verse that it means Muslims are forbidden to assist the disbelievers in their disbelief and religion. It warns Muslims against exposing the secrets of believers to the disbelievers to enable them to harm or get victory over the Muslims (al-Ṭabarī 1374 A.H., 6:313). Qur'an 4:89 is about *al-munāfiqūn* (hypocrites who outwardly professed Islam but are inwardly disbelievers during the time of the Prophet). They connive with others to harm Islam.

The situation of hostility in which Allah warned believers against taking non-Muslims as allies is clear in Qur'an 5:57, where Allah described those not to be befriended as those who engage in the mockery of Islam. This also applies to Qur'an 5:80-81. The preceding verses 78 and 79 signify the people whom Allah was referring to. The verses 82- 84 after praised the Christians as people who share love with Muslims. Qur'an 9: 114 is self-explanatory: that until Abraham discovered that his father was obstinately an enemy of Allah, he then dissociated from him. This verse is one of the evidences referenced on *al-walā wa-l- barā'* to prove that Ibrāhīm dissociated himself from his polytheist father. There are ample *asbāb al-nuzūl* (reasons of revelations) that were mentioned by scholars of *tafsīr* on the verse and the 113 before it. These include the narration about the efforts of Allah's Apostle (SAW) to make his uncle, Abū Ṭalīb, accept Islam before his death and the futility of the exertion. The Apostle of Allah then said: "I will seek Allah's forgiveness for you as far as I am not stopped from doing so." It was narrated that 'Ali saw a man seeking Allah's forgiveness for his polytheist parents. 'Ali then asked him on whether a person should seek forgiveness for his polytheist father? 'Ali then informed the Prophet, upon this, verses 113 and 114 were revealed. There are many other narrations giving other reasons for the revelation of the verses. Ibn Kathīr wrote that Ibn 'Abbās mentioned that Ibrāhīm did not stop seeking forgiveness for his father until the father's death, and that was when Ibrāhīm knew that he was an enemy of Allah and then stopped praying for him (Ibn Kathīr nd, 2:295). The point of reference in the above statement of Ibn Abbās is that the disbelief of Ibrāhīm's father did not stop him from relating with him until he died in the path of disbelief.

The Prophetic traditions that were read by the Imam are in no way signifying that Muslims should disavow peaceful and cordial non-Muslims. The first Ḥadīth is about accepting Islam. The phrase “*wa tufārik al-mushrikīn*” (that you get separated from the polytheists) means leaving their fold. Other traditions he quoted do not also have any basis to be interpreted as a total disavowal of peaceful non-Muslims.

### **Conclusion**

This research has studied the controversies over Muslims’ participation in inter-faith dialogue in Nigeria, which were generated by the interpretation of the Salafi doctrine of *al-walā’ wa-l-barā’*. The most outspoken scholar in northern Nigeria on the matter in the year 2022 was Sheikh Idris Abdul-Aziz, the Imam of Dutsen Tanshi Masjid, Bauchi. He used his pulpit to preach against Muslim engagement with Christians in dialogue. This research has studied his arguments and his use of the Qur’an and Ḥadīth to support his viewpoint. It was, however, noted that, in most cases, he has quoted the ordinances out of context due to emotions about hostilities in his immediate society, thereby categorising all non-Muslims in Nigeria as enemies fighting Muslims and machinating against Islam.

This researcher submits that there is a need to correct such misconceptions that the teachings of such scholars with large followership entail. This is due to the fragile nature of peace in parts of northern Nigeria. The use of force is not appropriate at this juncture; intellectual engagement is the way out. Clamping down on ideologies and their protagonists has not yielded desired results in northern Nigeria. The subject of this research had been incarcerated by the government severally over his views and preaching. That did not make him change his position before he died. In fact, it has grown his followership and led to negative consequences. The efforts of various imams who countered the position of Imam Idris ‘Abdul Azīz in their sermons are noteworthy, especially the scholars mentioned above. Nonetheless, there is a need for more intellectual engagements with many others who still hold tenaciously to the same view among the Salafis of Nigeria.

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## CHAPTER 4

### Muslims and *Ahl al-Kitāb* Social Interactions in Marriage and Inheritance: Modern Trends in Muslim Countries

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#### Definition of *Ahl al-Kitāb*

*Ahl al-Kitāb* means “possessors of the Scripture or People of the Book” (Hutman & Wensinck, 1960, pp. 264–266; Muhibbu-Dīn, 1997, pp. 1–5). It is the term used for the people who profess a religion recognised by Islam to have been of divine origin. These are Judaism (Jew), Christianity, Sabaeans (*as-Sabi'un*) and Zoroastrians or Magians (*al-Majus*).

#### Muslim and *Ahl al-Kitāb* Social Interactions

##### Marriage

Concerning the marital relations between Muslims and the People of the Book, the Qur’ān says: Maida 5 v 5: (Arabic):

﴿الْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حِلٌّ لَكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ  
لَهُمْ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ  
إِذَا أَتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِينَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِي أَخْدَانٍ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ  
بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ﴾

##### Translation:

Lawful unto you in marriage are not only chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret intrigues. If anyone rejects faith, fruitless is his work. And in the Hereafter, he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good) (‘Ali, 1989, Qur’an 5:5).

Imām Fakhr al-Dīn (al-Rāzi, 1938, Vol. XI, p. 147) observes that on the basis of the verse above, the majority of Islamic jurists legitimise marriage between a Muslim male and a non-Muslim chaste female who belongs to the Prophet of the Book, i.e. among the Jews and the Christians. However, Ibn ‘Umar holds a contrary opinion in view of another verse which reads: “Do not marry unbelieving women until they believe” (‘Ali, 1989, Qur’an 2:221). Ibn ‘Umar argues that any woman who upholds such a belief cannot be said to properly belong to the chaste women of the People of the Book (Muhibbu-Dīn, 1997, pp. 189–191).

Another *ḥadīth* narrated by Ata' says that God gave the concession to the Muslims to marry women of *Ahl al-Kitāb* during the period when the number of Muslim women was relatively few, but now that they are in large numbers, the concession has been withdrawn, hence the annulment. Other verses stipulate keeping a distance from unbelievers in general: "Take not my enemies and yours as friends" (Qur'an 60:1) and "O ye who believe! Take not into your intimacy those outside your ranks..." (Qur'an 3:118). The religious belief of the spouses may change as the wife can influence the faith of her husband, resulting in his conversion to the wife's religion. This may also affect the religion of the offspring. Ibn 'Umar considers the marriage avoidable risk. Commenting on *Sūrah* 2:221 upon which 'Umar based his contention, Al-Qurtubi notes that scholars, a section of them, observe that while God forbids marriage in general with polytheists, He exempts the women of the Scripture (Qur'an 5:5) from the polytheists and permits wedlock with them. This is the consensus of notable jurists based on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, Mālik ibn Anas, his disciples (such as ath-Thawri and Al-Awza'i) and Imām ash-Shafi'i (al-Qurtubi, 1957, Vol. III, p. 67).

The opinion of Ibn 'Umar, which opposes marriage with the chaste women of the People of the Book, is said by an-Nuhas to be contrary to the popular view among the companions (such as 'Uthmān, Talihah, Jābir and Hudayfah and their successors: for example, Sa'id b. Musayyib, Mujahid, Ikrimah and ad-Dihāk (al-Qurtubi, 1957, p. 68). Moreover, the verse of *Sūrah* 2:221, upon which Ibn 'Umar relies, cannot be said to have abrogated that of *Surah al-Mā'idah* (*Qur'an*, Ch.5:5) because the former was one of the earliest revelations in *al-Mā'idah* while the latter was of the latest. It is not logical, argues al-Qurtubi, to say the former (verse) abrogates the latter. For the tradition, namely: "no polytheism is greater than the confession of a woman who says Jesus is her 'Lord'": it does not contain sufficient evidence. Besides, continues al-Qurtubi, it is an opinion derived from *al-Muwatta* of Mālik. Moreover, Ibn 'Umar did not categorically claim that one of the two verses abrogates the other. But having observed a seeming contradiction in the two verses (i.e. one forbids marriage while the other permits it), he interpreted one as abrogating the other, whereas the doctrine of abrogation is not a function of interpretation but of a clear-cut injunction. Above all, Ibn 'Abbās quotes 'Umar b. al-Khattab on the authority of Ibn Mundhir as approving marriage with the chaste women of the People of the Book. Thus, Ibn 'Abbās remarks that no authenticated tradition opposes wedlock and none can be attributed to any of the earliest companions (al-Qurtubi, 1957, p. 68).

According to the opinion of certain scholars, there is no contradiction between the two verses in question because the practical implication of idolatry (الشرك) does not involve the People of the Book. Hence God distinguishes between them and the idolaters in the following passages: "it is never the wish of those without faith among the People of the Book nor of the Pagans that anything good should come down to you from your Lord" (Qur'an 2:105) and "Those who reject (truth) among the People of the Book and among the Polytheists" (Qur'an 98:1).

Literally two different words are used for the People of the Book ( **مُحِبُّو دِينَ** ) and the ( **مُشْرِكَات** ). The chaste women of the People of the Book are distinct from the Polytheists, and are lawful unto the Muslims (Muhibbu-Dīn, 1997, pp. 193–194; al-Qurtubi, 1957, Vol. III, p. 69).

The early part of the verse states, “A slave woman who believes is better than a free idolatress” ( **لشرك** ). This is so because an idolater beckons to the hell fire (Qur’an 2:221). It can be argued that there is a residue of unbelief in all disbelievers (including the People of the Book and Polytheists) making Muslims preferable to non-Muslims regardless of their status (Muhibbu-Dīn, 1997, pp. 194–195; Qur’an 9:29; ‘Abd al-’Atī, 1977, p. 178). Thus, if a Muslim has the slightest suspicion that a non-Muslim wife might affect the beliefs and attitudes of his children, it becomes obligatory on him to exercise caution. Moreover, the Qur’ān has warned against the rejection of faith which my likely result from the unwary use of privilege accorded to Muslims to marry chaste Jewish or Christian women (Qur’an 5:5). From the foregoing, the view expressed earlier by Ibn ‘Umar on the concluding part of *Sūrah* 5 verse 6, namely that it contradicts its first part - if interpreted to mean permission - is not likely to be correct. Rather than being a contradiction, it is a warning to those availing themselves of the permission to guard their faith and morality very cautiously against the influence of his unbelieving wife (Muhibbu-Dīn, 1997, p. 196). In general, a husband owes the same marital duties towards a non-Muslim as he does towards his Muslim wife. Nevertheless, the non-Muslim wife’s right of custody, for example, over the children of the marriage is not as extensive as that of a Muslim mother because of the undesirable influence that her different religion might have upon the Muslim child (Coulson, 1971, p. 186).

Opinions differ among the jurists as to the marriage of a Zoroastrian woman. For example, Imam Mālik, Shafi’i’, Abu Hanifah and al-Awza’i forbid marriage with them on the grounds that they are polytheists. Moreso, it is related that Hudhayfah b. al-Yaman, who married a Zoroastrian woman, was ordered to divorce her by ‘Umar b. al-Khattab (al-Qurtubi, 1957, Vol. III, p. 70). Conversely, Ibn al-Qasar reports the view of certain Companions who approved of marriage with their women because they possess a revealed Book. Even though, as dualists, the modern trend is to treat them as the People of the Book in accordance with the *Sunnah* of the Prophet who accepted *jizyah* from the Zoroastrians of Hajar (al-Qurtubi, 1957, Vol. III, p. 70; al-Qardawi, 1989, p. 62). The Sabaeans, who are classified along with the People of the Book, are also to be treated in like manner. While the *Qur’ān* grants permission to Muslim males to marry chaste women among the People of the Book, conversely, it forbids a Muslim woman to marry a non-Muslim male regardless of whether he is of the People of the Book or not.

The Qur'ān says concerning the immigrant Muslim women thus:  
[Ch.60:10]

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا جَاءَكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ مُهَاجِرَاتٍ فَامْتَحِنُوهُنَّ ۗ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِهِنَّ فَإِنْ  
عَلِمْتُمُوهُنَّ مُؤْمِنَاتٍ فَلَا تُرْجِعُوهُنَّ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ لَا هُنَّ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحِلُّونَ لَهُنَّ

**Translation:**

O ye who believe: When there come to you believing women refugees, examine (and test) them. Allāh knows best as to their faith: if ye ascertain that they are Believers, then send them not back to the unbelievers. They are not lawful (wives) for the Unbelievers, nor are the Unbelievers lawful (husbands) for them. . . (Qur'an 60:10).

It is not permissible for a Muslim woman to marry a non-Muslim man. This can injure the practice of her religion among others (Muhibbu-Dīn, 1997, pp. 198–200; Ansari, 1973, Vol. II, p. 270). It will be realised from the foregoing that Islam is consistent in prohibiting the Muslim male from marrying an idolatress. Since Islam is absolutely opposed to polytheism, it would obviously be impossible for two such people to live together in harmony and love (al-Qardawi, 1989, pp. 185–186).

In view of the absence of provision and freedom for a Muslim woman to practice her religion among the People of the Book, the permission granted to Muslim men to marry chaste women of the Jewish and Christian faiths may be temporarily suspended. This is desirable when the number of Muslims in a country is small. For example, if they are immigrants residing in a non-Muslim country, their men ought to be prohibited from marrying non-Muslim women. This is because Muslim women are prohibited from marrying non-Muslim men. Should Muslim men be allowed to get married to non-Muslim women in such circumstances, it would mean that many Muslim girls will remain unmarried. And such a situation is injurious to the Muslim Society (al-Qardawi, 1989, p. 184).

**Inheritance: (الميراث)**

Islamic law of inheritance fosters the collective social spirit because it favours the distribution of property among many surviving heirs and thus holds in check the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few people. The difference of religion between a Muslim and a non-Muslim constitutes a general bar to inheritance because it is seen as a difference of communal allegiance ('Abd al-Ati, 1982, p. 252).

Al-Qurtubi seizes the occasion of his commentary on the difference between the semantics of الدين (Religion), (creed or religious community) and الشرعية (Law) to elicit the opinion of jurists on the subject. The Qur'ān says: "Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion" (Qur'an 2:120).

It explains that religious creed is the credal form of religious law, which God enacts for His servants through His Messengers. Viewed from this angle, al-Qurtubi opines that religious creed and the Islamic code of laws are synonyms. As for **الدين** (Religion), there is a difference between it and the preceding two: while *al-Millat* and *ash-Shari'ah* are what God enjoins His servants to uphold (namely in terms of belief and conduct), **الدين** (Religion) is the vehicle through which the upholding is possible (al-Qurtubi, 1957, Vol. III, pp. 93–94).

However, a closer examination of the Glorious *Qur'ān* shows that the two words, *al-millat* and *ad-Din*, are used interchangeably, contrary to the view of al-Qurtubi, to mean the credal laws common to all the revealed Religions dating from the time of Patriarch Ibrahim (Qur'an 4:125; Qur'an 6:161). For instance, *ash-Sharī'ah* is the detailed code of conduct or canons comprising ways and modes of worship, standards of morals and life, laws that allow and proscribe, and that judge between right and wrong. Such canon laws have undergone amendments from time to time. Though each prophet had the same religion, he brought with him a different *ash-Sharī'ah* to suit the conditions of his own people and time (Qur'an 5:48). According to Islam, the universal Prophet is Muhammad (S.A.W.). He is believed to have brought the final and most comprehensive *ash-Sharī'ah* applicable to all mankind at all times and ages. Abu 'I-A'la al-Maududi follows the latter analysis in his contrastive study of *ad-Din* and *ash-Sharī'ah*. Though the divine religion is one in its credal foundation of pure, Abrahamic, monotheistic tradition, yet later generations severed their relationship with it (Qur'an 21:92; Qur'an 10:19; Qur'an 11:118). Thus, there emerged schisms such as Judaism and Christianity. In continuation of his commentary on the verse under examination (i.e. *Sūrah* 2:120), al-Qurtubi record the view of a group of jurists, among whom are Abu Hanifah, ash-Shafi'I, Daud and Ibn Hanbal, who categorise all varieties of disbelief as a form of religion because the Qur'ān refers to their form of religion as *millatuhum*, thus unifying them as an entity; just as it is said elsewhere in the Book- "To you be your religion and to me is mine" (Qur'an 109:6). Consequently, the Prophet is reported to have said, "there is no reciprocal inheritance between people of two different religions" – implying: No reciprocal inheritance between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. The tradition is further clarified by another one which says, "A Muslim does not inherit a disbeliever and vice-versa." Another *ḥadīth* says disbelief consists of many religions ( **كَلِمَات** ). Thus, a Jew does not inherit from a Christian nor do both inherit from a Zoroastrian (*majus*) (al-Qurtubi, 1957, pp. 93–94; Doi, 1984, p. 290). On the strength of this tradition, Imam Malik and Ahmad Hanbal prohibit inheritance between people of two different religions. As for the term *millatuhum* (i.e. their form of religion) used in the verse under discussion, al-Qurtubi explains it to mean plural religion, because of the suffix of a plural pronoun (*hum*) attached to *millat*.

The principle of difference of communal allegiance upon which the mutual exclusion of inheritance is premised is explained as follows. Hammudah 'abd 'al-'Ati defines inheritance as a form of succession, an expression of solidarity and a medium of cooperation. He argues that such principles do not inherently bind individuals who belong to different religions: "there is no reciprocal inheritance between a Muslim and a non-Muslim relative" ('Abd al-Ati, 1982, pp. 250–256). Legally, there is no reciprocal inheritance between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. Islam, the divine religion which

conforms to the nature of man, has not allowed difference of religion to be a total bar to making *Wasiyyah* ('Ali, n.d., pp. 334–336; Doi, 1984, p. 293) (bequest or will) by a Muslim in favour of his beloved non-Muslim spouse or close relations (who are not antagonistic to Islam) within one-third limit of his estate. Thus, supposing a Muslim husband dies leaving behind his Jewish or Christian wife, she will not inherit him but she will be entitled through *Wasiyyah*, which will not be more than one-third of the net estate (Doi, 1984, p. 289; 'Abd al-Ati, 1982, p. 256; Jarma, 1986, p. 13).

However, Coulson records that under Hanbali law, a relative who is not a Muslim at the time of the Muslim prepositus' death becomes entitled to inherit if he is converted to Islam at any time before the actual distribution of the inheritance. Ibn Qudamah justifies this by a systematic explanation of a doctrine of rights and obligations which may accrue to the deceased's estate as a result of events that happen after his death. He explains: if, for example, the deceased has set a snare during his lifetime, animals caught by it after his death belong to his estate. So too, the deceased's estate will be liable to pay compensation for the injury or death of a person who falls, after the deceased's death, into a well which the deceased had dug during his lifetime. On the same principle, concludes Ibn Qudamah, a relative's conversion to Islam after the prepositus' death transforms his latent right of succession, existing by virtue of his relationship, into an effective one (Coulson, 1971, p. 187; Ibn Qudamah, 1348 A.H., Vol. VI, p. 300). To allow inheritance in these circumstances is not premised on any other ground than the law of equity and encouragement to accept Islam (Coulson, 1971). Though the eventual acceptance of Islam by a non-Muslim relative before the actual distribution of the inheritance of the deceased may be an advantage to the Muslim Community, yet it is widely not a *prima facie* reason for his entitlement to inheritance. It should be based on his position as a relation to the deceased. After all, any conversion which is not induced by genuine faith is not only hypocritical but also fragile. The Qur'an gives the psycho-analysis of such opportunists as follows:

وَإِذَا جَاءَوكُمْ قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَقَدْ دَخَلُوا بِالْكَفْرِ وَهُمْ قَدْ خَرَجُوا بِهِ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْتُمُونَ

**Translation:**

When they come to thee, they say: “We believe”: but in fact they enter with a mind against faith, and they go out with the same. But Allāh knoweth fully all that they hide (Qur'an 5:61).

Thus, it would be risky and counterproductive for Islam to induce conversion by offering material benefits such as inheritance.

**Interfaith Religious Marriages and Inheritance: Modern Trends in Muslim Countries**

**Interfaith Marriages in Muslim-Majority Countries**

In Indonesia, marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims is *harām*. Citing classical Islamic texts as authentic sources of Islamic law, scholars express the view that the *Ahl al-Kitāb* are in the category of non-Muslims considered *harām* for Muslims to marry. According to the Majelis

Ulema of Indonesia (MUI) *fatwa* in the Second National Liberation on May 26- June 1, 1980, mixed marriage not only prohibits marriage of Muslim women to non-Muslims, but differences of opinion surround the marriage of Muslim men and *Ahl al-Kitāb* (Najib, Abdulrahman, & Sofyan, 2023, pp. 308–311).

Similarly, the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), 1985, prohibits interfaith marriage and is based on the *fatwa* of the Indonesian Ulema Council. The MUI issued two *fatwas* relating to the concept. First, the 1980 *fatwa* forbids marriage between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. Second, in 2005, the group reported that interfaith marriage was forbidden and invalid. Even marriage with *Ahl al-Kitāb* is forbidden and invalid according to *qaulmu tamad* (Maloko, Chotban, Fuady, & Hasdiwanti, 2024, p. 2). The Indonesian Ulema Council declared the marriage *ḥarām*, given that *mafsadah* was greater than the *maṣlahah*. *Ahl al-Kitāb* are distinct from non-Muslim category; nevertheless, the Majelis Ulema Indonesia (MUI) *fatwa* stipulates marriage between Muslims and *Ahl al-Kitāb* is *ḥarām* (Najib et al., 2023, pp. 308–317).

Interfaith marriage is prohibited in Indonesia in the eyes of the religion, yet it is widely practised in diverse communities (Maloko et al., 2024, pp. 2–5). Despite the MUI position, the Supreme Court of Indonesia adopts interfaith marriages on the basis of human rights, disregarding the rulings of *Shari'ah* (Adhha, 2018, p. 965). This allowed interfaith marriage to be conducted abroad and subsequently registered in the Indonesian civil registry office. For the sake of legal clarity, the Supreme Court Circular Letter (SEMA), Number 2 of 2023, to the Heads of Courts of First Instance and Court of Appeal restricts judges from approving the registration petitions of couples of different religions (Birahmat & Dedi, 2023, p. 273; Maloko et al., 2024, p. 9). This regulation takes into account the viewpoint of Islamic law and national law, which both forbid interfaith marriages. Civil activists claim that the Supreme Court ruling violates people's human rights, including freedom of religion.

In the Turkish experience, interfaith marriage is shaped by its secular ideology and social changes. The marriage registration procedures established in the Turkish Civil Code were adopted from Swiss law. In Somaliland, marriage is a religious matter, not a civil matter, subject to the faith of the couples. Somali civil law, section 5, recognises same religion in marriage (Adhha, 2018, p. 966). In Egypt, interfaith marriage between a Muslim man and a Christian woman is permissible. The Egyptian code restricts the marriage of Muslim women to only Muslim men. A Muslim woman's marriage to a Christian or Jew is null and void. A Christian woman's marriage to a Muslim man is expected to secure a statement from the diocese to become a legal wife of her Muslim husband without religious barriers for her to marry. The diocese's refusal to agree impedes the marriage office from ratifying it. On the other hand, if the woman is a Muslim and her husband is not, the marriage record office obstructs the marriage because the basis of such a marriage violates the Egyptian rules (Adhha, 2018, p. 966).

The Declaration of Human Rights of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), ratified in Cairo in 1990, allows women and men the right of marriage regardless of their race, colour and nationality, but not religion. While verse 6 of the declaration recognises equality of men and

women, verse 5 restricts women from marrying non-Muslims (Adhha, 2018, p. 966). The constitutions of Somalia, Egypt and Indonesia do not support interfaith marriage. The family laws contained in the constitutions of these countries derive from classical Islamic texts. Turkey is a secular country and interfaith marriage is permissible. Egypt and Indonesia, though guided by classical Islamic traditions, still record cases of interfaith marriages that are legally documented. Somali family law stipulates a marriage contract according to religious procedure. Interfaith marriage, based on customary procedure rather than religion dictated by demand for clan cooperation, is a criterion of family law (Adhha, 2018, p. 966).

Reform in Muslim family law considered an amendment of Islamic legal rules in order to improve the rights of women and children (Stilt, Waheedi, & Griffin, 2018, pp. 301–342). Reforms should be executed with caution, especially as advanced by human rights activists and western influence, so as not to obstruct Islamic classical texts while expanding the scope to accommodate new challenges.

### **Inheritance in Muslim Countries: Turkey, Somalia, Egypt and Indonesia**

In Indonesia, the rules of inheritance are found in the Compilation of Islamic Law (KHI), which is a transformation of Law No. 1 of 1974 with several amendments and additional articles derived from the Islamic inheritance law of classical Fiqh (Adhha, 2018, p. 967). In contrast to classical Islamic procedures of a ratio of 2:1 male to female ratio in inheritance, the Turkish Family Law (The Civil Code 1926) stipulates a share of male and female inheritance is 1:1. As for adopted children, the law is not specific on their status. Family law reform in Turkey is greatly influenced by western modernisation and secularism (Adhha, 2018, p. 968).

In Somalia, the time of equating inheritance of men and women was under Musthofa Kamal Atatürk's time, replacing the Sharia law with Swedish law. The change moves to Tunis through the Burqaibah then to Somalia. The Somali Family Law No. 23 of 1975, verse 158, asserts that men and women have equal rights in the distribution of inheritance. Verse 169 of the Act states that "the wife whose husband died receives half of the inheritance if there is no child or grandchild, and earns a quarter of the property if there is a child or grandchild. Verse 161 of the Law states that "if the heir consists of only sons and daughters, then the inheritance is divided equally between sexes, besides that, if the heir is only a woman, then she takes all the assets. Likewise, the heirs of the heirs are only mother, so they will take all the assets" (Adhha, 2018, p. 968).

Inheritance law in Somalia has changed dramatically from the inheritance law of the school of Fiqh adopted by it, and is very different from the inheritance law adopted in various other Muslim countries. The renewal of the concept of inheritance is still based on the Sunni school (Shafi'i) - system of distribution with emphasis on the *Ashabah* system, that is, equality of rights of each gender. In the Somali inheritance law, the surviving spouse, whether a wife or husband, gets half the portion if there is no child. The reform of material inheritance in Somalia also uses an extra doctrinal reform model, as in Turkey. The Turkish and Somali laws stipulate an equal ratio of 1:1 (Adhha, 2018, p. 968).

Inheritance law reform in Egypt grants the right to the husband or wife to get the rest of the property (*radd*). In 1925, the Egyptian court issued a Judicial Circular No. 28 of 1925 concerning the right of a widow to obtain the remaining inheritance if there are no *ashabah* or other heirs by returning the remainder (*radd*). In the development of Egypt's inheritance law, the provisions concerning *radd* for husband/ wife are found in verse 30 paragraph (2) of law No. 77 of 1943 concerning *waris* (*qanūn al-miras*), which reads that Egypt gives *radd* rights to spouses if there are no other *aṣḥabulfurūd* and *dzawilarḥām*. This rule plays an important role in the transfer of inheritance. Legal opinions on rules like this are unpopular among Islamic jurists (*fuqahā*). Most scholars (*jamhur*) argue that *radd* is only given to heirs because of blood relations (*nasabiyyah*). Either of the spouses, as heir due to marriage (*sababiyyah*), is not entitled to receive the remaining property with *radd* (Adhha, 2018, p. 968).

Under the Egyptian inheritance law, each of the spouses gets a share of what is right and no addition from what remains of the assets. The Zaid Thabit group do not recognise *radd*. For this group, the remaining assets go into the state treasury for the public interest. To Shia, the *radd* is only given to the husband, besides heirs who are entitled to get *radd* according to the Sunni, and not given to the wife (Adhha, 2018, p. 968).

*Radd* rights to husband and/or wife expresses the view of 'Uthman bin 'Affān. 'Uthman believes that all heirs, including the spouses, are entitled to the remaining property by means of *radd*. The reason for this is that, in the event of a shortage of inheritance, the couple bear the shortage. Thus, in the event of residual property, the couple should enjoy it. This opinion becomes the unpopular view among *fiqh* scholars. This Egyptian inheritance rule is similar to Indonesian inheritance law, verse 193 of KHI, which occurs when there is no heir of heir; otherwise, *radd* is given to the husband and the wife as right of inheritance (Adhha, 2018, p. 969). The legal reform implication is that Egypt has shifted from mainstream opinion to unpopular opinion by using *takhayyur* (the selection of alternative law). This change affects the Islamic inheritance law in the *farā'id* (Adhha, 2018, p. 969).

From the anthropological evolution of society, the reform of inheritance law in Egypt is related to changes that occur in society, viz: the shift from an extended family structure to a nuclear family system. The rule contained in the *farā'id* (husband and wife cannot get *radd*) is suitable for a society that adheres to a large family clan system (extended family) (Adhha, 2018, p. 969). The Egyptian and Indonesian family laws spell the *jumhūr*'s opinion about giving *radd* to husband and wife, illustrating law modernisation and social change as two related entities that influence each other. Further, observance of law and legal interpretation undergo changes in accordance with the structure of changes in state and community authority (Adhha, 2018, p. 969).

Turkish law of inheritance, apart from granting equal rights to men and women, extends to grant inheritance rights to grandchildren, adopted children, children born from illegal marriages, and heirs who are religiously different. Indonesia retained the classical Islamic distribution of 2:1 between man and woman in inheritance. There are differences with the Sunni school in terms of group inheritance (*dzawilfurud*, *ashab*, and *dzawilarḥām*) based on KHI verses 176-193. KHI

enforces obligatory *wasiat* by giving part to adopted children or adoptive parents; considering the diverse nature of Indonesian society in race, ethnicity and language, obligatory *wasiat* is also intended for non-Muslim heirs based on justice and humanity. Application of the judge's decision to extend *wasiat* to non-Muslims is *qiyās* - the expansion of the interpretation of the giving *wasiat* to relatives, who do not inherit like adopted children or foster parents, extended to non-Muslim relatives (Adhha, 2018, p. 969).

Somalia maintained the Turkish ratio 1:1: no inheritance for adopted children, children born from an illegal marriage. They are excluded from inheritance rights, "but possible to enter in the will category which should not be more than  $\frac{1}{3}$  part of inheritance. For heirs of different religions or non-Muslims. Somalia does not give inheritance rights to them according to the *Shafi'i* school" (Adhha, 2018, p. 969). Egyptian inheritance law, adopted by the *Sunni* school, is more conservative when compared to the three previous countries. The differences are not much between the laws that apply to the rules of *farā'id*, including (1) Egypt, which granted no more than one-third of the mandatory *wasiat* for a grandson whose parents died before or together with their grandparents, and (2) giving *radd* to a husband or wife. Egypt's other conservative evidence is that it states explicitly that Muslims and non-Muslims cannot inherit from each other (Adhha, 2018, p. 969).

Across countries exist similarities and differences of the four countries. Turkey and Somalia are similar in the sharing of inheritance between men and women (1:1). Indonesia and Egypt adopt the rules of *farā'id* science of 2 (men) to 1 (women): that is, women have half of the share of men. Turkey and Indonesia share similarities in terms of inheritance to adopted children and non-Muslim relatives, though different sharing formulas. Turkey's inheritance distribution of equal shares to adopted children or non-Muslim relatives with biological children and Muslim relatives (Adhha, 2018, p. 970). Indonesia gives a part to the children and non-Muslim relatives through obligatory *Wasiat*. Strong differences exist between Turkey and the other four countries regarding the rights of grandchildren. Where they exist, Turkey equates the share of the children with that of grandchildren. Unlike Somalia, which declares grandchildren by the existence of a child, Indonesia gives the grandchild the right through successor to the successor to the substitute only if his parents have died with heir. Egypt gives the rights of parents' grandchildren to have died with the heir through *Wasiat*. Equality in Indonesia and Egypt which share the portion of *radd* to husband and wife (Adhha, 2018, p. 970).

### ***Wasiat Wājibah*/Obligatory Will to Non-Muslim Heir: The Case of Egypt and Indonesia**

The Compilation of Islamic Law, or *Kompilasi Hukum Islam* (KHI), specifies what is required for adopted children and their adoptive parents. Article 209 of the KHI embodies the law of *Wasiat Wājibah*. It cannot be regarded as contrary to Islamic law. The Cassation Decision Number. 368 K/Ag/1995, issued 16 July 1998, marked the beginning of the practice of non-Muslim heirs via *Wasiat Wājibah*, which created a body of laws within religious courts. The aim of the inheritance system (KHI) is to preserve the integrity of the family and accommodate the multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of Indonesian society (Sunarto & Sumbulah, 2022, p. 242).

The classical Fiqh position informed legal reform to address the gap in a multi-ethnic and multireligious society, where diversity and interfaith marriages are common. One area of critical challenge in contemporary Islamic legal theory is the practice of inheritance among members of different religions within the same family (Sunarto & Sumbulah, 2022, p. 244). Legal complications arise where one of the partners abandons Islam during the marriage between husband and wife, or the descendants of the marriage adhere to a religion other than Islam. The civil code adheres to a bilateral individual inheritance system. Under the civil code, after all debt obligations have been deducted, the remainder is shared by the heirs. All portions of the heir are equal regardless of whether they are identical, whereas Islamic law states heir according to their inheritance (Sunarto & Sumbulah, 2022, p. 246).

The KHI specifies that the heir must be Muslim, have blood or marital ties and not be banned from becoming heir by law (Article 171, letters b and c). According to Islamic law, other factors impede the heir from inheriting (*mawani' al-irts'i*), even if they meet up with the requirements and have a relationship with the heir. Conditions, such as murder, religious division and slavery, hinder heirs from inheriting (Sunarto & Sumbulah, 2022, p. 246).

The *Wasiat Wājibah* has been appropriately regulated in Article 209 paragraphs 1 and 2 of the KHI, which states that adoptive parents who do not receive a will must be given as many wills as possible. Inheritance of the adopted child is divided based on Article 176 to Article 193, and for the adoptive parents who do not receive an inheritance, they are given *Wasiat Wājibah* of one-third of the inheritance of the adopted child. Similarly, an adopted child without a will is given *wasiat wājibah* of one-third of his adoptive father (Sunarto & Sumbulah, 2022, p. 258).

According to Islamic law, *Wasiat Wājibah* applies to heirs who do not receive a share of the inheritance due to obstructions to obtaining the inheritance. *Fiqh* experts claimed that “giving wills to heirs whose inheritance has been determined is forbidden”. Egyptian scholars find a way to allow grandchildren who were prevented from inheriting, being prevented by sons, to inherit through *Wasiat Wājibah*. *Wasiat Wājibahs* in Egypt is regulated under Egyptian Will Law No. 71 of 1946, Article 76 to 79. “This requirement applies to grandchildren or grandchildren whose father/ mother died before or at the same time as the heirs (grandparents)”. In Egypt, what is legally binding includes explicit provisions. In Indonesia, Article 209 of the KHI regarding *Wasiat Wājibah* only explains that wills are given to adopted children and adoptive parents in a maximum proportion of one-third (Sunarto & Sumbulah, 2022, p. 255).

One basis for granting *wasiat wājibah* for adopted parents is the transfer of responsibility for meeting daily needs and education costs from biological parents to adoptive parents. Quoting M. Anshary, “only Muslim heirs are entitled to inherit. The provisions regarding heirs of different religions: a Heir of different religions do not receive inheritance rights from heirs who have died, look for ways to get a share through *Wasiat Wājibah*; and cutting the amount of *Wasiat Wājibah* of non-Muslim heirs from the heirs is appropriate when the person concerned is a Muslim (Sunarto & Sumbulah, 2022, pp. 255–256).

Inheritance rights of non-Muslim heirs based on *Wasiat Wājibah* are unregulated in detail in a given legal rule, either in positive law or Islamic law. This, however, does not invalidate applying *Wasiat Wājibah* to heirs of different religions as incorrect; it is rather a solution used by judges to ensure that heirs who are prevented from inheriting because of religious differences “can get their rights to receive the property left by the family” (Sunarto & Sumbulah, 2022, pp. 255–256). *Wasiat Wājibah* for heirs of different religions creates legal uncertainty as it is not determined in law and regulations but only in jurisprudence. The amount of which is the highest amount obtained by equal heirs or may not exceed one-third of the inheritance (Sunarto & Sumbulah, 2022, pp. 255–256).

For scholars who permit *Wasiat Wājibah*, their reason is based on *sūrah al-Baqarah* verse 180, which is only carried on to both parents and relatives who are hindered or are heirs. Ibn Hazm explained the command to give a will if the will still exist and obligatory. The waived orders are addressed only to family members who have become heirs: “If a Muslim dies without a will, the heirs are obliged to give part of their inheritance. Moreover, if the obligation is not carried out, then the court that acts as the ruler is obliged to give the will to fulfil this testamental obligation” (Sunarto & Sumbulah, 2022, pp. 256–257). The majority of scholars do not accommodate *Wasiat Wājibah*. They concede that the law of giving will to relatives who are not entitled to inherit property is *sunnah*. Their evidences are: first, the text of *sūrah Al Baqarah* verse 180 has been confirmed by the *Mawarits* verses, which explained the share of each heir, like parents and relatives, with definite portions/fractions; second, the obligation in this testament verse has been confirmed by the *hadith* of the Prophet, “that Allah has given rights to those entitled. Therefore, there is no right to obtain a will for the heirs...” (Sunarto & Sumbulah, 2022, p. 258).

The rule above is a new legal construction in Islamic jurisprudence, not found in classical and contemporary Fiqh literature. The problem is typical of the Indonesian society, which is diverse in its population. The concept of *Wasiat Wājibah* in the rules of KHI is not contrary to the *Qur’ān* and *Sunnah*. Bequeathing through will to an adopted child or adoptive parent does not negate the classical texts (Sunarto & Sumbulah, 2022, p. 258).

Cassation Decision No. 368 K/g/1995, dated July 16, 1998, laid the precedent in the practice of non-Muslim heirs receiving part of inheritance through *Wasiat Wājibah*. It became a jurisprudence within the religious courts. *Wasiat Wājibah* become a means of allowing non-Muslim heirs to inherit from their Muslim parents. This takes care of the gap observable in a multireligious society with interfaith marriages and different religions of parents and heir, as well as the rights of adopted child and the adoptive parents’ right to inheritance. *Wasiat Wājibah* stand as a pillar of justice and morality. The *Wasiat Wājibah* informed several court decisions, including Religious Court Decision Number 0140/Pdt.P/2012/PA and the Supreme Court Cassation Decision Number 218K/Ag/2016 (Sunarto & Sumbulah, 2022, p. 258).

## Conclusion

Islamic law is specific in marriage between Muslims and *Ahl al-Kitāb*. The classical Islamic texts of the *Qur’ān* and *Sunnah* permit it under a certain environment of fewer Muslim women. The general tone of Islam is that Muslim men are allowed to marry chaste women of *Ahl al-Kitāb*.

However, the experience of families with non-Muslim wives, especially relating to the impact of the mother's belief on the children, child custody, socialisation cum religious belief of the children, divorce or death, as well as the abundance of Muslim women in society, necessitated revisiting pristine Islamic legal traditions in order to address societal problems and challenges emanating from such interfaith marriages.

Muslim-majority countries vary in their outlook on marriage between Muslim men and believing women of the revealed Books. Indonesia, considering the *maclah* and *mafsad*, prohibits Muslim men from marrying women of *Ahl al-Kitāb*. Somalia stipulates that marriage will be based on the faith of the couples. Egypt forbids interfaith marriage between Muslim women and non-Muslim men and permits marriage of Muslim men to women of *Ahl al-Kitāb*. Turkey deviates from the Islamic tradition on interfaith marriage. Egypt and Indonesia adhere to classical Islamic *fiqh* on interfaith marriages. Nevertheless, interfaith marriages occur but conflate with religious dictates. The SEMA circular brings legal clarity, disapproving of interfaith marriage. This is condemned by human rights activists, from the right approach and freedom of religion angle. Somalia Family Law states that marriage must be according to the religious procedures of couples.

In the inheritance law derived from Islamic *fiqh*, changes are observable in accordance with the social experiences of societies. Across the four countries (Turkey, Somalia, Indonesia and Egypt), comparison shows that Turkish inheritance law is the most secular, influenced by western modernisation in its reform. Egypt and Indonesia adhere to the traditional Islamic *fiqh* position of a ratio of 2:1 between men and women, respectively. Turkey, heavily influenced by Swiss law-based sharing between men and women on equality, has a ratio of 1:1 for men and women. Somalia is influenced by Turkish legal reform, based on men and women inheritance on equal share. On *radd*, or residual property, opinions differ. In Egypt, who gets the *radd* is based on unpopular scholars' positions, reflecting the changes in societal structure.

On inheritance to non-Muslim heirs, adopted children and adoptive parents or grandchildren, the *Wasiat Wājibah* or obligatory will have taken care of this in Indonesia and Egypt. The Turkish legal code grants inheritance to children born out of illegal marriages, among others. The *Wasiat Wājibah* takes care of diversity in societies with multiethnic and multireligious faith. Islam clearly prohibits inheritance by people of non-Muslim faith. This is reciprocal. Muslims cannot inherit from non-Muslim relatives either. Nevertheless, in some Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia, and evolutionary trends in places like Egypt, Muslims are confronted with social realities that necessitate Islamic jurist to consider *Wasiat Wājibah* or obligatory will within Islamic jurisprudence. This clearly is not provided for in Islamic law of inheritance. Social realities, in the spirit of social integrity, justice and morality, influence legal reform with Islamic jurisprudence that allows non-Muslim heirs to inherit a certain share of not more than one-third portion of the Muslim relative's property, and for adoptive parents and adopted children to inherit from the deceased Muslim family's property.

This study recommends that classical Islamic *Fiqh* position should inform legal reforms in Muslim countries to address issues of modernisation and social changes in the contemporary world.

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# CHAPTER 5

## An Examination of the Activities of Muslim Women in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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### Introduction

Nigeria is a multi-religious sovereign country with many ethnic groups. It consists of thirty-six states, a Federal Capital Territory and 774 local government areas. In terms of ethnicity, western Nigeria is inhabited largely by the Yoruba, the northern part by the Hausa, and the eastern part by the Igbo. As noted by Uchendu (2016, 2011), Eastern Nigeria, which covers east of the River Niger and south of the River Benue, consists of the Igbo, Ibibio, Anag, Oron and Eket (Akwa Ibom State); the Efik, Ekoi or Ogoja (Cross River State); and the Ijaw, Ikwerre, Ogoni and Andoni (Rivers State). Others in eastern Nigeria include the Ekpetima, Igbirran, Nembe and Ogbia in Bayelsa State.

This paper countenances women in cultures found in Rivers State, especially the Ijaw and Ikwerre women. Ijaw women are cultured and have been champions in many endeavours of life. Unlike many cultures that are patriarchal and ascribe low status to women, traditional Ijaw communities give women high social, political and economic status because the Supreme Creator, God, is seen as possessing feminine attributes. God is called “Teme arau” (she who creates) or “Ziba arau/Zibo arau” (she who gives birth). Thus, women in the Ijaw nation are given high socio-cultural status due to the “feminization of God among the Ijaw nation” (Uzobo & Olali, 2023).

In Ikwerre communities, women are recognised as arbiters, peace brokers and enforcers. They have been agents of conflict resolution, especially the adult daughters (*Rumurinya*). This is also true of the Omurinya (daughters of the clan who married within and outside the community) and the *Nwere-nzi* (co-wives) (Wotogbe, 2021). Consequently, women of these cultures who became Muslims have a heritage and legacy of offering services to draw from through the process of socialisation.

According to the Pew Forum (2012), the religious landscape of Nigeria manifests as 49.3% Christianity, 48.8% Islam and 1.9% other faiths. The coming of Islam to Nigeria cannot be placed on a particular date but has been clearly linked to trade and migration along the Trans-Saharan trade route. As noted by Faga (2023), “the exchange of goods across the Sahara Desert introduced the people of Nigeria to Islamic merchants and travellers who, in turn, shared their faith. This early contact laid the foundation for the gradual spread of Islam in the region” (p. xx).

The activities of Sheikh Usman dan Fodio, with a mission to purify the practice of Islam, also aided the spread of Islam in Nigeria. The first public identification of the propagation of Islam in Eastern Nigeria was by Hugh Goldie, the Primitive Methodist Missionary at Calabar, Cross

River State, in 1890. In 1896, Major Galway and Mr. A. B. Harcourt confirmed the presence at Elele, Rivers State, of a team of hunters from Kano (Uchendu, 2020). The first Ijaw convert from Christianity to Islam was in 1960. He was in his mid-twenties and named Ahmed Okiri. In addition, some women converted to Islam during this period due to marriages with migrant Muslims in Elele, Rivers State (Uchendu, 2016, 2011). Thus, the reality of the practice of Islam in Port Harcourt has been noted by Kilani (2007).

Islam and other religions in contemporary Nigeria could be described as a double-edged sword, as religion is utilised as a platform to promote peace, but sometimes is the cause of crises in society. It has been noted that the country has recorded very bizarre experiences in the domain of religious violence, and this is because examples of crises and violence attributed to religion in Nigeria are numerous (Minini, 2021). However, religion remains a veritable tool for peace and nation building through various contributions (Sulaiman, 2016). An example of such contributions is the activities and interventions by faith-based groups, such as Muslim women groups. Since the arrival of Islam in Rivers State, women have been engaging in development activities. Muslim women in Port Harcourt strive to please Allah through programmes and interventions, within and outside of Islamic spaces.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

The activities of Muslim women in Port Harcourt are premised on women's agency and initiative. The need to appreciate women's agency has been countenanced several times by the World Bank. Accordingly, the World Bank (2025) asserts that women's voices, agency and participation are a "major policy priority." Furthermore, the World Bank observes that "growing evidence shows how removing gender barriers unlocks economic productivity, reduces poverty, deepens social cohesion and enhances well-being and prosperity for current and future generations" (p. xx). Thus, these activities by women portend ripples of development indices for society.

Again, these activities seek to conform to the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-Being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Clean Water and Sanitation, Affordable and Clean Energy, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, Reduced Inequalities, Sustainable Cities and Communities, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action, Life Below Water, Life on Land, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, and Partnerships for the Goals (Wao, 2024). These seventeen goals rest on three core elements: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection (Allman, 2013).

Social inclusion concerns the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in societal events. It refers to improving the ability, capacity, opportunity and dignity of disadvantaged people. Social inclusion is fuelled usually by enhanced social interaction. Pattison (2025) identified six pillars for social inclusion: engage, equip, enable, empower, evaluate and evolve. Social inclusion points to the need to appreciate Muslim women's contributions to diverse sectors in society.

Furthermore, the activities of Muslim women in Port Harcourt hinge on collective action. The concept of collective action in sociology has been construed as a situation in which a number of people work together to achieve some common objectives through social or political means (Aiken & Cloud, 2023; Francisco, 2010). Such initiatives require clear and commonly agreed-upon purposes, community engagement, worthy relationships, trust and accountability. According to a study by Van Zomeren et al, titled *The Social Identity Model of Collective Action* (SIMCA), three key concepts are essential drivers of collective action: injustice, efficacy and identity. They propose that the strongest force for collective action of these three is identity (Olarinmoye, 2013). Interestingly, the identity of Muslim women in Port Harcourt as agents of Islam is the primary driving force for their activities, as they engage local communities while staying accountable to Allah.

Lastly, the concept of feminism is multifaceted and involves paying attention to the importance of women's issues in a setting. Feminist theorising proposes the possibility of new epistemologies that appreciate women's experiences as valid sources of knowledge. It is concerned with prioritising values as well as moving women's issues from the periphery to the centre of discourse, just as it challenges traditional ideas about gender roles, identity and utilisation of power in society (Nicholson, 2013; Harding, 1987). This paper especially countenances feminist agency, which refers to women's capacity to make choices and act according to personal or shared values and desires (Meyers, 2025). The agenda of this paper aligns with the feminist agency prescription of women's actions as valid sources of nation building.

### **Data Presentation**

The activities of Muslim women in Port Harcourt involve engagement with local communities and groups in and around the city. These can be classified into three categories: activities targeting women in Islam, activities for the broader society and interfaith efforts.

Activities directed at women in Islam include lectures and awareness talks on health issues such as cancer and its management. Ramadan lectures, the first of which was held on March 27, 2024, provide religious education and spiritual empowerment. Muslim women also organise the annual celebration of World Hijab Day every February to create awareness about the significance of the hijab and to encourage respect for Muslim women who wear it. World Hijab Day was introduced by Nazma Khan on February 1, 2013, following her personal experiences of discrimination in New York.

The Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) plays a significant role in these activities. Founded on October 12, 1985, in Minna, Niger State, FOMWAN has expanded to include members across Nigeria and branches in Gambia, Ghana and Liberia. The organisation supports Islam through *da'wah*, the establishment of educational institutions, and other outreach efforts (Fahm, 2017). The Port Harcourt branch established a school at Elelenwakebbi and maintains an active presence on Instagram (@FOMWANRivers).

Muslim women also extend their efforts to the general society by visiting hospitals and correctional centres with gifts, prayers and counselling. For example, they visited the Port Harcourt Maximum Correctional Centre on February 9, 2024. Similarly, they reached out to indigent communities in rural areas with gifts and prayers.

In terms of interfaith engagement, Muslim women in Port Harcourt have collaborated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in joint programmes involving both youth and adults (December 26, 2024). On March 24, 2025, they joined women of other faiths in an interfaith prayer session for peace in Rivers State, following the declaration of a state of emergency by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (March 18, 2025).

### Data Analysis

Eighteen women completed the Google Form and the data was analysed by SPSS Software based on the following three objectives:

Objective 1: How do Muslim women engage in activities in Port Harcourt?

S/N	Activity Responses	Yes Responses	No Responses
1.	Participation in Ramadan activities	15	3
2.	Celebration of World Hijab Day	13	4
3.	Engagement in Interfaith Activities	12	6

Table 1 shows that most Muslim women in Port Harcourt actively participate in religious and interfaith activities. This stance confirms the women's commitment to the social inclusion agenda through agency. In addition, it is a manifestation of collective action. There is no significant difference in their level of engagement across these activities, including a strong commitment to all activities.

Objective 2: What are the challenges faced by Muslim women in Port Harcourt?

S/N	Challenges	Frequency	% Frequency
1.	Financial constraints	High	1.03%
2.	Cultural or social barriers	High	31.03%
3.	Lack of recognition and support	Medium	20.69%
4.	Internal leadership challenges	Low	3.45%
5.	Government policies and regulation	Low	13.79%

Table 2 shows the prevalence of different challenges faced by Muslim women in Port Harcourt.

Objective 3: How active are Muslim women in interfaith activities in Port Harcourt?

S/N	Interfaith activities with non-Muslims	% Frequency
1.	Social activities with non-Muslims	80
2.	No social activities with non-Muslim's	20

Table 3 shows that there are more social activities with non-Muslims.

From the above data presented, it can be deduced that Muslim women in Port Harcourt engage in many religious activities, which is a clear sign of women’s agency, collective action and prioritisation of social inclusion. Challenges are realities for the execution of activities by Muslim women. These include financial constraints, cultural and social barriers and the effects of government policies and regulations. These are obstacles to optimal planning and execution of projects that require remedies. However, despite these challenges, the impact of Muslim women’s activities on society and development cannot be denied, especially when assessed based on links to relevant SDGs.

### **Muslim Women’s Activities in Port Harcourt and SDGs**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Corresponding SDG</b>
1.	Awareness lectures on health issues for women	3 & 10
2.	Celebration of World Hijab Day	4 & 10
3.	FOMWAN School	4
4.	Visits to the vulnerable in society	10 & 16
5.	Utilising ICT, use of social media and the Internet	9 & 4
6.	Interfaith efforts	16 & 11

### **Recommendations**

1. Increased funding and donations should be provided to support Muslim women’s activities and project execution.
2. Greater publicity should be given to Muslim women’s contributions in mainstream and social media.
3. Government policies concerning religion should promote interfaith relations.
4. Projects that foster collaboration among women of different faiths should be prioritised, including empowerment programmes.
5. Joint interfaith programmes should be designed for secondary school girls to promote tolerance from an early age.

### **Conclusion**

This paper examined the activities of Muslim women in Port Harcourt under three categories: intra-faith, general societal, and interfaith. Findings show that Muslim women have actively engaged in these areas, contributing meaningfully to social inclusion, peacebuilding and national development. Despite challenges, particularly financial and cultural barriers, Muslim women’s impact remains significant. With stronger support and greater visibility, their contributions to sustainable development in Nigeria could be further amplified.

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## CHAPTER 6

### Islamic Scriptural View on Religious Harmony across Faiths

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#### Introduction

The general belief, affirmed by both religious and philosophical traditions, is that all human beings, regardless of gender, originate from a single source, having been created by one sole Creator. Despite the diversity in race, tribe, ethnicity, language, skin colour and cultural background, the unity of humankind remains an undeniable reality that cannot be dismissed as a trivial or superficial phenomenon. This foundational principle of human cohesion is deeply embedded in Islamic teachings, particularly as articulated in the Glorious Qur'ân, which traces the origin of humanity to a single soul (*nafsin wāhidatin*). Almighty Allah says:

O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, Who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, his mate, and from them twain scattered [like seeds] countless men and women; - reverence Allah, through Whom you demand your mutual [rights], and [reverence] the wombs [That bore you]: for Allah ever watches over you (Qur'an 4: 1).

This verse underscores the shared ancestry of all people and serves as a divine reminder of the inherent dignity, equality and interconnectedness of the human race. It forms the theological basis for mutual respect, justice and peaceful coexistence among all members of society, regardless of their differences.

The multi-religious nature of the Nigerian society should not serve as a breeding ground for religious intolerance, as the foundational teachings of all divine religions advocate for interfaith harmony, dialogue and peaceful coexistence. Islam, as one of the most prominent world religions and widely practised in Nigeria, places a high premium on tolerance and respect toward followers of other faiths. This is evident from both its scriptural sources and historical practice. The Qur'an instructs Muslims to offer protection and hospitality even to non-Muslims who seek refuge or wish to understand Islam. As stated in *Sūrah At-Tawbah* (9:6):

And if any one of the polytheists seeks asylum with you, grant him asylum until he hears the words of Allah, then escort him to where he feels safe. That is because they are people who do not know.

This verse exemplifies the Islamic principle of engaging with people of other faiths in a spirit of compassion, openness and peaceful dialogue. Its primary objective is to provide an opportunity for the message of Islam to be conveyed respectfully, while ensuring the safety and dignity of those seeking knowledge or refuge. A secondary but equally significant purpose is to foster understanding, potentially leading to spiritual enlightenment and voluntary acceptance of Islam through reasoned discourse rather than coercion.

In the Nigerian context, the need for religious harmony cannot be overstated. Given the country's diverse religious composition and shared cultural heritage, fostering peaceful interfaith relations is essential for national unity and development. This paper serves as a call to action towards strengthening interreligious understanding and cooperation among Nigeria's diverse faith communities, ultimately promoting peace, stability and collective progress. The discussion is structured into five main sections: introduction, definition of key terms, Islamic scriptural perspectives on religious harmony, the necessity of interfaith harmony in a multi-religious nation like Nigeria, and finally, recommendations, summary and conclusion.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Religion:** Religion is widely regarded as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, as it conveys different meanings to individuals, communities and scholars alike. This complexity may have informed Balogun's (1981:4) assertion in his *Inaugural Lecture* that religion, across cultures and societies, ultimately seeks to address the "Ultimate Reality" who is perceived from diverse perspectives. Similarly, Adebayo (2020:20) argues that religion, as a social phenomenon, faces numerous challenges, including difficulties in arriving at a universally accepted definition, its ubiquity across human societies and the prevalence of subjective, often egocentric, interpretations.

Generally, religion can be understood as a system of beliefs and practices centred around the worship of a deity or deities, or the veneration of supernatural powers believed to govern human affairs. From a sociological perspective, Émile Durkheim defines religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things" (Durkheim, 1960). He expands the concept of the sacred beyond divine entities to include objects such as rocks, trees, springs or even pieces of wood; indeed, anything that holds deep significance for a community. Peter Berger (1969) later refers to this framework as the "Sacred Canopy," emphasising religion's role in providing meaning and order to human life.

Contemporary scholars emphasise that religion, by its very nature, should serve as a source of peace rather than conflict. Ideally, religious life must not be associated with discord, animosity, tension or chaos. Given its divine foundation and moral orientation, religion is expected to promote harmony through faith, worship and adherence to ethical norms and values as outlined in sacred scriptures and prophetic teachings. Marloes (2021:184) further observes that "for many people, religion is less a matter of belief and more of practice." Thus, a truly religious person, whether through creed or conduct, is not only expected to maintain a harmonious relationship with the Divine but also to foster peaceful coexistence with all of humanity.

**Harmony:** A society that exists in a state of peaceful coexistence, marked by love, mutual respect, trust, cooperation and contentment, is regarded as harmonious. Harmony can be measured across various dimensions of human life, including religious, political, social, cultural and economic spheres. In the context of this study, religious harmony is of particular importance, and may be understood in two ways: intra-religious harmony, which refers to peace and agreement among adherents of the same faith, and inter-religious harmony, which denotes cordial relations among followers of different religions or belief systems.

All major world religions promote values such as empathy, peace, tolerance and justice, while rejecting discrimination, hostility, intolerance, conflict and disunity. Haruna *et al.* (2022), after examining major global religions, assert that mutual respect among people of diverse faiths is essential in today's pluralistic societies for fostering peaceful and harmonious relationships. In multi-religious contexts like Nigeria, interfaith harmony is crucial for promoting national cohesion, progress and sustainable development, regardless of religious affiliation.

Peaceful coexistence often arises from understanding one another through dialogue and shared values. This principle is also emphasised in the Qur'an, where Almighty Allah says: "And if your Lord had willed, He would have made mankind one community (following a single religion), but they will not cease to differ" (Qur'an 11:118).

This verse underscores the divine wisdom behind human diversity and affirms the necessity of peaceful coexistence among differing communities.

**Diversity:** According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, diversity is "the condition of having or being composed of differing elements, especially the inclusion of different types of people (such as those of different races, cultures, or beliefs) within a group or organization." Simply put, diversity refers to the quality or state of being different—whether in race, culture, religion, ideology or practice.

Scholars widely agree that diversity contributes positively to the creation of more just, inclusive and dynamic societies, where individuals from various backgrounds have equal opportunities to contribute and thrive. It fosters creativity, innovation, empathy and social cohesion across multiple sectors of human endeavour.

Diversity is an inherent feature of all aspects of life, political, economic, social, cultural, educational, moral and especially religious. This paper focuses specifically on religious diversity, which plays a significant role in shaping intergroup relations, especially in a multi-religious country like Nigeria. Religion is often categorised under personal diversity, as noted in psychological literature (Study.com). Unlike other societal norms, religious belief is not compulsory and should not be imposed on individuals. This aligns with the Islamic principle articulated in the Qur'an: "There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the right path has become distinct from the wrong path..." (Qur'an 2:256).

Religious diversity, according to Muhibbu-Din (2008:219), is not only a reality in human life but also becomes evident when there are significant differences in beliefs, doctrines and practices among people of interfaith. This is especially relevant in societies characterised by religious pluralism or what Kilani calls religious ‘manyness’, such as Nigeria (Kilani, 2021:31). For peaceful coexistence to prevail, therefore, it is essential that people of different faiths focus on shared values and common themes rather than divisive differences. By doing so, they can work collectively towards the growth and development of their communities and the broader society.

**Faith:** Faith in Islam is known as *Imān*. It is an Arabic term derived from three root letters: ‘-m-n-’ which has connotations of “being secure”, “trusting in”, “turning to”, “to believe”, “to give one’s faith”, “to place in safety”, *etcetera*. It is an act that is associated with three principal elements, viz: internal conviction (*taṣḍiq bi’l-qalb*), verbal expression (*iqrār bi’l-lisan/qawl*) and performance of the prescribed works (‘*amal*). Lewis (1986:1170) opines that the term in the Glorious Qur’ān could either mean “the act or the content of faith or sometimes both together” as enshrined in the phrase reiterated more than fifty times in the Qur’ ān – *illā/ladhīna ‘amanū wa ‘amilū ḡ-Ṣālihāt*... i.e, except those who believe and act righteously...”. The Book of James in the Bible agrees with the Qur’anic phrase when it says: “Faith without corresponding good work is dead” (James 2:14-17). Therefore, it (faith) technically refers to a strong belief in the doctrines of a religion, grounded in spiritual conviction rather than empirical proof. It influences all aspects of a Muslim’s life, from personal conduct to societal responsibilities, by instilling ethical values such as accountability, kindness, charity, mercy, justice, patience, gratitude and resilience. Prophet Muhammad (*SAW*) emphasised the communal dimension of faith in *An-Nawāwī*: “None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself” (*Ḥadīth* 13). This statement underscores the importance of empathy and mutual care within society, illustrating that the impact of faith extends beyond individual piety to influence interpersonal relationships, community cohesion and broader national development.

In the context of this study, faith denotes belief in the existence of God and adherence to the ethos, teachings and principles of a particular religion, be it African Religion (AR), Christianity, Judaism, Islam, etc. Religious faith is typically defined by spiritual doctrines, sacred scriptures, rituals and acts of worship in any of the afore-listed beliefs.

**Islamic Scripture:** The primary sources of Islamic teachings are the Qur’an and the *Sunnah* (as preserved in the *ḥadīth* literature), which provide divine instructions and moral guidance from Allah and the exemplary teachings of Prophet Muḥammad (*SAW*). While other revealed scriptures were sent to previous prophets, Muslims believe the Qur’an to be the final and most complete revelation. Belief in all the scriptures revealed by Allah constitutes the third article of Islamic faith. According to modern scholars, the reasons for the revelation of divine scriptures include:

1. *Guidance and knowledge:* To serve as reference points for understanding the religion, one’s duties toward Allah and fellow human beings, and the ultimate purpose of human creation.
2. *Resolution of dispute:* To act as an authoritative source for resolving disagreements among believers regarding religious beliefs, practices and social norms.

3. *Preservation of religion*: To safeguard religious truth from corruption and distortion over time.

Among these scriptures, only the Qur'an has been preserved in its original form without alteration, as promised by Allah: "Indeed, it is We Who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian" (Qur'an 15:9). For this reason, the Qur'an holds a central place in Islamic theology, law and practice. Nevertheless, Muslims are required to respect earlier scriptures such as the Torah, the Gospel and the Psalms, acknowledging their original divine origin before alleged interpolation, as Opeloye termed it, occurred (Opeloye, 2001:14).

### **An Examination of Islamic Scripture on Religious Harmony**

The primary scripture of Islam contains numerous passages that guide Muslims in ways of living harmoniously with adherents of other faiths. The Prophet (*SAW*) exemplified harmony with people of other faiths through both his words and actions. He initiated from the onset the Madīnah Constitution (*Dāstur al-Mādīna*), equally known as *Pax Islamica*, which governs and regulates the people of diverse beliefs in Madīnah. The 'document' leveraged the scriptural passages that guarantee freedom of religion, peaceful coexistence and religious tolerance as well as prohibition of coercion in the matters of faith (*Qur 'ān* 2:136, 213, 255, *Qur 'ān* 10:99-100, *Qur 'ān* 49:13, *Qur 'ān* 109:6). These verses postulate a clear solution to the problem of religious intolerance in all its ramifications. It prohibits all forms of persecution and harassment on religious grounds and upholds the principle of religious freedom for all citizens without discrimination. In the same vein, one of the major theses of the unprecedented 'Written Covenant', using the word of Abdur Rehman (2010), is that prior to the Prophet's arrival at Madīnah, not only that there were copious problems but the city was faced with anarchy, which the prophet diplomatically and skillfully tackled. Having wielded the political power necessary then, he offered the city with law (*Sharī'ah*), order and coordination (*nizām*) and religion (*dīn*). All these are embedded in the 'Pact'. The contents of the Covenant, summarily, include, though not limited to, protection of lives and property, freedom of religion, religious tolerance, diplomatic relations, etc (Salisu, 2023:112). For clarity's sake, mentioning a few clauses of the Pact that relate to religious harmony is not out of order:

...The Jews who are our allies and under us deserve our help and sympathy. They will neither be harassed nor co-operation extended against them. As long as the Jews are allied in warfare as non-Muslims, they will share war expenses with the Muslims. The Jews will be at liberty to practice their religion while Muslims would follow their religion. If Muslims make peace with an enemy, the Jews will also be bound by it. If the Jews make peace with anyone, the Muslims will also join them in peace but religion warfare is excepted from this. If anyone goes out of Madīna for some purpose then he too is in protection and security and he who reside in Madīna is also safe and protected save the wrongdoer and criminal... (p.114).

Furthermore, it is established in Islamic doctrine that all revealed religions share a common divine origin. Allah says:

Say: ‘We believe in Allah and in what has been revealed to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in what was given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit (Qur’an 2:136; see also Qur’an 43:13).

This verse proclaims the unity among the monotheistic religions, namely Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Moreover, it affirms the recognition and respect that Islam extends to other divinely revealed faiths. Yusuf Ali (1989:1249), in his commentary on this verse, unequivocally declares that God’s religion is not only the same in essence but that the source of unity is the revelation from Allah. Principles were laid in Islam, guiding the Muslims in their interactions with the adherents of other faiths. These include:

*Food sharing and interfaith marriage with women of other faiths, especially people of the book (i.e. Jews and Christians):* “This day (all) good things are made lawful for you. And the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. And so are the chaste from among the believing women and the chaste from among those who have been given the Book before you, when you give them their dowries, taking (them) in marriage.... And whoever denies faith, his work indeed is vain, and in the Hereafter he is of the losers” (Qur’an 5:5).

*Protection/neighbourliness with idolaters:* The Glorious Qur’an expressly advocates in the context of the above: “And if anyone of the idolaters seek your protection, protect him till he hears the word of Allah, then convey him to his place of safety. This is because they are a people who know not” (Qur’an 9:6).

The above implies that Muslims have religious obligations to tolerate and cohabit peacefully with the adherents of other faiths, including the idolaters. Islam permits giving protection to the people of other faiths who are ready to abide by the rules that cover their residency in an Islamic community (*Dhimmis*).

*An injunction frowning and/or detesting passing abusive words to other faiths’ objects of worship:* “And abuse not those whom they call upon besides, lest, exceeding the limits, they abuse Allah through ignorance. Thus, to every people have We made their deeds fair-seeming; then to their Lord is their return so He will inform them of what they did” (Qur’an 6:108).

Imam Fakhru’ d-Dîn al-Râzî, in his *Tafsîr al-Kabîrm*, commented on the above Qur’anic verse and posed a hypothetical question as to whether the reviling of idols can be regarded as an act of worship (*ibâdah*). The response was negative, as he avers that doing this is capable of causing ill-feeling and, thus, it should be discouraged. He opines further that reviling of idols might incite the unbelievers to entertain spite for Allah and His Messenger and thus aggravate their hatred for Islam and annoyance (al-Râzî, 1938: 140-141).

*Divine directive towards dialogue and understanding on common ground rules among the revealed religions:*

Say: O People of the Book, come to an equitable word between us and you, that we shall not associate anything with Him, and that some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah. But if they turn away, then say: Bear witness, we are Muslims (Qur'an 3:64).

The verse above is akin to Nwamaka's view (2024) that both Christianity and Islam share common features in terms of background, geography and basic principles. Apart from sharing the same origin from the Middle East, their guiding principles are based on divine revelation with prophets as couriers through whom messages were received from God. In addition, it is obvious that Islam shares some beliefs with Judaism and Christianity, tracing their historical background to the patriarch Abraham, whose source is traceable to the first man, Adam. All the prophets proclaimed the universality of faith in one God, brotherhood in humanity and the wellbeing of mankind. Salisu (2020) once made allusion to Opeyoye's *The Qur'an and The Bible: Common Themes for Peaceful Co-Existence* on the commonalities of the Abrahamic faiths. The allusion partly reads thus:

...it is envisaged that the book would serve as illumination and enlightenment for the adherents of Islam and Christianity to enable them see the two scriptures as containing precepts which are largely synonymous just as it would help to foster mutual understanding, promote tolerance, maintaining peaceful co-existence and ensure harmonious relationship with one another to the overall benefit of Nigeria in particular and the world at large ( p.376).

### **Necessity for Interfaith and Religious Harmony in a Multi-Religious Nation-State: Nigeria as a Case Study**

Gulen (2011), a Turkish scholar, once argued and concluded that "*dialogue is a must*". This he advanced in a paper titled "The Necessity for Interfaith Dialogue", presented to the Parliament of the World's Religions in Cape Town from 1-8 December, 1999 (p. ix). In the same vein, Gwamna (2010) posits that interfaith dialogue plays a cardinal role in dousing the tensions arising from crises experienced in Nigeria in recent times because the three religions have actually provided for the necessity for the principles and procedures of interfaith dialogue (p.7).

It is reasonable to assert that any developing nation characterised by religious pluralism, like Nigeria, requires effective mechanisms to promote unity and progress among its diverse population. A key instrument in this context is inter-religious harmony, which shapes the nature of interactions across all spheres of life by fostering peaceful coexistence. Hence, promoting religious harmony and tolerance is indispensable, as it contributes valuable benefits to national development and social cohesion. It fosters mutual respect and unity by cultivating a spirit of love and understanding among individuals from diverse religious backgrounds and beliefs. Oyetoro and Talabi (2023:35) summarise the innumerable benefits that are derivable from religious harmony and tolerance, thus:

Religious tolerance also challenges the beliefs and thought processes of individuals, provoking critical thinking, mutual respect and understanding; thus,

fostering an inclusive and progressive relation in the society. Furthermore, religious tolerance promotes economic development by reducing social and political tensions; ensuring religious minorities have equal opportunity to contribute to the economy. It also encourages local and international investment.

According to Adeleke (2018), in nations characterised by religious tolerance, individuals of diverse faiths are better positioned to collaborate toward national development. This principle has been exemplified by Nigeria’s past leaders who transcended religious sentiments in the pursuit of common national goals. These leaders demonstrated the power of unity, as they worked collectively without religious chauvinism to achieve independence and national progress. Evidence of religious harmony and mutual understanding can be observed in the composition of successive Nigerian leadership structures, such as heads of state and their deputies (military), presidents and vice-presidents (civilian), and governors and their deputies at the state level. For instance, a notable example is the loyalty shown by late Alhaji Lateef Jakande, a devout Muslim and former governor of Lagos State during the Second Republic, under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a Christian and founding leader of the defunct Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). Despite their religious differences, the former wholeheartedly adopted the latter’s political blueprint to develop Lagos State, laying a foundation that subsequent administrations have continued to build upon.

Reflecting on Nigeria’s history of governance, many of its most respected national heroes were distinguished figures regardless of whether they were Muslims or Christians. Notably, religious affiliation has historically not been a decisive criterion for political appointments. Opeloye (1993) traces this trajectory back to 1976 during the regime of General Murtala Muhammed, albeit a closer historical analysis reveals earlier instances dated to 1966, particularly during the administration of Alhaji Tafawa Balewa and Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe. He notes, among other things, that religion started to be an issue for consideration in political appointments from the reign of General Murtala Muhammed. He evolved a tradition of cooperative rule between the Muslim and the Christian at the federal level, that is, if the Head of State is a Muslim, his deputy would be a Christian, and vice versa. This was adopted in the civilian regime under Alhaj Shehu Shagari. It has also become the tradition in the states of the Federation with an equal population of Muslims and Christians (p.59).

The table below shows the situation at both the federal and states of the federation wherein the two diverse faiths came to the forefront.

S/No	Head of State/President	Second-in-Command / Vice President	Year
1.	Major-General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi	Babafemi Olatunde Ogundipe	1966- 1970
2.	General Yakubu Gowon	Vice Admiral Joseph Edet Akinwale Wey	1970-1975
3	General Murtala Mohammed	Olusegun Obasanjo	1975-1976
4.	Major General Olusegun Obasanjo	Major General Shehu Musa Yar’Adua	1976-1979

S/No	Head of State/President	Second-in-Command / Vice President	Year
5.	President Shehu Shagari	Alex Ifeanyichukwu Ekwueme	1979-1983
6.	Major-General Muhammadu Buhari	Major-General Tunde Idiagbon	1983-1985
7.	General Ibrahim Babangida	1. Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe (from 1985 to 1986) 2. Admiral Augustus Aikhomu (from 1986 to 1993)	1985-1993
8.	President Ernest Shonekan	Brigadier-General Sani Abacha	1993
9.	General Sani Abacha	Brigadier-General Oladipo Diya	1993-1998
10.	General Abdulsalami Abubakar	Unknown	1998-1999
11.	President Olusegun Obasanjo	Alhaji Atiku Abubakar	1999-2007
12.	President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua	Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan	2007-2010
13.	President Goodluck Jonathan	Alhaj Namadi Sambo	2010-2015
14.	President Muhammadu Buhari	Prof. Yemi Osinbajo	2015-2023

S/N	Governor	Religion	Deputy	Religion	State	Year
1.	Michael Agbolade Otedola	Christian	Sinatu Aderoju Ojikutu	Muslim	Lagos	1992 -1993
2.	Bola Ahmed Adekunle Tinubu	Muslim	1. Kofoworola Bucknor 2. Femi Pedro 3. Abiodun Ogunleye	Christian Christian Christian	Lagos	1999- 2007
3.	Babatunde Raji Fashola	Muslim	1. Sarah Adebisi Sosan 2. Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire	Christian Christian	Lagos	2007- 2015
4.	Akinwunmi Ambode	Christian	Oluranti Idiat Adebule	Muslim	Lagos	2015-2019
5.	Babajide Olusola Sanwo-Olu	Christian	Dr. Kadiri Obafemi Hamzat	Muslim	Lagos	2019-Date
6.	Olusegun Osoba	Christian	Sefiu Adegbeniga Kaka	Muslim	Ogun	1999- 2003
7.	Gbenga Daniel		Salimot Badru	Muslim	Ogun	2003 – 2011
8.	Ibikunle Amosun	Muslim	1. Segun Adesegun 2. Yetunde Onanuga	Christian	Ogun	2011-2019

S/N	Governor	Religion	Deputy	Religion	State	Year
9.	Dapo Abiodun (2019- Date)	Christian	Alhaja Noimot Salako- Oyedele	Muslim	Ogun	2019-Date
10.	Victor Omololu Olunloyo	Christian	Olatunji Mohammed	Muslim	Oyo	Oct.1983- Dec. 1983
11.	Alhaj Lam Adesina	Muslim	Iyiola Oladokun	Christian	Oyo	1999-2003
12.	Alhaj Rashidi Adewolu Ladoja	Muslim	Christopher Adebayo Alao-Akala	Christian	Oyo	2003-2007
13.	Christopher Adebayo Alao-Akala	Christian	1. Taofeek Arapaja 2. Hazeem Gbolarumi	Muslim	Oyo	2007 -2011
14.	Isiaka Abiola Ajimobi	Muslim	Moses Alake Adeyemo	Christian	Oyo	2011-2019
15.	Oluseyi Abiodun Makinde	Christian	1. Rauf Olaniyan 2. Bayo Lawal	Muslim	Oyo	2019-Date
16.	Isiaka Adetunji Adeleke	Muslim	Clement Adesuyi Haastrup	Christian	Osun	1992- 1993
17.	Chief Abdulkareem Adebisi Akande	Muslim	Iyiola Omisore	Christian	Osun	1999-2003
18.	Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola	Muslim	Titilayo Laoye-Tomori	Christian	Osun	2010-2018
19.	Alhaj Adegboyega Isiaka Oyetola	Muslim	Benedict Alabi	Christian	Osun	2018- 2022
20.	Dr. Olusegun Rahman Mimiko	Christian	Ali Olanusi	Muslim	Ondo	2009-2017
21.	Olusegun Oni	Christian	Sikiru Tae Lawal	Muslim	Ondo	2017-2021
22.	Abubakar Audu	Muslim	Patrick Adaba	Christian	Kogi	1999-2003
23.	Ibrahim Idris	Muslim	Philip Salawu	Christian	Kogi	2003-2012
24.	Idris Ichala Wada	Muslim	Yomi Awoniyi	Christian	Kogi	2012-2016
25.	Yahaya Adoza Bello	Muslim	1. Simon Achuba 2. Edward David Onoja	Christian	Kogi	2016-2024
26.	Ahmed Usman Ododo	Muslim	Salifu Joel Oyibo	Christian	Kogi	2024-Date
27.	Abubakar Bukola Saraki	Muslim	Joel Afolabi Ogundeji	Christian	Kwara	2003-2011
28.	Abdulfatah Ahmed	Muslim	Peter Kisira	Christian	Kwara	2011-2029
29.	AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq	Muslim	Kayode Alabi	Christian	Kwara	2019-Date

The above heads of state/presidents and governors at both federal and state levels, to our mind, operate and adopt what Iwuchukwu (2014:314) calls the principle of inclusivism and are averse to the contrary (exclusivism). This principle, by definition, is a theological assumption that accommodates and respects the validity and right of the other to exist, especially because the other's teachings and theological worldview are identical to that of the inclusivist, and this aligns with the principle of *maṣlāḥah* in Islamic law.

Indeed, two of the challenges facing our dear nation today are intolerance and disharmony. For instance, if the killings of the Muslim preachers (Alfa Bisiriyu Apalara, by the traditionalists, in 1952, and Alfa Safwan Bello Akodo, in Epe in 2003) appear to be extant, as documented by Kilani (2021:32-3), the recent *Hijāb* saga at the International School, University of Ibadan (2021), and the ongoing construction work of a mosque that was forcefully and illegally stopped at Ede Senior High School, Ede, Osun State, by members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, led by one Mr. Osundina, are fresh. The latter case, according to Dr. Razaq Bolawaye Uthman, the Chairman of Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC), Osun State Chapter, is capable of breaching security and the breakdown of law and order. He says *inter alia*: "Going by the religious disharmony experienced in the socio-political enclave during the past administration in Osun State, Osun State cannot afford to boil again on the auspices of religion. The action taken by Dr. Adeleke and his cohorts reminds us of the old constant religious disharmony in the state by certain agents' provocateur" (Muslim Rights Concern, 2025). All of the above avertable crises, to our mind, are due to probably selfishness, erroneous orientation and negative thoughts of some religious leaders, dogmatically adopted by their adherents towards people of other faiths. This attitude has hijacked the socio-political and economic life of the majority of the citizens. Oladosu *et. al.* (2024) succinctly aver to this:

Here, religion is used by the political elite as a weapon of division and even by the clergy as a means towards achieving their egregious goals. Whereas the multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of this country is supposed to be a source of strength, it is ironic that these have proved to be some of its greatest albatross. Religion is being hijacked to promote division, hatred and intolerance among the citizenry. This has, in turn, continued to impact its development negatively, prevent national integration and threaten communal cohesion (p.51).

The above statement underscores the genesis of religious disharmony and intolerance in Nigeria, which overtly or covertly have adverse effects not only on a particular faith group but also on the entire nation. Retrospectively, the existence of religious harmony in some parts of Nigeria for years back has brought about mutual understanding and respect with strict adherence to the Nigerian Constitution that addresses freedom of religion and promotes interfaith coexistence. This has assisted in promoting religious dialogue and cooperation through interfaith initiatives.

It is not difficult to compare the economic growth of states where there is inter-religious harmony that attracts foreign investment and tourism with others without religious tensions. Definitely, peacebuilding takes place in states that have inter-religious understanding and unity. Perhaps, this

informs Musa citing Jega that: “In Nigeria, the quest for national integration is a continuing one involving the implementation of various strategies so that the citizens will increasingly recognise themselves as one people, bound by shared historical experiences and common values, and imbued by the spirit of patriotism and unity, which transcends traditional, primordial diverse tendencies” (Musa, 2020:21).

On the other hand, the benefits of inter-faith harmony that could have been gained by all without exception are delimited by some challenges in some parts of the country. These challenges include: sectarian violence caused by *Boko Haram* and other militant organisations perpetrating violence against Muslims and Christians in the north; ethno-religious tensions between Hausa-Fulani (mainly Muslims) and Igbo (mainly Christians) communities in the south; socio-economic disparities due to poverty among some religious adherents; exploitation of religious difference for political manipulation; and misconceptions and stereotypes about other faiths due to lack of education and awareness.

The religiously diverse nature of Nigeria necessitates inter-faith and religious harmony. It is incumbent on all faiths in the country to maintain peaceful co-existence for stability, social cohesion and development. The following factors are key reasons towards actualising religious harmony:

- 1. Economic growth and development:** Diverting resources to manage the crisis has discouraged investment in the affected locations. Ukoma (2008) maintains that sustainable economic growth in Nigeria is hindered by religious fundamentalism. He explicitly pointed to various factors responsible for religious fundamentalism and proffered appropriate solutions to ensure the sustainability of economic growth and development (p.107). Indubitably, frequent clashes in some parts of Nigeria have affected foreign investment, tourism, agriculture, industrialisation, and so on.
- 2. Educational advancement and youth development:** Loreta (2006), as cited by Mepaiyeda and Oyedele (2024:152), emphasises the need for ‘an education focused on peace and justice towards effective support for interfaith dialogue and collaboration, bringing about transformative change’. This will not only result in employing education to rectify the situation by creating awareness, particularly among the youth, but if religious tensions could be checkmated by prioritising religious harmony, especially in areas where educational institutions are targeted by terrorists, definitely educational advancement and youth development will flourish in safe environments. This will also contribute a skilled and knowledgeable force to the country.
- 3. Reduction in humanitarian crisis and displacement:** Religious harmony is mandatory to reduce diversion of resources to managing the displacement of people and crisis. Violence, be it religious or otherwise, has displaced many people, especially women and children in some parts of the country. The report from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs states: “Over 2 million people were displaced in the northeastern Nigeria alone due to religious violence in 2021” (UNOCHA Report, 2021).

4. **Combating extremism and radicalisation:** In the spirit of cooperation, brotherhood and unity, religious harmony can actualise the prevention and total eradication of extremism and radicalisation in Nigeria. According to the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) Report (2020): ‘Interfaith cooperation is crucial in combating religious extremism, which thrives on division and intolerance’.
5. **Strengthening democracy and governance:** Former President Goodluck Jonathan declares: “Religious harmony is essential for a democratic society where every voice is heard and respected” (Leadership Newspaper, 2013, online accessed). This assertion is ethically reliable because fostering tolerance and strengthening a democracy of inclusivity can only be achieved where people of diverse faiths coexist peacefully and actively participate in the political agenda and processes.
6. **Social cohesion and national identity:** According to Ayuba (2020), “A harmonious relationship between religious groups can foster a sense of belonging and national unity, essential for Nigeria’s progress”. It is absolutely true that without mutual respect and understanding among adherents of different faiths, societal fragmentation is visible against a collective national identity. Therefore, in a culturally diverse country like Nigeria, religious harmony promotes social cohesion and helps forge a unified national identity.

In a nutshell, we are confident that the above will guarantee national stability and peace if considered by stakeholders of different faith groups in Nigeria. Religious harmony is equally visible in a society where godliness is sincerely the watchword.

### **Results/Findings**

This study revealed that numerous ethnic groups across Nigeria are combinations of at least three major religions, i.e. Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR). Consequently, religious harmony, tolerance, understanding, interfaith dialogue, national identity and cooperation are the major tools needed to foster development and advancement in all circumstances. As argued by Salisu *et. al.* (2024), the potential for conflicts arising from religious diversity not only threatens national unity and social cohesion but also hinders economic advancement (p.110). It has also been discovered that politicians’ schemings for personal means, unethical attitudes on the part of some leaders of faiths, and lack of self-dependence on the part of religious followers have contributed to religious disharmony. This, indubitably, results in religious sentiments and rivalry in politics, economic and social matters.

It is also unveiled that the sustainability of religious harmony in Nigeria is not without challenges that impede peaceful coexistence. These challenges include accusations and/or allegations of domination, victimisation, discrimination, marginalisation, nepotism, bigotry, politicisation of religion whereby politicians exploit religious diversity for selfish interest, conflicting doctrines, lack of effective implementation of policies that guarantee and ensure interfaith dialogue and understanding,

inability to accommodate divergent viewpoints, inability/delay of the Nigerian government in the management of conflict, mutual jealousy and covetousness, particularistic claim, preaching modes, to mention only a few.

In the course of the research, some observations were noted on the part of individuals, religious groups and the government concerning dialogue, interfaith and religious harmony in Nigeria.

1. **Unity and resilience among the citizens:** The country is made up of multi-religious settings. It is rare in some parts of Nigeria, especially in the southwest, where a large family is not a combination of adherents of at least two or three faiths. It is either Muslim-Christian or either of the two with African Traditional Religion or even the three in a single large family. In fact, there are always daily interactions and inter-related activities with one another. This happens in our communities, places of work, public places like markets, shopping malls, sports centres, motor parks, train stations, etc. Indeed, Nigerians cannot do without one another either for support or the spirit of humanity. For instance, incidents like the Kaduna bombings in 2012, where Muslim and Christian communities helped each other, proved that the Nigerian people value brotherhood and peace above division (*Al-Jazeera Report, 2012, accessed online*).
2. **Governmental intervention in interfaith dialogue:** The intervention of the Nigerian Government in a number of ways, with substantial initiatives, has helped to mediate and stem inter-faith violence and conflicts to an extent. The National Orientation Agency and the office of Interfaith Division in the Ministry of Interior collaborate with interfaith organisations such as the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), established in 1999, and the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC), to promote religious dialogue and tolerance (Akolade, 2020:123). Similarly, the government should ensure that those to be appointed as Chairmen of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution are experts in the field or well-grounded fellow Nigerians in the peace and peaceful engagement enterprise.
3. **Initiatives in the community and grassroots:** Every community is advancing towards interfaith understanding with mutual respect and recognition for one another. The interest of every member is now focused on the development and progress of the community rather than on religious chauvinism, blind followership, rivalry or self-centredness. With this, every community will promote religious harmony. For example, 'Neighbourhood Peace Initiative' is a grassroots forum of young Muslims and Christians in Jos, Plateau State, purposely to reduce ethno-religious tensions (Professor Shittu Hud, UNIJOS, during a personal interaction).
4. **Religious education:** Egwu (2024:105) submits that the inclusion of religious education in the Nigerian Educational Curriculum not only equips students with the knowledge of their own faith and those of others in appreciating the areas of common interests and differences but also paves the way for dialogue and cooperation to foster peace and harmony. In

addendum to the above, the formation of the National Association for the Study of Religions (NASR) as an umbrella bringing the scholars of Islamic and Christian Religious Studies together has proved that with education, people of diverse faiths can make meaningful contributions to the development of our society (Shittu, 2017:163). In the same vein, NIREC's incubating proposal of making Interreligious Dialogue a General Studies (GNS) course in our universities, in our opinion, is a right step in the right direction. The table below shows the cases related to a lack of religious tolerance in Nigeria.

### Cases Related to a Lack of Religious Understanding/Tolerance in Nigeria

S/No	Town	State	Date	Incident	Source
1.	Ede	Osun	July 2025	Mosque construction in Ede High School	MURIC Press Release
2.	Abeokuta	Ogun	2024	Ogun State local government polls: Christian-dominated chairmanship list	MURIC Press Release
3.	Iseyin	Oyo	2023	Pastor injured <i>Eleha</i> on <i>Ileya</i> Day (Case in court)	MURIC Press Release
4.	Jos	Plateau	December 23-25-2023	Fulani militant attacks resulting in the deaths of between 160 and 200 people, in predominantly Christian villages, with hundreds of houses destroyed and thousands displaced.	The Sun
5.	Ibadan	Oyo	2022	<i>Hijab</i> saga at International School University of Ibadan (Case in court)	MURIC Press Release
6.	Sokoto	Sokoto	12-05-2022	Deborah Samuel, a 19-year-old Christian student at Shehu Shagari College of Education was murdered on the accusation of blasphemy against Prophet Muhammad after posting a message on her class WhatsApp group.	Daily Trust
7.	Kwara	Kwara	25-02-2021	The controversy on the use of Hijab in schools which led to the temporary closure of 10 schools in Ilorin due to violence, resulting in one death and several injuries	<a href="https://www.google.com/amp/s/thenationonlineng.net/hijab-controversy-lingers-in-kwara/amp/">https://www.google.com/amp/s/thenationonlineng.net/hijab-controversy-lingers-in-kwara/amp/</a>

S/No	Town	State	Date	Incident	Source
8.	Idiroko	Ogun	2/4/2019	Oro worshippers attacked Muslims inside mosque in Idi-Iroko	MURIC Press Release
9.			23/7/2019	Name-calling	MURIC Press Release
10.	Across Yoruba land	Six geo-political zones	20-08-2018	<i>Isese</i> curfew on <i>Ileya</i> Eve	MURIC Press Release
11.	Abuja	FCT	2018	Amasa Firdaus was denied call to Bar on account of adorning herself with <i>Hijab</i>	MURIC Press Release
12.	Across the nation	Across the nation	20/8/2016	Fixing WAEC exam during Jumu'ah service	Uthman's Ph.D Thesis
13.			24/6/2016	Immoral textbooks	MURIC Press Release
14.	Lagos	Lagos	11-07-2014	Supreme Court ruled in favour of MSSN wearing <i>Hijab</i> in public institutions in a suit between Lagos State Government & Ors v. Asiyat Abdulkareem & Ors	Uthman's Ph.D Thesis
15.	Idi Araba	Lagos	6-3-2012	LUTH <i>Hijab</i> case	The Guardian
16.	Igbobi	Lagos	5-7-2011	Group engage Igbobi Medical Director over <i>Hijab</i>	Daily Trust
17.	Kaduna	Kaduna	22-11-2002	Muslims vs. Christians over Miss World Beauty Contest	Olademo's Paper
18.	Abuja	FCT	23-11-2002	Muslims vs. Christians over an offensive publication in the dailies	Olademo's Paper
19.	Osogbo	Osun	29-11-2001	Muslims vs. Christians before Reinhard Bonnke crusade	Olademo's Paper

\*\*\* For a comprehensive catalogue/documentation of religious and ethnic crises in Nigeria, see Olademo, 2016:71-78

## **Suggestions, Summary and Conclusion**

It is agreeable to note that a better, harmonious inter-religious community where peace, stability and national development could be achieved will be realised if the following suggestions are adopted.

Relevant government agencies like the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should, as a matter of urgency, put in place mechanisms to create more awareness about various government policies and efforts relating to interfaith harmony and cooperation. Other measures include:

- 1. Strengthening institutions that promote inter-religious harmony:** More support should be rendered to Interfaith Organisations like the Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), Centre for Interfaith Dialogue (CID), African Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Centre (ACRPC), and so on.
- 2. Addressing socio-economic disparities:** The religious and political leaders are to sincerely find a lasting solution to the economic impoverishment of a high number of religious adherents. Every religion teaches the act of charity towards poverty reduction. If people are empowered economically, it will be impossible for agents of destruction to use them to perpetrate evil in the name of religion.
- 3. Encouraging interfaith education and dialogue:** Comparative Religious Studies should be given a space in the entire curriculum of the education scheme in Nigeria from primary to tertiary level. This will actually motivate the spirit of understanding and dialogue among young people.
- 4. Promoting religious respect among the adherents of different faiths:** This will actually concretise the ‘live and let live’ slogan as it is explicitly stated in the Qur’an: **لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِي دِينِي** “To you be your Way, And to me mine” (Qur’an 109:6).
- 5. Religious leaders serving as role models:** They are to serve as role models in managing conflict and encouraging religious harmony. The Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) is the best example in all ramifications when it comes to inter-faith conflict management. He lived in Madīnah peacefully with the Jews and Christians without rancour except when they transgressed.

This study has explored the passages of the Qur’an to illustrate clearly that Islam permits religious harmony between Muslims and people of other faiths. Previous works on the level of harmony among the diverse faiths in Nigeria have been studied with measures put in place to improve on it. We find solace in Muhibbu-Din’s strong hypothesis that religious diversity has come to stay and will remain as such till the end of time. Its underlying principle is ‘live and let live’ (Muhibbu-Din, 2008:221). In conclusion, therefore, the highlighted suggestions, if adopted, could be contributory factors towards improved religious harmony that can foster lasting peace for sustainable development in Nigeria.

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## CHAPTER 7

### Fostering Unity in Diversity: The Role of the Nigeria Inter-religious Council (NIREC) in Bridging Religious Divides in Ekiti State

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#### **Introduction**

The Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) was formally established on Saturday, September 11, 1999. It emerged from a joint initiative of the apex religious bodies of the two major faiths in Nigeria: the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), representing Islam, and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), representing Christianity. The formal inauguration of the Council was conducted by President Olusegun Obasanjo, on Wednesday, September 29, 1999. The primary objective of NIREC was to:

Provide religious leaders and traditional rulers with a variable (sic [veritable]) forum to promote greater interaction and understanding among the leadership and their followers and lay the foundations for sustainable peace and religious harmony in the country (Nigerian Inter-Religious Council, Official Site, [nirec.org.ng](http://nirec.org.ng)).

The year 1999 marked a pivotal moment in Nigeria's political history. It witnessed the end of prolonged military rule and the peaceful transition to a democratically elected civilian government. The concluding phase of military governance was marred by intense political and social unrest, particularly following the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, which would have led to the emergence of Alhaji Moshood Abiola as president (Ewokor, 2025; and Ekanade and Odoemene, 2012). The resultant crisis shook the nation's foundations, with fears of national disintegration hanging heavily in the air. Eventually, the tension subsided with the inauguration of a civilian government on Saturday, May 29, 1999 (Aye, 2022). Motivated by patriotism and hope in the new democratic dispensation, many Nigerians committed themselves to the pursuit of peace, recognising it as essential to the stability, progress and prosperity of the nation. These aspirations inspired the leadership of both Muslim and Christian communities to close ranks and establish NIREC.

It was envisioned that the Council would be replicated at the state and local government levels to foster peace and mutual understanding among diverse religious groups. However, traditional religious practitioners were notably excluded—apparently due to the absence of a national umbrella

body to represent their interests, and the widespread assumption that they posed little or no threat to public peace. This assumption, however, has proven inaccurate in the light of incidents such as the Okija Shrine saga (Ellis, 2008), and the recurring violent clashes associated with the *Oro* and *Egungun* festivals (Ojedokun and Atoi 2020). In line with the national framework, the Ekiti State Chapter of NIREC was inaugurated on Tuesday, September 7, 2004, during the first term of Governor Peter Ayodele Fayose.

### **Structure of the Study**

Following this introduction, the study is divided into three main sections:

1. Literature Review and Conceptual Analysis
2. NIREC in Ekiti State – covering its activities, achievements and challenges
3. The Way Forward – including recommendations and concluding reflections

#### **1a. Literature Review and Conceptual Analysis**

Ekiti State is one of the few states in Nigeria that enjoys a relatively high level of peaceful inter-religious coexistence. Although occasional incidents—such as the controversy following the inauguration of the *Shari'ah* Arbitration Panel, which was publicly inaugurated in Ado-Ekiti at the Fajuyi Pavilion on Saturday, October 26, 2024 (*Daily Trust* of 25/1/2025 and *Vanguard* of 23/1/2025), and the demolition of a mosque in Aramoko (Babatunde, 2025, and *Punch* of 11/4/2025)—have sparked concern, these situations have generally been contained without escalating into violence or widespread destruction.

Adabenbe, Adedayo, Ugwu and Isaiah (2024) examine the expected roles of NIREC in enhancing peace and security among religious communities in Nigeria. Their study explores the historical events that led to the formation of NIREC and similar local and international organisations, all aimed at promoting and sustaining peace. However, the paper primarily focuses on the activities of NIREC at the national level, without, specific reference to Ekiti State, the subject of this study. Ewamuo, Okonkwo, Alaku and Dodo (2022) investigate youth involvement in conflicts in Nigeria from 1999 to 2021, identifying ethnicity and religion as major contributing factors. The study posits that while ethnic and religious diversity can lead to conflict, these elements can also be harnessed positively if properly managed and directed toward national development. The researchers conclude that religious and ethnic pluralism contributes to insecurity in Nigeria. In this context, the relative peace in Ekiti State may be attributed to its mono-ethnic composition. Ezeibe (2010), in his work on the political economy of conflict, argues that the “initialization and aggregation of human interest” often drive conflict, particularly among those who benefit from it. He advocates for a reorientation towards shared national and religious values that promote dialogue, tolerance and mutual understanding.

Oduma-Aboh and Ochoga (2018) and Olaleye (2023) present African Traditional Religion (ATR) as a potential *via media* in inter-religious dynamics. They argue that ATR is less prone to religious conflict due to its non-missionary nature, unlike Islam and Christianity. However, this claim

overlooks historical episodes of resistance to the spread of both Islam and Christianity, which, at times, involved violent confrontation (Elugbaju and Fagunwa, 2023). A notable example is the 1953 murder of Alfa Bisiriyu Apalara in Lagos, allegedly in the name of traditional religious practices (Kehinde, 2020, and *City People Magazine*, 2021). In Ikun-Ekiti, traditional worshippers invaded and vandalised mosques in 2017 and 2019, claiming that Muslims “defiled their order of not coming out during their 7-day curfew” (Balogun, 2022). Today, the low visibility and limited following of ATR relative to the dominant faiths may account for its lesser involvement in inter-religious disputes. However, if ATR were to gain more adherents, competition with Islam and Christianity over recognition and rights could potentially lead to conflict (McKinnon, 2021).

Moshood Omotosho (2014) documents numerous incidents of inter-religious conflict across Nigeria and emphasises the importance of strengthening inter-religious mediation groups like NIREC to broker and maintain peace. Salawu and Aina (2017) advocate for peace education as a proactive means to address conflict in society. They argue that a lack of awareness about the consequences of hostility contributes significantly to social unrest. The authors recommend that the government invest in formal and informal education to promote peace and national stability. Educated citizens, they contend, are better equipped to understand their rights and responsibilities, unlike those who remain uninformed or illiterate (Abdu-Raheem, 2008). Idu (2011) addresses the broader challenges to peace in Nigeria, including religious diversity, and calls for good governance and impartial enforcement of the rule of law as essential measures for conflict prevention and resolution. This review gives the background to this study by drawing attention to the issues involved in inter-religious dialogue and peaceful co-existence.

## **1b. Conceptual Clarification**

This section provides a conceptual analysis of the key terms in the topic under investigation as follows:

“Fostering unity in diversity” presumes that a reasonable level of peaceful coexistence already exists between Muslims and Christians, even though both groups actively practise and promote their respective religions. In practice, adherents of both faiths often celebrate and congratulate one another during religious festivals and other significant events. Thus, this study assumes the presence of “unity” in the form of cooperative efforts to maintain peaceful inter-religious relations. This assumption aligns with the findings of the Nigeria Peace Index Report as reported by Joke Falaju (2018). Nevertheless, the degree of peace in Ekiti State does not yet reach the standard of “positive peace”, as conceptualised by Johan Galtung (1964).

The term “fostering”, generally defined as “helping to grow or develop, stimulating; promoting,” is used here to refer to the nurturing, building and sustaining of peace and tranquility. “Unity” in this context denotes agreement and harmony, which do not imply the loss of self-identity as either a Muslim or a Christian (Emelonye, 2011). As noted in the introduction, the primary focus of NIREC is the relationship and interaction between Muslims and Christians, although it does not

entirely dismiss the existence of traditional religion. While most inter-religious conflicts involve the two major faiths, it is incorrect to assume that traditionalists are never responsible for breaches of public peace (Ellis, 2008; and Elugbaju and Fagunwa, 2023). However, such incidents rarely escalate into widespread violence or arson, largely due to the limited number and geographical spread of traditional religious adherents.

This study on NIREC in Ekiti State, therefore, seeks to build upon the existing atmosphere of relative peace, which, though significant, still falls short of Galtung's notion of positive peace (Scholten, 2014). It aims to explore how NIREC can further advance unity, harmony, and sustainable peace among religious groups, particularly between Muslims and Christians. Galtung (2021) refers to "positive peace" as:

... A social condition in which exploitation is minimized or eliminated and in which there is neither overt violence nor the more subtle phenomenon of underlying structural violence. It denotes the continuing presence of an equitable and just social order as well as ecological harmony.

The current form of peace in Ekiti State falls short of the standard of "positive peace", as defined earlier. This shortfall is particularly evident in the area of governance and political representation, where Muslims have historically experienced marginalisation and underrepresentation. This is apparently a reflection of the fact that the political landscape tilts in favour of Christians as a result of the accidents of history and the use of education by missionaries for conversion during the colonial days, which compelled Muslims to boycott Western education to retain their children in Islam (Abdu-Raheem, 1991).

The administration of Governor Biodun Abayomi Oyebanji has made notable efforts to address this imbalance. However, meaningful progress will require sustained and deliberate action. For instance, the number of Muslims in the Ekiti State House of Assembly has increased from just one or two in previous years to three out of twenty-six members. As shown in the appendix to this paper, in the Executive Council, three Muslims now serve—including the Secretary to the State Government—out of a total of forty-seven members, compared to just one in the past. Similarly, the number of Muslim Senior Special Assistants and Special Assistants has risen to twenty-seven out of a total of 160, a significant increase from two or three in previous administrations. Muslim members of Boards and Governing Councils of tertiary institutions are now twenty-three, with three serving as chairpersons. Despite these improvements, a considerable gap remains.

## **2a. NIREC in Ekiti State**

Since its formal inauguration in Ekiti State in 2004, the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) has grown steadily in influence and achievements. Although not without challenges (some of which will be discussed later), NIREC has successfully created a platform for Muslim and Christian

leaders to engage in dialogue, promote mutual understanding and work collaboratively for peaceful coexistence.

Inaugural membership in 2004 was as follows:

**Christian Group:**

- |      |                                  |   |              |
|------|----------------------------------|---|--------------|
| i.   | Most Rev. Dr. M. O. Fagun        | – | Co-Chairman  |
| ii.  | Rev. Ebenezer Asawe (JP)         | – | Co-Secretary |
| iii. | Rt. Rev. I. O. Odubayo           | – | Member       |
| iv.  | Rt. Rev. Tunde Ogunsemi          | – | Member       |
| v.   | Late Rev. (Dr.) Kunle Salami     | – | Member       |
| vi.  | Rev. Fr. Dr. Femi Osegbohun (JP) | – | Member       |
| vii. | Most Rev. (Dr.) S. A. Abe        | – | Member       |

**Muslim Group:**

- |      |                                    |   |              |
|------|------------------------------------|---|--------------|
| i.   | His Royal Majesty Oba Olu Adeyemi  | – | Co-Chairman  |
| ii.  | Alh. Dr. Sikiru T. Lawal           | – | Co-Secretary |
| iii. | Alh. Ahmad Baba Abdulsalam         | – | Member       |
| iv.  | HRM Oba Idowu Adamo Babalola       | – | Member       |
| v.   | Late Alh. H. O. K. Ogunlayi        | – | Member       |
| vi.  | Alh. R. A. Jamiu                   | – | Member       |
| vii. | Late Alh. Chief Ilyas Olaseni (JP) | – | Member       |

The statutory Secretary of the Council is the Director of Political and Economic Affairs in the Governor’s Office, assisted by relevant staff. This office is responsible for issuing meeting invitations (held quarterly), recording minutes, coordinating with the government to support Council activities and disbursing honoraria to members. Membership changes occur due to shifts in political leadership, expiration of tenure or the death of a member.

**Current Membership (As from November 2024 to date)**

**Christian Group:**

- |      |                                        |   |              |
|------|----------------------------------------|---|--------------|
| i.   | His Eminence Rev’d Dr. E. A. Aribasoye | – | Co-Chairman  |
| ii.  | Evangelist David Omoniyi Fabusuyi      | – | Co-Secretary |
| iii. | Rt. Rev. Julius Kayode Ayodele         | – | Member       |
| iv.  | Rev. Fr. Dr. Louis Taiwo Omojola       | – | Member       |
| v.   | Prophet Rotimi Oluwatosin              | – | Member       |
| vi.  | Bishop Dr. Feyisetan Michael Yomi      | – | Member       |
| vii. | Rev. Benjamin James Ayodele            | – | Member       |

### **Muslim Group:**

- |      |                                    |   |              |
|------|------------------------------------|---|--------------|
| i.   | Alh. Shaykh Jamiu Keulere Bello    | – | Co-Chairman  |
| ii.  | Prof. Musa Adesina Abdu-Raheem     | – | Co-Secretary |
| iii. | Alh. Ahmad Baba Abdu-Salaam        | – | Member       |
| iv.  | HRM Oba Mumini Orisagbemi          | – | Member       |
| v.   | Alh. Abdul-Azeez Abiodun Badmus    | – | Member       |
| vi.  | Alh. Hammed Afolabi Bakare         | – | Member       |
| vii. | Imam Abdul-Azeez Alabi Olatunbosun | – | Member       |

### **2b. Key Activities of NIREC in Ekiti State**

NIREC's work in Ekiti State spans several critical areas:

- i. Conflict prevention and mediation:** NIREC proactively addresses both intra- and inter-religious tensions through dialogue, persuasion, and public engagement, preventing crises from escalating.
- ii. Peace-building during elections:** The Council convened a peace meeting with political party flag bearers on Tuesday, 26 April, 2022, at the Pope John Paul II Pastoral Centre, Ado-Ekiti. The event included prominent religious leaders (e.g., the Grand Imam, Catholic and Anglican bishops, Pentecostal leaders), security agencies, NGOs, the media and political stakeholders. The meeting significantly contributed to the peaceful conduct of the 2023 general elections in Ekiti State.
- iii. Loan recovery and microfinance administration:** In its early years, NIREC was involved in the disbursement of microfinance loans given out by the State Government under Governor Ayodele Fayose, as a special intervention programme to reduce poverty. Following a change in administration, some loans went unpaid. Because disbursement was based on religious affiliations, NIREC successfully intervened to recover a significant portion of the loans.
- iv. COVID-19 response:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, NIREC collaborated with relevant ministries to formulate and implement policies related to the closure and reopening of worship centres, ensuring compliance and public cooperation.
- v. Support for government policies:** NIREC mobilises religious groups to support important government initiatives, including campaigns against gender-based violence, insecurity, drug abuse, ritual killings and kidnapping (*Punch* of July 15, 2023).
- vi. Education advocacy – AGILE project:** NIREC plays a key role in sensitising religious communities regarding the World Bank-supported AGILE (Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment) project. Many of the project's targeted schools were originally founded by religious bodies. NIREC ensures community support and quality implementation of interventions such as classroom construction, laboratories and sanitation facilities.

- vii. **Security advocacy:** In response to recent abductions of school children and monarchs, NIREC supported the government's campaign for stronger parental guidance, community vigilance and cooperation with security agencies (Nejo, 2023).
- viii. **Economic advocacy post-fuel subsidy removal:** Following the removal of petrol subsidies and the resultant economic hardship, especially in an agrarian, non-industrial state like Ekiti, NIREC appealed to the government to intensify support measures. It also educated the public on the broader global economic context, including the impacts of conflicts in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, and the need for increased local production of essential goods (Abiola, 2023; *Guardian* of July 15, 2023).
- ix. **Participation in state religious events:** NIREC members actively participate in annual interfaith prayers, government-organised religious festivals and New Year ceremonies.
- x. **Public awareness campaigns:** The Council regularly issues press statements and broadcasts public service announcements on state-owned radio and television stations to educate and mobilise citizens on key social and religious issues.

## 2c. Challenges Facing NIREC in Ekiti State

While the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) has recorded notable achievements in fostering inter-religious harmony in Ekiti State, it continues to face several challenges that hinder its ability to achieve greater success. These challenges include:

- i. **Lack of implementation mechanisms for resolutions:** NIREC often adopts ambitious resolutions aimed at promoting peace or pre-empting crises. However, the absence of implementation provisions, particularly funding, hinders execution. For instance, during the last general elections, the Council resolved to hold a peace meeting with political parties and their candidates. Due to a lack of funds, members had to undertake the task voluntarily. The event, held at the Pope John Paul II Centre, Ado-Ekiti (courtesy of former Co-Chairman Bishop Femi Ajakaye), was nonetheless a resounding success. All parties were represented, with many contestants attending in person. Their pre-existing relationships made it easier for NIREC to persuade them to uphold peace. The elections subsequently proceeded peacefully before, during and after the exercise (Ojo, 2022).
- ii. **Inadequate budgetary allocation for public engagement:** While the Government provides basic funding for meetings and member allowances, there is insufficient budgetary provision to publicise the Council's resolutions and create public awareness. Critical issues such as national security, drug abuse and gender-based violence require public sensitisation, which necessitates wider engagement through mass media. However, this is limited by financial constraints, as media outlets are unlikely to offer such services for free.

- iii. **Limited operation at the local government and LCDA levels:** Initially, NIREC's activities were decentralised to reach grassroots communities through Local Government Areas (LGAs) and Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs). However, operations have since become restricted to the state level. Though membership includes representatives from across senatorial zones and local councils, most members reside in the state capital, Ado-Ekiti. Reintroducing operations at the grassroots level would ensure that religious leaders outside the capital are also actively involved.
- iv. **Inadequate engagement with sub-groups:** Given the large number of religious denominations and branches in Ekiti State, it is practically impossible to disseminate NIREC's resolutions and activities across all religious institutions. The limited membership and lack of resources for mass media engagement mean that some churches and mosques remain unaware of NIREC's existence or initiatives.
- v. **Leadership disposition and attendance issues:** Chief Imams and Bishops who serve as NIREC members are also primary leaders of their respective religious institutions. Scheduling conflicts between Council meetings and religious programmes sometimes result in low attendance. Although attendance-based honoraria were introduced to encourage participation, not all members are consistently present. Furthermore, discussions during meetings sometimes reflect collective religious interests rather than individual objectivity, thus compromising neutrality and balanced deliberation.
- vi. **Lack of a formal engagement framework with government organs:** Currently, there is no institutionalised structure for engaging with government agencies. Matters requiring governmental support, such as intra- and inter-group conflicts, education, security and drug abuse, are typically handled by co-chairmen or their secretaries seeking appointments with relevant officials. Unfortunately, these initiatives are rarely pursued effectively, resulting in missed opportunities for collaboration.
- vii. **Absence of an independent secretariat:** The current secretariat comprises career civil servants whose operations are bound by government rules and hierarchical loyalty. As such, it is challenging for them to document resolutions that may contradict official policies. This limitation restricts the Council's autonomy and capacity to operate independently in line with its core objectives.
- viii. **Lack of linkage with the national NIREC structure:** Despite the fact of originating from the national NIREC initiative, the Ekiti State chapter operates in isolation from the national body. Establishing strong linkages would promote uniformity of purpose, enable cross-learning among state chapters and foster collaboration, particularly among states with shared history or geographical proximity.

These challenges highlight the need for structural, administrative and financial reforms to empower NIREC in Ekiti State to function more effectively and achieve its mandate of promoting sustainable peace and inter-religious harmony (Elugbaju and Fagunwa, 2023).

### **Recommendations**

In light of the challenges identified, the following broad recommendations are proposed to strengthen the effectiveness of NIREC in Ekiti State as a key institution for fostering inter-religious dialogue and sustaining peace:

- i. Moral and material support for implementation of resolutions:** There is a need for strong political will and structured support to enable NIREC to fulfil its mandate of promoting peace and inter-group harmony. Government backing, beyond crisis moments, should include annual or quarterly budgetary allocations to support the implementation of its resolutions, programmes and outreach efforts. Such institutional support will encourage greater commitment and dedication from Council members.
- ii. Decentralisation to LGEA and LCDA levels:** NIREC should be replicated at the Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) and Local Council Development Area (LCDA) levels. This grassroots presence will allow early identification and mitigation of potential crises, particularly in remote areas where security challenges often begin. Proximity to the communities will enable faster response and better community engagement.
- iii. Strategic use of mass media for publicity:** Advocacy and peace-building efforts require consistent and professional publicity. Given the high cost of running media outlets, due to fuel, maintenance and staffing, it is unrealistic to expect media houses to offer free airtime. Therefore, NIREC should work with the government to allocate dedicated funds for public service announcements, jingles and sensitisation programmes across radio, television and print media.
- iv. Liaison with the national NIREC:** There should be a formal linkage between the Ekiti State chapter and the national body of NIREC. Although state chapters may be autonomous, collaboration with the national structure would ensure consistency in strategy and offer opportunities for mutual support. The national body, with its access to federal institutions and security agencies, can advocate more effectively for interventions in state-level issues that require federal attention.
- v. Establishment of monitoring and evaluation framework:** NIREC should establish mechanisms to receive feedback and assess the impact of its activities, especially in terms of engagement with various religious sub-groups and the public. Without structured evaluation and reporting, successes may be overestimated or challenges overlooked. This feedback system will also help in aligning NIREC's initiatives with government policies and ensure transparency in impact measurement.

## **Conclusion**

It is evident that NIREC in Ekiti State has demonstrated its relevance and potential in promoting inter-religious dialogue and peace-building. As one of the enduring legacies of the Fayose administration, the Council has continued to thrive under successive governments, including that of the current Governor, Biodun Abayomi Oyebanji.

To consolidate its achievements, NIREC requires stronger institutional support from the government, active engagement with the national body and strategic partnerships with media organisations for wider public reach. The prevailing atmosphere of religious harmony in Ekiti State must not be taken for granted. Rather, it calls for deliberate and sustained efforts to preserve and enhance it. With such coordinated commitment, Ekiti State will not only maintain its reputation as one of the most peaceful states in Nigeria but will also serve as a model of interfaith harmony, in line with the vision of the late Professor I. A. B. Balogun, in whose honour this study is presented.

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**APPENDIX**  
**EKITI STATE GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS /POLITICAL OFFICE**  
**HOLDERS UNDER GOVERNOR OYEBANJI AS AT 15<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2025**

S/NO.	LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT	APPOINTMENT	NO. OF APPOINTEES	NO. OF CHRISTIANS	NO. OF MUSLIMS
I.	Federal Government Level	a. Minister	1	1	Nil
		b. Senators (Elected)	3	3	Nil
		c. House of Representatives (Elected)	6	6	Nil
II.	State Government Level	a. Governor	1	1	Nil
		b. Deputy Governor	1	1	Nil
		c. Chief of Staff	1	1	Nil
		d. SSG	1	Nil	1
		e. Chief Press Secretary	1	1	Nil
		f. Head of Service	1	1	Nil
		g. Commissioners	21	20	1
		h. Special Advisers	14	13	1
		i. Members of Statutory Commission/Council	22	21	1
		j. Local Government/LCDA Chairmen	36	36	Nil
		k. House of Assembly members (Elected)	26	23	3
		l. Chairman and members of Odua Investments	5	4	1
		m. EKSIEK	5	4	1
		n. Members of Ekiti State Boards, Agencies, and Commissions	52	50	2
		o. Senior Special Assistants/ Special Assistants	279	252	27
		367	339	28	

# CHAPTER 8

## Religious Extremism in the Nigerian Muslim Context

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### Introduction

The discourse on religious extremism continues to attract the attention of scholars of diverse disciplines, including History, Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology and Theology. Islamic and non-Islamic scholars and intellectuals have addressed the issue based on their knowledge, experience and exposure. Eraliev (2020) defines religious extremism as “an ideology of certain movements, groups, individuals in denominations and religious organisations, characterized by adherence to extreme interpretations of dogma and methods to achieve their goals, spread their views and influence”. He argues that through the interpretation of scriptures (holy books), religious extremists are found among the adherents of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. Religious extremism is also defined as “the expression of extreme and unjust positions or actions taken by some adherents of a religion, based on their understanding of a religious teaching or scripture (Kazaarian, 2017). Islam, one of the world’s religions, has addressed religious extremism since the 7<sup>th</sup> century through the Glorious Qur’an and Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The authentic history of Islam also attests to the fact that there are religious extremists among the early Muslims. For instance, the religious doctrines and practices of the Muslim groups like the Kharajites, Shiites and Ibadites have been considered extremist and violent (Adeniran, 2024).

It is important to note that since the twentieth century, the Muslim world has witnessed the emergence of some individuals and groups who claim to profess Islam but whose actions and reactions are considered extremism and terrorism. Among these individuals are Sayyid Qutb of Egypt, Ayatollah Khomeini of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Osama bin Laden of Saudi Arabia (Owoyemi, 2020). International Muslim groups whose activities are labelled as religious extremism and terrorism in the twenty-first century include *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimūn* (The Muslim Brotherhood), Al-Qaeda, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) and *Jama’atu-Ahlul Sunnah Lid-da’wati wal-Jihad* (Muslim Group that is committed to the propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad) popularly known as Boko Haram in Nigeria (Owoyemi, 2020). Unfortunately, due to the proliferation of religious extremist individuals and groups in the contemporary Muslim world, the media and some non-Muslim critics have evolved some obnoxious terms and derogatory labels to describe Islam and Muslims. Terms and labels like Islamic Fundamentalism, Islamic Extremism, Islamic Terrorism and Islamic Radicalisation are coined for people who perpetrate evil in the name of Islam. While discussing

Islamic radicalisation and global terrorism, Oloyede (2018) remarks thus:

What is Islamic in Islamic radicalization? What is Islamic in Islamic extremism? What is Islamic in the so-called Islamic terrorism? You would begin to appreciate the global politics behind these labels when you realize that eighty percent of acts of violence and unwanted destruction of lives and properties around the world are usually being perpetrated by non-Muslim state and non-state agents across the world. . . .hardly would you hear of Christian radicalization, hardly would you hear of Christian terrorism, hardly would a mention ever be made of Christian extremism even at a time Christians are engaged in acts of terror and violence around the world (p.7).

One may agree with Oloyede's remarks on the wrong labelling of Islam with "radicalisation" and "extremism". The fact that adherents of other faiths, Judaism and Christianity, engage in acts of religious extremism and terrorism, would make it wrong to ascribe acts of religious extremism and terrorism to only Muslims. Nigeria, a multi-religious country, often experiences inter- and intra-religious conflicts, religious extremism and terrorism. What is the perspective of Islam on religious extremism? Is there intra-religious extremism (non-violent and violent) among Nigerian Muslims? Which Muslim groups engage in religious extremism in Nigeria? How can religious extremism be curbed through the proper understanding of the Islamic teachings on Jihad, intra-religious dialogue and peaceful coexistence? These are some of the germane issues that will be addressed in this study.

### **Islamic Perspective on Religious Extremism**

In the Arabic language, *at-Tatāruf* is translated as "excessiveness, immoderation, extravagance, extremism, extreme standpoint or position, radical attitude or radicalism" (Cowan, 1960, p. 558). *Al-Guluw* is another Arabic term that literally means "exceeding of proper bounds, excess, extravagance or exaggeration" (Cowan, 1960, p.682). Other Arabic terms that connote excessiveness, transgression and extremism are *At-tanattu* and *at-tashdid* (Oladosu, 2007; Adeniran, 2024). In the Glorious Qur'an, the term *al-Guluw* depicts religious extremism when used to caution the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) in the observance of religious duties. Allah warns and commands them thus:

Say: "O People of the Scripture! Exceed not the limits in your religion beyond the truth, and do not follow the vain desires of people who went astray before and who misled many, and strayed (themselves) from the right path (Q5:77).

In another verse of the Glorious Qur'an, the term *Guluw* is also used for religious extremism displayed by the Jews and Christians in their erroneous belief in Prophet 'Isa (Jesus Christ). Allah admonishes them and warns thus:

O People of the Scripture! Do not exceed the limits in your religion nor say of Allah except the truth. Al-Masih, Isa, son of Maryam, was (no more than) a Messenger and a spirit created by Him: so believe in Allah and His Messengers (Q4:171).

From the above passages of the Glorious Qur'an, it can be deduced that religious extremism may be manifested in the religious beliefs and practices of adherents of faiths like Judaism and

Christianity who exhibit religious extremism in their belief in Sonship and the divinity of Jesus under the concept of the Trinity. This implies that Muslims will exhibit religious extremism if their belief in Allah and the Prophet Muhammad contradict the text of the Glorious Qur'an. Going beyond the boundaries of the divine law of Allah (Islamic law) is tantamount to religious extremism, which is condemned in another verse of the Qur'an, where it is said:

... These are boundaries ordained by Allah, so do not transgress them. And if they do transgress the limits ordained by Allah, such are the wrong doers (Q2:229).

A cursory look at the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad also reveals that some of his companions exhibited some tendency towards religious extremism in the acts of *Ibadah* (worship) and *Mu'amalat* (social interaction). This is contained in a hadith reported by Abdullah ibn Abbas, who said:

The Prophet asked him to collect some pebbles for him to use during the stoning of the pillars during the pilgrimage exercise. He brought him small-sized pebbles. When he put them into the Prophet's hand, the Prophet said. "Beware of going beyond the bounds of religion. The people before you were destroyed by going to extremes in the religion (Khan, 2000, p.225).

The above hadith shows that the Prophet warned his companions against religious extremism by "going beyond the bounds of religion" (Islam) while performing religious rites of Hajj (Holy Pilgrimage in Makkah). In another hadith, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) also cautions Muslims against engaging in religious extremism while performing some religious acts. This can be found in the hadith reported by Anas, who said:

Some of the companions of the Prophet (SAW) asked his wives about the acts that he performed in private. Someone among them (the companions) said: "I will not marry women" another one said: I will not eat meat, another one said: I will not lie down in bed. The Prophet (SAW) then came out and said to them: "What happened to these (three) people (Muslims) that they say so and so, whereas I perform prayer and sleep too; I practise fast and break it. I married women too. And he who turns away from my *Sunnah* (practice), he has no relation with me (Khan, 2000, p.194).

From the above prophetic narrations, it is understood that some early Muslims exhibited religious extremism in the religious acts of worship like Hajj, *Salatul-Tahajjud/Qiyam layl* (Vigil), voluntary fast on a daily basis and abstinence from worldly affairs such as marriage. So a Muslim will be considered a religious extremist if he or she observes *Qiyam layl* (vigil) without any break or observes fasts on a daily basis or decides to practise monastery-sisterhood or fatherhood. Similarly, a Muslim will be accused of exhibiting religious extremism if he/she makes compulsory (*Wajib*) for himself/herself what is voluntary (*Mustahab*) or optional (*Mubah*) in the acts of worship or makes unlawful (*haram*) what is lawful (*halal*) in worldly affairs (*Mu'amalat*). In the modern world, Muslims will be accused of manifesting religious extremism if they treat fellow Muslims as infidels due to sins committed, declare war on fellow Muslims for upholding juristic views/thoughts

different from other schools of thought, believe in the Glorious Qur'an as the only source of *Shari'ah*, misinterpret and misapply the texts of *Shari'ah* (Adeniran, 2024). Al-Qaradawi (2006) describes Muslims who have traits of religious extremism thus:

This kind of people who have these elements of bigotry (religious extremism) and intolerance will always believe that they are right always, and they cannot be wronged. They perceive anyone who differs from them as an enemy or best as an ignorant person, which means that in any circumstances, they will not tolerate differences of opinion (p.56).

### **Understanding Religious Extremism within the Context of Nigeria**

Quite a number of academic works exist on religious extremism across the globe, with scholars and researchers discussing the issue from different perspectives. Religious extremism could be inter or intra. Inter-religious extremism is directed towards people of other faiths, while intra-religious extremism manifests among people of the same faith. Some scholars discuss religious extremism along with religious fundamentalism, religious radicalisation and religious terrorism. One of them is Eraliev (2020), who notes that books and teachings of Muslim intellectuals, including Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab, Syed Abul A'la Maududi and Sayyid Qutb, have promoted religious extremism in the Muslim world.

Works of Atoi (2022) and Ugwu and Eneh (2022) attribute violent religious extremism to Muslim groups in Nigeria because of the Boko Haram violent activities and the acts of terror of Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP). Findings of some of these previous researches, especially by non-Muslim scholars, revealed bias, misinformation and distortion of facts, especially when discussing Islamic extremism and terrorism. For instance, Ugwu and Eneh (2022) report that Islamic texts encourage Muslims to engage in violence and intolerance towards non-Muslims because they are to be rewarded with paradise and plenty of virgins. However, some Islamic scholars have also written extensively on religious extremism based on their understanding of Islamic texts and historical facts about the early Muslims.

The works of Islamic scholars like Oloyede (2018), Owoyemi (2020), Hussain (2022), Saikal (2022), Jamiu (2023) and Adeniran (2024) give a comprehensive analysis and discourse on religious extremism and terrorism from the perspective of Islam. The works identify the genesis, causes, manifestations and consequences of religious extremism in the Muslim *Ummah*. For instance, Oloyede (2018), in his work *De-radicalisation - What Role for Islamic Studies?*, identifies causes of radicalisation and the involvement of some young Nigerian Muslims in religious radicalism and terrorism due to their ignorance about Islamic texts and Islamic jurisprudence. Among the causes of religious extremism in Nigeria are the proliferation of Muslim sects and societies, ignorance of the intricacies in the study of Hadith and *Usul-Fiqh*, unqualified *Da'wah* workers and preachers, the misunderstood concept of Jihad and the influence of the teachings of Wahhabism and Salafism (2018). The works provide a pragmatic solution to religious fundamentalism, radicalisation and extremism in Nigeria. Owoyemi (2020) gives an insight into the genesis, causes and rising wave of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in the Muslim world.

The work condemns, in strong terms, the media propaganda of labelling and stigmatising only Muslims as “fundamentalists”, “extremists” and “terrorists” due to the fact that adherents of other world religions like Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism also engage in acts of fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism. The colonisation and secularisation of Muslim lands in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries fuelled religious extremism. Jamiu (2023) explains the meaning of Islamic extremism and the factors responsible for it. He argues that Islamic extremism can be curbed through Islamic modernism.

The thesis of Adeniran (2024) discusses extensively religious extremist tendencies among Yoruba Muslims who belong to the Ahlus-Sunnah (Salafiyyah), Ahmadiyyah Movement, Jama’ah Tabligh, Laa Jama’ah Group and Jabata Group of Muslims. The work also examines some religious issues that constitute intra-religious extremism among Yoruba Muslims and how some of those issues generated heated debates and altercations that later resulted in court cases among Yoruba Muslims that exhibited religious extremism. Some of these contentious issues are the annual celebration of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad (*Maulud-Nabiyy*), perceived heretical practices of the Sufi orders of Qadariyyah and Tijaniyyah and the misunderstanding of the concept of *Bid’ah* (innovation) in Islam (Quadri, 2013). The purpose of the present study, therefore, is to examine critically religious extremism within the purview of Islamic texts, particularly what constitutes religious extremism in Islamic theology, and juxtapose them with the conducts of Nigerian Muslim groups and movements that exhibit intra-religious extremism in their missionary activities.

**Table 1: Violent Intra-Religious Extremist Groups in Northern Nigeria**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Year Founded</b>	<b>Founder</b>	<b>Manifestation of Violent Religious Extremism</b>
Maitatsine	1980	Muhammad Marwa	Misinterpretation of the Qur’an, claiming of Prophethood, verbal attacks and hate speeches during public sermons, killing and maiming Muslims and non-Muslims in Kano, Borno, Kaduna, Adamawa, Katsina, Gombe and Bauchi.
Jamat Izalatul-Bid’ah wa Iqamatus-Sunnah (an offshoot of Salafiyyah/Wahhabism)	1978	Shaykh Ismaila Idris	Verbal attacks/hate speeches against Muslims that engage in <i>bid’ah</i> (heretical innovation), condemnation of Muslims that celebrate the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, waging war against the Sufi orders of Qadariyyah and Tijaniyyah.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Year Founded</b>	<b>Founder</b>	<b>Manifestation of Violent Religious Extremism</b>
Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda' wati-wal-Jihad (Boko Haram)	2009	Mohammed Yusuf	Condemnation of western education/culture, declaring Muslims unbelievers, killing Muslims and non-Muslims, kidnapping school children, suicide bombing of public places especially in the north-eastern states of Borno, Bauchi and Adamawa, linked with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP).
Islamic Movement of Nigeria (Nigerian Shiites, Az-Zakzaky Group)	1970s	Shaykh Ibraheem Yaqoub El-Zakzaky	Uphold Shiite beliefs and practices, preach against the secularity of the Nigerian State, public disturbance, loggerheads with constituted authorities of the Nigerian Government.

**Table 2: Non-Violent Intra-Religious Extremist Groups in Southwestern Nigeria**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Year Founded</b>	<b>Founder</b>	<b>Manifestation of Non-Violent Religious Extremism</b>
Jama'at Ahlus-Sunnah (Salafiyah)	18 <sup>th</sup> Century in Saudi Arabia	Linked to Ibn Taymiyyah's writings and teaching in the 14 <sup>th</sup> century.	Clamouring for strict adherence to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and his companions, condemnation of Sufi practices and verbal attacks/hate speeches against Muslims that engage in <i>Bid'ah</i> (heretical innovation).
Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at	1889 (founded in 1916 in Nigeria)	Mirza Ghulam Ahmad	Recognition of Ghulam Ahmad as a Prophet and a promised messiah, misinterpretation of the Glorious Qur'an on prophethood, members cannot marry non-Ahmadist Muslims.
Jam 'at-Tabligh	1926	Maulana Ilyas	Making incessant <i>Da'wah</i> tours (for three days, forty days and four months) a compulsory duty on every Muslim, misconception of the concepts of <i>Da'wah</i> and Jihad in Islam, non-participation in the political affairs of their society.

Group	Year Founded	Founder	Manifestation of Non-Violent Religious Extremism
The Jabata Muslim Group	1986	Abdul-Rahman Muhammadul-Awwal Ali Jabata	Misconception of the concept of <i>Bid'ah</i> , verbal attacks/hate speeches against Muslims who engage in <i>bid'ah</i> , compelling Muslim women to wear <i>niqāb</i> , non-greeting of Muslim women who are not members for not wearing <i>niqāb</i> , condemnation of the Yoruba culture of greeting the elderly, misunderstanding of <i>'Itkaf</i> , labelling Muslims <i>kufār</i> (unbelievers) for celebrating the birthday of Prophet Muhammad.
Laa Jama'ah Group	Not Stated	Abdul Rasheed Mustapha	Condemnation of the existing Muslim groups and associations in Yorubaland, verbal attacks against Yoruba Islamic scholars on electronic and social media, misconception of the concept of <i>Bid'ah</i> , consideration of their version of Islam as the best, and others unacceptable.

### X-raying Religious Extremism among Nigerian Muslims through the Lens of Islam

The manifestation of religious extremism, violent or non-violent, among Nigerian Muslims is incontrovertible from the available records. Table 1 reveals that violent intra-religious extremism exists in northern Nigeria. The religious activities of the Muslim groups, namely Maitatsine, Jam'atul-Izalat Bid'ah wa-Iqamah Sunnah, Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda'wati-wal-Jihad (Boko Haram) and Islamic Movement in Nigeria (Az-Zakzaky Group) in northern Nigeria indicate violent religious extremism of the identified groups. The groups have been identified with various extremist and terrorist acts like maiming, killing and destruction of lives and property of Muslims in northern Nigeria (Owoyemi, 2020). Table 2 shows that non-violent intra-religious extremism exists among the Jama'at Ahlus-Sunnah (Salafiyya), Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Jam'at-at-Tabligh, Jabata Muslim Group and Laa Jama'ah Group in the southwestern states of Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo and Osun. The manifestation of non-violent intra-religious extremism tendencies is noted among these identified groups in the form of verbal attacks/hate speeches, altercations, arguments and counter arguments, disagreements on the interpretation of Islamic texts on Jihad and *Bid'ah*. Some Muslims also manifest intra-religious extremism by declaring fellow Muslims unbelievers, rejecting the prophetic tradition and relying on the Glorious Qur'an as the only source of Islam,

considering one particular group as the only Ahl-Sunnah and condemning the status of the companions of Prophet Muhammad (Aliyu, 2024).

The ideologies, religious beliefs and practices of these identified Muslim groups in this study fall within the description of religious extremism. For instance, misinterpretation of the Islamic texts on Jihad and *Bid'ah* is common to all the groups. There exist differences among great scholars of Islamic jurisprudence on the concept of *Bid'a*. Scholars like Harmala Ibn Yahya, Ibn Jawzi, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani and An-Nawawi have addressed the concept of *Bid'a* from different perspectives. They classified *Bid'a* into two, namely: *Bid'a hasanat* (good innovation) and *Bid'a Sayyi'ah* (bad innovation) or *Bid'a Mahmudah* (approved innovation) and *Bid'a Madhmumah* (disapproved innovation) (I.E.T, 2015). Al-Shatibi is reported to have defined *Bid'a* as:

A way of innovation in religion that resembles the way of the *Shari'ah* and which is intended to be followed. . . . He (Al-Shatibi) says: "If this way of innovation belongs to *dunya* (worldly affairs) exclusively, it would not be a *bid'a* (I.E.T, 2015, p.131).

It is important to note that the most commonly quoted hadith on *bid'a*, "Every innovation is misguidance and every misguidance is in hell", has been refuted by some scholars who agree that not every innovation is misguidance, but every innovation that contravenes or contradicts the *Shari'ah* is misguidance (I.E.T, 2015). This implies that some religious acts that are against the clear injunctions of Islam are bad innovation (*bid'a sayyiah*), but those religious acts that do not contradict the divine injunctions can be regarded as good innovation (*bid'a hasanat*).

The concept of Jihad is another issue that often causes intra-religious extremism among Muslims in Nigeria. Some Muslim individuals and groups have misconstrued the concept of Jihad while carrying out *Da'wah* (propagation or invitation to Islam) activities. Some uninformed Muslims and non-Muslims erroneously believe that fighting, maiming and killing in the name of Allah or Prophet Muhammad is Jihad, which can be directed towards weak Muslims and non-Muslims. There are reported cases whereby Maitatsine, Jama'at Izalat and Boko Haram waged 'Jihad' that claimed the lives and property of Muslims in northern Nigeria (Atoi, 2022). While commenting on the violent intra-religious extremism of Jama'at Izala, Quadri writes thus:

The Izala group has made attempts both peaceful and violent in preaching its objectives to the Nigerian Muslims while it is determined to remove all that it considers to be heretical innovations (*bid'a*) by all means. All in the name of God, the Izala group resolved to force all members of the Qadriyyah and the Tijaniyyah to renounce Sufism (Khan, 2000, p.196).

Among the commonly misinterpreted verses of the Qur'an on Jihad are Q2:193, Q8:60 and Q9:14. Some prophetic sayings are also misinterpreted and misapplied to justify Jihad by religious extremists. These include:

I have been ordered to fight the people until they say, there is none worthy of worship but God (Khan, 2000, p.196).

A party of my community shall not cease fighting for truth and it shall be triumphant over its opponents (I.E.T. 2009, p.50).

Paradise is under the shade of swords (Khan, 2000, p.73).

It is important to stress that the above quotations from the Hadith are often taken out of context without due regard for the rules of interpretation of Islamic texts. Jihad is more than taking up arms to defend oneself or to fight perceived enemies; it also denotes exercising discipline or self-restraint, taking care of one's parents, imparting beneficial knowledge, engaging in *Da'wah* (invitation to Islam with wisdom and good exhortation) and being frank in advice to a tyrannical ruler (I.E.T. 2009).

Scholars of *Usul-Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) have categorised the degree of authenticity and meaning of the text of the Qur'an and Hadith or *Sunnah* into two, namely *Qat'i al-dilalah* and *Zanni al-dilalah*. *Qat'i al-dilalah* refers to where the meaning of the text of the Qur'an or Hadith *Mutawatir* is explicit, very clear and unambiguous, while *Zanni al-dilalah* points to where the meaning of the Islamic text (Qur'an or Hadith) is probable, speculative, not very clear and ambiguous, hence open to different interpretations by *Mufasssirun* (Qur'an exegetes). It is reported that Ibn Taymiyyah and other early great Islamic scholars were always careful in declaring things *Haram* (forbidden) or *Wajib* (compulsory) if they did not have clear and certain evidence to back their conclusions (I.E.T., 2015).

From the foregoing discussion, it will be inappropriate to declare the celebration of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the practice of democracy and the acquisition of western education as *bid'a* since there is no explicit or clear text in the Qur'an or Hadith that forbids such practices. Hence, interpretations and *fatawa* (Islamic ruling) given on the Prophet's birthday, democracy and western education/culture by religious extremists are based on *Zanni al-dilalah* (speculative/ambiguous text) that are open to different interpretations and meanings.

Furthermore, verbal attacks and hate speeches exhibited by Jama'at Ahlus-Sunnah (Salafiyya), the Jabata Muslim Group and the Laa Jama'ah Group in southwestern Nigeria, killing and destruction of property of fellow Muslims (exhibited by Maitaitsine, Boko Haram and Jama'at Izala groups in northern Nigeria) on the basis of different beliefs and opinions on religious matters and practices perceived to be *bid'a* (heretical innovation), and the non-application of *Shari'ah* in a multi-religious society can be attributed to a lack of knowledge of *Usul-Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), application of *Ijtihad* (juridical reasoning) and *Maqasid Shari'ah* (objectives of Islamic law) by Muslim extremist individuals and groups in Nigeria. Hell, wrath and the curse of Allah are divine punishments for the intentional killing of Muslims. This is contained in the Glorious Qur'an where Allah says:

And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell to abide therein; and the Wrath and the Curse of Allah are upon him, and a great punishment is prepared for him (Q4:93).

The multi-religious and secular nature of Nigeria cannot be denied. Besides, Nigeria is a country that practices democracy as a system of government. Condemnation of the practice of democracy by some religious groups may be considered an act of religious extremism because there is no explicit Islamic text, the Qur'an or authentic Hadith that specifically prohibits democracy. It is important to state that Islam does not forbid Muslims from partaking in politics or in a democracy. Though there are divergent views among Islamic scholars on the involvement of Muslims in a democracy, the popular view held by modern Islamic scholars is that Islam is not against democracy as long as its principles are in accordance with Islamic ethics and values. Notwithstanding the fact that democracy is a preferred system of government, some Muslim scholars have argued against its adoption by Muslim countries. Western democracy is condemned because it is defective on the grounds that it is a system of government that allows the financial giants and political demagogues to hijack power or to impose candidates on the populace by rigging elections which may lead to loss of lives and property (Noibi, 2008). In his own submission, Al-Atharee (2011) is of the view that democracy is a *kufir* (i.e. unbelief) system of government because it gives rooms for the supremacy of a country's constitution over *Shari'ah* (Islamic law) and that it also promotes violence, disunity and craving for leadership position, allowing non-Muslims to rule over Muslims, women leadership, wasteful spending and display of pictures of candidates, etc. While explaining the evils of democracy, Al-Atharee (2011) further writes:

Waste of money is another thing in democracy. It is known that if you do not have money, you cannot become a leader in democracy. Imagine the best brain in a village becomes a president of country like Nigeria, never! he must have money or a political god-father that will turn him into a puppet... losers are usually very many in a democracy and that is what often leads to do or die posture of those who venture into democracy. People have sold their personal belongings in order to contest in an election and they often lose (p.24).

Notwithstanding these attacks against democracy, some Muslim scholars see nothing wrong in Muslims adopting democracy, which, to them, is a system of government for good governance. One of them is Al-Qaradawi (1998), who is of the view that democracy can be adopted if it implies that people must choose their ruler by themselves without imposition, and if people have the right to bring him to account if he commits a mistake, and if they must have the right to depose him and choose a new ruler if he goes astray. Al-Qaradawi (1998) further argues that democracy should be embraced if it is embodied in elections, public opinion polls, preference of the majority rule, multi-party system, the right of the minority, opposition, freedom of the press and independence of the judiciary. While condemning those who refuse to participate in politics, Akintola (2018), quoting from Plato and Socrates, writes:

If you do not take an interest in the affairs of your government, then you are doomed to live under the rule of fools. One of the renditions for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by few inferiors. The wise who refuse to rule should prepare to suffer the rule of idiot (p.320).

## Conclusion

The study has analysed religious extremism from an Islamic perspective. It has been established from the findings of the study that there is intra-religious extremism (violent and non-violent) among Muslim groups, particularly in northern and southwestern parts of Nigeria. The manifestation of intra-religious extremism among Muslim individuals and groups has been attributed to misinterpretation and misapplication of the concepts of Jihad and *Bid'ah* due to a lack of profound knowledge of *Usul-Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) and *Ijtihad* (independent juristic reasoning) or lack of sincerity of purpose and pursuit of fame and leadership in the Muslim *Ummah*. Violent religious extremism has claimed the lives of Muslims in northern Nigeria, while non-violent intra-religious extremism has caused division, hatred and enmity among Muslims in the southwestern states of Nigeria.

Arising from this study, the following recommendations are offered in order to curb the wave of intra-religious extremism among Nigerian Muslims:

- i. The apex Islamic bodies, namely the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), League of Imams and Alfas in Yorubaland and Muslim *Ummah* of South-West Nigeria (MUSWEN), should ensure that all Muslim groups in northern and southwestern Nigeria are registered by the Federal Government of Nigeria and recognised by them in order to address any religious extremist tendencies that may arise among Muslim individuals and groups.
- ii. There should be respect for differences of opinions and views expressed by Islamic scholars on controversial religious issues or practices that are not explicitly forbidden by Islamic texts.
- iii. Leaders and founders of Islamic organisations in Nigeria should endeavour to possess profound knowledge on *Tafsir* (Qur'an exegesis), *Mustalah al-Hadith* (Science of Hadith), *Usul-Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) and *Maqasid-Shari'ah* (Objectives of Islamic Law) in order to understand religious issues and concepts like Jihad and *Bid'a* that require application of *Ijtihad* (juristic reasoning) in the contemporary world.
- iv. Worldly matters like democracy and western education that are not expressly forbidden by the Qur'an and authentic Hadith should not cause division and rancour among Muslims. Hence, Islamic scholars, including jurists, should devote more attention to explaining the permissibility or otherwise of the involvement of Muslims in a democratic government and the acquisition of western education in a multi-religious society like Nigeria.
- v. The Nigerian government at the local, state and federal levels should deal ruthlessly with any individual or group of Muslims that engages in violent religious extremism.

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**SECTION TWO**  
**ISLAMIC LEGAL THOUGHT, ETHICS**  
**AND PUBLIC POLICY**

## CHAPTER 9

### The Ethical Teachings of *Sharī‘ah* on Environmental Pollution

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#### **Introduction**

Human beings, by nature, consider themselves owners of the environment and believe they have the authority to control it as they see fit. In exercising this authority, they abuse and misuse the ecosystem, thereby endangering themselves and other matters on earth. This is the argument of Kula (2001:1) when he asserts that, owing to the scientific and technological revolutions that have taken place during the last few centuries, humankind has been able to pursue a ruthless policy of the exploitation of natural resources, leading to environmental crises. As a result, greenhouse effect, global warming, environmental pollution, among others, are the foremost challenges that upset today’s global world and have necessitated the setting up of multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are targeted at conserving the ecosystems and biodiversity. The essence of these goals finds resonance with Mangunjaya and McKay (2012:290), who argue that without a healthy environment, humans lose the essence of life.

From the perspective of the *Sharī‘ah*, human and nature are the creations of Allah. According to Haneef (2002:242), these two entities are created through a set of procedures and are willed to subsist in accordance with the order fixed by God (*fitrah*). He notes further that “in consequence, human and nature by creation are governed by the law of nature which enables them to orderly function and perform their assigned role as two basic components of God’s creation, i.e. their intra behaviour to be in harmony with the order of the universe (*qanūn al-fitrah*)” (2002:242). The *Sharī‘ah* makes us understand that the environment or nature is created for the benefit of humans. The Qur’ān points to this fact:

He Who has made for you the earth like a carpet spread out; has enabled you to go about therein by roads (and channels); and has sent down water from the sky. With it have We produced diverse pairs of plants, each separate from the others. Eat (for yourselves) and pasture your cattle: verily, in this are signs for men endued with understanding (Q.20:53 – 54).

As the environment is created for the benefit of man, he is expected to reciprocate the good gesture by preserving the environment and protecting it from all that may cause a crisis for it or pollute it. According to Saidul Islam (2012:77), human beings are expected to protect the environment, since no other creature is able to perform this task. Humans are the only beings who have been “entrusted” with the responsibility of looking after the earth. Humans voluntarily accepted the trusteeship. As a result of this, Bagader, El-Sabbagh, Al-Glayand and Samarraï (2011) note that God has ordained stewardship (*Khilafah*) on the earth to human beings. Therefore, in addition to being part of the earth and part of the universe, man is also the executor of God’s injunctions and commands. He is only a manager of the earth and not a proprietor; a beneficiary and not a disposer or ordainer. They further assert that, from the point of view of Islam, heaven and earth and all that they contain belong to God alone. Hence, man has been granted stewardship to manage the earth in accordance with the purpose intended by its Creator; to utilise it for his own benefit and the benefit of other created beings, and for the fulfilment of his interests and those of others. He is thus entrusted with its maintenance and care, and must use it as a trustee within the limits dictated by his trust. However, because man is *khalifah*, he must act according to the will of Allah and take care of the earth as He wishes. Ouis quotes Seyyid Hossein Nasr as saying: “As *khalifatu* of Allah, he must be active in the world, sustaining cosmic harmony and disseminating the grace for which he is the channel as a result of his being the central creature in the terrestrial order” (Quis: 1998:154).

Notwithstanding the responsibilities of humans and nature as designed by their Creator, human being has deviated from his responsibilities and has seen himself as the overlord of the environment, using it the way he wants and creating different crises for the environment. Therefore, as observed by Mangunjaya and Mckay (2012:290), the environmental crisis that surrounds humanity is growing ever more acute, with increasing numbers of natural disasters worldwide caused largely by human action: pollution of the oceans and waterways, the air and the atmosphere, deforestation and alterations of the natural environment - all which contribute to global warming and climate change (Mangunjaya and Mckay, 2012:290). They note further that these unsustainable practices cannot be addressed effectively by any one group of people or by any single government or nation. A concerted global effort is now required (Mangunjaya and Mckay, 2012:290). For the concerted global effort to succeed, issues of the environment need to be handled from all angles, particularly from the religious sphere. It is on the basis of this that this study endeavours to examine the angle through which *Sharī‘ah* ethical teachings have handled the problem of environmental pollution.

### **Concepts of *Sharī‘ah* and *Maqāsid ash-Sharī‘ah***

The word *Sharī‘ah* literally means “a course to the watering place and a resort of drinkers” (Ibn Manzur, n.d:175). Technically, it represents the path ordained by Allah to be followed by every human being to earn His pleasure and avoid His wrath in this world and the hereafter (Rashid, 1986:109). It is the law of Allah which He enacted for human beings in their beliefs, religions, moralities and socials, to regulate their affairs in all spheres of life for the purpose of achieving

success in this world and the hereafter (Rashid, 1986:109). Moreover, the term *Sharī'ah* covers all aspects of life. It is the circle that embraces in its orbit all human actions; it stands for the law which is the “divinely ordained path of rectitude” (Makinde, 2007:2). Therefore, *Sharī'ah* is very wide in scope and this is confirmed by the new *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which states that the scope of *Sharī'ah* is much wider than that of the Western system of law and it is also concerned as much with ethics as with legal rules, indicating not only what man is entitled or bound to do in law, but also what he ought, in conscience, to do or refrain from doing (The University of Chicago, 1981:938). Hence, the ethical rules of *Sharī'ah* on environmental pollution deserve to be discussed.

It also becomes necessary to look at the concept of *Maqāṣid ash-Sharī'ah* in order to state the relevance of *Sharī'ah* to the issue under discourse, i.e. environmental pollution. *Maqāṣid* (the plural form of *maqṣad*) refers to the aims, higher intents, objectives, purposes, goals and principles of *Sharī'ah* (Islamic Education Trust, 2015:161). Generally, *Sharī'ah* is predicated on the benefits to the individual and the community, and its laws are designed to protect these benefits and facilitate improvement and perfection of the conditions of human life on earth (Kamali, 2008:1). The objectives of *Sharī'ah* have been classified into two broad categories. The first centres on the promotion of the common good and benefit (*maṣlahah*) – *jalbal-maṣāliḥ* – and the second focuses on avoidance and protection from harm (*mafsada*) – *dar'al-maḥāsīd* (Islamic Education Trust, 2015:161). Therefore, the subject of *Maqāṣid ash-Sharī'ah* is concerned with the wisdom behind the rulings of *Sharī'ah*, and focuses on the challenging questions of “why” at various levels. The *Maqāṣid* are those good ends that the law aims to achieve by blocking or opening certain means. Some scholars use the terms *Maqāṣid* (objectives, intent goals, principles, etc.) and *Maṣāliḥ* (general benefit or common good) interchangeably (Islamic Education Trust, 2015:161).

Kamali (2008:4) cites Ibn 'Ashur as stating that the general purpose of *Sharī'ah* (*maqṣad al-taḥrī' al-'ām*) is “preservation of the order and prosperity of the *Ummah* through educating and reforming the mental and behavioural self of the individual and taking care of the world around him and what has been placed under his custody and control.” He goes on to say that from the viewpoint of the relative importance of the *maqāṣid*, they have been classified into the three categories of essential *maqāṣid* (*darūriyyāt*), complementary *maqāṣad* (*hājiyyāt*) and desirabilities (*tahsinīyyāt*). Therefore, the *darūriyyāt* are essential to the survival and spiritual well-being of the individual and society, so much so that their destruction and collapse would precipitate chaos and demise of normal order in society (Kamali, 2008:6). According to him, from the viewpoint of the scope of *maqāṣad*, they have been classified into the three categories of general purposes (*al-maqāṣad al-'āmmah*), particular purposes (*al-maqāṣad al-khāssah*), and partial purposes (*al-maqāṣad al-juz'iyyah*). The general purposes are those that extend to the whole of *Sharī'ah* in all its parts, and they are altogether broad and comprehensive. Realisation of benefit (*maṣlahah*), prevention of harm and corruption (*darar*; *mafsadah*), building the earth (*i'mār al-ard*), administration of justice, and removal of hardship (*raf'al-haraj*) are examples

of the general purposes of *Sharī'ah* (Kamali, 2008:7). Hence, protection of the environment from pollution falls under the general purposes of *Maqāṣad ash-Sharī'ah* because man is expected to build the environment by protecting it; he is not expected to pollute or destroy it. It is in this connection that *Maqāṣad ash-Sharī'ah* becomes relevant to this discourse.

### **Environmental Pollution**

Before discussing the ethical teachings of *Sharī'ah* on environmental pollution, it is pertinent to first of all look at the concept of environmental pollution. Environmental pollution is one of the most serious problems facing humanity and other life forms on our planet today. It is defined as “the contamination of the physical and biological components of earth/atmosphere system to such an extent that normal environmental processes are adversely affected” (Muralikrishna and Manickam, 2017).

Pollution is the introduction of contaminants into the natural environment that cause adverse change. It can take the form of chemical substances or energy, such as noise, heat or light (Muralikrishna and Manickam, 2017). Pollution is defined as the excess discharge of any substance into the environment which adversely affects the quality of the environment, causing damage to humans, plants and animals. It can be in the form of solid, liquid or gaseous substance. Ehindero (2006:126) asserts that pollution may be defined as any significant degradation or simplification of the food web and energy exchange in a natural ecosystem, or the presence of anything at undesirably high concentrations. Pollution can also be regarded as any undesirable characteristic in air, water, soil or food that can adversely affect the health, survival or activities of humans or other living organisms.

According to Ehindero (2006:126), the awareness and concern of pollution attracted global attention only about over a century ago, following the growing effects of the Industrial Revolution, which enlarged human capacity for modifying natural ecosystems. In the process of this modification, human beings divert huge quantities of energy flowing through natural ecosystems for their own use, and the by-products of their industries are introduced into the natural ecosystem, often with disastrous consequences. Basic to most of the industrial and economic processes which characterised the Industrial Revolution are the unearthing, extraction, refinement and processing of fossil fuels once buried under the earth's crust. The processed synthetic products (often toxic) are then released back into the biosphere (Ehindero, 2006:126).

The agents which cause environmental pollution are called pollutants. A pollutant may be defined as a physical, chemical or biological substance unintentionally released into the environment which is directly or indirectly harmful to humans and other living organisms (Saini and Malhotra, 2016:70). Ehindero (2006:127) cites Hardy who states that there are two general categories of pollutants – biodegradable organic wastes or nutrients and non-degradable harmful or toxic material or energy. Both types produce environmental stress and alter the energy flow available for ecosystem production. An input of toxic materials, which reduces the health of organisms, will reduce the

ecosystem's energy production directly until organisms die or the entire system collapses and becomes abiotic (without life). An input of usable energy or materials (such as biodegradable organic compounds) or nutrients (fertilisers) may stimulate ecosystem production at moderate levels, but higher inputs can result in dangerous oscillations and finally lethal conditions (Ehinder, 2006:127).

Pollution needs to be taken seriously, as it has a negative effect on natural elements that are considered an absolute need for life to exist on earth, such as water and air. Indeed, if pollution is present in different quantities, animals, including humans, and plants could not survive. Types of pollution include water pollution, air pollution, soil pollution, thermal pollution, radioactive pollution, noise pollution and light pollution ([www.toppr.com/bytes/pollution](http://www.toppr.com/bytes/pollution)).

### **Causes of Environmental Pollution**

The causes of environmental pollution include industries, transportation, agricultural activities, trade activities and residences. It is observed that industries have been polluting the environment due to the increasing use of fossil fuels. Moreover, in the area of transportation, ever since man abandoned animal power to travel, pollution of the environment has been scaling alarming levels. Similar to industries, pollution caused by transport can mainly be attributed to fossil fuels. It is noted that as traffic increases every day, pollution follows suit ([www.conserve-energy-future.com](http://www.conserve-energy-future.com)). In the case of agriculture, it is mainly responsible for contaminating water and soil. This is caused by the increased use of pesticides, as well as by the intensive character of their production. Almost all pesticides are made from chemical substances and are meant to keep diseases and threatening animals away from the crops. As for trading activities, it is noted that they include the production and exchange of goods and services. Concerning goods, however, pollution can be caused by packaging (which often involves the use of plastic, made from fossil fuel) or transport ([www.conserve-energy-future.com](http://www.conserve-energy-future.com)). In the case of residences, it is noted that residential areas also contribute their fair share of pollution. First, to be able to build homes, the natural environment has to be destroyed in one way or another. Hence, wildlife and plants are driven away and replaced by human constructions. Like industries, construction itself is also a source of environmental contamination. At the end, when people settle in, they will produce waste every day, including a part that cannot be processed by the environment without harm ([www.conserve-energy-future.com](http://www.conserve-energy-future.com)). Therefore, its negative effects are on humans, animals, plants and ecosystems. In view of the effects of environmental pollution, it becomes necessary to see it as a problem that must be addressed from all angles of human endeavour. Hence, there is a need to take a cursory look at the teachings of *Sharī'ah* on environmental pollution.

### ***Sharī'ah* Ethical Rules on Environmental Pollution**

As it has been earlier stated, *Sharī'h* is the law of Allah, which He enacted for human beings in all their affairs, for the purpose of achieving success in this world and the hereafter. Since Allah is the Creator of the universe and all things therein, He has provided guidelines in the *Sharī'ah* through which a conducive atmosphere will be achieved. Therefore, the objectives or purposes

of *Sharī'ah* (*Maqāṣad ash-Sharī'ah*) on the issue of the environment are based on the fact that there must not be destruction or pollution of it by human beings since both they and the environment are creations of Allah. Human beings should maintain the role of vicegerency (*khalifah*) on earth and should not misuse that position. Ali (2016:175) observes that Muslims are repeatedly reminded to reflect on the natural system and their obligations of stewardship through the concept of *khilafah*. Therefore, because human beings are the *khalifah* of Allah on the earth, they must act according to the will of Allah and take care of the earth as He wishes.

It is noted by Haneef (2002:241) that the environment signifies the sum total of all external conditions and influences affecting the development and life of organisms. The unity and interdependence existing within biological systems and their interaction with the environment is called the ecosystem. This interdependency between the living organism and the matters from which they derive their source of life and subsistence, such as food, water and air, greatly determines their continued existence. He states that, for instance, a human being by his very constitution is made up of more than 30 elements derived from the natural environment. Therefore, to guarantee the continued supply of fresh air, uncontaminated food, unpolluted water and other provisions of life for humans and other living creatures in the animal kingdom, and plants, a harmonious, balanced and integrated approach by the human, as the master architect of creation, is fundamentally essential.

Explicating on the duties of humans to the environment, Ouis (1998:90) notes that the Divine Law (*Sharī'ah*) is explicit in extending the religious duties of human beings to the natural order and the environment. One must not only feed the poor but also avoid polluting the water supply. It is pleasing in the eyes of Allah not only to be kind to one's parents, but also to plant trees and treat animals gently and with kindness. He further states that even in the realm of the Divine Law, and without recourse to the metaphysical significance of nature, one can see the close nexus Islam establishes between man and the whole natural order. Nor should it be otherwise, for the primordial character of the Islamic revelation reinstates human being and the cosmos in a state of unity, harmony and complementarity, reaffirming human being's inner bond to the whole of creation, which shares the Qur'ānic revelation in the deepest sense (1998:90).

Human beings need to realise that sustainable development is virtually impossible without adequate protection of their environment. Man needs good food, water, air and other environmental systems to live a comfortable and enjoyable life. Pollution of these environmental ecosystems by man endangers his life. Hence, Ali's (2016:174) opinion is apt in this regard. He observes that, due to resource constraints, early Muslims realised that long-term development was only possible within ecological constraints, which were shared by all of humanity. Furthermore, Islam considers environmental deterioration as symptomatic of social injustice and hence development and the environment are inextricably linked. As the foundational scripture of Islam, all doctrines must be legitimised through Qur'ānic injunctions, and curricular efforts must first acknowledge that there is indeed a scriptural basis for this linkage between environment and development (Ali, 2016:174).

It is to be noted at this juncture that environmental pollution is a cause of various diseases or illnesses, endemic and epidemic, being witnessed by human beings. Therefore, various subjects like air and water contamination, and solid waste mishandling have been studied by experts in these areas. In a study carried out by Gari (2002:476), he tries to analyse a number of studies embarked upon by the researchers on illnesses caused by environmental pollution. He remarks that “physicians have studied the causes and treatment of widespread illness or crowd diseases, both endemics and epidemics, as parts of medicine” (Gari, 2002:476). As a result, man needs to take serious caution on environmental pollution so as not to invite diseases and illnesses of both endemics, and epidemics, for the Qur’ān warns human being against this as follows: “...and make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction...” (Q.2:195).

Some Islamic scholars have interpreted *fasād* in the ecological context as pollution and destruction of the environment. Ouis (1998:159) cites Bayḍawī as saying that *fasād* includes “dryness of the land, many fires, many drowned”, and that Ibn Kathīr states that *fasād* will result in “lower crops of both food plants and fruits.” According to him, the cause of *fasād* is the human being himself, just as he is the cause of the environmental problems. Ouis (1998:159) further mentions that Muhammad Asad also supports the idea of *fasād* as environmental destruction. Unfortunately, human potential for the destruction of the environment seems to be greater than caring for it. Hence, the relevant term in this context is *fasād*, which is translated as mischief, destruction, corruption (1998:159). It is mentioned several times in the Qur’ān: “Mischief (*fasād*) has appeared on land and sea because of the deeds that the hands of men have earned that Allah may give them a taste of some of their deeds, in order that they may turn back from evil” (Q.30:41).

There is no gainsaying that the primary sources of the *Sharī‘ah* are the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth. As much as the Qur’ān stands as the main source of Islamic law, *Sharī‘ah*, Ḥadīth stands as a complementary source to explain some ambiguities or complement the exegesis of some verses. Hence, the Qur’ān or the Ḥadīth of the Prophet is made as a *Sharī‘ah* reference point on any issue whatsoever without excluding the issue of environmental pollution. Therefore, as Mangunjaya and Mckay (2012:289) assert, the scripture of the Qur’ān guides discussions on the environment as well as techniques to put these teachings into practice. For example, it contains as many as four hundred and eighty-five words with meaning directly related to *‘al-‘ard*, the Arabic word for “earth.” Moreso, they cite Khalid as finding at least two hundred and sixty-one verses in the Qur’ān that discuss the world made by God, using terms based on the Arabic meaning of *khalq*, which relates to His creation (Mangunjaya and Mckay, 2012:289). An example of this is in Qur’ān 6 verse 38, where it states that all earthly creatures are part of the “*ummah*” community, which humanity shares.

As the Qur’ān puts forward a model for living, the Ḥadīth also contains a number of sayings and actions of the Prophet that connect the overarching ideas of justice and equity, with the command to humanity not to “corrupt” or “oppress” the creation of God. It is on this note that Mangunjaya and Mckay (2012:290) observe that some Muslim ethicists and legal thinkers have concluded

that Islam puts forward the conservation of the environment as one of the highest goals of Islamic law (*Shari‘ah*). According to them, this may be recognised through the fundamental legal and ethical theory known as the “five necessities” (*ad-darūriyyat al-khams*) that were put forward by Syatibi in the book, *al-Muwaffaqat*, and which are guiding criteria of the “aims of law” (*al-maqāṣid ash-sharī‘ah*). They state the necessity of all legal rulings to safeguard and protect five aspects of human endeavour, namely: religion, life, heritage, property and thought. These criteria are all broadly dependent on the conservation of the environment (Mangunjaya and Mckay, 2012:290).

There is no doubt that humanity is completely dependent upon nature for all its activities. Kula (2001:3), therefore, opines that unwastefulness towards nature is a great virtue just like modesty and justness, and Allah wants human beings to live a virtuous life. In this respect, the faithful must keep their surroundings clean, must not waste the gifts of Allah and must be gentle and just towards all living things, insects and animals. Therefore, Islam broadens environmental awareness by connecting religion to other aspects of everyday life (Mangunjaya and Mckay, 2012:289).

The *Sharī‘ah* concerns itself with the preservation and protection of the environment and frowns on its pollution and destruction. According to Saidul (2012:78), Islam, preservation and protection of natural resources for other creatures is a kind of worship, and wasting them is a sin. *Sharī‘ah* forbids the wastage of water and the usage thereof without benefit. Hence, Saidul Islam (2012:78) cites Smith as saying that “the preservation of water for drinking of mankind, animal life, bird life and vegetation is a form of worship which gains the pleasure of Allah.” Also, the protection of soil and the improvement of derelict land are encouraged by the Prophet. He was reported to have advised that the faithful should protect the fertility of agricultural land by taking every possible step to prevent its impoverishment. Furthermore, those who improve unclaimed derelict land could and should claim ownership of it (Kula, 2001:4).

Other living organisms that constitute an important component of the environment are plants and animals. They, as part of Allah’s creations, like all other things in the universe, have their assigned role to play, especially in terms of facilitating the proper environmental conditions for humans. For instance, animals are the source of protein for human wellbeing, and provide skin, fur, wool and fibre for their clothes; and plants, aside from being an invaluable source for daily consumption, also have a fundamental role in providing fresh air, protecting against flash floods and providing greenery for recreation (Haneef, 2002:250). It is, therefore, unethical to destroy plants and animals, from the point of view of *Sharī‘ah*. With regard to animals, the Qur’ān has this to say: “There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you. . .” (Q.6:38). As a result of this, kindness to animals is encouraged and cruelty to them is discouraged by the *Sharī‘ah*, and there should be no killing or hunting of lawful animals except for food (Ibn Shu’ayb, 1988:102). As for plants, human beings are enjoined to protect them and avoid damage. The Prophet was reported to have said: “You are not to damage any plant life because you are the vicegerent of Allah” (Karim, 1960:387). In addition to that, as

Kula (2001:5) observes, the Prophet in a number of Hadiths advised clearly that not only should the existing trees be protected, but also that Muslims should plant new ones for a variety of charitable purposes.

It is observed by Haneef (2002:250) that the Islamic legislative measures to save land, air and water are well governed by the principle of purification (*tahārah*), which occupies so central a position in the teaching of Islam that makes the avoidance of pollutants (natural or chemical) an integral part of the Islamic faith. As we read in the Qur'ān: "...Allah loves those who make themselves clean and pure" (Q.9:108). The Prophet was also reported to have said: "Purification is a branch of faith" (Tirmidhi, 2008:107) and "Allah the most Exalted is clean and loves those who uphold cleanliness" (Haneef, 2002:252).

The *Sharī'ah* also addresses the issue of noise pollution and frowns upon it. Haneef (2002:252) notes that subjecting humans to loud and annoying noises harms them physically and psychologically. Therefore, there are ethical teachings of the *Sharī'ah* on this aspect of the environmental problem. There is no iota of doubt that making a loud noise is unethical, rude and impolite. The Qur'ān says: "... and lower thy voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass" (Q.31:19). It is, therefore, considered as *ḥaram* (prohibited) to inflict harm to others by disturbing their quiet. This is an established law of *Sharī'ah* that was laid in the Ḥadīth: "harm must neither be inflicted nor reciprocated" (Ibn Majah, 2014:39).

Environmental pollution in the area of industries is not left undiscussed by the *Sharī'ah*. Saidul Islam (2012:78) observes that while current economic patterns permit factories to release toxic waste into water and the atmosphere and thereby disturb and destroy marine life as well as other species and habitats, the Islamic ecological paradigm regards these practices as an act of sin. Saidul Islam (2012:79) goes further to quote Smith, who referred to Imam Alhilaly, an Islamic clergyman, as saying that Islamic ecological paradigm forbids "factory outpours to go to waterways or to the ocean, as this would pollute the water and threaten marine life. Air is the property of Allah, the Exalted. Hence, contaminating the air with smoke is an encroachment on nature and a threat to the life of mankind and all other living thing" (Saidul Islam, 2012:79). It is also noted that one of the most destructive causes of pollution is consumer waste (Saidul Islam, 2012:79). The Qur'ān declares: "Verily, the squanderers were ever brothers of the devils and the devil was ever ingrate to his Lord" (Q.17:27).

In view of the above, it is to be noted that as the Earth Charter asserts that humanity stands at a "critical moment in Earth's history" and that the way forward requires the lucid recognition that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms, we are one human family and one Earth Community with a common destiny (Johnson, 2012:219), it is on this submission that it is believed that the solution to the problem of the world's environment crisis is in the *Sharī'ah*. Moreover, Johnston (2012:224) recognises the fact that Izzi Dien's message is perfectly in line with the Earth Charter's message: "The conservation of the natural environment in Islam is both

an ethical and a religious imperative which should be backed with legislation and effective enforcement of an environmental law.”

### **Conclusion**

The environmental crisis that human beings are currently witnessing includes pollution. Rather than see himself as a partner in progress with his environment, man continues to see himself as lord of the environment and, as a result, he pollutes or destroys it and creates problems for himself and other creatures. Therefore, the environmental crisis that surrounds humanity is growing ever more acute with an ever increasing number of natural disasters and diseases worldwide. In order to get out of the various environmental crises, including pollution, human beings need to redirect their thinking towards appreciating the natural legislative measures as ordained by Allah, the Creator of the universe, environment and man, through His divine law, *Sharī'ah*. From the point of view of Islam, Allah's wisdom has ordained stewardship (*khilāfah*) on the earth to human beings. Hence, in addition to being part of the earth and part of the environment, human beings are also the executors of Allah's injunctions and commands. He is to see himself only as a manager of the earth and not a proprietor, a beneficiary and not a disposer or ordainer. Heaven and earth and all that they contain in them belong to Allah alone. Human beings are only entrusted with the maintenance and care of things in the environment and must use them as trustees. Moreover, *Maqāṣid ash-Sharī'ah* is about the goals and objectives of *Sharī'ah*. These are meant to spell out various purposes for which human actions must be based in order to attain success in this life. Hence, the *Sharī'ah* is generally predicated on the benefits of the individual and the community, and its laws are designed to protect these benefits and facilitate the improvement and perfection of human conditions on earth. As a result, it becomes expedient to explore the ethical teachings of *Sharī'ah* in addressing the problem of environmental pollution globally. To be able to do this, there will be a need to consider the ethical teachings of the *Sharī'ah* on the environment, which should be backed with legislation and enforcement at the global level. This, no doubt, will go a long way in solving the environmental crisis that bedevils the world at large.

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## CHAPTER 10

### The Circumstantial Application of Some Islamic Legal Maxims in the Covid-19 Era: Implications for Interfaith Understanding

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#### Introduction

COVID-19, a viral infection, became a global concern in 2020 when it was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), due to its high and alarming rate of spread and its significant toll on human life. Measures to curb its spread were far-reaching, and it spared no sector. According to the WHO (2022), there have been 497,057,239 confirmed COVID-19 cases globally as of April 11, 2022, including 6,179,104 deaths. Table 1 below indicates the confirmed cases of the notorious Coronavirus across the WHO regions.

**Table 1: Confirmed cases of coronavirus in the WHO regions**

<b>WHO Regions</b>	<b>Confirmed Cases</b>
Europe	207,759,697
The Americas	151,489,694
South-East Asia	57,425,623
Western Pacific	50,129,978
Eastern Mediterranean	21,638,314
Africa	8,613,169

Source: WHO Coronavirus Dashboard <https://covid19.who.int> accessed 12/4/2022

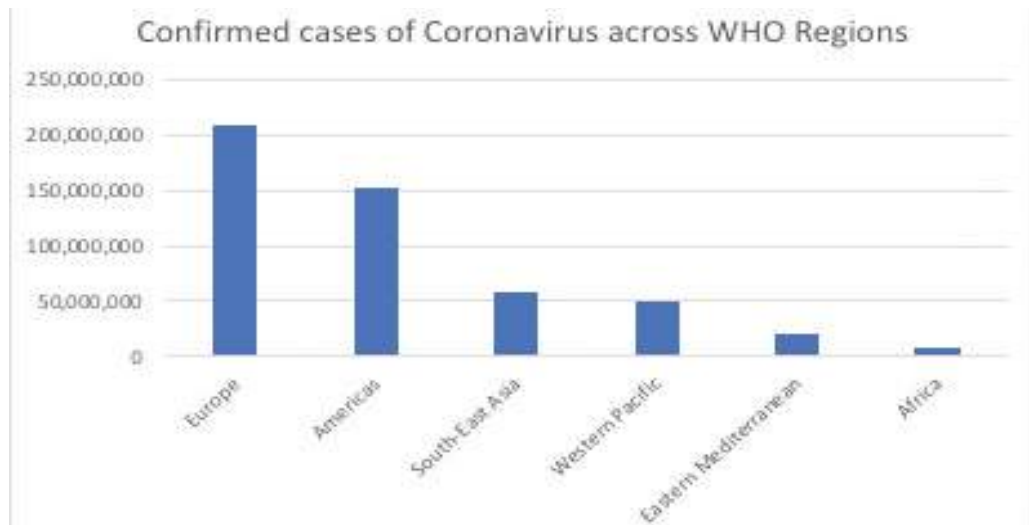


Figure 1: Confirmed cases of Coronavirus across WHO Regions (Source: WHO, 2022)

The total lockdown, adopted as a measure to curb the coronavirus pandemic, paralysed every sector, as all economic and social activities were suspended. Institutions of learning were closed, while religious activities were highly restricted to personal and individual levels, as places of worship were under lock and key. Indeed, the compulsory daily congregational prayers were not allowed to be held congregationally in the *Masājid* (Mosques). In some instances, the number of congregants was pegged to allow for social distancing and prevent physical contact. Not this alone, alcohol, which is considered an abomination for Muslims to touch, became the order of the day, as alcoholic sanitiser was recommended for frequent use to sanitise the hands (WHO, 2022). The use of face masks in public places was made compulsory to reduce the transmission of the virus. It is against this backdrop that this paper attempts to study the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the practice of Islam within the context of some Islamic legal maxims.

### Viewing the Pandemic from the Perspective of Islam

The response of Prophet Muhammad to a question posed to him by ‘Aisha as to whether or not a pandemic is a punishment from Allah is highly instructive. He responded by saying, “It is a punishment sent by Allah on whom He wants to punish. And Allah made it a source of mercy for the believers. If one in the time of an epidemic plague stays in his country (or stays in his house as mentioned in different narrations) patiently hoping for Allah’s reward and believing that nothing will befall him except what Allah has written for him, then he will get the reward of a martyr” (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 5734; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2218). This hadith is indicative of the fact that the emergence of any contagious disease can be a source of mercy or punishment. It is mercy when one afflicted with it has full faith in Allah and exercises patience and trust in Him. Such a person takes all preventive measures and seeks lawful means to treat the plague with the strong belief that only Allah is the one who can cure the plague.

It has to be mentioned that, even before the advent of Islam among the Arabs, various precautionary measures were taken against contagious diseases. The Prophet was not against this, yet he tried to implant in them Allah as the Source of everything and that any preventive measure against contagious diseases is subject to Allah's will. This explains why the Messenger of Allah stood to address his people, saying: "Nothing transfers illness to something else." A Bedouin who was not convinced by this prophetic submission called the attention of the Prophet to this saying: "Oh Messenger of Allah, then what about my camels? They are like deer on the sand, but when a camel with mange comes and mixes with them, they all get infected with mange (a contagious, itching disease)." To establish the consciousness of Allah in the minds of the people and disapprove of belief in superstition, the Prophet replied to the Bedouin Arab, saying, "So, who caused mange in the first camel? There is neither contagion nor bad omen associated with Safar. Allah created every soul and wrote its life, sustenance and afflictions" (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith no. 2293).

To implant and concretise faith in Allah as the Prime Cause of all things, the Prophet declared, "There is neither contagion, nor bad omens, nor omens associated with an owl, nor omens associated with Safar. But flee from a leper as you would flee from a lion" (Al-Bukhari, Hadith no. 5707). This hadith is trying to downplay and trivialise the already established superstitious belief associated with contagious diseases, owls and the month of Safar, and so establishing a shift from this to a strong belief in Allah as the Prime Cause of all things. At the same time, belief in Allah does not undermine the transmission of diseases, hence the need to take preventive measures by distancing oneself from those afflicted with contagious diseases.

When, eventually, the Prophet was able to establish true faith in Allah as the Source of everything and disengage their minds from believing that this apparent cause is the ultimate cause of disease, he called their attention to the need to take preventive measures against contagious diseases. It is considered a religious responsibility of a Muslim to protect his life and that of others; hence, he declared: "Do not bring diseased camels into contact with healthy camels" (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2221). In another hadith, he said: "If you hear about a plague in any land, then do not enter it; and if plague breaks out in any land and you are there, do not leave it" (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 5728; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2219). This hadith prescribed self-quarantine as a religious measure, which is in line with modern research based methods for checking the spread of contagious diseases.

The companions of the Prophet adhered to self-quarantine as a measure to check the spread of contagious diseases. This was demonstrated by 'Umar bn al-Khattab when he and his people set out for Sham (the region comprising Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan). When he reached Sargh, a town by the side of Hijaz, Abu 'Ubaydah bn Al-Jarrah, the governor of Al-Ajnad, came to meet 'Umar and his entourage to inform them that a plague had broken out in Syria. 'Umar therefore called on the people (both the *Muhājirūn*

and the *Ansār*) to inform them of this news and to seek their opinion on the next line of action. There were divergent opinions on whether they should proceed further or retreat to their homes in such a situation. He thereafter opted to go back and asked his people to do the same. The reaction of Abu ‘Ubaydah bin Al-Jarrah to this conclusion was pertinent, as he asked ‘Umar, “Are you going to run away from the Divine Decree?” ‘Umar, who was surprised that Abu ‘Ubaydah could react in such a way, given that he was the one who came to inform them of the outbreak of the plague, reacted by saying: “Yes, we are running from the Divine Decree to the Divine Decree.” To explicate further, he gave an instance thus: “What do you think if you have camels and you happen to descend a valley having two sides, one of them covered with foliage and the other being barren, will you not act according to the Divine Decree if you graze them in vegetative land? And if you graze them in the barren land, then you are doing so according to the Divine Decree?” (Al-Bukhari, Hadith no. 5729). This implies that when there are two options, one should select the easier option.

There are indications that contagious diseases can be caused by human excessiveness and indulgence; this, therefore, attracts the wrath of Allah. In a hadith, the Prophet turned to his companions, saying:

O Muhājirūn, there are five things with which you will be tested, and I seek refuge with Allah (SWT) lest you live to see them: (1) Immorality never appears among a people to such an extent that they commit it openly, except that plagues and diseases that were never known among the predecessors will spread among them. (2) They do not cheat in weights and measures, except that they will be stricken with famine, severe calamity, and the oppression of their rulers. (3). They do not withhold the Zakah of their wealth, except that rain will be withheld from the sky, and were it not for the animals, no rain would fall on them. (4). They do not break their covenant with Allah and His Messenger, except that Allah will enable their enemies to overpower them and take some of what is in their hands. (5). Unless their leaders rule according to the Book of Allah and seek all good from that which Allah has revealed, Allah will cause them to fight one another (Ibn Majah, *Sunan ibn Majah*, Hadith no. 4019).

The above Tradition of the Prophet indicates that plagues or contagious diseases could be a trial from Allah, consequent upon the excesses and indulgences of humankind. It is, therefore, a punishment from Allah to humankind for sins committed by them (Diop, 2021). Shabana (2019) has a list of pandemics that ravaged the Muslim states in the history of Islam. He cited al-Nawawī (d. 676) as having listed five main plagues during the early period of Islam. The first was the plague of Shirawayh, which occurred during the lifetime of the Prophet in the city of al-Madā’ in Iraq from 627 to 628. This was followed by the famous plague of ‘Amwās, which occurred during the reign of ‘Umar b. Khaṭṭāb (634 – 44) in the year 639, and claimed about 25,000 lives. There was also the *al-tā’ūn al-jārif* (sweeping

plague) which occurred during the time of ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr (683 – 692) in the year 688. It is reported that for three days during this plague, about 70,000 people died each day. There was also the plague which claimed the lives of several young girls in Iraq and Syria in the year 706, and another one which occurred in the year 749 (Shabana, 2019).

### **Muslims’ Reactions to Religious Rituals and Activities in the COVID-19 Era**

Observation of the total lockdown as a measure to check the spread of the pandemic had serious implications for *ṣalāt*, which is an important pillar of Islam. The daily, weekly and even annual prayers were affected as *masājīd* (mosques) were under lock and key. The sacred mosques in Makkah, Madinah and Jerusalem were virtually empty, as congregational prayers were highly restricted. In some places, the call to prayers became a serious offense, and where it was allowed, it was altered to tell people to pray from home (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020).

In a tradition, the Prophet objected to the request of a blind man to excuse him from coming to the *masjid* because there was no one to lead him there. The Prophet observed that there was no excuse for anybody who heard the call to prayer to decide to observe his prayers at home (al-Bukhārī, n.d.). To observe *ṣalāt* at home was a bitter pill for conscious Muslims to swallow during the COVID-19 era. They, however, found solace in a Prophetic tradition, which says: “Once on a cold and windy night, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar made the *adhān*. Then he said: ‘Lo, pray at home!’ He went on to say that when the night was cold and rainy, the Messenger of Allah used to have the *mu’ adhdhin* say: ‘Lo, pray at home!’” (Muslim, n.d.). If Muslims were asked to observe their prayers at home on account of bad weather, then there was no excuse to insist on going to the *masjid* when a pandemic was taking hundreds of lives. Karaan (2020) believes that taking such a step was not to obstruct the functioning of the *masājīd*, but to ensure that the Houses of Allah remained alive after the pandemic passed. He cited the outbreak of an epidemic in Spain in 448AH, where in Seville, death was so severe that the *masājīd* were closed, and the epidemic in Transoxiana in 449AH, where 18,000 funerals were conducted in one day and over 1,650,000 deaths recorded, leaving most *masājīd* empty (Karaan, 2020; Oladosu et al, 2025).

Total lockdown as a measure to check the spread of the coronavirus also prevented the keeping of strong family ties, which Islam preaches. In some instances, the family setup was shaken to its roots. In addition, it became difficult for many Muslims to carry out the highly rewarding visitation to the sick. Those on sickbed were neglected, while the elderly could no longer enjoy the compliments of the youth for fear of spreading the virus. The sick, however, found solace in a Prophetic tradition: “The plague (contagion) patient who remains in his home with patience and expectation of reward, knowing that nothing will befall him other than Allah’s decree, will attain the reward of a martyr” (al-Bukhārī, n.d.; Muslim, n.d.). On the other hand, Muslims who were expected to visit the sick relied on a Prophetic tradition which advised running away from someone with a contagious ailment (leper) as

one would run away from a lion (Abū Dāwūd, n.d.). Scholars also cited the outbreak of an epidemic in *Shām* during the rule of Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, when ‘Amr ibn al-‘Ās instructed the people to separate and stay in the mountains to stop the spread of the plague (Ibn Kathīr, n.d.). It should also be noted that Ibn Sīnā had recommended quarantine of people for 40 days as a means of checking the spread of contagious diseases as far back as the 10th century (Ibn Sīnā, n.d.).

Furthermore, as part of measures to curb the spread of the obnoxious pandemic, the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended social distancing of at least one metre from others. Muslims who were expected to observe their daily obligatory prayers were therefore forced to observe social distancing while observing their prayers in the *Masjid*. This practice negates the teaching of the Prophet that the gap must be closed, and congregants must line up shoulder to shoulder with toes touching one another so that the rows remain compact. It is so important that the Prophet himself used to check the rows of the congregation during prayers as if he was straightening the shaft of an arrow that he called to order a man whose chest was sticking out of the row, saying: “Slaves of Allah! Make your rows straight or Allah will cause discord among you” (Badwi, 2013). The Prophet made straightening the rows while praying a means of perfecting and establishing prayers, saying: “Straighten the rows, for you form rows like the angels, keep your shoulders in line with one another; fill the gaps, and do not leave any room for the Shaytan. Whoever joins a row to complete it, Allah will take care of him and whoever interrupts a row, Allah will cut him off” (Badwi, 2013). The argument of those who see nothing wrong in social distancing is the statement of the Prophet, which says, “Do not stare at lepers continuously. When you speak to them, let there be a spear’s length between you and them” (*Sunnan ibn Majah*, no. 3543). Although this hadith has been declared weak, it cautions us to keep a distance from a person carrying a contagious disease. Apart from this, the hadith could not be said to have been a basis for social distancing in *Salāt*. This is because no one is reported to have contracted the virus before maintaining distance in the *masjid*. That notwithstanding, the submission of medical experts on social distancing as a measure to check the spread of COVID-19 could be considered a measure to avoid a greater evil that could have affected human life. In this case, the maxim, *Al-ḍarar yuzāl* (Harm must be removed), is relevant. This involves choosing between various actions to remove harm by developing a law based on removing harm before it occurs, minimising harm once it occurs, or preventing further harm after it occurs.

The annual Ramadan fast was also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This all-important pillar of Islam, which comes up every 9th month of the Islamic lunar calendar, is always full of different religio-spiritual activities like *Iftār*, *sahūr*, *I’tikāf*, and *tafsīrul-Qur’ān* classes during the days and nights of the month, all of which are carried out mostly in congregation. The pandemic took away the usual *Tafsir* classes, which normally take place in the *masjid*. The daily communal *iftār* was suspended, while the *I’tikāf* (spiritual retreat), which normally comes up in the last ten nights of the month, could not be held due to the total lockdown and consequent closure

of the *Masājid*. The daily *Tarāwih* prayers also suffered, as they could not be offered in the *Masājid* congregationally due to the pandemic. There were attempts in some quarters to conduct the prayer congregationally by following an Imam through a live broadcast or any other means of telecommunications. This was, however, declared invalid based on the fact that such may become a norm even when normalcy returns, and so make physical congregations at the *masjid* a myth (The European Council for Fatwa and Research, 2020).

*Hājj*, another pillar of Islam, was also affected during the pandemic, as Saudi Arabia, the main centre of the *hājj* rituals, denied millions of intending pilgrims the chance to enter their country for the 2020 *Hājj* operation, all in the name of taking preventive measures against the spread of the pandemic. The exercise was so restrictive that only the inhabitants of Saudi Arabia were allowed to perform the *Hājj* rites for that year. The basis of this step is that the Prophet had warned against causing harm or returning harm (Ibn Majah, No. 2340) and the saying of the Prophet: “Do not enter a land where the plague (a contagious ailment) has broken out; don’t leave from where it has broken out” (Sahih Bukhari, No. 624). The COVID-19 pandemic equally affected the annual *‘idul Fitr* and *‘idul Adha* celebrations, which are normally held congregationally at *‘Id* praying grounds. These were observed at home, as no one was allowed to congregate. Observing *‘Id* at home individually or congregationally is allowed by the Shafi‘i, Hanbali and some Maliki schools of thought, but with the condition that the sermon, which normally follows the prayers, should not be delivered. They also agreed that it was not valid to offer it at home following an Imam via a live broadcast or other means of telecommunications (The European Council for Fatwa and Research, 2020). Another aspect affected by the COVID-19 pandemic was the mode of greeting amongst Muslims. The adoption of physical measures to curb the pandemic contradicts the Sunnah of the Prophet, which recommends handshaking amongst people of the same sex as a method of greeting under normal circumstances. This was suspended on account of the possible harm it might cause and replaced by elbow bumps and foot shakes. The basis of this is that one has to tolerate lesser harm to avoid a greater one.

Apart from the above, maintenance of personal hygiene was recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a measure to check the spread of coronavirus. Frequent handwashing for at least 20 seconds was, therefore, recommended. This is not new to Muslims, who are used to washing their hands regularly, especially when performing ablution, though with no soap whatsoever. However, the use of hand sanitiser, which became the order of the day during the pandemic period, is debatable, as scientifically, an antibacterial that has 60% to 95% alcohol is considered most effective for sanitising the hands against viruses. Most sanitisers contain ethyl alcohol, isopropyl alcohol or benzalkonium chloride as the main ingredients. Some scholars considered it absurd to use alcohol-based sanitiser to clean the hands before entering the *masjid*, because alcohol is *harām* in Islam. Not only is the consumption forbidden, but anything associated with alcohol in the form of perfumes or deodorants must be rejected, as such can invalidate prayers which should be observed in a pure state. Conversely, however, some scholars did

not see anything wrong in using hand sanitisers, though they may contain alcoholic products, yet such had undergone serious processes, and this implied non-direct usage of alcohol to sanitise the hands. In addition, such scholars believe that it is the consumption of alcohol that is *harām*, and the hadith that curses those connected to alcohol – those who produce it, those for whom it is produced, those who drink it, those who carry it, those who sell it, those who buy it, those who earn from the sale of it and those from whom it is bought – are all about its consumption.

One area that is highly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is the burial of deceased Muslims. It is the responsibility of a Muslim to follow and attend the *janāzah* of a fellow Muslim when he dies (Reported by Bukhari and Muslim). A section of the Muslim community is also expected to participate in the process of the burial, which includes the ritual washing (*ghusl*), shrouding (*kafan*) and the ritual prayer (*Janāzah*). In addition to this, Muslims are not expected to delay the burial of their corpse. This process, however, took a new dimension in the COVID-19 era, as the corpses of those examined to have died from COVID-19 were not released to their immediate family for burial rites for fear of spreading the virus. In some countries, especially non-Muslim majority-dominated states, cremation of the remains of those who died of COVID-19 was adopted as a measure to checkmate the spread of the virus. This method is considered a violation of the dignity of the human body, which Islam frowns at, and its adoption, according to Amnesty International, could inflame religious tension if Muslims are denied the right to bury their relatives in accordance with their religious norm. Some countries also adopted indiscriminate mass burial of the corpses of those who died during the pandemic to reduce contact with the corpses. This method has also been considered un-Islamic as Islam enjoins corpses to be buried individually, and where mass burial becomes inevitable, it should be done with decorum in the form of separating male and female bodies in separate graves, and Muslims and non-Muslims should be buried in separate graves ([www.bbsi.org.uk](http://www.bbsi.org.uk)).

### **Some Islamic Legal Maxims Relevant to COVID-19 Circumstances**

The adoption of *Ijmā'* and *Qiyās* as secondary sources of Islamic law implies the accommodability of human reasoning in matters affecting human lives, acknowledging that not all events in the contemporary period were captured by the primary sources (Kamali, 2003). *Ijmā'* and *Qiyās* are products of *ijtihād* that take their root from the Qur'ān and Hadith. Aside from these, Muslim jurists have developed auxiliary sources such as *istihsān* (jurist equity), *istislāh* (seeking public interest), *istidlāl* (deduction) and *'urf* (custom), provided they are not repugnant to *Sharī'ah* principles (Nyazee, 2000).

*Istihsān*, as believed by those who adopted it (e.g., the Hanafi, Maliki and Hanbali schools), is a means of avoiding hardship and generating a solution to an existing problem that will be harmonious with the higher objective of the *Sharī'ah*. *Istihsān* is therefore generated to avoid rigidity in rulings for the ease of the subjects and was adopted as a source of law

even by the Companions. This was relied upon by ‘Umar bn al-Khattab when he refused to enforce the *hadd* penalty of amputation of the hand for theft during a widespread famine. Also, contrary to the Qur’anic injunction which includes new converts as one of the beneficiaries of *zakat*, ‘Umar, during his tenure as *khalifah*, did not allow new converts to enjoy this benefit, as he said: “These were payments from the Prophet (SAW) to you to win you over for Islam. Now, Allah has given power to Islam and it no longer needs to pay you. ... We do not pay anyone anything for embracing Islam; he who wishes to believe, let him believe and he who wishes to remain infidel, let him do so” (Doi, 1984). *Istihsān*, therefore, stands for freedom in the use of one’s reason, whereas analogy is to protect *Sharī‘ah* against the free use of reason.

### **Al-qawā‘id al-fiqhīyah (Legal maxims of Islamic law)**

*Al-qawā‘id al-fiqhīyah*, or legal maxims of Islamic law, are applicable in cases of common rulings and deducing rules of *fiqh*. There are five leading maxims, each with its own branches and subsections. They are (i) *al-‘umūr bi maqāsidihā* (matters are determined according to intentions), (ii) *al-yaqīn la yazūl bil shakk* (certainty is not overruled by doubt), (iii) *al-mashaqqah tajlib al-taysīr* (hardship begets facility), (iv) *al-ḍarar yuzāl* (harm must be eliminated) and (v) *al-‘ādah muḥakkamah* (custom is a basis for judgment) (Al-Zarqā, 1989). Some of the maxims relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic and upon which scholars rely are hereby considered.

#### **1. Al-Umūr bi maqāsidihā (Acts are judged by the intentions behind them)**

This maxim is generally referred to as a major maxim that links any action to the intention of its doer. It practically means that a person is accounted for by their intention and goal. Reference is therefore made to some Qur’anic verses and popular hadith of the Prophet for their justification. Allah, for instance, says:

Allah will not call you to account for that which is unintentional in your oaths, but He will call you to account for that which your hearts have earned. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most-Forbearing (Q2: 225).

Bukhari and Muslim reported the popular hadith about intention and action, which reads:

Verily, all actions are only judged by intentions, and every man gets what he intends. So, whoever emigrates for Allah and His Messenger, his emigration will be for Allah and His Messenger, and whoever emigrates for worldly benefits or for a woman to marry, his emigration will be for what he emigrated (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, ḥadīth no. 1; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, ḥadīth no. 1907).

The above hadith illustrates the symbiotic relationship between the heart and the body. Sincerity is the bedrock of every action in Islam, and it is determined not only by the outward actions of a Muslim but also by what he intended. This is further explicated in the saying of the Prophet, which Abu Hurayrah reported: “Verily, Allah does not look at

your appearance or wealth, but rather, he looks at your hearts and actions” (Sahih Muslim, Hadith NO. 2564). This hadith implies that a Muslim’s action should not be outwardly judged, as necessity may compel him to take action against his intention. There was the case of some detained Muslims in Xinjiang, China, who were made to eat pork and drink alcohol in the mass re-education camps. In cases of this nature, it is not within the capacity of any human to declare them non-Muslims; it is only Allah who has the final say on them. By implication, Muslims were compelled to accept certain practices during the pandemic period; hence, if such is contrary to the normal practices of Islam, their intention should not be read to have taken such steps willingly.

## **2. *Al-mashaqqah tajlib al-taysir* (Hardship begets facility)**

*Al-mashaqqah tajlib al-taysir* is a major maxim that applies to many instances. It provides an opportunity for a traveller to shorten and combine his prayers; he may also break his fast to reduce the burden and hardship of travelling. A sick person who finds it difficult to observe his prayers while standing may decide to perform them sitting or in any other posture convenient for him under this provision as well. Many verses of the Qur’ān are quoted to support this maxim. For instance, the Qur’ān in *Sūratun-Nisā’* reads: “Allah wishes to lighten (the burden) for you; and man was created weak” (Q.4: 28). In another verse, it says: “Allah intends for you ease and He does not want to make things difficult for you” (Q. 2: 185). Speaking in the same spirit, the Prophet is reported to have said: “Religion is very easy, and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue with it. So, you should not be extremists, but try to be near perfection” (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith No. 18).

Hardship is categorised into tolerable, intolerable and medium hardship. Tolerable hardship, as the name implies, is that type which can be endured. An example of this is the hardship of hunger one experiences while fasting, or the excessive sweating one experiences while working under the sun. Intolerable hardship is the type of hardship that, if not checked, may lead to death. In this case, whatever means of getting out of this hardship are allowed. Thus, it is allowed for someone who has no access to *halāl* food but can access *harām* food. He is allowed to eat such to sustain and keep him alive. Medium hardship occurs when one has the option of reducing the hardship without necessarily falling into an abomination. An example is one resorting to *tayammam* due to excessively cold weather or deciding to perform *wudū’* once or three times in cold weather. Thus, he has the choice of *Rukhsah* (concessionary law), which scholars categorise into different forms.

*Al-Qawā'id Al-Fiqhiyyah* (Legal Maxims of Islamic Jurisprudence) of the Islamic University of North America has included *rukhsah*, which cancels a command of *Sharī'ah*, like non-observance of *salātul-Jum'ah* or hajj due to valid excuses; *rukhsah*, which makes a traveller reduce the number of *rak'ah* in his *salāt*; *rukhsah*, which makes one to adopt another means, like performing *tayammum* instead of *wudū’* due to lack of water or difficulty in using it; and *rukhsah*, which makes an act to be delayed till another time, like a

sick person who forgoes his fasting of Ramadan but will make it up later after its prescribed period. There is also the *rukhsah* of *Darūrah* (necessity), where what is hitherto unlawful, like eating a dead animal or pork to survive, becomes lawful out of necessity. *Rukhsah* changes the normal structure of carrying out a religious obligation (Islamic University of North America, 2013). This is true of *Salāt* due to fear. On this, the Qur'an says:

And when you (Muslims) travel in the land, there is no sin on you if you shorten your prayer if you fear that the disbelievers may attack you, verily, the disbelievers are ever unto you open enemies. When you (O Messenger Muhammad) are among them, and lead them in prayer, let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with you taking their arms with them; when they finish their prostrations, let them take their positions in the rear and let the other party come up which has not prayed with you taking all the precautions and bearing arms. Those who disbelieve wish, if you were negligent of your arms and your baggage, to attack you in a single rush, but there is no sin on you if you put away your arms as a result of the inconvenience of rain or because you are ill, but take every precaution for yourselves. Verily, Allāh has prepared a humiliating torment for the disbelievers. When you have finished the (congregational) prayer, remember Allāh standing, sitting down, and lying down on your sides, but when you are free from danger, offer prayers perfectly. Verily, the prayer is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours (Q. 4: 101-103).

#### **Al-darūrāt tubihu al-mahdhurāt (Necessities make forbidden things canonically harmless)**

One of the subsidiaries of the maxim *Al-mashaqqah tajlib al-taysir* (Hardship begets facility) is “Necessities (*darūrāt*) make forbidden things canonically harmless” (*Al-daruratu tubihu al-mahdhurat*). This maxim allows prohibited things to become lawful in the absence of any other alternatives. It is a corollary of one of the five leading legal maxims, which says, “hardship begets facility.” This maxim implies that some rules can be relaxed in exceptional circumstances, especially when such rules can lead to hardship. It is a form of *Rukhsah* in Islamic jurisprudence that is applicable to instances of omission, reduction, combining, delay, advance, lawful and unlawful. The maxim has its basis in the Qur'anic injunction, which reads:

Say, I do not find within that which was revealed to me (anything) forbidden to one who would eat it unless it be a dead animal or blood spilled out or the flesh of swine, - for indeed, it is impure – or it is (that which is slaughtered as a sacrifice for others than Allah). But whosoever is forced by necessity, neither desiring it nor transgressing (its limit), then indeed, your Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (Qur'ān, 6:145).

From the above verse of the Qur'an, it is deducible that Muslims are guided by Allah on what they eat and drink, and they can only consume from what is permissible. That notwithstanding, a Muslim is allowed, out of necessity, to consume carrion or pork, which is originally unlawful, just to save his life if he would die of starvation for want of lawful food. Thus,

the dumping of the cargo of an overloaded ship to prevent danger to the lives of its passengers is validated (Kamali, 2012). It should, however, be noted that taking such a step remains the only genuine solution and effective remedy and must be clearly and genuinely justified, such as the protection of life. Also, such a step must not lead to higher abominable acts like murder, apostasy, unlawful sex and unlawful usurpation of property (Hasanuzzaman, 2007).

The maxim “necessities (*darūrāt*) make forbidden things canonically harmless” is relevant to the COVID-19 new normal of wearing masks as an effective method of curbing the spread of the virus. Covering the face in *salāt* is considered to be a prohibition and an imitation of the fire-worshippers. According to the Maliki jurists, a Muslim woman must open her face in *salāt* and *ihram*, but there is no repugnance if she does so due to a need, such as the presence of strange men. The Shafi‘i also ruled that it is disliked for a man to pray with his mouth masked, or for a woman with a face veil, except she finds herself in a place where there are strange men who would not desist from looking at her. In the same vein, the Hanafi jurists declare covering the face in *salāt* to be *makruh tahrimi* as it amounts to imitating the Zoroastrians who used to mask themselves in their worship of fire. However, the Prophet was said to have granted an exception to this prohibition, namely, if covering is used to suppress yawning. This reason is a relaxation of the rule of the prohibition and the sensitivity and responsiveness of the Shari‘ah, which is equally relevant to the pandemic situation (Karaan, n.d.). According to Karaan (n.d.), “phenomena which under normal circumstances amount to *tashabbuh bil-kuffar*, or imitation of non-Muslims, will no longer be given the same characterisation when they are resorted to out of need”, just like a sick Muslim who is sick and cannot observe his *salāt* standing, and so decides to sit on a chair, in the manner the Christians would sit on benches and chairs.

#### **4. *Al-darar yuzāl* (Harm must be eliminated)**

This involves choosing between various actions to remove harm by developing a law based on removing harm before it occurs, minimising harm once it occurs, or preventing further harm after it occurs. Harming takes different forms, and so the Qur‘ān forbids any form of the action. It says in one verse, “And do not do mischief on the earth after it has been set in order, and invoke Him with fear and hope. Surely, Allah’s Mercy is (ever) near unto the good-doers (Q7: 56). Allah equally frowns and rules against harming women even at the point of divorcing them, saying: “Lodge them (the divorced women) where you dwell, according to your means, and do not harm them to oppress them...” (Q. 65: 6). It is generally believed that the root of this maxim is from the hadith of the Prophet which says, “*La darara wala dirāra*” (Let there be no infliction of harm nor its reciprocation).

Choosing to remove harm is based on the scale of priorities under the *Maqāsid ash-sharī‘ah* – life, mind, lineage, religion and property. This formula serves as a basis for legislating legal rulings for new incidents and emerging issues (Elgariani, undated), and for achieving the fundamental principle of *Sharī‘ah*, which is to prevent and remove injury,

difficulty and hardship. For instance, a sick person is expected to avoid using water to perform ablution when he has been instructed by an expert physician that using water may prolong the period of his illness, or make the sickness more severe. Such a person should therefore avoid using water and go for *tayammum*. A clear demonstration of this could be inferred from the following Hadith of the Prophet:

A man had a tree on the land of someone else. The owner of the land was annoyed at the frequent visits and intrusion of the owner of the tree. He subsequently raised the matter before the Prophet. The Prophet asked the owner of the tree to take another tree nearer to his orchard instead of this tree. The man refused. The Prophet asked him to sell it to the landlord, but he refused again. Then the Prophet asked him to give it to the landlord and he refused that too. Then the Prophet said: ‘What you are doing is to harm him.’ So, he asked the owner of the land to give him another tree (Sunan Abu Dawud, Hadith No. 3629).

The question of not harming oneself implies that all precautionary measures are taken to avoid contracting any contagious disease. Quite a good number of *ahādith* give credence to this. In the *Sahīh Muslim*, Sharīd ibn Suwayd narrated that a leper was among the delegation from Thaqīf. The Messenger of Allah sent a message to him, saying: “Return; we have received your pledge of allegiance.” The normal practice of accepting a pledge of allegiance by the Prophet was to shake their hands. But in this case, he avoided physical contact with the leper to prevent the spread of the disease and to avoid harming himself. Thus, the conventional form of paying allegiance was altered to prevent the disease from spreading. This hadith also aligns with another Prophetic Tradition narrated by Abu Hurayrah, in which the Messenger of Allah said: “Do not bring diseased camels into contact with healthy camels” (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith No. 9263).

Another relevant aspect to this maxim is the washing of hands with soap as a step in any disinfection procedure. This is because maintaining good personal hygiene is a prerequisite for preventing the spread of COVID-19, which can be transmitted through various surfaces and can survive for two hours to nine days, depending on the surface. As such, avoidance of touching the eyes, nose and mouth is emphasised as a measure by the WHO to maintain good personal hygiene. Interestingly, washing the face, which includes the mouth and nose, is one of the obligatory (*wājib*) parts of ablution (*wudū'*), omission of which renders it null and void. In addition, washing the hands three times when starting *wudu'*, as well as rinsing the mouth and nose, forms part of the sunnah of *wudū'*. By implication, thorough handwashing with soap before performing ablution becomes a necessity to be adopted during the pandemic era for one to wash their face and rinse the mouth and nose, which are all parts of *wudū'*.

**5. *Al-dararu al-ashaddu yuzālu bil darari al-khaff* (A greater harm is eliminated by tolerating a lesser one)**

This is a branch of the maxim *Al-darar yuzāl* (harm must be eliminated). It implies tolerating a lesser harm to eliminate a greater one. For instance, it is allowed to open the abdomen of a dead pregnant woman to save the life of a foetus in her womb. In the same vein, when a Muslim is abducted and the abductors are asking for a ransom, lesser harm is paying the ransom to save the life of the abducted Muslim. Looking at it from an economic angle, Buerhan Saiti and Adam Abdullah (2016) have this to say:

The meaning of this maxim is that if harm is unavoidable, one must choose the lighter harm, as reflected in the maxim that states that the lesser of the two harms must be chosen (*Majallah*, no.29). The maxim provides some important choices in order to endure a minor harm to counteract a major harm. The nature of guarantee in Islam calls for a more well-off neighbor to come to the aid of a less well-off neighbor if his house or property has been damaged or destroyed, rendering him impoverished. Notwithstanding the provisions of any contemporary *takāful* policies, which may not be affordable to the poor, the harm that is caused by the poverty of the poor neighbor is more serious than the harm caused by the distribution of a portion of the income from a well-off individual to his neighbor. Therefore, in cases where the choice is between two harmful alternatives, the one fraught with less harm may be chosen.

**6. *Mā jāza li‘udhrin batala bizawālih* (What is made legal by a valid excuse becomes illegal when the excuse ends)**

This legal maxim implies the non-perpetuity of an excuse for doing what is not normal. In other words, where a condition creates an opportunity for doing an illegal act, such a grace will become nullified as soon as the condition improves. For instance, the absence of water prompts one to perform *tayammum*, but as soon as water becomes available, they should immediately opt for it. In the same vein, a traveller who shortens his prayers while on a journey goes back to the full observance of his prayers immediately after he returns to his home. A hadith that can be used to corroborate this maxim reads:

One of the companions of the Prophet, called Qabisah, said: “I was in debt and I came to the Prophet and asked for help regarding it. He said: Wait till we receive *Sadaqah*, so that we may order that to be given to you. The Prophet again said: Qabisah, begging is not permissible except for one of three classes of people: one who has incurred debt, for him begging is permissible until he pays that off, after which he must stop (begging); a man whose property has been destroyed by a calamity which has smitten him, for him begging is permissible until he receives enough sustenance or reasonable subsistence; and a person who has been smitten by poverty, the genuineness of which is confirmed by three intelligent members of his people, for him begging is permissible till he receives that which will support him or will provide him with subsistence. Qabisah, besides these three, begging is forbidden, and one who engages in such consumes that which is forbidden (Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 2271).

By implication, the COVID-19 pandemic legalised some practices, such as social distancing and the use of face masks in *salāt*, which hitherto were not legal. These become illegal when the pandemic is no longer effective or alternative means of checking its spread are devised.

### **Implications for Interfaith Understanding**

The coronavirus outbreak dealt a serious setback to religion worldwide. Its consequences spared no religion: pilgrimages to the holy places were stopped and all religious festivities were suspended. Indeed, all mosques, churches and places of worship were locked down, and no congregational worship was allowed to be held. The pandemic falsified those who used different religious platforms to forecast and predict the future. One Bola Olalere (2020) confronted such ‘prophets’, saying: “How many of our miracle-working pastors can come out and look at coronavirus in the face and command it to go, like the way they command HIV and other forms of diseases. They dare not!” This presupposes that religious clerics should see religion beyond performing miracles or forecasting the future. Meanwhile, the emergence of COVID-19 has brought about a better understanding of religion for the promotion of unity and peaceful coexistence.

Specifically, the universality of human struggle and divine mercy were clearly demonstrated in the application of Islamic legal maxims during the pandemic. In Islam, pandemics can be seen as both a trial and a mercy, depending on one’s spiritual orientation and response. This resonates with Judeo-Christian, Hindu and Buddhist perspectives, where suffering is often interpreted as a test, a form of purification or a spiritual opportunity. For instance, the story of Job exemplifies suffering as a test of faith. God allowed Satan to afflict Job to prove his righteousness (Job 1:8-12). Also, it is plainly stated in Hebrews 12:6,11 that “The Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastens everyone He accepts as his son... No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Rater on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness.” It, therefore, implies that an open space should be created by different religions for shared theological reflection on suffering, divine will and the role of faith in adversity, as a means of fostering meaningful interfaith dialogue.

In addition to the above, it can be inferred from Islamic maxims that the preservation of life is one of the supreme objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid ash-sharī‘ah*). This is equally the stand of all religions; hence, a clarion call to align with the common religious imperative to protect human dignity and welfare. This theological position is expected to promote interfaith collaboration in humanitarian and relief efforts, particularly during times of crisis. By implication, there is a need to encourage joint faith-based responses to crises across the fields of health, economics and the environment, all anchored in shared values such as compassion, responsibility and human dignity. Apparently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, various religious bodies across the globe worked together across faith lines to respond to the crisis in ways that reflected shared moral values. These

collaborative efforts were seen in health interventions, economic support systems and environmental advocacy. For instance, there was a series of interfaith health campaigns and initiatives during the period. The Faiths4Vaccines Initiative (USA), for example, was a national multi-faith effort comprising Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist and Hindu leaders. The coalition aimed to promote equitable vaccine distribution, especially among marginalised communities. Their work was rooted in compassion and the religious responsibility to protect life (<https://www.faiths4vaccines.org>). There was also the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Religions for Peace. These two global bodies worked together to disseminate accurate health information, counter vaccine hesitancy and provide spiritual and psychological support. They encouraged congregations worldwide to serve at vaccination and testing sites. In Nigeria, the Muslim-Christian Health Coalition in northern Nigeria brought together Christian and Muslim leaders who worked together through local interfaith networks to support COVID-19 safety awareness campaigns, especially in areas where mistrust of government health messaging was high. The message was centred around the shared value of preserving life (*hifz al-nafs* in Islam and “sanctity of life” in Christianity) (Nigeria Interfaith Action Association, 2020).

In the economic sphere, some humanitarian and relief efforts were made to uphold human dignity and solidarity. The Interfaith Rainbows in South Africa comprised Jewish, Muslim and Christian organisations, which jointly created food banks and distributed relief packages to economically vulnerable families during the lockdown. Their effort was based on the religious imperative to protect the vulnerable and uphold human dignity (<https://www.interfaith.org.uk/news>). Also, the UK Interfaith Network, which comprises Churches, Mosques, Gurdwaras and Temples, collaborated to deliver food and essentials to the elderly and migrants. They often shared facilities and volunteers, despite doctrinal differences. The initiative promoted compassion and the shared belief in caring for one’s neighbour. In addition, there was the Religions for Peace – COVID Solidarity Response Fund, an initiative that pooled resources from multiple faiths to provide emergency relief, fund income, generate projects and support small businesses in the Global South affected by lockdowns (<https://rfp.org/covid19/>).

In addition, the environmental stewardship during the pandemic was impressive. This came in the form of faith-based environmental reflection and joint advocacy. For instance, a multi-faith network, including Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and indigenous leaders by the name GreenFaith International Network emphasised how environmental degradation worsens pandemics. They called for eco-friendly recovery policies rooted in stewardship, like the Islamic concept of *khalifah* and Christian stewardship of creation (<https://greenfaith.org>). In the same vein, at the Joint Interfaith Statements at COP26 (2021), religious leaders used the pandemic as a wake-up call to reflect on ecological justice. They argued that the health crisis revealed the fragility of human systems and the urgent need for sustainable practices anchored in shared values like responsibility for creation and solidarity with future generations (United

Nations Climate Change, Faith-Based Organizations at COP26, 2021).

Apart from the above, the Islamic legal maxims discussed clearly demonstrate religious flexibility in crises, particularly those related to hardship (*al-mashaqqah tajlib al-taysir*), necessity (*al-darurat tubihu al-mahzurāt*) and intention (*al-umūr bi maqāsidihā*), which were applied to adjust religious practices during COVID-19. This flexibility reflects a shared human concern across faiths: the sanctity of life. It encourages mutual respect among religions, showing that even deeply ritualistic traditions can prioritise public health and the common good. By implication, other religions which observed similar adaptations, such as suspending congregations and adjusting some rituals, can better appreciate Islam's internal logic for doing the same, thereby enhancing mutual trust and understanding.

Closely related to the above is the fact that Islamic responses to the pandemic, like quarantine, social distancing and suspension of mass gatherings, mirror ethical principles in Christianity, Judaism and other faiths that prioritise saving lives. The use of *al-qawā'id al-fiqhīyah* reflects that religious reasoning can align with modern science, providing a basis for shared ethical frameworks during emergencies. As such, there is a need to encourage collaborative interfaith advocacy for public health and social responsibility, validating that faith and science can work together across religious boundaries. Furthermore, the suspension of communal prayers, pilgrimages and funerary rites due to the pandemic affected all religious communities, not just Muslims. By explaining how Islamic jurisprudence accommodated these disruptions using principles like *rukhsah*, the paper provides a lens through which Muslims can empathise with non-Muslims, and vice versa. Building empathy across religions, therefore, becomes imperative, as all grappled with similar disruptions to sacred rituals, creating grounds for dialogue about adapting faith in times of crisis.

Another implication of the legal maxims as related to the COVID-19 pandemic is the clarification of misconceptions about Islamic rigidity. One of the misunderstandings often held by people of other faiths is that Islam is rigid and legalistic. This application of the maxims dispels that myth by showing that Islam has built-in mechanisms for compassion, ease and exception during hardship. Concepts such as *rukhsah* and *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) highlight Islam's dynamic ethical framework. By implication, the application of these legal maxims calls for the promotion of greater respect and nuanced understanding of Islamic law among non-Muslims, reducing prejudice and promoting informed engagement.

Further still, the pandemic called for respect for religious diversity and rights. Initially, we discussed how forced cremations and denial of Islamic funeral rites during the pandemic were deeply painful and viewed as violations of religious rights by Muslims. Such insights can sensitise other faiths to the sacredness of Islamic rituals, while simultaneously calling for mutual respect for burial traditions across religions. We therefore advocate for religious freedom and dignity, especially in multifaith societies during emergencies, fostering legal and

moral support for all religions. In the same vein, there is a need to promote interfaith legal and ethical discourse among religious jurists, theologians and ethicists across faiths to strengthen mutual learning. By rooting pandemic-era adaptations in classical Islamic legal reasoning and citing precedents from early Islam, the paper models a faithful yet forward-thinking jurisprudence. This opens the door for interfaith legal scholars to engage in comparative studies on how religious laws adapt in times of crisis.

## **Conclusion**

The flexibility of *Sharī'ah* to accommodate modern developments in ways that safeguard society from harm, hardship and difficulty has been clearly demonstrated through the Islamic legal maxims relevant to the COVID-19 era. This establishes that there is flexibility within perceived rigidity, particularly in mitigating hardship during extraordinary circumstances (Al-Zuhaylī, 2006). The justification for modifying certain religious practices during the pandemic has also been addressed, showing that Islam is not alien to such instances, as analogous situations occurred in earlier times. This historical continuity explains the ease with which Muslims adapted themselves to the pandemic context.

Furthermore, this adaptability reinforces the divine mission of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who, despite emerging from a context often described as pre-Islamic ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*), provided prescriptions that remain relevant to contemporary realities (Kamali, 1991). It also highlights the scientific orientation of Islam, given that many of the World Health Organization's (WHO, 2020) recommendations during COVID-19 were consistent with Islamic teachings on hygiene, quarantine and communal safety. Muslims are, therefore, urged to acquire proper knowledge of their religion to distinguish between what is obligatory, permissible or forbidden, especially under the principle of *Rukhṣah* (legal concession), which addresses omission, reduction, combination, delay and even temporary permissibility of otherwise unlawful acts (Nyazee, 2003).

In the same vein, health practitioners are encouraged to engage with Islamic legal maxims to deepen their understanding of the intersections between religion and their profession. Bridging the artificial divide between religion and science is crucial for mutual enrichment and cross-fertilisation of knowledge. Finally, the pandemic period has significantly contributed to interfaith understanding by demonstrating that Islamic legal thought is humane, dynamic and responsive to contemporary challenges. It bridges religious tradition with public health, ancient jurisprudential principles with modern realities, and faith obligations with communal responsibility. In doing so, it not only strengthens Muslim resilience but also fosters interreligious solidarity grounded in shared values, mutual recognition and cooperative ethics in the face of global adversity.

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# CHAPTER 11

## An Examination of the Growth and Potential of Halāl Certification in Nigeria: The Case Study of Halāl Certification Authority in Nigeria

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### Introduction

Halāl refers to what is acceptable and lawful according to the *Shari'ah*. It is the basis upon which actions are valid in Islam. *Halāl* is used not only in the context of commodity consumption or production, but it also refers to a wide range of human activities that influence all aspects of Muslim daily life (Bux, Varese, Amicarelli & Lombardi, 2022). Due to the complexity of the modern world and the global dynamics of development, there is a compelling need to establish mechanisms that ensure ethical standards and maintain ideological integrity in all facets of life. As a significant subject in the Islamic faith, *Halāl* consumption is becoming increasingly attractive to the Muslim population across the world (Ashafa, 2025). This situation is driving the growth of the *Halāl* certification subsector of the global economy. It is also noted that the post-COVID-19 performance of the *Halāl* industry has been significant across all borders, particularly in academia, among consumers, policymakers and businesses (Mustun, 2021).

The importance of Halāl certification cannot be overstated. It ensures consumer safety and health, especially regarding food and other consumables. Halāl-certified foods are highly regarded in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia, so the absence of the certification logo can significantly affect marketability (Hasan, 2019). Therefore, *Halāl* certification is seen as a way to improve consumer well-being. Likewise, *Halāl* certification is a key means of safeguarding the religious needs of Muslim consumers, as it guarantees the required quality of products in accordance with Shari'ah. Allah states in the Qur'an: "O mankind! Eat the lawful and good things out of what is in the earth, and do not follow the footsteps of the Shaitan; surely he is your open enemy" (Qur'an 2:168). This emphasises the importance of selective eating and obeying divine commandments. It also shows that Islam sets a clear way of life that influences Muslims' daily decisions, from food habits to other actions (Bux et al., 2022).

The overall significance of *Halāl* certification in relation to religion, socio-economics and sustainable development, as it pertains to Nigeria, is the focus of this study. With about

two billion Muslims, approximately 25% of the world's population, a significant portion of immigrants from Muslim-majority nations prefer to consume *Halāl*-certified products while abroad. Many Muslim-majority countries have begun leveraging the opportunities presented by *Halāl* certification for economic growth. Given this, it is essential to investigate the current state of *Halāl* certification in Nigeria. In this context, the study aims to examine the *Halāl* certification market in Nigeria, using the *Halāl* Certification Authority in Nigeria as our background. This exploratory study seeks to answer the question: What is the impact of the *Halāl* Certification Authority in positioning Nigeria as a competitive player in the global *Halāl* industry? The contributions of this study to existing knowledge are twofold. First, it provides insights into how the *Halāl* Certification Authority in Nigeria influences the *Halāl* sector to enhance Nigeria's potential. Second, it contextualises *Halāl* certification in Nigeria as a contribution to the global sustainable development agenda. Consequently, the following three research questions are addressed: (a) What is the current state of *Halāl* certification worldwide? (b) What are the certification processes and compliance requirements adopted by the *Halāl* Certification Authority? (c) What are the challenges and prospects of *Halāl* certification in Nigeria? Answers to these questions will help consumers, entrepreneurs, policymakers and other stakeholders understand the mutual benefits of *Halāl* certification within the global economic landscape. In addition to the introduction (section one), there are five other sections. Section two explores the concept and importance of *Halāl* certification. Section three examines the growth and impact of *Halāl* certification globally. Section four provides an overview of the *Halāl* Certification Authority in Nigeria. Section five evaluates the challenges and prospects of *Halāl* Certification in Nigeria, while section six presents the conclusion, implications and recommendations.

### **The Concept and Importance of *Halāl* Certification**

*Halāl* certification refers to the process undertaken by relevant agencies to assure consumers that both ingredients and production methods comply with Shari'ah stipulations. *Halāl* certification as a symbol of value, health and the ecosystem not only serves as assurance that a product complies with Islamic dietary laws but also ensures that it contains only permitted elements (Asa & Azmi, 2018). During the *Halāl* certification process, a manufacturer or brand owner applies for certification. The *Halāl* certification body (HCB) reviews the application, evaluates product content, examines the product's process or service procedure, inspects production or service environments and issues reports. This results in the issuance of a label bearing the *Halāl* certification number (Karimullah, 2023). *Halāl* certification induces the consciousness of producers to high quality and standards. This consciousness strengthens customer attraction and increases marketability across human settlements, particularly in Muslim-dominated societies. The inclination of producers to disclose the high quality of their products to consumers, particularly regarding nutritional content and production hygiene conditions, leads to the adoption of product certification. It also stimulates competition among producers to uphold ethical standards. There is a strong market demand from manufacturers worldwide to explore Muslim-dominated

regions for economic advantage. This is also evident in the claims by both the Malaysian government and the Indonesian Council of Ulama that their standards are the model for Halāl certifier bodies across the globe (Hosen & Lathifah, 2020). Similarly, it has been established that severe consequences await producers who compromise the ethical standards required by Halāl regulatory agencies in Muslim-dominated societies (Mustun, 2021).

*Halāl* certification positively impacts the quality of life of consumers. One basic feature of the certification process is that manufacturers establish a mechanism that assures consumers of the hygiene and safety status of the products (Moosavi-Movahedi et al., 2021). For instance, cosmetics consumers in Indonesia are concerned about skin damage due to the prevalence of dangerous cosmetics (Hasibuan, Nasution, & Siregar, 2019). The situation has made product certification more compelling, which is the consumers' hope for safety. Moreover, Halāl certification enhances economic growth. Statistics show that the global *Halāl* industry is valued at over two trillion U.S. dollars as of 2025, and is estimated to grow to 2.8 trillion U.S. dollars in the coming years (Amna, 2025). This makes the industry one of the most sought-after economic targets for many countries across the globe. *Halāl* certification stimulates research to enhance quality through the development of *Halāl* studies curricula in academia. The trend in the business world suggests that the *Halāl* industry is poised to become a hub for advancement in the global economic landscape. With this, it is becoming increasingly imperative to set the stage for the training of manpower to take on the responsibilities of the emerging market, which entails *Halāl* certification, among other subsidiaries. Ahmad et al. (2011) noted that simple Halāl knowledge is not enough to tackle the challenges being created by the increasing *Halāl* awareness, hence the need for higher education institutions to rise up to this challenge by establishing *Halāl* studies to produce adequate and competent manpower for the industry (Ahmad et al., 2011).

*Halāl* makes a significant contribution to the global sustainable development project. This fact stems from the interconnectivity of different sectors of the economy, which are all impacted by the *Halāl* supply chain, including manufacturing, transportation and storage. It facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration among scholars who work together to set standard procedures and audit parameters for *Halāl* products. It makes goods and services globally acceptable, thereby enhancing cross-border relationships. For instance, the Netherlands is identified as the hub of Halāl supply chain to European nations through its establishment of a storage facility for *Halāl* products in the region (Khan & Haleem, 2016). Different nations are now developing their own regulations to expand the export and import of *Halāl* products (Asa, 2019). This is in addition to the fact that many other nations offer to patronise *Halāl* products due to health safety concerns. Overall, *Halāl* certification, which ordinarily signifies compliance with religious dictates and ethical standards, also fosters transparency, trust, authenticity and reliability (Aufi, Julian, Maulidizen, Ariaputra & Fauzan, 2024).

### **Global *Halāl* Certification Landscape**

*Halāl* certification is a development that has evolved as a result of the inevitable growth arising from population surge and human civilisation. Despite the existence of religious consciousness of adhering to ethical practices, certifying what is Halāl or what is not used

to be an informal engagement by religious experts, which was largely based on community trust (Aufi et al., 2024). This is what makes Halāl certification an emerging sector, which is undoubtedly a fast-growing industry. The need to increase the global market's reliability and traceability of Halāl products and services has driven the development of Halāl certification (Bux et al., 2022). Malaysia is widely known as the leading nation in the development of Halāl standards. This is done under the agency known as the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, otherwise called JAKIM. It is a federal government agency responsible for Islamic religious affairs, including Halāl certification in Malaysia. *Halāl* standard development was pioneered by JAKIM in 1974 (Azam & Abdullah, 2021).

Since the establishment of the Malaysian *Halāl* standards, many other *Halāl* certification bodies have emerged across the globe due to the market potential of the industry, in addition to the religious significance it portends. Some of the internationally known Halāl certification bodies include: JAKIM in Malaysia, Islamic Food Research Centre Malaysia & Asia Region (IFRC Asia), Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Produk *Halāl* (BPJPH), Majelis Ugama Islam Singapore (MUIS), Jamiat Ulama Halāl Foundation, South African National Halāl Authority (SANHA), American *Halāl* Foundation (AHF) and Shandong *Halāl* Certification Service, China, among others ([www.gimdes.org](http://www.gimdes.org)). It is worth noting that many certification bodies exist in non-Muslim or Muslim-minority nations in different parts of the world. Australia, Canada, Japan and the USA are among Muslim-minority nations with many certification bodies ([www.myehalal.com](http://www.myehalal.com)). This gesture is as a result of the market potential of the *Halāl* industry and the capacity it has for economic expansion, in which the Muslim population is projected to reach three billion by 2060 ([www.isaHalal.com](http://www.isaHalal.com)).

*Halāl* certification is based on standards developed from a Shari'ah lens by countries worldwide. Every certification body follows a particular standard that guides its certification procedure. Those taken as models by certification bodies worldwide include the Malaysian standard by JAKIM, the *Halāl* Standard of Indonesia by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), the *Halāl* Standard of Singapore by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, and the Halāl Standard by the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC), patronised by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member countries (Azam & Abdullah, 2021).

It is significant to acknowledge that countries that thrive in *Halāl* certification have established government-designated agencies to regulate their activities. This gesture is significant either as an economic boost or as a guarantee of the religion of consumers. In either case, the control indicates government cohesion in playing the expected role in achieving sustainable development, which encompasses goals such as good health and well-being, economic growth, industry and innovation, responsible consumption, and an inclusive society, among others. In consonance with this perspective, studies on the Halāl industry confirm that *Halāl* certification technologies align with the spirit of the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) across the economic, social and environmental dimensions (Syahr, Syaifullah, Buyamin & Sally, 2023). Government involvement in the administration of *Halāl* certification for products significantly impacts performance; in contrast, the lack of rigorous policies from the government sector is a factor responsible for the performance of *Halāl* certification in some countries (Othman, B., Md. Shaarani, S. & Bahron, 2017).

In Nigeria, the government is showing an interest in making an impact in the *Halāl* industry, particularly in the certification sector. The federal government in 2022 inaugurated a committee to develop a roadmap and operational framework for *Halāl* certification in Nigeria ([www.brtnews.ng](http://www.brtnews.ng)). With the action, the government intends to explore the vast opportunity inherent in the global *Halāl* industry, which has been hinted at by research scholars (Muhammad, Lateef, Ibrahim, Fahmi, Yakub & Ahmed, 2025). To show government's enthusiasm to make the industry work, the representative of the government, while inaugurating the committee, acknowledged that the *Halāl* market is a huge segment of the economy which has to be given attention to assure both local and international customers, and improve the profile of the country's economy ([www.brt.ng](http://www.brt.ng)). The committee comprises members from government agencies and representatives of the private sector involved in the *Halāl* value chain. Since the committee was inaugurated, progress has been slow due to governance bureaucracy.

Overall, *Halāl* certification is central to the performance of *Halāl* products and services across the globe. Hence, it has become a growing industry with Muslim-dominated and Muslim-minority countries getting involved to varying degrees. Muslim majority-countries like Malaysia and Indonesia are leveraging their population advantage to lead in the industry in order to safeguard the religion of their teeming population and enhance their economic status. Muslim-minority countries, such as Singapore, Thailand and the USA, are actively engaging the industry to attract tourism and protect the interests of their minority population for sustainable development. Regardless of the religious status of countries, government policy or bureaucracy has been a significant factor in the performance of *Halāl* certification practices across the globe (Noor & Noordin, 2016).

### ***Halāl* Certification Authority (HCA) in Nigeria: An Overview**

A closer examination of Nigeria's *Halāl* certification sector reveals a surprising presence of certification bodies, despite the country's relatively low profile in the global *Halāl* market. These existing bodies are operating certification services to sustain the country's *Halāl* market and, equally, to enhance the nation's image in the global *Halāl* industry. Some of the *Halāl* certification organisations in Nigeria are *Halāl* Certification Authority (HCA) ([www.halalcert.com](http://www.halalcert.com)), Factocert *Halāl* Certification ([www.halalfactocert.com](http://www.halalfactocert.com)), *Halāl* Compliance and Food Safety Limited (HaCFoS) ([www.english.hak.gov.tr](http://www.english.hak.gov.tr)), *Halāl* and Agrofood Compliance Certification Services (HACCS) ([www.halalagrofoodcert](http://www.halalagrofoodcert)), Certvalue *Halāl* Certification ([www.certvalue.com](http://www.certvalue.com)), TopCertifier *Halāl* Certification ([www.topcertifier.com](http://www.topcertifier.com)) and *Halāl* Standards

Development Trust (HASDAT) ([www.brtnnews.ng](http://www.brtnnews.ng)), among others. Nigeria is a member of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) but not a member of the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC), an affiliate of the OIC meant to regulate *Halāl* certification bodies of member countries ([www.english.hak.gov](http://www.english.hak.gov)).

Nigeria is still passive in the *Halāl* certification sector because the government has yet to fully establish a body that regulates such activity. As catalogued on the *Halāl* Accreditation Agency's website, Nigeria has not developed practices or official regulations for *Halāl* certification or *Halāl*-certified products and services. Even at this, the demand for *Halāl* products is on the increase in the country. This development is motivating non-governmental bodies to explore the *Halāl* market by offering accreditation services to manufacturers in different parts of the country, although these bodies are still less noticed, perhaps due to a poor awareness strategy (Muhammad & Yakasai, 2022).

In this context, *Halāl* Certification Authority (HCA) is one of the organisations operating in the *Halāl* industry in Nigeria. It was established in 2016. Before its establishment, a technical committee was formed in 2013 by a group of concerned Muslim professionals to evaluate the need for *Halāl* certification in Nigeria (Ajala, Personal Communication, May 30, 2025). The body develops *Halāl* product standards and inspects products in accordance with Islamic law that is internationally accepted and reliable for both domestic and foreign consumers ([www.halacert.com](http://www.halacert.com)).

The objectives of the organisation as spelt out on their website are as follows:

- i. to develop and establish *Halāl* products standards in conformity with Islamic law and international standards;
- ii. to offer *Halāl* certification services for products and services;
- iii. to develop human capacity in the field of *Halāl* and its industry;
- iv. to ensure traceability of certified *Halāl* products and services by leveraging on cutting edge technology to maintain *Halāl* standard and requirements;
- v. to collaborate with other stakeholders (in public and private sectors) to redress the challenges in *Halāl* industry through process improvements, promoting healthy living and sustainable development.

With the absence of a functional framework for *Halāl* regulation in Nigeria, *Halāl* Certification Authority has signed a memorandum of understanding with the two leading public agencies responsible for standards and product quality: the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). The memorandum signed signifies the lawful operation of the body as an accredited organisation in the standards industry. The relationship is basically in the area of standard formulation and compliance with Codex Alimentarius. HCA also spreads its tentacles to establish partnerships with international bodies in the *Halāl* industry. These include: the International Institute for *Halāl* Research and Training (INHART) of the International Islamic University Malaysia

(IIUM), the *Halāl* Food Authority, United Kingdom, the Laboratory of *Halāl* Services (Universiti Putra, Malaysia), and *Halāl* Industry Development Corporation, Malaysia. Collaboration with these foreign bodies makes it possible for HCA to enhance the expertise of its personnel.

*Halāl* Certification Authority is managed by a team of experts across basic disciplines required for a reliable certification process. These experts include microbiologists, pharmacologists, Shariah experts, food technologists, biochemists, environmental chemists, among others. The basic services offered by the body include: *Halāl* certification, *Halāl* education and training, consultancy and promotion. Apart from their initial expertise, HCA also explores international collaboration to further train their staff to meet global industry standards (Ajala, Personal Communication, May 30, 2025). It is on record that HCA has certified 350 products from various manufacturers. Some of the products certified are presented in the table below.

<b>NO.</b>	<b>MANUFACTURING COMPANY</b>	<b>PRODUCT</b>	<b>ISSUE DATE</b>	<b>EXPIRY DATE</b>
1.	Abvee Industries Limited	Packaging Material	03-02-2022	03-01-2023
2.	Crest Agro Product Farms	Cassava Starch	31-01-2022	30-01-2023
3.	Sarsoli	Filler Master Batch	21-02-2022	20-02-2023
4.	Sonata Agri International Limited	Ww320 Cashew Nuts	05-05-2022	05-04-2023
5.	GB Foods Gbagada	Jumbo Tomato Mix	05-05-2022	05-04-2023
6.	TG Agri Limited	Goodheart Foods Nutmeg Powder	26-04-2022	25-04-2023
7.	Ifgreen	Ifgreen Fufu Flour	26-04-2022	25-04-2023
8.	JOF Salt	JOF Fine Salt	28-04-2022	27-04-2023
9.	Crown Flour Mill	Crown Spagetti Slim	17-05-2022	16-05-2023
10.	Crown Flour Mill	Mama Gold Flour	17-05-2022	16-05-2022
11.	Amel International Services	Finest Icing Sugar	17-05-2022	16-05-2023
12.	Africa GB Foods	Bama Real Mayonnaise	17-05-2022	16-05-2023
13.	BUA Refinery Limited	Premium Sugar Non-fortified	24-05-2022	23-05-2023
14.	Nigeria Eagle Flour Mills	Eagle Wheat Flour	31-05-2022	30-05-2023
15.	Premium Edible Oil Products	Golden Penny Spread	31-05-2022	30-05-2023
16.	Rite Foods Limited	Bigi Premium Table Water	02-07-2022	02-06-2023
17.	Rite Foods Limited	Bigi Beef Sausage Roll	02-07-2022	02-06-2023

18.	Premium Cassava Product	Golden Penny Garri	06-07-2022	06-06-2023
19.	Sierra Tropical Limited	Pineapple Juice concentrate	20-06-2022	19-06-2023
20.	UAC Foods	Gala Sausage Roll	29-07-2022	28-07-2023
21.	Jay's American Diner	Rebound Ready-to-use Therapeutic Foods	29-07-2022	28-07-2023
22.	Domino's Pizza Wawa	Catfish Pizza	29-07-2022	28-07-2023
23.	Harvest Food and Agro Processing Limited	Venus Cassava Starch	31-10-2022	30-10-2023
24.	OCS Limited	Meat Products	22-11-2022	21-11-2023
25.	Chicken Hobb	Chicken	22-11-2022	21-11-2023
26.	Primepak Industries Nigeria Limited	Packaging Material	14-12-2022	13-12-2023
27.	Flour Mills of Nigeria	Golden Penny Semovita	16-01-2023	15-01-2024
28.	Royal Salt	Light Salt	23-01-2023	22-01-2024
29.	NASCO Foods	NASCO Fancy Biscuits	31-01-2023	30-01-2025
30.	Perfect Meats	Perfect Meat	09-02-2023	08-02-2025

Source: <https://Halalcert.com.ng/new/certifiedproducts>

A thorough assessment of the products and services certified by the organisation reveals that it deals with various industries, which include meat and poultry, health and beauty, flavours and ingredients, bakery and food processing, nutraceuticals and supplements, as well as airport restaurant services. HCA evaluates service-based industries where *Shari'ah* compliance is critical. Some of these include slaughtering service, ensuring that abattoirs follow Islamic guidelines for animal slaughter. In catering service, it assesses food handling, ingredient sourcing and kitchen hygiene. In logistics and warehousing, it verifies segregation and contamination control for Halāl and non-Halāl goods during storage and transport. There are also hospitality services that cover hotel management, in-flight catering service and event centres (Sherifdeen, Personal Communication, June 1, 2025).

HCA has a five-step certification process, which includes: Application, Application Evaluation, Agreement and Price Quote, On-site Audit, and Certification Decision. First, the application stage involves the client formally applying to the body for the *Halāl* certification of a product or service. It also requires that the client submit the profile of the product and service for evaluation. Second, the application evaluation is the stage in which the submitted application and the supporting documents are thoroughly reviewed for completeness, eligibility and compliance with *Halāl* requirements. It includes verifying the type of product or service applied for, assessing the list of ingredients, raw materials and suppliers. It also ensures that supporting documents, such as company registration, hygiene certifications and ingredient specifications, are submitted. This enables screening for

the presence of haram, *najas* (impurity) or *mashbuh* (doubtful) elements, and to determine the appropriate certification scope and audit plan (Sherifdeen, Personal Communication, June 1, 2025). Third, the parties follow the necessary procedure to agree on the terms of the certification contract. Fourth, an on-site audit follows if the evaluation outcome meets the established standards. The certification body sends expert auditors to the client's site to inspect and document the assessment for the necessary decision. Fifth, the *Halāl* certification body issues the certificate and the *Halāl* logo that signify approval of a product or service as being Shari'ah-compliant. Upon approval, certification expires after one year in most cases. This implies that the client typically re-applies for renewal to ensure continuous compliance with standards.

### **Challenges and Prospects of Halāl Certification in Nigeria**

There is no doubt that the *Halāl* industry in Nigeria is facing huge challenges, particularly in the certification sector. Practitioners in this sector have expressed concerns about the bottlenecks hindering progress in the *Halāl* market, which affect certification. The experience of HCA as a case study reveals the following challenges:

- i. **Complex supply chains:** Tracking the *Halāl* status of ingredients through the lengthy procedure of international supply chains is tasking and may be discouraging to clients seeking certification in some situations.
- ii. **Compliance awareness:** Applicants seeking certification for products and services, especially first-timers, often do not know specific *Halāl* requirements. This leads to delays in the certification process. For example, HCA takes 4-6 weeks to complete certification, but a lack of awareness often prolongs the process.
- iii. **Documentation accuracy:** Verifying the completeness and correctness of supporting documents, especially for imported ingredients, can be time-consuming.
- iv. **Training gaps:** There is often a need for continuous training and capacity building for the industry workforce among certification applicants and certification body team members. Such knowledge gap can sometimes hinder diligence in the process.
- v. **Inadequate public awareness:** There is inadequate awareness of the *Halāl* certification services among the populace. Awareness of the importance and scope of *Halāl* certification also affects businesses, especially in non-food sectors.
- vi. **International recognition and harmonisation:** Nigeria does not have a *Halāl* standard yet; navigating the complexities of international recognition and aligning with various national *Halāl* standards is a challenging task.
- vii. **Technological integration:** Keeping up with technological advances, such as *Halāl* blockchain and digital traceability systems to ensure transparency and efficiency in certification, is difficult for practitioners in places like Nigeria, where there is no operational framework.

- viii. **Stringent standards:** Meeting the specific standards required for *Halāl* certification can be challenging for businesses unfamiliar with Islamic law. Adhering to specific restrictions may also expose entrepreneurs to market risks at times. For example, manufacturers seeking a *Halāl* certification must produce only *Halāl* goods to avoid contamination; suppliers of materials needed for production should also possess a *Halāl* certificate, etc.
- ix. **Cost:** The complexity of the *Halāl* certification, which may take the same process for businesses regardless of status, may be too costly for small businesses and beginner entrepreneurs. Sometimes, businesses may need to reformulate their products to meet *Halāl* requirements, which can involve additional costs for research, development and testing.
- x. **Absence of a national framework:** The non-existence of a national framework for *Halāl* certification is the fundamental challenge hindering the effective operation of *Halāl* certification in Nigeria.

As in any other industry, challenges in the *Halāl* certification sector are not peculiar to Nigeria. Findings show that the industry faces various issues across different parts of the world. Some common challenges include heterogeneity, questionable raw materials, unethical practices, poor understanding of Islamic theology, acceptance variability, human resource management problems, supply chain obstacles, among others (Islam, Talib & Muhamad, 2023).

In terms of prospects, Nigeria, as a country with a large Muslim population, has an advantage in growing the economy with the *Halāl* market. With a population of over two hundred million people, of which not less than 52 per cent are Muslims ([www.findeasy.in/population](http://www.findeasy.in/population)), the country can boost its economy through a robust *Halāl* ecosystem. Such a move can create jobs, stimulate investment and boost exports, just like Thailand, Singapore, China and other Muslim-minority countries that have made giant strides in the *Halāl* market. For instance, despite being a Muslim-minority country, *Halāl*-certified food businesses have become visible and mainstream in the United States (Atalan-Helicke, 2023). The non-Muslim population in Nigeria is equally a market opportunity for the country to grow its economy. The *Halāl* industry is not only of religious benefit but also of ethical merit for healthy living. As such, the overall population is a strength for the country to explore the *Halāl* market for economic growth provided appropriate strategies are adopted as identified by experts (Abdullah, 2024). With a well-coordinated *Halāl* certification framework, Nigeria is well-positioned to develop a competitive *Halāl* standard that can pave the way for global acceptance, ultimately leading to increased export opportunities and foreign exchange. This is capable of strengthening the country's currency in the face of the current low value of the Naira, driven by factors such as reliance on imported goods. The *Halāl* certification sector has achieved global status, with practitioners now advocating for a universal standard in international relations. Ruiz-Bejarano posits that the slow growth of the economies of Europe, Canada, the United States and Australia is one of the factors prompting many industries to seek *Halāl* certification

to adapt their products and services to the requirements of Muslim consumers worldwide (Ruiz-Bejarano, 2017). In this regard, the earlier Nigeria develops its framework, the easier it becomes to align with the global trend.

Nigeria's vibrant *Halāl* ecosystem can attract Muslim tourists and investors once certification is coordinated and the standards are reliable. It helps build trust among Muslim travellers by ensuring that services and facilities adhere to Islamic principles. By easily accessing culturally sensitive services that are of global standards, tourists will find Nigeria a more appealing destination. By strengthening the *Halāl* certification sector, businesses in the tourism industry can enhance their competitiveness, boost customer satisfaction and foster long-term customer loyalty. Hence, *Halāl* certification can help businesses access a vast and lucrative domestic market, as well as the global *Halāl* market. Inclusivity is another aspect in which the *Halāl* industry can benefit the country's multi-faith landscape. *Halāl* certification promotes inclusivity by catering to the lifestyle preferences of Muslim consumers who value quality and safety. Also, at the international level, Nigeria will be able to build a reputation as a sensitive nation among diverse cultural entities.

### **Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations**

This chapter examined the growth and potential of *Halāl* certification in Nigeria with the *Halāl* Certification Authority as a case study. It adopted a qualitative review of secondary sources, alongside an interview with the representatives of the *Halāl* Certification Authority, to answer the research questions. The study acknowledged that *Halāl* certification is still in its infancy in Nigeria, with several *Halāl* certification bodies (HCBs) currently operating in the sector. Despite the existence of these bodies, Nigeria has yet to develop a regulatory framework for the sector. An exploration of the global *Halāl* certification landscape reveals that Muslim-dominated countries like Malaysia and Indonesia are leading the sector through the establishment of *Halāl* standards, which have served as models for other nations. It was established during the review that countries with *Halāl* certification coordinated by government agencies are thriving in the sector worldwide. In Nigeria, the government, having realised the need to explore the potential in *Halāl* certification, inaugurated a technical committee in 2022 to develop an operational framework for *Halāl* certification in the country. Since then, there has been no significant progress due to governance bureaucracy.

*Halāl* Certification Authority is one of the *Halāl* certification bodies operating in Nigeria's nascent *Halāl* certification sector. The body, established in 2016, has issued certificates for at least 350 products and services in the country. In the absence of a regulatory framework, HCA established memoranda of understanding with both local and international bodies concerned with standards to enhance its operations in product standard formulation and manpower training. The body offers certification services for food products and food-related service providers in the areas of meat and poultry, flavours and ingredients, bakery,

supplements, and airport restaurants, among others. Nigeria Eagle Flour Mills, UAC Foods, Rite Foods Limited and Flour Mills of Nigeria are some of the prominent manufacturers whose products have been issued Halāl certificates, having satisfied the necessary Shari'ah-compliant standards. There are industry challenges affecting HCA and other participants, which require specific policy actions from the government and relevant stakeholders.

Stemming from the above, this study presents critical academic and policy implications for enhancing economic growth through the *Halāl* certification sector. The study provides evidence-based findings for further research in Islamic economics. It is capable of prompting further studies to cover a wider area of *Halāl* certification practice in Nigeria. In the aspect of policy, the study is an eye-opener for relevant government agencies to implement the necessary actions required to institutionalise the *Halāl* certification sector. Doing this can enhance the country's wealth profile through international relations in the Halāl sector.

To address the identified issues in this study, the following actions are hereby recommended:

- i. The Nigerian government should complete the process of establishing a suitable framework to coordinate the activities of *Halāl* certification bodies and other relevant institutions operating in the *Halāl* certification sector. This will boost the operation's status in the global community.
- ii. The government should collaborate with relevant Islamic bodies to develop globally acceptable *Halāl* standards to enhance *Halāl* certification practice in the country.
- iii. *Halāl* certification bodies should embark on public awareness strategies to stimulate the consciousness of citizens to ethical standards.
- iv. There is a need for the government to provide necessary funding to mitigate the effects of the high cost required of small and medium businesses for *Halāl* certification.

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### **Interview**

Ajala, Abdul Azeez, *Halāl* Auditor with *Halāl* Certification Authority, interviewed by the author, May 30, 2025.

Sherifdeen Ibrahim, Shari'ah Expert with *Halāl* Certification Authority, interviewed by the author on June 1, 2025.

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## CHAPTER 12

# Digital Realities and Islamic Epistemology: Navigating Ethical Challenges in Modern Education

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### Introduction

In recent years, global education has witnessed a profound digital transformation. International bodies, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), note that digital innovation can “complement, enrich and transform education,” widening access and resilience in learning systems (ENETOSH, 2025). From online classrooms to Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered tutoring, new modes of knowledge delivery are reshaping how learners acquire information worldwide. These developments have given rise to emergent digital epistemologies – novel ways of knowing and learning from interactive technologies and internet connectivity. Open-access platforms, social media and algorithm-driven content personalisation decentralise knowledge production, often displacing traditional teacher-centric and text-centric learning modes. While this shift promises greater inclusion and adaptability, it also disrupts long-established educational paradigms that prize structured guidance and verified scholarship.

The impact of these digital realities extends into Muslim educational contexts, where it both enables and unsettles. Muslims comprise roughly a quarter of the world’s population (approximately 1.9 billion people) and are increasingly active in virtual learning spaces (Editorial Team, 2024). The rise of online Islamic courses, YouTube khutab (sermons) and social media fatawa (religious rulings) exemplify how religious knowledge is now often sought and disseminated through digital networks. This democratisation of information challenges the authority and methods of traditional Islamic education, which historically revolved around in-person mentorship, rigorous curricula and careful transmission of knowledge (isnād). Classical Islamic pedagogical thought emphasised holistic development and the sanctity of the teacher-student relationship, delineating clear roles and responsibilities for each (Abdesselam Cheddadi, 2009). In today’s online forums, anyone with a camera or account can expound on theology, potentially bypassing the time-honoured processes of scholarly qualification and ethical upbringing (tarbiyah). Thus, this study’s background and rationale lie in examining how the global digital shift introduces opportunities and tensions in Islamic learning environments, effectively spawning a new learning landscape that intersects with, and sometimes upends, traditional modes.

Against this backdrop, a clear problem has emerged: the accelerating adoption of digital tools is testing the ethical and epistemological foundations of Islamic education. Core Islamic epistemology holds that knowledge (*‘ilm*) is not merely information but must be authentic, purposeful and ethically grounded. As Ibn Khaldūn observed, one function of actual knowledge is to guide humans in “what they must do and what they must not do, of what is good and what is evil” (Abdesselam Cheddadi, 2009). Yet the Internet’s free-flowing information ecology often blurs these moral boundaries. There is growing concern that unvetted online content, AI-generated answers and social media debates may conflict with Islamic criteria for valid knowledge and proper conduct. Ensuring the legitimacy and authenticity of religious content in digital spaces has become one of the foremost challenges for Islamic education (Indrawan et al., 2024). For example, algorithm-driven platforms can amplify misinformation or extremist interpretations, bypassing the scholarly filters that traditionally safeguarded doctrinal integrity. Likewise, AI, now used in some Muslim communities for tasks ranging from fatwa search engines to Qur’ān instruction, raises questions about the epistemic authority and ethical orientation of machine-provided guidance. Scholars note that the philosophies underpinning AI in the Muslim world have “yet to receive the attention they deserve” from an Islamic perspective (Popova, 2020), highlighting a gap between technological adoption and the development of corresponding ethical epistemological frameworks.

Accordingly, this study’s objectives are threefold. First, it seeks to critically explore the intersection between contemporary digital realities and Islamic epistemological principles, illuminating how the online knowledge paradigm converges with or diverges from Qur’ānic and classical notions of *‘ilm*. Second, it aims to examine the ethical challenges arising from specific digital tools – particularly the advent of AI, the ubiquity of social media and the proliferation of online learning – through the lens of Islamic ethics and pedagogy. The study identifies where ethical dilemmas or epistemic inconsistencies emerge by investigating scenarios such as AI-driven fatwa systems, Twitter-based religious discourse and virtual madrasas. Third, building on these insights, the study proposes conceptual frameworks for ethical digital engagement in Muslim educational contexts. These proposed guidelines or models will be grounded in Islamic moral theology and epistemology, offering pathways to harness digital innovations for learning while mitigating risks to authenticity, *adab* (proper conduct) and spiritual purpose.

### **Islamic Epistemology: Foundations and Ethical Commitments**

Islamic epistemology is anchored in divine revelation while interweaving knowledge with moral purpose. Its foundational sources of knowledge are the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, which provide revealed guidance for all aspects of life. These primary sources are supplemented by established interpretive methodologies such as *ijmā’* (consensus) and *qiyās* (analogical reasoning) developed by classical jurists. Through *ijmā’*, the collective insight of scholars becomes a source of authoritative knowledge, and through *qiyās*, reasoning by analogy extends revealed principles to new circumstances. Other traditional tools, such as *ijtihād* (independent juristic reasoning), further demonstrate that, in the Islamic view, reason and

revelation operate in harmony. This layered epistemic model ensures that Islamic knowledge remains tethered to its sacred sources even as it addresses changing realities. Crucially, it also reflects the integration of facts with values: *Shari‘ah*’s knowledge paradigm was never ethically neutral, for it presumed that truth comes ultimately from God and thus carries moral imperatives. As Nasr observes, modern secular knowledge often prides itself on value-free objectivity, yet “in the traditional worldview, ethical values were inseparable from the acts and deeds” of knowing (Ient, 2020). In Islam, what is known cannot be divorced from how one should live. This starkly contrasts contemporary notions of knowledge as mere information, highlighting from the outset the distinct ethical orientation of Islamic epistemology.

### **Sources of Knowledge in Islam**

The Qur’ān (believed by Muslims to be the direct word of God) and the Sunnah (the exemplary teachings and practices of Prophet Muhammad) form the twin pillars of Islamic epistemic authority. All other sciences of Islam derive their legitimacy and methods from these scriptural sources. The Qur’ān and Sunnah encourage intellect and reflection, laying the groundwork for Islam’s rational disciplines. Classical scholars delineated secondary sources and derived methodologies to systematise knowledge from revelation: chief among them, *ijmā‘* and *qiyās*. Through *ijmā‘*, the scholarly consensus on a legal or theological question was taken as proof on the premise that the Muslim community would not agree on an error. Through *qiyās*, jurists could analogise novel cases to known teachings, ensuring that the divine law remained applicable as new situations arose. However, the authority of these methods always rested on their fidelity to revelation. Other instruments of inquiry – such as examining local custom (*‘urf*), public interest (*maṣlaḥa*) or the innate human faculty of reason (*‘aql*) – were likewise incorporated by various Islamic schools under the aegis of scriptural principles. A clear hierarchy balanced this epistemological pluralism: no human-derived knowledge could override the Qur’ān or authentic Prophetic tradition. By situating reason within the bounds of revelation, Islamic epistemology avoids the extremes of pure rationalism or blind scripturalism. It cultivates an approach wherein empirical observation, logical inference and spiritual insight all have their place, but always in service of understanding God’s guidance. The resultant epistemology is neither stagnant nor relativistic – it is dynamic, expanding knowledge through disciplined methods, yet anchored in what Nasr would call the “sacred quality of knowledge” connected to the Divine (Nasr, 1989). Islamic knowing is, at its core, a quest to understand truth as disclosed by God, whether through scripture or the “signs” in the natural and human world. Therefore, it inherently carries an ethical and spiritual weight.

### **Characteristics of Islamic Epistemology**

One of the defining features of Islamic epistemology is the inseparability of knowledge (*‘ilm*) and action (*‘amal*) within a moral-spiritual framework. Classical Muslim thinkers incessantly stressed that knowledge devoid of practice is empty. Imām Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī (1058–1111), for example, admonished that a person who gains knowledge but does not act upon it is like a lamp that burns itself without illuminating anything – a futile enterprise. In *his Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, al-Ghazālī begins the discussion of *‘ilm* by establishing that true knowledge

must transform the knower’s character and orient the knower towards good. Centuries later, the contemporary philosopher Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas reiterates this principle in precise terms: “The process of acquisition of knowledge is not called ‘education’ unless the knowledge that is acquired includes moral purpose”, activating in the seeker what he terms *adab* (Ghilan, 2022). In al-Attas’s conception, Adab effectively combines knowledge and virtue – “right action that springs from self-discipline founded upon knowledge whose source is wisdom” (Ghilan, 2022). He defines knowledge as recognising the proper places of things in the order of creation, culminating in recognising God’s rightful place as Lord of existence (Ghilan, 2022). Thus, knowing something in the Islamic sense is understanding its moral context and one’s duties towards it. Knowledge, morality (*akhlāq*) and God-consciousness (*taqwā*) are woven together. The Qur’ān ties knowledge directly to spiritual virtue: “Only those of His servants fear Allah who have knowledge” (Qur’ān 35:28). This verse encapsulates the Qur’ānic epistemology – knowledge should lead to humility and reverence, not arrogance. In practical terms, Islamic pedagogy traditionally aimed to produce the “upright scholar,” whose learning is evidenced by integrity and God-fearing conduct. Knowledge (*‘ilm*) was often described as a light (*nūr*) that God casts into the heart of the faithful seeker, illuminating right from wrong. Such a view resists knowledge reduction to mere data or technical skill; rather, it demands integration with *‘amal ṣāliḥ* (righteous action). Importantly, this integration is not only individual but also civilisational. Islamic history offers many examples of scholarship in the service of society – from jurists who established just civic norms to scientists and philosophers who saw exploring creation as a form of worship. The hallmark of Islamic epistemology is that it intrinsically links knowing the truth with living the good. As al-Attas notes, knowledge must be “actualised by acknowledgement” of truth through action; in fact, “education is the absorption of adab in the self”, such that personal knowledge yields social justice (Ghilan, 2022).

### **Role of Teachers and Transmission**

Given the sacred trust attached to knowledge, the Islamic tradition developed robust mechanisms for preserving the authenticity and ethical integrity of knowledge transmission. Foremost among these is the concept of *isnād* (chain of transmission), epitomised in the sciences of ḥadīth. Every prophetic teaching had to be supported by a reliable chain of teachers returning to the Prophet – a practice that elevated verification to a religious duty. The renowned early scholar ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181 AH) succinctly said, “The isnād is part of the religion: had it not been for the isnād, whoever wished to would have said whatever he liked” (Islamic Awareness, n.d.). This insistence that knowledge claims be traceable to authoritative sources created a culture of scrupulous scholarship. It was not enough for an idea to sound reasonable; one had to ask, “Who narrated this? From whom did you learn it?” – questions that ensured accountability. The *isnād* ethos extended beyond ḥadīth into all fields of Islamic learning. Law, theology, linguistics, and spirituality scholars likewise, maintained instruction chains. Over time, this gave rise to the *ijāzah* system, a formal certification wherein a master grants a student permission to teach a text or science. An *ijāzah* is essentially a license authorising its holder to transmit specific knowledge issued

by someone with that authority. It typically documents an unbroken lineage of learning, often back to the original author or source. Through the *ijāzah* tradition, the role of the teacher (*shaykh* or *ustādh*) was paramount. Teachers were not mere lecturers but mentors who embodied the ethical and intellectual virtues their students were meant to acquire. In many classical writings on *adab al-mu'allim* (the etiquette of the teacher) and *adab al-muta'allim* (the etiquette of the student), we emphasise humility, reverence and trust between teacher and pupil. Knowledge was seen as a light passed heart to heart, not just information written in books. Ibn Khaldūn, in his 14th-century *Muqaddimah*, observed that sound education requires an unbroken continuity of scholarship; when that chain breaks or unqualified persons take on teaching, knowledge suffers distortion. His analysis of civilisational rise and fall tied the flourishing of societies to the presence of learned, virtuous teachers and the disciplined transmission of knowledge across generations. In essence, Islamic epistemology envisions knowledge as a living legacy, safeguarded and conveyed by an ethical scholarly community. This has enduring implications for modern education: it reminds us that in the age of digital “knowledge on demand,” mentorship, authenticity and authoritative scholarship remain irreplaceable. The isnād mentality urges today’s learners to verify sources and seek guidance from those with proven expertise, much as one would consult a *sanad* (chain) in classical learning. By valuing teachers as moral exemplars and not just content deliverers, Islamic epistemology offers a model of education that is personal, character-building and resistant to the anonymity and unaccountability that often plague knowledge in the digital realm.

### **Ethical Parameters in Knowledge Acquisition and Dissemination**

Finally, at the heart of Islamic epistemology are key ethical commitments that govern the seeker and teacher of knowledge. Foremost among these is *ṣidq* (truthfulness). The pursuit of knowledge in Islam is fundamentally a pursuit of truth (*ḥaqq*), and thus dishonesty, deceit or the distortion of facts are antithetical to its very purpose. Muslim scholars regarded deliberate falsehood in knowledge – such as fabricating a *ḥadīth* or spreading misinformation – as a sin against the religion. The rigorous biographical evaluations in *ḥadīth* science (*al-jarḥ wa-al-ta'dīl*) attest to how seriously truthfulness was taken; transmitters known to lie or even slip in moral conduct were deemed unfit to bear knowledge. This principle translates into a broader norm of intellectual honesty: one must accurately represent one’s sources, acknowledge the limits of one’s knowledge and never obscure evidence inconvenient to one’s argument. ‘*Adl* (justice) is another pillar: knowledge must be used justly and for just ends. The Qur’ān commands believers not to let hatred or bias prevent them from being (Qur’an 5:8), which, in epistemic terms, means maintaining objectivity and fairness. A scholar must do justice to the subject matter – representing viewpoints and data fairly – and do justice to the audience by conveying knowledge in a measured, unbiased manner. Moreover, the knowledgeable have a social obligation to advance justice; the prophetic ideal of “enjoining right and forbidding wrong” is incumbent especially upon those who know. Many classical ‘*ulamā*’ saw themselves as guardians of justice in society, advising rulers and educating the masses to uphold ethical norms. Yet, Islamic epistemological ethics also emphasise inward dimensions such as *ikhhlās* (sincerity) and proper *niyyah* (intention). The Prophet stated,

“Actions are judged by intentions”, and seeking knowledge is one of those actions that must be purely for the sake of God and the pursuit of truth. There are famous warnings in the tradition against impure motives in scholarship. For instance, a hadīth states that “Whoever seeks knowledge in order to argue with the foolish, or to show off before the learned, or to attract attention to himself, will be in Hellfire”. Even if the chain of this report is not the strongest, its message has been widely affirmed by scholars: insincere knowledge is spiritually dangerous. Accordingly, students were urged to check their intentions – to learn out of love of truth and a desire to benefit humanity, not for fame, pride or material gain. Teachers, too, were expected to teach for God’s sake, not to misuse the power that knowledge grants. This ethical ideal finds reflection in works like al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’*, which devotes sections to purity of intent and sincerity in scholarship, and in al-Attas’s writings, where he links the decline of the Muslim world to the loss of adab and hence loss of justice and wisdom (Al-Attas, 1985). Truthfulness, justice, sincerity and righteous intention create an ethos where knowledge is respected as a trust (*amānah*) from God. These values place moral boundaries around the use of knowledge: for example, one should not withhold knowledge that could benefit others (as that would be unjust and insincere), nor should one exploit knowledge to deceive or harm.

In the context of modern education and information technology, such ethical parameters are exceedingly relevant. The ease of sharing information today makes verifying truth and sourcing (the spirit of *isnād*) critical to combating misinformation. The importance of justice and responsibility in the use of knowledge speaks directly to issues such as data ethics and equitable access to education. And the emphasis on sincerity and intention challenges educators and students to resist the commodification of knowledge – to treat learning not as a mere credential or means of social status, but as a noble endeavour tied to personal and societal betterment. Indeed, as Nasr has argued, the modern “desacralisation” of knowledge – its treatment as a utilitarian or power-driven enterprise – has led to ethical crises (Jent, 2020). Islamic epistemology aims to resacralise knowledge by reasserting its connection to truth and virtue.

## **Digital Realities and the Contemporary Educational Landscape**

### **Defining Digital Realities**

Nigeria’s educational sphere is increasingly shaped by digital realities – the pervasive presence of digital tools, artificial intelligence (AI), virtual learning environments, social media and algorithm-driven information systems. With over 103 million internet users (about 45% of the population) as of early 2024 (Kemp, 2022), Nigeria is experiencing a digital revolution that directly impacts how knowledge is accessed and delivered. Educational institutions are adopting e-learning platforms and blended learning models, especially after COVID-19, enabling virtual classrooms and online coursework. Social media has become an informal learning space for many youths, who regularly consume educational content on platforms like YouTube, Facebook and WhatsApp. Indeed, Nigeria counts roughly 36.7 million active social media users (Kemp, 2022), indicating the significant role these platforms play in disseminating information and connecting learners.

AI and algorithmic systems further characterise the new digital landscape. In Nigeria's context, AI is gradually entering classrooms through tools like intelligent tutoring systems and chatbots that can answer students' queries. More pervasively, algorithmic recommendation systems – such as search engine results and social media feeds – now influence students' exposure to knowledge. These algorithms often prioritise engagement and personalisation, which can both enhance and skew the learning experience. For example, a student searching online for Islamic history or jurisprudence may be guided by Google's or YouTube's algorithms toward specific sources or scholars, subtly shaping their perspective. While such digital tools promise personalised, on-demand learning, they also raise questions about bias and authenticity in the information they present. The Nigerian government recognises the need to adapt to these changes: policy frameworks, such as the National ICT in Education policy, have been introduced. However, they remain underdeveloped relative to the scale of transformation needed (Sarumi, 2024). Still, digital infrastructure challenges persist – for instance, only about 59% of Nigerians have reliable access to electricity, and urban students are twice as likely to access e-learning as their rural counterparts (Sarumi, 2024). These realities underscore that digital tools are a double-edged sword, offering new possibilities while highlighting enduring infrastructural gaps.

### **New Epistemologies and Information Cultures**

The rise of digital media has fostered new epistemologies and information cultures marked by unprecedented speed, fragmentation and decentralisation of knowledge. Information now travels at lightning speed through Nigerian digital spaces: students can Google answers within seconds or witness scholarly debates on Twitter in real time. This immediacy has shifted expectations – knowledge is often expected to be instantly available and constantly updated. However, the quality of understanding may suffer. The Internet encourages a mode of consumption that is “fragmented” and non-linear, as users hop between bite-sized pieces of information (Laghari, 2024). Social media posts, short videos and algorithm-curated feeds prioritise engagement over depth, often reducing sustained intellectual focus (Laghari, 2024). In the Nigerian context, where youths widely use mobile phones for both secular and religious content, this can translate into a preference for quick answers and catchy infotainment over rigorous study. Scholars note, “Never before has information been so abundant, yet misinformation, intellectual fragmentation, and digital inequality thrive” (Laghari, 2024). Indeed, the very decentralisation of knowledge – the fact that anyone can publish opinions or interpretations online – means that authoritative voices compete with a cacophony of others in Nigeria's digital forums.

These shifts create both opportunities for pluralism and tensions with traditional Islamic epistemology. In Islamic tradition, knowledge (*'ilm*) is holistic and ideally pursued through disciplined study under guidance, integrating revealed sources and rational inquiry harmoniously (Momen, 2024). The classical model stresses spiritual depth, authenticity (through chains of transmission or *isnād*) and the unity of knowledge under divine purpose (*tawhīd*) (Momen, 2024). By contrast, today's information culture can feel decontextualised

– a student might learn isolated Islamic rulings from a blog or memorise Qur’ānic verses via an app without the mentoring and ethical framing a traditional teacher would provide. Furthermore, the decentralisation of knowledge production online dilutes the authority of established scholars. Just as observed in other Muslim societies, Nigerian Muslims are experiencing a “fragmentation of religious authority” as individuals turn to personal interpretation and diverse online preachers (Dessing, n.d.). Young people, in particular, may bypass local imams or formal madrasas in favour of “Sheikh Google” or popular social media influencers. This democratisation of knowledge challenges hierarchies – it allows a broader range of voices (including youth and women) to participate in religious discourse. Yet, it also raises concerns about the credibility and cohesion of the circulated knowledge. The information culture of rapid sharing can amplify misinformation or extremist narratives as well, a known ethical challenge in Nigeria, where platforms have been used both to promote peace and, at times, to spread hate or radical content. The algorithmic curation of content can inadvertently create echo chambers, reinforcing one-sided views. Thus, the modern digital epistemology is a double-edged phenomenon: it is more participatory and fast-paced yet more fragmented and prone to erode the careful, reflective approach that Islamic education traditionally values.

### **Opportunities for Islamic Education**

Despite these tensions, the digital transformation also unveils powerful opportunities for Islamic education in Nigeria. Foremost among these is broadened access to knowledge. Digital platforms have broken many barriers of geography and social restrictions, allowing learning to reach communities previously left behind. For instance, Muslim women in purdah (seclusion) or those with limited mobility can now engage with educational programmes online without violating cultural norms, as noted by Nigerian educators (Borokini et al., 2020). Through open and distance learning, a homemaker in a conservative northern town can enrol in courses on Qur’ānic exegesis or join a virtual class taught by scholars at Al-Azhar or a Nigerian Islamic university. Similarly, youths in rural villages with an internet connection can download lectures and e-books that were once accessible only in urban centres. Such inclusion gradually reduces historical inequities for those who acquire advanced religious knowledge. Global reach is another significant benefit: Nigerian Islamic institutions and teachers can share their teachings with a worldwide audience via livestreams and YouTube, enhancing the exchange of ideas across the *Ummah*. Conversely, Nigerian students can tap into a global reservoir of Islamic scholarship – accessing digitised libraries, webinars and Massive Open Online Courses on Islamic Studies hosted anywhere from Kuala Lumpur to London. This interconnectedness enriches the local educational experience and situates Nigerian Islamic discourse within a broader intellectual milieu, fostering mutual understanding. Indeed, the Internet “bridges cultural and geographic gaps...providing developing nations with access to essential knowledge” and creates a global intellectual community that Nigerian educators and learners are increasingly part of (Laghari, 2024).

Digital technology also aids in the preservation and revival of Islamic heritage. Important

manuscripts and historical texts in Nigeria's rich Islamic scholarly tradition are digitised and archived, safeguarding them for future generations. Through international partnerships, initiatives supported by institutions such as Arewa House in Kaduna have worked to "preserve and digitise Nigeria's rich Islamic manuscript heritage" (Drake, 2008). Thousands of pages of classical Arabic and *Ajami* (local languages in Arabic script) manuscripts from northern Nigeria – treatises on theology, law, history and poetry – have been scanned and made accessible to researchers worldwide. This protects fragile documents from physical decay and allows Nigerian students to consult original source materials that were once locked away in private collections or libraries. The digital preservation of heritage goes hand in hand with contemporary content creation. Today, Nigerian Islamic scholars often record their lectures and sermons and upload them as videos or podcasts, creating an expanding online repository of local Islamic knowledge. Nigerian television and radio educational programmes are now archived on YouTube; Qur'ānic recitation competitions and *tafsīr* (exegesis) sessions are streamed live during Ramadan and saved for later study. Such media serve as valuable resources for students and teachers, enabling repetition, reflection and broader dissemination. In addition, social media and messaging apps have been harnessed to form study circles and knowledge-sharing communities, such as Telegram or WhatsApp groups, where classical texts are read and discussed under the guidance of a scholar but are open to members across different cities.

The implications of these digital opportunities for Islamic education in Nigeria are profound. They promise a more inclusive and far-reaching educational landscape where learning is not confined to certain elites or urban centres. Digital archives help preserve the Islamic scholarly legacy of West Africa, while online platforms foster a culture of continuous learning beyond formal settings. However, alongside these opportunities, educators are mindful of ensuring that the integrity and ethos of Islamic epistemology are maintained. The task ahead is to integrate digital tools with traditional pedagogy creatively – for example, using online resources to complement, not replace, the mentorship of teachers – thereby blending the old and the new. By doing so, Nigeria's Islamic educational discourse can leverage the benefits of connectivity and information abundance, while mitigating the risks of dilution and misguidance.

### **Ethical Challenges in Digital Islamic Education**

The digital transformation of Islamic education in Nigeria has brought unprecedented access, inclusion and innovation opportunities. However, alongside these benefits lies a complex terrain of ethical challenges that demand critical scrutiny. These challenges intersect with foundational principles of Islamic epistemology, particularly in areas such as the authority and authenticity of knowledge, the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation, the spiritual impact of social media, data privacy ethics, and the broader issue of digital inequality. Addressing these concerns is essential to ensure that the digital turn in Islamic education does not compromise its spiritual, ethical and epistemological foundations.

One of the most pressing challenges is the disruption of traditional hierarchies of knowledge and the resultant crisis of authority and authenticity. Classical Islamic education has long

operated within well-established chains of transmission (*isnād*), where knowledge is passed from qualified scholars to students through disciplined study and mentorship (Berkey, 2014). In the digital age, however, the boundaries of authority have become porous. Anyone with access to the Internet can publish religious opinions, interpret Qur'ānic verses or issue fatwas without formal training or accountability. In Nigeria, platforms such as YouTube and Facebook have given rise to a new class of self-styled Islamic influencers who often lack scholarly credentials but wield significant influence over public opinion. While this democratisation of knowledge can be empowering, it also facilitates the proliferation of unverified, reductionist, and, at times, dangerously misleading content (Fahm, 2025). The ethical problem here is not merely misinformation, but the erosion of the epistemic discipline that undergirds Islamic learning — a discipline rooted in humility, rigorous trainings and ethical intent.

The ethical tension arising from AI and automation in knowledge production and dissemination is equally significant. AI-driven chatbots, recommendation algorithms and automated *fatwa* engines are increasingly employed in digital Islamic education platforms. While these tools can enhance user experience and provide instant access to religious knowledge, they also raise critical concerns. The algorithms that power AI systems are often opaque and shaped by the data on which they are trained, potentially introducing biases into the content delivered to learners (Ibrahim, 2024). In Nigeria, where ethnic and sectarian diversity intersects with digital inequality, the risk of algorithmic amplification of one viewpoint at the expense of others is particularly acute. Furthermore, automated content generation lacks the moral intentionality and contextual sensitivity essential to Islamic guidance. As Islamic epistemology insists on the ethical responsibility of the scholar (*‘ālim*) in interpreting and transmitting knowledge, delegating these roles to machines risks decoupling knowledge from its ethical and spiritual moorings. Moreover, using AI in educational surveillance and data analysis raises issues about autonomy and consent, especially in platforms that monitor user behaviour without transparent disclosure.

The pervasive use of social media also introduces subtler but no less serious ethical challenges related to spiritual distraction and the commodification of religion. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp have become popular venues for disseminating Islamic content in Nigeria, often presented in visually appealing, emotionally resonant formats. However, this trend has given rise to a culture of performative religiosity, in which acts of piety are curated for public consumption rather than for private spiritual growth. The line between authentic religious expression and self-promotion becomes increasingly blurred, potentially leading to *riyā'* (showing off), a form of insincerity condemned in Islamic ethics (Nasr, 2009). The commodification of Islamic identity, where religious messages are marketed for clicks, likes and monetisation, risks transforming sacred knowledge into entertainment, diluting its depth and seriousness. Furthermore, the addictive design of social media platforms, driven by algorithms that reward sensationalism and short-form content, undermines the reflective and immersive learning environment that traditional Islamic pedagogy promotes. Beyond these concerns, privacy and data ethics loom large in the use of digital platforms for Islamic education. Many mobile applications and websites that offer religious services,

including Qur’ān recitation, prayer time notifications and *fatwa* consultations, collect vast amounts of personal data, often without informed consent. In Nigeria, where data protection laws remain underdeveloped and digital literacy is uneven, users may be unaware of how their religious queries and behavioural data are harvested and potentially exploited. This raises grave ethical concerns, particularly given the Qur’ānic emphasis on respecting the dignity and confidentiality of individuals (Qur’an 49:12). Islamic ethics places a premium on trust (*amānah*) and accountability in handling knowledge, and these principles must extend to the digital infrastructure that supports learning. The unregulated collection and commodification of data on faith-based platforms contradict the values of transparency and justice that Islamic epistemology upholds.

Finally, the digital divide continues to produce epistemic exclusion and inequality, reinforcing structural disparities in access to Islamic education. While internet penetration in Nigeria is increasing, significant regional and socio-economic gaps persist. Students in rural areas, girls from conservative backgrounds and individuals with disabilities often face barriers to access online educational resources due to cost, connectivity or cultural restrictions (Adeleke, 2021). This exclusion undermines the Islamic principle of *ta’līm* (universal education) and the obligation to seek knowledge regardless of circumstances. Moreover, the dominance of English and Arabic in many digital learning platforms marginalises non-Arabic-speaking and non-literate populations despite Nigeria’s rich Islamic heritage in indigenous languages such as Hausa, Yoruba and Kanuri. The ethical challenge, therefore, is not only to increase access but to ensure inclusivity in content design, language and pedagogical approach. An Islamic ethic of education would demand that digital tools serve to uplift the marginalised rather than exacerbate existing hierarchies.

### **Bridging the Divide: Toward an Ethical Framework for Digital Islamic Education**

The intersection of digital innovation and Islamic epistemology necessitates a critique of emerging challenges and the formulation of constructive ethical responses. As Nigeria’s Muslim communities increasingly adopt online madrasas, social media *da’wah* and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered Islamic applications, the imperative arises to craft a framework that safeguards the integrity of religious knowledge while leveraging technology’s affordances. This study proposes an ethical paradigm rooted in Qur’ānic principles and classical Islamic thought, tailored to Nigeria’s sociocultural realities. By outlining foundational values such as justice (*‘adl*), consultation (*shūrā*) and moderation (*wasatiyya*), alongside juristic concepts like *ijtihād*, *maṣlaḥa* and *dar’ al-mafāsīd* it argues for a deliberate integration of digital tools into Islamic pedagogy. The framework further offers practical pathways for content vetting, ethical platform design and hybrid learning models, ensuring that technological adoption enhances rather than erodes Islamic education’s moral and spiritual objectives.

### **Qur’ānic Principles as Guiding Ethics**

Fundamental Qur’ānic ethics provide the first pillar of this framework. Foremost is the principle of justice (*‘adl*). The Qur’ān enjoins justice unequivocally – “Allah commands justice and excellence...” (Qur’ān 16:90) – making it a cardinal virtue in all affairs. In digital education, justice calls for fairness, equity and inclusion. This has concrete implications in

Nigeria, where a significant digital divide persists between urban and rural communities and between social classes. A 2021 report found that about 67% of Nigerian school-age children lack access to digital learning resources at home, a disparity most acute in rural and poor communities (Umar, 2024). An ethical framework inspired by ‘*adl*’ would urge policymakers to actively bridge this gap – for example, by expanding internet infrastructure and providing affordable access – so that students in places like Kano’s villages are not left behind those in its cities (Umar, 2024). Justice also entails impartiality and correctness in content: digital Islamic curricula must present authentic teachings and diverse viewpoints fairly, avoiding unjust bias or sectarian exclusivity. Nigerian educators can fulfil the Qur’ānic imperative of justice in the digital sphere by ensuring equitable access and truthful, balanced content.

Another key Qur’ānic value is consultation (*shūrā*) – collective deliberation on community affairs. The Qur’ān praises those “whose affairs are a matter of counsel among them” (Qur’ān 42:38), establishing *shūrā* as a foundation for ethical governance and decision-making. Applied to digital education, decisions about online Islamic curricula, e-learning platforms and AI tutoring systems should not be made in isolation by technocrats or administrators. Instead, a consultative process involving religious scholars (‘*ulamā*’), educators, parents and even students is vital. Nigerian institutions can convene consultative councils or workshops where stakeholders collectively deliberate on e-learning content standards, culturally appropriate pedagogies and policies for safe technology use. Such *shūrā*-driven inclusion builds trust and cultural legitimacy into digital initiatives. It also reflects Nigeria’s communal ethos, where Islamic scholars and community leaders play influential roles – their input can guide platforms to respect local values (for example, by offering appropriate language options and observing prayer times). One Nigerian Muslim education network recently emphasised that policies affecting diverse populations demand transparent, inclusive dialogue with parents, educators and religious leaders (Al-Hikmah University, n.d., 2025). By heeding the Qur’ānic call to consultation, digital education programmes will be more attuned to the communities’ needs and values.

A third guiding value is moderation (*wasatiyya*), the ethos of balance and temperance. The Qur’ān describes the Muslim *ummah* as “a middle nation” (*ummatan wasaṭan*) (Qur’ān 2:143), and Islamic tradition has long regarded moderation as a defining characteristic of Islamic life. In practical terms, the principle of *wasatiyya* underscores a holistic and equitable approach to faith (Alabdulhadi & Alkandari, 2024), rejecting extremes of excess or neglect. For digital education, *wasatiyya* implies maintaining balance in multiple senses. First, the content and tone of online Islamic courses should reflect theological and ideological balance – promoting neither extreme rigorism nor unfettered liberalism but a “justly balanced” understanding of Islam (Omer, 2016). This is especially pertinent in Nigeria, where youths are sometimes exposed online to polarising interpretations, from militant extremism to secular materialism; a moderate curriculum can help inoculate learners against both. Second, moderation relates to the method of learning: a balance between digital and traditional modes. While online platforms vastly increase access, an exclusively virtual pedagogy may dilute the personal

mentorship and discipline traditionally integral to Islamic learning (Yakub & Issah, 2025). Thus, a *wasati* (moderate) approach would blend the efficiencies of e-learning with the spiritual intimacy of face-to-face guidance. Finally, moderation extends to the time and manner of technology use – encouraging students to benefit from digital resources without falling into unhealthy overuse or distraction. Educators can echo the Qur’ānic ideal of moderation in lifestyle by inculcating digital discipline and balanced routines (for instance, time for online study is balanced with offline reflection or community service).

### **Frameworks from Classical Islamic Thought**

Beyond the broad Qur’ānic values, classical Islamic thought offers additional frameworks to guide ethical decision-making in new contexts. The first principle is *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) – the dynamic process by which qualified scholars derive rulings for unprecedented issues. Historically, *Ijtihād* enabled Islamic law and ethics to respond flexibly as Muslim societies encountered new environments and challenges. Today, the digital revolution in education is precisely the novel situation that demands fresh *ijtihād*. Nigerian scholars and educational authorities should exercise creative legal reasoning to address questions that classical jurists never faced: Is it permissible to obtain an *ijāzah* (certificate of Qur’ān memorisation) entirely online? How should Islamic norms of gender interaction or privacy apply in virtual classrooms and AI tutoring systems? In tackling such issues, jurists must stay true to *uṣūl al-fiqh* (root principles) while interpreting the objectives of *Sharī’ah* for modern realities. This adaptive spirit is in line with the guidance of scholars like Mohd Kamal Hassan, who notes that maintaining *wasatiyya* (moderation) in contemporary society “include[s] balancing between the permanent principles of Islamic law and the changing conditions of the time; [and] coupling religious duty with social reality” (Omer, 2016). In practical terms, Nigerian Islamic bodies (for instance, Fiqh academies or state Sharī’ah councils) could form *ijtihād* committees focusing on educational technology, issuing guidelines and fatwas that legitimise practical innovations and set ethical boundaries. By reviving *ijtihād*, the community ensures that digital learning tools are harnessed to serve Islam’s higher objectives (*maqāṣid*) rather than shunned or used haphazardly. *Ijtihād* thus provides the mechanism for adaptability – allowing Islamic education to evolve methodologically while preserving its sacred aims.

Complementing *ijtihād* is the classical principle of *maṣlaḥah* (public interest). Islamic jurisprudence has long upheld that the community’s welfare is a core consideration in formulating rulings and policies. *Maṣlaḥah* means public benefit; it authorises measures that secure people’s well-being and prevent hardship, especially when scriptural texts are silent. Nigerian Islamic educators can invoke *Maṣlaḥah* to strongly encourage and support digital initiatives that demonstrably serve the common good – for example, using mobile apps to teach basic Qur’ān literacy to out-of-school children or broadcasting Islamic studies lectures via radio and the Internet to reach remote areas. Such efforts further the public interest by spreading knowledge (*‘ilm*) and combating illiteracy and ignorance, which are pressing issues in parts of northern Nigeria (Fahm et al., 2022). Indeed, the application of *maṣlaḥah* has gained prominence in modern times due to its relevance for contemporary issues not explicitly

addressed by classical texts. Educators can argue that investing in digital infrastructure for Islamic schools, training teachers in ICT and developing e-learning curricula are all mandates of public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), since they empower the next generation of Muslims with religious and practical knowledge. This must be pursued within the limits of *Sharī‘ah* – the concept of *maṣlaḥah* is not a blank check to contravene explicit Islamic norms but a tool to prioritise beneficial outcomes. In the Nigerian context, one can see *maṣlaḥah* being applied in initiatives such as integrating secular and religious curricula in Almajiri schools using technology (Fahm et al., 2022), a reform intended to uplift the socio-economic prospects of students while still nurturing their faith. By foregrounding public interest, policymakers ensure that digital education advances the common good of the Nigerian society, in line with Islam’s holistic vision of welfare (including the preservation of faith, life, intellect, lineage and property – the five *maqāṣid* identified by classical scholars).

At the same time, the framework must heed the principle of *dar’ al-mafāsīd* – averting harm. Islamic ethics requires pursuing good (*maṣlaḥah*) and proactively avoiding harm and evil. A well-known juristic maxim states, “if a harm is greater than a benefit, avoiding the harm takes priority over obtaining the benefit”. This is highly pertinent for digital education, which, while beneficial, carries new risks. Unfiltered internet access can expose students to misinformation, inappropriate content or extremist propaganda masquerading as religious knowledge. Excessive screen time and reliance on gadgets may harm students’ health or psychosocial development. An ethical framework guided by *dar’ al-mafāsīd* would mandate robust safeguards against these dangers. For example, educational platforms should incorporate content filtering and moderation to remove harmful material and ensure students receive only accurate, sound religious education online (Yakub & Issah, 2025). Protecting young minds from *fitnah* (trials) in cyberspace might involve curated websites and apps vetted by trustworthy scholars rather than open-ended browsing. Likewise, guidelines can be developed for healthy usage – perhaps limiting hours of online study to prevent addiction, and encouraging periodic digital fasts or spiritual retreats away from the screen. Nigeria’s experience with extremist groups amplifies the importance of this harm avoidance: distortion of Islamic teachings on social media was one factor in youth radicalisation. Thus, scholars and educators must actively “block the means” (*sadd al-dharā’i’*) to corruption by ensuring digital Islamic content is authentic and cultivating digital literacy and critical thinking in students as a shield against online misguidance.

### **Recommendations for Ethical Practice**

Concrete recommendations can operationalise this ethical framework for Nigeria’s digital Islamic education by building on the above values and principles. Foremost is the deliberate curation and vetting of online content by qualified scholars. At the same time, traditional Islamic learning ensured authenticity through chains of transmission; the digital sphere requires analogous quality control to prevent exposure to unverified or misleading interpretations. Collaborative efforts between scholars, educational institutions and technology developers could yield standardised, vetted digital resources—such as an e-library of Islamic textbooks, Qur’ān, *tafsīr* and ḥadīth—reviewed by reputable Nigerian scholars and

contextualised through local languages and cultural examples to ensure both doctrinal integrity and accessibility. Equally essential is embedding Islamic ethical principles in the design of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and e-learning platforms. Since educational technology is never value-neutral, adopting a “moral by design” approach can ensure features like AI Qur’ān tutors reflect Islamic etiquette (*adab*) and safeguard privacy as an *amānah*, while fostering respectful online interactions. Beyond content and technology, pedagogy must remain rooted in *tarbiyya*—the holistic nurturing of character and faith—rather than reducing learning to mere information transfer. Integrating service projects, storytelling and mentorship into digital courses can help students internalise prophetic virtues and apply them in daily life, with parents engaged to reinforce lessons at home.

Finally, a hybrid learning model is crucial, retaining face-to-face interaction that allows for *suhbah* (companionship) with teachers and preserves the *barakah* of communal learning. Nigerian institutions experimenting with “smart *madrasas*” exemplify this balance, blending online lectures with guidance from local imams. Such an approach harmonises technological innovation with traditional Islamic pedagogy, ensuring digital education enhances rather than erodes the human and spiritual dimensions central to Islamic epistemology.

## **Conclusion**

The convergence of digital realities and Islamic epistemology in Nigeria presents unprecedented opportunities and significant ethical challenges for contemporary Islamic education. The rapid rise of online *madrasas*, social media influencers and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered Islamic tools has expanded access and participation across gender, geography and generations. Yet it simultaneously disrupts traditional authority, authenticity and structures of spiritual discipline rooted in *isnād*-based scholarship. This study argues that sustaining the ethical and epistemological integrity of Islamic education amid digital transformation requires a deliberate, theologically informed strategy grounded in the Qur’ānic principles of justice, consultation and moderation, alongside classical doctrines of *ijtihād*, *maṣlahah*, and *dar’ al-mafāsīd*. Aligning content curation, platform design, pedagogical reform and hybrid learning models with the higher objectives of Islamic knowledge—cultivating moral character, communal coherence and pursuit of divine truth—demands collaboration among scholars, educators, developers and policymakers.

Future research should empirically investigate user experiences with digital Islamic tools in Nigeria, examine epistemic trust in online influencers and AI-generated content, and explore cross-cultural approaches to ethical technology integration, thereby advancing a digital Islamic pedagogy that is both technically efficient and rooted in the moral imperatives of the tradition.

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## **SECTION THREE**

### **A GLOBAL ISLAM, CONFLICT AND REFORMIST TRAJECTORIES**

## CHAPTER 13

# Between the Local and the Global: A Critique of Challenges Facing Muslims in the Contemporary World

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### Introduction

The three key concepts in this topic deserve explanation to set the premise for this discourse, namely: Conflict, Islam and Muslim. Conflict, according to the *Oxford Dictionary*, means “a serious disagreement or a protracted argument”. However, the *Webster English Dictionary* presents conflict as “fight”, “battle,” or “war”. From the semantic significations of the two dictionary definitions, two typologies of conflicts emerge: minor and major conflicts. A conflict may be classified as minor when a contentious issue is peacefully resolved by the feuding parties within a short span. Major conflicts, on the other hand, are often prolonged and take the form of physical confrontations before they are eventually resolved, if they ever are. In the context of the early history of Islam, these two forms were exhibited at different epochs. A typical illustration of a minor conflict is the succession crisis over the leadership of the *Ummah* after the demise of the Prophet (SAW). The crisis, which threatened to polarise the *Ummah*, was peacefully resolved through the popular choice of Abū Bakr as the first *Khalīfah*. There are three types of major conflicts in Islamic history which involved warfare, namely: wars of defense (*Badr*, *Uhūd* and *Khandaq*), civil wars (Camel and *Siffīn*) and wars of expansion (Conquest of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, etc). With reference to our contemporary period, mention must be made of conflicts and insurgencies masterminded by the *Mujāhidīn* like *Al-Qaeda*, *Taliban*, *Hezbollah*, *ISIS* and *Hamas*, among others, who have reasons for their conflicts in different parts of the world, as will be discussed.

The second key word is “Islam”, which means submission to the will of Allah. The etymology of the term connotes peace in all ramifications: peace with Allah, peace with one’s neighbour, and peace with self (See *Sūrah* 25:63, *Sūrah* 28:55, *Sūrah* 19: 47, *Sūrah* 51:24, and *Sūrah* 36:48, among others.) In view of the importance attached to peace, Islam teaches freedom of religion (*Lā ikraha fī’-d-Dīn*, Q. 2:256; also *Sūratu’l Kāfirūn*, *Sūrah* 108). It is for this reason that the Qur’ān says, “Do not abuse that which they worship”, as evident in *Sūrah* 6:108. Muslim, on the other hand, means one who submits to the will of Allah. Ashafa (2022) categorises Muslims into four, viz: ideological Muslims (varieties of tenets propagated by the jihadists, as will be seen, are ideological), nominal Muslims (Muslim by mere name), ceremonial Muslims (occasional Muslims) and dissident Muslims (recalcitrant Muslims). According to Oladosu (2022), being a Muslim has implications for six spheres of Muslim life: being a Muslim in ideology, rituality, morality, family,

personality and the necessity to have optimism that the future belongs to the Ummah (Sūrah 24:55). It is for this reason that the glorious Qurʾān makes a distinction between a Muslim and a *Mūʾmin*, as evident in Sūrah 49:14 which reads: “The Bedouins say: ‘We believe’ Say: ‘You believe not but you only say, ‘ We have surrendered (in Islam)’, for faith has not yet entered your hearts...”.

Muslims, the world over, constitute an *Ummah* which should be united and that is why the Qurʾan in several passages warns against disunity:

*Sūrah* 3: 105 - “And be not as those who separated and disputed after the clear proofs had come unto them. For such, there is an unlawful doom.”

*Sūrah* 6:159 - “Lo! as for those who sunder their religion and become schismatic, no concern at all hast thou with them, their case will go to Allah who then will tell them what they used to do.”

*Sūrah* 10: 19 - “Mankind were but one community; then they differed, had it not been for a word that had already gone forth from thy Lord, it had been judged between them in respect of that wherein they differ.”

*Sūrah* 21: 92-93 - “And lo this your religion is one religion, and I am your Lord, so worship me. And they have broken their religion (into fragments) among them (yet) all are returning unto us.”

*Sūrah* 23: 52-54 - “And lo this your religion is one religion, and I am your Lord, so keep your duty unto Me. But they mankind have broken their religion among them into sects, each sect rejoicing in its tenets, so leave them in their error till a time.”

*Sūrah* 42:14 - “And they were not divided until after the knowledge came unto them, through rivalry among themselves; and had it not been for a word that had already gone forth from their Lord for an appointed term, it surely had been judged between them...”.

I have quoted these Quranic passages copiously as listed by Chaudhry (n.d.) to show the importance attached to the unity of the Muslim *Ummah* in the scripture. Paradoxically, the same set of verses affirms the inevitability of schism. That is the allegory of the Qurʾan. Many questions arise from the foregoing: If Islam as a religion portends peace, why is it engulfed in conflicts around the world? If Muslims as an *Ummah* should be united, why the split into sectarian groupings? What role should we play as Muslims to stem the tide? I will adopt a historical approach in the analysis of the issues involved.

### **The Origin**

For a proper understanding of the conflicts/insurgencies associated with Islam and the Muslims in our contemporary period, the root causes have to be traced to the civil unrests

that engulfed the early history of Islam. Schism within the *Ummah* experienced in early Islam arose from the civil wars fought during the caliphate of ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭālib, cousin of the Prophet Muḥammad. It all started because Prophet Muḥammad did not issue a definite instruction regarding the mode of selection of his successor before his death (Watt, 1972). This led to controversy between the *Muhājirūn* and Anṣār, each claiming the right to produce the first caliph, before it was settled in favour of Abū Bakr from among the *Muhājirūn*. In order not to allow a repeat of that experience, Abū Bakr designated ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb as his successor. Hence, ‘Umar ascended the caliphate throne without controversy. ‘Umar introduced a novel system for the selection process. He constituted majlis shūrā (an electoral college) to select from. Interestingly, all the members were interested in the caliphate seat even though ‘Uthmān bin ‘Affān emerged as the third caliph. This was the beginning of the trouble. ‘Uthmān reigned for twelve years, only six of which were peaceful. In the end, he was assassinated and ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭālib succeeded him. ‘Alī did not enjoy his reign, having been suspected of complicity in the murder of ‘Uthmān. His regime was marred by civil wars masterminded by his opponents. The first was the Battle of Camel, fought between ‘Alī, on one side, and ‘Ā’ishah, wife of the Prophet, Ṭalḥa and Zubair, on the other. They accused ‘Alī of failing to punish ‘Uthmān’s assassin. They, however, lost the battle. The battle was named the Battle of Camel because ‘Ā’ishah rode on a camel in the battle. This narrative is the argument normally used to justify Muslim women’s participation in politics

The next civil war was the Battle of Siffin. It was a battle fought between Caliph ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah, the governor of Syria, and ‘Uthmān’s kinsman. The same reason for the Battle of Camel is the reason for Siffin, ‘Alī should not be caliph, having failed to bring to book the culprits of ‘Uthmān’s assassination. When Mu‘āwiyah’s commander noticed that the war was going against his army, he raised up a copy of the Qur’an to signal discontinuation with the war. A panel of arbitration was set up to broker peace, ‘Amr bin ‘Ās, representing Mu‘āwiyah, and Abū Mūsā Al-Ash‘arī, representing ‘Alī, agreed that their two leaders should abdicate their positions as governor and Caliph, respectively, based on Ibn ‘Ās’s suggestion. As this decision was unacceptable to ‘Alī, he opted to go back to the battlefield, but with a divided army, he could not. The outcome was the emergence of three splinter groups: the group that remained loyal to ‘Alī was known *Shī‘atu ‘Alī*; the group that withdrew from ‘Alī was known as *Khawārīj*, while the neutral group was the Murji’ates (the postponers).

The *Karbala* war was the last straw that broke the camel’s back because it was in this war that Hussain was killed. After the death of ‘Alī, the 4th orthodox caliph, Ḥassan, his son, was tipped by Shī‘atu ‘Alī to succeed his father, but he declined for lack of interest; rather, he teamed up with Mu‘āwiyah, who had been appointed the caliph by the majority. Apparently, he did that to reconcile the opposing groups. That year in Islamic history was known as the Year of Jam’ah. Before Mu‘āwiyah’s death, he had designated his son Yazīd as his successor, thus introducing hereditary succession into the caliphate system. People had thought he would choose Ḥassan to succeed him. While Yazīd had been enthroned

as the second Caliph of the Umayyad dynasty, the Shia picked Ḥusain (who was more interested than his brother) as the third Imam of the Shī‘ah sect. The ensuing Karbala war between Yazīd and Ḥussain sealed the division between Sunnī and Shī‘ah Islam. Ḥussain was beheaded and his head was carried to Damascus, the new capital. It was at this point that Sunnī and Shī‘ah Muslims permanently parted ways and Karbala became the moral story for the Shī‘ah. The Sunnī Muslims’ rule after the khulafā’r-Rāshidūn fell under the hegemonies of the Ummawī, the Abbasid and the Ottomans till the fall of the caliphate in 1924. Even as Sunnī triumphed politically in the Muslim world, the Shī‘ah continued to look up to their Imām as their legitimate political and religious leader. The abolition of the caliphate by the colonial rulers put an end to Muslim rule throughout the world, whether Sunni or Shia.

### **Contributions of the *Sunnī-Shī‘ah* Divide to the Growing Insurgencies**

Shiism has been described as Islamic Protestantism, considering the way the Shi‘ites broke away from mainstream Islam. Out of a total of 1.8 billion current world Muslim population, the Shiites constitute between 10 and 13 percent, representing about 200 million Shiites, predominantly in Iran. Both the *Sunnī* and *Shī‘ah* contributed in no small measure to the insurgencies around the world. While Sunnī Muslims believe that Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) did not explicitly declare a successor to take over governance after his death, the Shi‘ites believe he did designate ‘Alī, his cousin and in-law, to succeed him. In other words, the debate over succession divided the community, with the *Sunnī* arguing that leadership should be awarded to a qualified individual and the *Shī‘ah* insisting that the only legitimate ruler must come through Muḥammad’s bloodline.

Sectarian conflicts have been entrenched in a growing number of Muslim countries and it is threatening to fracture Iraq and Syria in particular. Tension between *Sunnī* and *Shī‘ah*, exploited by regional rivals, i.e. Saudi Arabia and Iran, could reshape the future of the Middle East. An ancient religious divide is helping to fuel a resurgence of conflict in the Middle East and Muslim countries. Two countries that compete for leadership of Islam, *Sunnī* Saudi Arabia and *Shī‘ah* Iran, have used the sectarian divide to further their ambition. How their rivalry is settled will likely shape the political balance between Sunnī and Shī‘ah and the future of the region, especially in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Bahrain and Yemen. Alongside the proxy battle is the renewed fervour of armed militants motivated by the goal of cleansing the faith or preparing the way for the Messiah’s return. Today, there are tens of thousands of organised sectarian militant groups throughout the region.

Despite the efforts of many *Sunnī* and *Shī‘ah* clerics to reduce tension through dialogue and counter violence, many experts express concern that Islam’s divide will lead to escalating violence and a growing threat to international peace and security. Nevertheless, there have been instances when Shī‘ah and Sunnī have lived peacefully together for centuries. In many countries, it has become common for members of the two sects to intermarry and pray at the same mosque. They share faith in the Qur’ān and Prophet Muḥammad’s sayings and perform similar prayers, although they differ in rituals and the interpretation of Islamic law

## **Abolition of the Caliphate and its Aftermath**

The Ottoman Caliphate, the world's last widely recognised caliphate, was abolished in 1924 by a decree of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey as a result of the Ottomans' defeat in the First World War. The process was one of the Atatürk's reforms following the replacement of the Ottoman Empire with the Republic of Turkey. Abdul Majīd II was deposed as the last Ottoman Caliph, as was Muṣṭafā Şabrī as the last Ottoman Shaykh of Islam. In the years prior to abolition during the Turkish revolution, the uncertainty that surrounded the future of the caliphate provoked strong reactions among the worldwide community of Sunnī Muslims. None of the candidates proposed from different parts of the world gained consensus for the candidacy across the Muslim world. Consequently, the institution entered a period of dormancy. In Egypt, debate focused on the book written by 'Alī Abdul Rāziq, which argued for a secular government. To date, two frameworks for pan-Islamic coordination exist: the Muslim World League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, both founded in the 60s. One of the active groups that tries to reestablish the Caliphate is *Hizb at Taḥrīr* established in 1953, as a political organisation in Jordanian-controlled Jerusalem ([en-m.wikipedia.org](http://en-m.wikipedia.org)).

When we talk about the efforts made by the revivalists to return the Muslim world to the practice of pristine Islam, Egypt should be mentioned as having played a leading role in view of the pan-Islamic religious and social movement (the Muslim Brotherhood) established by Ḥassan al-Bannā in Egypt in 1928. Ḥassan al-Bannā preached Islam in Egypt, set up hospitals and business enterprises before advancing into the political arena, aiming to end the British colonial control of the country. The self-stated aim of the Muslim Brotherhood is the establishment of a state ruled by *sharī'ah* law under a caliphate. Its slogan is "Islamic solution". The group spread to other Muslim countries and suffered government crack-downs from 1948 to the present day because of its incessant protests. The Brotherhood was legalised in 2011 and won several elections, including the 2012 presidential election, when its candidate, Moḥammed Morsī, became Egypt's first president to gain power through popular election. After one year in office, he was overthrown by the military and placed under house arrest. This unfortunate incident could not have happened without the plotting of the anti-Muslim West. In view of the fact that the group failed to embrace democratic values during its time, it was banned and declared a terrorist organisation.

Since the 1970s, a worldwide Islamic revival has emerged on a global scale, owing in large part to popular disappointment with the secular nation states and westernised ruling class which had dominated the Muslim world during the preceding decades and which were increasingly seen as authoritarian, ineffective and lacking cultural authenticity. It is also motivated by a desire to "restore Islam to ascendancy in the world that has turned away from God". The revival has been accompanied by the growth of various reformist-political movements inspired by Islam and by the re-Islamisation of society, with manifestations ranging from *sharī'ah*-based legal reform to greater piety and growing adoption of Islamic cultural identity. The revival has also been accompanied by an increased influence of

fundamentalist preachers and terrorist attacks carried out by some radicalised Islamic groups on a global scale. The radicalised groups that are masterminds of conflicts and insurgencies pervading the Muslim world today are well known. They include: *al-Qaeda*, the Taliban, ISIS, *HAMAS*, *Ash-Shabāb*, *Hizbullāh*, *ISWAP*, *Anṣarullāh* and *Boko Harām*. Some of them are *Shī'ah*, while some are *Sunnī*, particularly *Sunnī* Salafists rather than *Sunnī* Sufists. While Sufism represents the peaceful and mystical dimension of Islam, Salafism is the belief that the most authentic and true Islam is found in the lived example of the early righteous generation of Muslims who are closest in both time and proximity to Prophet Muḥammad (SAW). They are hardliners in the *aqīdah* they propagate. Islamic University of *Madīnah* is the leading intellectual centre of *Salafism*, which has produced scores of scholars around the world. It would be worthwhile to examine in brief what each of the revivalist groups stands for with a view to assessing their contributions to Islam, whether positive or negative.

### ***Al-Qaeda***

*Al-Qaeda*, founded by Osama bin Laden in the 1980s, is a pan-Islamist militant organisation led by a *Sunnī* Jihadist who self-identifies as a vanguard spearheading a global Islamic revolution to unite the Muslim world under an Islamic State known as the caliphate. *Al-Qaeda* has mounted attacks on civilian, military and economic targets in the United States and allied countries. The organisation has been designated as a terrorist group by NATO, the UN Security Council, the European Union, etc. Its ideologies include *Sunnī* Islamism, Muslim unity, *Sunnī-Shī'ah* alliance, anti-Americanism, anti-Zionism, etc. *Al-Qaeda* emerged out of the anti-Soviet Jihād in Afghanistan in the 80s. As the Soviets prepared to withdraw, Osama bin Laden and some of his close associates - high on their perceived victory over the mighty Soviet Union - decided to capitalise on the network they had built to take the jihad global. Today, *al-Qaeda* membership spreads across many Arab and non-Arab nations, including Yemen, the Maghrib, Afghanistan, Somalia, etc.

### **ISIS**

ISIS, an acronym for Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, is also known as ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant). It is a *Sunnī* jihadist group, with a particularly violent ideology, that calls itself a caliphate and claims religious authority over all Muslims. It was inspired by *al-Qaeda* but later publicly expelled from it. Terrorism experts have analysed the group's financing, management and organisation. Its savvy use of social media for recruitment and fundraising and instability had spawned the group as a regional problem in the Middle East. The Islamic State began as an Iraqi organisation, and this legacy shapes the movement to date. Jihadist groups proliferated in Iraq after the 2003 US invasion, and many eventually coalesced around Abū Musāb al-Zarkawī, a Jordanian jihadist who spent some time in Afghanistan. Though Osama bin Laden gave Zarkawī seed money to start his organisation, he started as part of *al-Qaeda* before they separated. Zarkawī emphasised sectarian war and attacks on fellow *Sunnī* Muslims deemed apostates, such as those who collaborated

with the Shī‘ah-led regime. They are notorious for their acts of brutality in dealing with the so-called ‘infidels’. When the Syrian conflict broke out in 2011 and electrified the Muslim world, Zawāhirī urged the Iraqī jihadists to take part in the conflict, and Baghdādī, who had taken over leadership of the Iraqī group in 2010, sent fighters to Syria to build an organisation. Syria was in chaos, and the Iraqī jihadists had already established a secure base of operation there, raising funds and winning new recruits to their cause. By 2013, the Iraqī jihadists started calling themselves the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria to reflect the new broader orientation. They faced less pressure in Iraq with the departure of the US forces at the end of 2011. ISIS’ ambition is to have territorial expansion; it wants to create a government where Muslims can live under Islamic law. This ideology inspired many Muslims who then embraced the group. By controlling territories, they are able to create an army and use it to gain more territories.

*Al-Qaeda* and Islamic State, being the two leading jihadist groups, have always been in competition in terms of networking. Wherever there is a call for Jihād, there is a rivalry, which has played out in Afghanistan, Algeria, Libya, Pakistan, Sinai, Yemen, etc. The Islamic State has gained support from a number of jihadist groups, including Boko Ḥarām in Nigeria, and Anṣār Bayt al-Maqdis in Egypt. Both are believed to have pledged allegiance to ISIS. As of 2015, ISIS has formally recognised seven provinces, including Libya, from where many of its foreign fighters hail, and in Yemen, where it is in competition with al-Qaeda ([www.brookings.edu/articles](http://www.brookings.edu/articles)).

### ***Ḥizbullāh***

This a Lebanese *Shī‘ah* Islamist political party and militant group which was founded in 1982 in Southern Lebanon by Imād Mughniyeh along with others, but led by Ḥassan Nasrallāh since 1992. Their ideology consists of two elements. First, a belief in the rule of the just Juriconsult and adherence to Khomeini leadership. Second, the continued need to resist the Israeli army. In the South Lebanon conflict (1985-2000), *Ḥizbullāh* was the primary force opposing Israel and the South Lebanon army. In the 2006 Lebanon war, Hizbullah had fierce military engagement with Israel. Under Nasrallah’s leadership, *Ḥizbullāh* acquired long-range rockets, which allowed them to strike at northern Israel. After suffering heavy casualties during its 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon, Israel withdrew its forces in the year 2000. This greatly increased *Ḥizbullāh*’s popularity in the region and bolstered Ḥizbullāh’s position within Lebanon. During the Syrian civil war, *Ḥizbullāh* fought on the side of the Syrian army.

### ***Ash-Shabāb***

*Ḥarakat al-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn* is a *Sunnī* Islamist military and political organisation based in Somalia and active in other parts of East Africa. It is actively involved in the ongoing Somali civil war and incorporates elements of Somali nationalism into its Islamic cause. *Al-Shabāb* seeks the creation of an Islamic Emirate of Somalia to include Somalia, Somaliland, Puntland, North Eastern Kenya and the Ogaden region of Ethiopia (Maruf and Joseph, 2018).

### ***The Taliban***

The *Taliban* is a militant fundamentalist Islamist movement chiefly based in Afghanistan and Pakistan, founded in 1994 by Mullah Omar Abdul Ghani Baradar. The Afghan *Taliban* are responsible for most insurgencies in Afghanistan, which follow an established regular pattern of low-level ambush and hit-and-run attacks. The *Taliban* ruled about three-quarters of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 before being overthrown following the American invasion. The *Taliban* recaptured Kabul in 2021 following the departure of most of the coalition forces after nearly 20 years. The Taliban now controls the entire country, with Ḥanafī jurisprudence as the basis for the country's legal system. They impose their doctrines on the citizens through the guidelines justified under their interpretation of the *Sharī'ah*.

### ***Anṣārullāh***

The Houthi Movement, officially known as *Anṣārullāh*, is a *Shī'ah* Islamist military and political organisation that emerged from Yemen in the 1990s. Yemen consists of two major branches of Islam, viz: Sunni (65 percent) and Shia (35 percent). Their ideologies are Zaidī revivalism, *Shī'ah* Islamism, Arab nationalism, anti-imperialism, anti-western sentiment, anti-Americanism, anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, etc.

### ***Hamas***

Hamas is an acronym of its official name, *Ḥarakat al-Muqawamah al-Islāmiyyah*, the Islamic Resistance Movement. It is a Palestinian Sunni Islamist political and military organisation governing the Gaza Strip of the Israeli-occupied territories. It was founded in 1987 by Ahmad Yassin along with others. Hamas continues to enforce restrictions on Gaza's population based on its interpretation of Islam and *Sharī'ah*, including a judicial system. Hamas is committed to the creation of an Islamic Palestinian State, having been the *de facto* governing body in the Gaza Strip since 2007. Its goal is to liberate Palestine and resist the Zionist project.

### ***Boko Ḥarām***

This sect, which is officially known as *Jamā'at Ahlu Sunnah li Da'wah wal Jihād*, is an Islamist militant organisation based in northeastern Nigeria, but also active in Chad, Niger, western Cameroun and Mali. It was founded in Maiduguri in 2002 by one Muḥammad Yūsuf. *Boko Ḥarām* is a Salafist militant group fighting for the replacement of the secular Nigerian State with an Islamist one based on strict compliance with *Sharī'ah* law throughout the country. It exerts violence against Westerners, Christians and Muslims considered infidels. *Boko Ḥarām* considers western education a taboo. It carries out acts of violence on a very large scale. In pursuit of its ideology, it has engaged in arson, bombing, shooting, stabbing with disdain and impunity, targeting important national events, public institutions, schools, markets, churches, mosques, and Muslim and Christian festivals indiscriminately. *Boko Ḥarām* pledged allegiance to and was accepted as a branch of Islamic State in 2015, and it renamed itself the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP).

## The Local Scene

At this juncture, our focus shifts to the local scene where the searchlight will be beamed naturally on the Nigerian State. The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic nation composed of six geo-political zones. The three zones in the northern region, made up of 19 states, are populated by Muslims; the two zones in the eastern region, comprising eleven states, are populated by Christians, while the southwest zone, consisting of six states, is made up of a balanced Muslim-Christian population.

Nigeria, which used to enjoy relative religious peace before and after independence, suddenly became acrimonious from the mid-1970s. This was when the slogan ‘Islamizing Nigeria’ cropped up during the meeting of the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) set up by the military regime of Murtala Muhammad in 1975. The issue became exacerbated in the 1977 Constituent Assembly debate during the General Olusegun Obasanjo regime. In these instances, Christian members vehemently resisted the inclusion of *Sharī‘ah* in the constitution on the claim that doing so would Islamise Nigeria. Since then, as rightly observed by Sanni A Lugga, the Waziri of Katsina, every type of conflict in Nigeria, whether ethnic, political or economic, has been interpreted to be a religious conflict. Examples of such conflicts, especially in the 80s and 90s, include the 1986 Ilorin Palm Sunday crisis, the 1987 Kafanchan riot, the 1991 Tafawa Balewa conflict, the 1992 Zango Kataf crisis, the 1995 Bauchi revolts, the 2000 Kaduna conflict and, more recently, the Jos intermittent conflicts. As can be observed, most of these conflicts occurred in the north.

Incidentally, at the advent of the 4th Republic in 1999, when Chief Olusegun Obasanjo became the nation’s president, 12 out of the 19 states of the north that are Muslim-dominated adopted full implementation of *Sharī‘ah*, and Nigeria did not become Islamised as a result. Interestingly, what happened in 1999 had been predicted by Opeloye (1988) when controversy was still raging on the issue of *Sharī‘ah*. He had argued then that since the federal system of government enables each state or region to have full control of its affairs, it should be possible for any state of the federation that preferred an Islamic system of government to adopt it. The 12 *Sharī‘ah* states of the north are homogeneously Muslim-populated. That is democracy at work.

Twenty-five years after the adoption of *Sharī‘ah* and its full implementation in the 12 states, the story cannot be said to be the same. The kind of zeal which Governor Sanni Yerima of Zamfara State had, which influenced other governors, is no longer there. As it will be recalled, at the very initial stage, it was tagged political *Sharī‘ah* by President Olusegun Obasanjo. Be that as it may, it is absurd that agitations and clamour for *Sharī‘ah* implementation are taking a dangerous dimension with the emergence of the Boko *Ḥarām* insurgency. I make bold to say that there is a link between the failed full *Sharī‘ah* implementation by the *Sharī‘ah* states and the emergence of Boko *Ḥarām*. As posited by Opeloye (2012), the declaration of full implementation of *Sharī‘ah* in Borno State was made by late Alhaji Mala Kachala, the then Executive Governor (1999-2003), following

the submission of the report of the Sharī‘ah implementation panel and the governor’s assent to the Act of the Borno State House of Assembly. The governor put in place the necessary structure, indicating the government’s seriousness with the implementation. However, with the expiration of Governor Kachala’s tenure and the coming of his successor, Governor Ali Modu Sheriff (2003-2011), no further progress was made; rather, Sharī‘ah measures were being relaxed. It turned out to be that Modu Sheriff only used Sharī‘ah as a campaign issue for the election, which he won, only to abandon Sharī‘ah on assumption of office, thus dashing the hope and aspirations of his followers. The situation of the other states is not different from what happened in Borno. The frustrated mercenaries used for political gains had no choice but to find other means of survival.

Since *Boko Harām*’s emergence, it has been viewed from different perspectives. To some, it is an insurgency occasioned by the nation’s flawed political process. This will be true when we consider the circumstances of its emergence. To others, it is a sectarian insurgency due to its propagation of heretical doctrines. This will be plausible when we realise that northern Nigeria has a history of spawning heretical sects. To hold this view is to see Boko Harām as comparable to the Maitatsine sect of the early 1980s. And yet to others, it is a manifestation of global terrorists’ organisational networking. The truth in this assertion is not farfetched since the group has recently established its affiliation with IS. Boko Harām, without doubt, portends serious danger not only to Islam as a belief system but also to Nigeria as a nation. This is because of the threat it continues to pose not only to the security of northern Nigeria but also the nation as a whole.

### ***Sunnī-Salafī versus Shīcah-Related Conflicts in Nigeria***

Besides the *Boko Harām*-associated conflicts, Nigeria has its share of Salafī- and Shīcah-related conflicts. The *Sunnī-Ṣūfī* clash with *Sunnī-Salafī* has been an issue in Nigeria since the 1970s. Two *Ṣūfī* brotherhoods, namely *Qādiriyyah* and *Tijāniyyah*, dominated the religious space in Nigeria till 1978 when the situation changed with the emergence of the *Izālah* group, formally known as *Izālatu’l bid‘ah wa iqāmatu’s-Sunnah*. The *Izālah* movement is the Nigerian brand of Salafism. Shaykh Abubakar Gūmī (d.1992), one-time Grand *Qāḍī* of northern Nigeria, inspired the emergence of *Jamā‘tu Izālah* in the early seventies with the objective of eradicating *Ṣūfī* orders in Nigeria through his lectures and publications in which he vehemently condemned *Ṣūfī* doctrines and practices, which he called censurable innovations. An example is the concept of *wilāyah* (sainthood), a significant aspect of *Qādiriyyah* tenets. Shaykh Ismail Idris, a former student of Shaykh Abubakar Gūmī, established the Movement in Jos city in 1978 (Quadri,1985:95-108). The reform movement aimed to fight *bid‘ah* (all forms of innovation). In their view, the Islamic tradition in Nigeria is full of accretions which should be purified, while the model of *as-Salaf as Ṣāliḥ* (pious predecessor) had to be followed. The *Izālah* attitude, of course, attracted reactions from *Ṣūfī* leaders, such as Shaykh Nāṣir Kabara, who took the *Izālah* leader up intellectually. The *Izālah*’s aggressive approach to the realisation of their objectives led to

occasional violence in many areas of their operation. Consequently, the *Qādiriyyah* and *Tijāniyyah* followers had no option but to come together, albeit temporarily, to defend their faith against their common enemy.

In 1999, during the process of transition to democratic rule, full Sharī‘ah implementation was being adopted by some northern states. The *Izālah* group was solidly behind the move, because full Sharī‘ah implementation agrees with the *Izālah* philosophy of Islamising the society. In other words, the *Izālah* group never hid its support for the full implementation of Sharī‘ah. The movement had been aggressive, violent and militant in its opposition against what the Ṣūfī brotherhood stood for.

### **Shiism Conflicts in Nigeria**

Nigeria is almost homogeneously a *Malikī Madhab Sunnī* Muslim community. The Shī‘ah presence is almost negligible, but they often make their presence felt, especially when celebrating their festival. They are neither friendly with the mainstream Muslim community nor with the government authorities against whom several clashes have been recorded, such as their clash with the Nigerian police in 2009 (IHRC report, 2014). In 2014, during their Qud’s day celebration in Zaria, they clashed with the government, which interpreted their procession as a demonstration in support of the Palestinian cause (Anjide & Okoli, 2017). Some members of the group were killed, including the sons of their leader, Ibrahim al-Zakzaky. Qud’s day in the Shī‘ah tradition is celebrated on the last Friday of *Ramaḍān*, when Muslims worldwide unite in solidarity against Israel in support of Palestine. Again, in Zaria in 2015, the *Shī‘ah* procession attracted the attention of the government. During the 3-day crackdown, scores of members of the group were allegedly killed; several members were arrested, including the leader, al-Zakzaky, and his wife. In September 2021, in Abuja, while marking a religious celebration previously banned by the government, some of their members were killed in a shootout involving the security agencies. In August 2022 in Kaduna, the Shī‘ah and security agencies clashed during the *Ashūrā* mourning procession, in which some of their members were killed. *Ashūrā* is a Shī‘ah celebration that marks the anniversary of the assassination of *Hussain at Karbala*. The members of the Shī‘ah sect, wherever and whenever they face persecution and travail, are encouraged to persevere and endure, believing that the return of the expected Mahdī will be the end of tyranny, suffering, misery, wretchedness and despotism, and the beginning of a new era of posterity, bliss, happiness and ecstasy never experienced before by humanity.

### **Raison d’être for the Conflicts**

Can there be justification for the conflicts and insurgencies involving the aforementioned jihadist groups? Whether or not there is, we must consider the following issues, believed to be germane to the discourse: the anti-Islam Western diplomacy of unsolicited interference in Muslim nations, the Palestinian Question, the disunited Muslim Ummah, and the inspirational zeal for re-introduction of the caliphate latent in Sūrah 24:55.

## **Anti-Islam Western Diplomacy**

By anti-Islam Western diplomacy is meant the unwarranted and unsolicited interference in the domestic affairs of Muslim nations by America and her allies. This played out in the US invasion of Iraq. The primary rationalisation of the Iraqi war was articulated by a joint resolution of the US Congress, known as the Iraqi Resolution. The US claimed that the intent was to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism and free Iraq from his alleged oppressive rule. Ironically, the Central Intelligence Agency, as well as the Security Intelligence Agency, discredited evidence related to Iraqi weapons and the alleged link with Al-Qaeda. Little wonder that Kofi Annan, the then UN Secretary General, termed it an illegal war and considered the action to be a threat to world peace. Nearly all the countries of the world opposed the war embarked upon without a UN mandate. This intransigence of the US was not limited to Iraq; it happened also in Syria and Libya, among others, thus leaving the countries in perpetual ordeal, though the recent attack on Iran became a big blow to the US, for it turned out to be a regret and not a success. The bitter truth, to my mind, is that the US is not comfortable seeing Muslim countries doing well. When they see a progressive government, their desire is to truncate it. What is unfortunate, however, is that we still find some Muslim countries being close allies of these Muslim enemy countries, contrary to the express teachings of Islam in Sūrah 5:51 (cf Sūrah 3:118) which reads: 'O you who believe take not the Jews and Christians for friends, they are friends to one another, whoever among you take them as friend is one of them, lo! Allah guides not the wrongdoing folk'.

The US use-and-dump policy is part of the game. The US once used *Al-Qaeda* against Russia and dumped them. It was a development that contributed to Al-Qaeda's recalcitrance. Al-Qaeda is said to have emerged from the anti-Soviet Jihād in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

## **The Palestinian Question**

Related to the assertion above is the Palestinian problem. The US has contributed in no small measure to the denial of Palestinians' right to self-determination, resulting in the lingering conflicts in the region. The least expected occurred in US diplomatic relations with Israel during the first administration of the US President, Donald Trump, when he made Jerusalem the capital of Israel. What an affront!

Despite these unfortunate developments, the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have been unable to present a united front of Islamic countries to put pressure on Israel and its western allies with a view to bringing about a ceasefire or moving towards a lasting political solution. Hamas, for some time, has been championing the Palestinian cause, backed by its nation state, Iran. Hamas, otherwise known as The Islamic Resistance Movement, is a Palestinian Sunnī Islamist political and military organisation governing the Gaza Strip of the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories. The bone of contention has been what constitutes the occupied territories. Hamas, backed by Iran,

employs the term “occupation” for the whole of Israel, while the Arab League employs it for select areas that came under Israel’s control after the Six Day War of 1967. The PLO’s position thus supports a two-state solution, implying Israel’s right to exist. These are the two opposing positions which, according to Rajdeep Sarkar (2023), make the Islamic world a house divided on Palestine, and this will not lead the Ummah anywhere. To my mind, the position taken by Hamas may never bring an end to the Palestine-Israel war because it will mean evacuating Israel from their present place to another location. Given the situation in which the civilian Palestinian population is facing genocide, the two-state solution proposed by the Arab League will foster the much-desired peace, as it will likely enjoy the support of most peace-loving nations of the world.

### **Disunity of the *Ummah***

This leads us to the problem of the lack of unity of the *Ummah*. The disunity manifests in the *Sunnī-Shī‘ah* sectarian divide, and the *Šūfī-Salaḥī aqīdah* divide, among others. It is one major problem preventing the *Ummah* from finding a solution to their problem. In point of fact, it is the problem contributing to the complexity in finding solutions to the conflicts around the globe. This, as we can see, is playing out in the ongoing Palestine-Israel war. One would wonder why the sectarian problem should be an issue when the Qur’an talks extensively about its inevitability, as evident in the passages earlier quoted, more so that we have common denominators in the prophethood of Muḥammad, the Qur’an as the last testament and the *Ka‘abah* as the *Qiblah*. It is in recognition of this that 20th-century revivalists like Jamālu’d-Dīn Al Afghānī, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Muḥammad Iqbāl and Kallīm Siddī did their best to advance the cause of Muslim Unity in the world. Iqbāl went beyond the politics of reducing everything to either Sunnī or Shī‘ah affairs exclusively, arguing that this narrow prism of confronting contemporary problems is the albatross of the Muslim world, and as long as they refuse to go beyond this narrow and reductionist perception, the attempt to be relevant in the contemporary world will be a mirage and chimaera (Bala Diggi, 2018). Kalīm, a Sunnī, saw the necessity of championing the Shī‘ah’s cause despite the sectarian differences. To Kalīm, the differences cannot serve as obstacles to unity, because when the Iranians were under the effective hegemony of the West, Iran was like Israel, no one dared to talk of Sunnī-Shī‘ah dichotomy. It should interest us to know that not too long ago, many international conferences were organised in which leading scholars of both Sunnī and Shī‘ah participated. I remember attending one organised by the Muslim Institute, London, in 1987. The differences are superficial. The Ummah should resolve to synergise and put behind the animosities and hatred of past centuries to pave the way for mutual cooperation and understanding.

In the same way, the disunity caused by ‘*aqīdah* within *Sunnī* Islam, in our considered view, is outlandish. Why should the Sufis be condemned by the Salafis? Should we forget so quickly the immeasurable contributions made by the Sūfī brotherhoods to the growth and expansion of Islam in different parts of the world? Giving account of the Sufi contribution

to the growth and development of Islam in India, Diggi (2018) opined that what Islam achieved in India during the period of the Muslim rule was due to the resilience of Sufism and the cosmopolitan approach of the *Sufis*. In India, the *Sufis* interacted with people of different faiths and cultures, and their efforts to transform society were unnoticed because they cared less about the inferior sides of any society. The duo of Iqbal and Rumi recognised Sufism as a tool for transforming Islamic societies. In most African societies, including Nigeria, the Sufi orders, particularly the *Qadiriyyah* and *Tijaniyyah*, played a pioneering role in the spread and growth of Islam. Barring the excesses associated with some Sufi saints, Sufism will not be unIslamic if Sufism or *tasawwuf* means indifference to what is with people and yearning for what is with Allah, or if Sufism signifies unveiling the unseen realities and inspired knowledge of the Creator. Condemning fellow Muslims, tagging them as infidels and killing them for not believing in a particular 'aqidah is arrogating to themselves that which is Allah's prerogative.

### **Inspirational Zeal for the Re-introduction of the Caliphate**

As can be observed from the foregoing analysis of the jihadists' activities, paramount in their ideologies is the zeal to re-Islamise their societies and restore the lost glory of Islam. The inspiration to embark on their mission seems to have been derived from *Sūrah* 24:55 which reads: "Allah has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds, that He will surely grant them succession in the land, as He caused those before them to succeed and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has approved for them and will give them in exchange safety after their fear...". This passage, as interpreted by notable exegetes, predicts the all-time triumph (ascendancy) of Islam. The fulfilment of the prediction is applicable not only to the time of the Prophet and the companions but also to the contemporary period. *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* opts for the former interpretation. According to the commentator, this is a promise from Allah to His messenger that he would cause his Ummah to become leaders and rulers of mankind, through whom he would reform the world and to whom people would submit. Allah made this to materialise before the death of the Prophet by giving him victory over Makkah, Khaybar, Bahrain and the entire Arabian Peninsula and Yemen. He even exchanged gifts with Heraclius, the ruler of Byzantium, the ruler of Egypt and Alexandria, the *Muqawqis*, the king of Oman, and an-Najash of Abyssinia. Further victories were recorded during the time of Abū Bakr, the first orthodox caliph (632-634AD), who conquered parts of Persia, Syria and Egypt through his commanders Khālid bn Wālid, Abū Ubaydah and 'Amr bin 'Ās. Under 'Umar, the second Caliph (634-644AD), more tremendous events were recorded as the rest of Syria and Egypt and most of Persia were conquered. Under 'Uthmān, the Islamic domain spread as far as the East and West, bringing Cyprus and Andalusia (Spain) under Islam. Allah's prediction of the triumph of Islam was indeed true.

In our contemporary time, Islam has continued to gain ascendancy in fulfilment of the Quranic prediction. This is why today Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world, and this is due to the natural appeal of Islam to the converts. In light of this, interpreting this

passage as motivating the jihadists to embark on an insurgency mission may not be wholly plausible. Nevertheless, present-day insurgencies aiming to achieve their Islamisation agenda are bound to be frustrated, especially in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies like Nigeria, which is why *Boko Harām* is not making any headway.

### **The Way Forward**

It is instructive to note that some Muslim countries still enjoy relative peace and stability despite the conflicts prevalent in many countries around the world. Malaysia can be cited as a good example. According to the Global Peace Index, the most peaceful Muslim country is Malaysia. It is a country I have visited twice. It gained independence three years before Nigeria, and it is more or less a first-world country. What is the secret behind the peace enjoyed in the country? What measures have they put in place to prevent insurgents from infiltrating the country? I list hereunder the administrative provisions governing religious matters as contained in the bulletin of the Department of Islamic Development, Malaysia, which guarantee peace in the country, with a view to examining their applicability in Nigeria in comparative terms.

1. Malaysia operates a constitutional monarchy which has provisions for the management of religious matters. Nigeria is a democratic republic which claims to be a secular nation.
2. Malaysia has 13 states, out of which Malay states are 9 and all of them Muslim-dominated; the remaining 4 comprise other nationalities. Nigeria has 36 states, excluding the Federal Capital Territory. The North consists predominantly of Muslims, the East is Christian-dominated and the West has a balanced Muslim-Christian population. In effect, Nigeria is much bigger and more diverse ethnically and religiously.
3. The 9 Malay states rotate leadership of the country among the Sultans every 5 years or when a vacancy occurs. Nigeria is not a monarchy. The northern Emirs, who are traditional rulers of their various communities, do not rotate leadership, as they all recognise the Sultan of Sokoto as their Head and there is no controversy about it.
4. Each of the 9 Sultans serves as the head of his state as well as head of the *Ummah* in the state (known as Agong). In Nigeria, the Sultan and the Emirs serve only as Head of the *Ummah* in their respective communities/cities. Agitation is ongoing for the government to give a constitutional role to the traditional rulers in the country. The country used to have a House of Chiefs in the First Republic.
5. In Malaysia, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs has branches and administrative offices in every state to handle Islamic matters in the states. The Nigerian Supreme Council, which oversees Islamic matters in the country, serves as an umbrella body for *Jammat Nasril-Islam* in the North and the Muslim *Ummah* of South West Nigeria (MUSWEN). Nothing prevents the Nigerian Council from aspiring to have a model close to the type in Malaysia to improve the image of Islam in Nigeria. For this to happen, it will require a fundamental restructuring, which is attainable.

6. In Malaysia, every religious issue is administered by the ruler through the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, such as the establishment and commissioning of mosques and even *Muṣallah*, appointment of Imams, *Mu'adhin* (known as Bilāl), administration of Zakāh, Nikāh and Janāzah. In Nigeria, our religious organisation like *Anṣār 'd Dīn* and *Nawairu 'd-Dīn* are not doing badly in this regard. It remains for the League of Imams and Alfas to be better organised and follow their pattern.
7. In Malaysia, the official *Madhab* is Shāfi'ī; any other *Madhab* or sect is not allowed. It is not allowed to distribute unauthorised books or organise unauthorised lectures. Maliki *Madhab* is the popular school of thought in Nigeria. It may be difficult to apply this principle in Nigeria due to the Islamic and constitutional principles of religious freedom. However, monitoring of what goes on by regulatory agencies will help sanitise the system
8. Imams who are placed on salaries are certified competent before employment. They are mostly trained in Azhar, Jordan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, but not Saudi Arabia, because of the ideological issue. Most Imams in Nigeria are not on a salary; they feed or even overfeed on *Ṣadaqah* offerings. It is desirable for the Nigerian Muslim *Ummah* to be better organised to place the Imams on a salary. Saudi Arabia is not giving a good account of herself as a leading Islamic country, not only because of the undue attachment to the '*aqīdah* but because of the undue influence of the West on the nation. Therefore, the Nigerian Muslim *Ummah* needs to relate with the country with caution.
9. The Supreme Council (JAKIM) has the power to deal with dissenting groups or individuals flouting its orders. No one dares contravene its directive to commence Ramadan on a specified date. Because of the respect which the Muslim *Ummah* in Nigeria has for the Sulṭān, his directives on Islamic matters are more often than not obeyed. However, he lacks the authority to deal with dissenting voices.
10. The Jumu'ah *Khuṭbah*, as approved by the Supreme Council, is read every Friday by the Imams throughout the country. As expected, the *Khuṭbah* reflect current issues within the society. Making Friday *Khuṭbah* uniform throughout the nation is not practicable in Nigeria. It even erodes the freedom that the Imams should have. Nevertheless, necessary machinery should be put in place by the government to sanction whoever engages in hate preaching.

## Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis, you will probably agree with me that it is not possible to apply the aforementioned principles wholesale. The reason is obvious: Malaysia is an Islamic state having all the necessary machinery to enforce its religious laws, while Nigeria is not. As a multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation, Nigerians are in all things religious, not minding our atrocities. However, the fact remains that Muslims and Christians, who constitute the

dominant population of the country, have different views on the acclaimed secular status of the country. I believe, and strongly too, that Nigeria is a multi-religious state rather than a secular one. This is because of the country's deep involvement in religious matters that we all know. It is on the strength of this that I will recommend that the government create a Ministry of Religious Affairs to coordinate religious activities and enforce discipline on erring perpetrators of religious indiscipline. It is when this is in place that the religious coordination organisations, like the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), MUSWEN and others like them, will have official/legal backing to enforce their laws and regulations. But before then, we have to look into the operational relations of the major Islamic bodies, such as NSCIA, JNI, MUSWEN and RABITA, in terms of how much synergy, cooperation and understanding exist within them, because without this, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to defeat disharmony and insurgency in whatever form.

The recommendation above is for as far as the Nigerian nation-state is concerned. However, with reference to the individual Muslims within the Ummah, there are inherent lessons to learn in the light of Qur'anic provisions in the context of this paper. Discomforting as the emerging facts in the paper may seem to the discerning and conscious Muslim, it needs to be stressed that Islam remains what it is, regardless of all kinds of disagreements leading to conflicts, schism and *'aqidah* exhibited by Muslims. Islam remains a religion to be proud of, given its beautiful tenets. *Alhamdulillah* for this. It only remains for us to take advantage of its beautiful teachings, whether as *Sunni* or *Shi'ah*, whether as *Salaḥī* or *Ṣūfī*, to be good ambassadors of the religion. I will illustrate with the following Quranic passages:

A. *Sūrah* 5: 3: "...Today I have perfected for you your religion, completed my favour upon you and approved Islam as your religion..."

This verse tells us that Muslims are blessed with Islam being a perfect and complete religion. Perfection and completeness of Islam are evident in the solutions it proffers to diverse human problems: political, economic, legal, social, cultural, etc, in ways no other religion does. My recent experience in international dialogue engagements shows that Islam always surpasses other religions in scripturally based facts concerning whatever subject is being discussed. This confirms the truth in the assertion that Islam is a way of life.

B. *Sūrah* 3: 110: "You are the best community (Ummah) that has been raised for mankind. You enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency and you believe in Allah..."

The passage expects us as Muslims, whatever our sectarian affiliations, to be models to others in all our human endeavours: political, economic, social, judicial, etc. *Sūrah* 21: 92 describes the Ummah as one, despite the schism that characterises it. This is understandable, after all, irrespective of the group individuals belong to, Allah is recognised by all as our Creator, Muḥammad as our Prophet and *Ka'abah* as *our qiblah*. This is enough to foster the spirit of accommodation, understanding and cooperation among the various groups following the

Quranic passage (Surah 5:2), which encourages Muslims to help one another unto righteousness and pious duty, but not unto sin and transgression.

- C. *Sūrah* 110: “When Allah’s help and triumph come and you see mankind entering into the religion of Allah in troops, then celebrate the praise of your Lord and seek forgiveness of Him. Lo He is ready to show mercy.”

It is in fulfilment of this Qur’anic prediction that Islam, today, is a global religion and, indeed, the fastest-growing world religion. The current world Muslim population is about 1.8 billion, next to Christianity, which in fact has been experiencing a gradual decline in adherence since the mid-20th century (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>). The rate at which Islam is being embraced in Europe and America is amazing. This is due to the natural appeal of the religion, not militancy. If the growth of Islam is not that phenomenal in Africa, it is due to three factors ravaging the continent: ignorance, poverty and disease. By the time the three evils disappear, the story will be different. *Alḥamdulillāh* for the *ni‘mah* of Islam.

In view of the foregoing, it is incumbent on Muslims, wherever they may be, to key into the abundant peace provisions of the Qur’ān, Islam being a religion of peace. Several verses of scripture attest to this, including Surah 25:63, which reads: “The faithful servants of the Beneficent God are those who walk upon the earth modestly and when the foolish ones address them, their answer is peace” (Cf *Sūrah* 28: 55; *Sūrah* 19: 47). If Muslims behave contrary to the peace provisions, it is not Islam that is deficient; it is the Muslim that is a deviant.

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# CHAPTER 14

## Reform and Socio-Economic Transformation of the Hausa Society

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### **Introduction**

To begin with, *Shaykh* Uthman bin Fodio (1754-1817 CE) was a man of his time and circumstances who learnt Islamic precepts and later disseminated them through the perpetual acts of teaching and preaching the true, unadulterated and real teachings of Islam. He was an itinerant/mobile teacher and guide. These are the two approaches that *Shaykh Uthman* applied in spreading his enlightenment and preaching activities for a new reformed face for the Islamic society in which he was raised, and also to avoid the failure of the unsystematic approach followed by some of his teachers in this regard.

Most of the scholars in the land stayed in their own established schools or centres of learning where they taught their students. These were resident teachers. Such teachers could be indigenes or immigrants. At times, the teachers would be given spiritual or political leadership, as it used to happen in the traditions of Hausaland. Such scholars were appointed as Imams and custodians of the established Qur'anic schools. They became the consultants in the religious affairs of their people, in all the socio-religious functions, such as naming ceremonies, weddings and funeral prayers (Gada, 2010).

Mobile teachers, on the other hand, are Islamic religious teachers who move from place to place with the sole aim of teaching religious knowledge. They were those known as itinerant scholars in the early centuries of Islam. However, the mobile scholars in Hausaland could differ slightly from the early itinerant scholars, since the former were those who moved together with children entrusted to them by their parents, while the latter were those who moved individually, visiting different centres of learning or scholars, where they settled for a period of time and imparted knowledge of Islam to the people they met (Gada, 2010).

Uthman bin Foduye was a well-known and important figure in the transformation of traditional Hausa society into a reformed Islamic society in the 19th-century history of West Africa (Bilad al-Sudan), especially in present-day northern Nigeria and southern Niger Republic. He was of Fulani origin, with high intellectual and moral character. He grew up in Hausaland, where the inhabitants were in the darkness of ignorance, with gross oppression and aggressive exploitation of the people by the then rulers. He had a great

zeal for reforming his society socio-religiously according to the dictates of Islam. It is pertinent to note that Shaykh Uthman was passionate about the reform of his society. He initially studied the problem and came up with the approaches most suitable for the circumstances at that time, that is, in a manner that gave him the easiest way to achieve his aim. He was inspired by the ignorance of the masses concerning Islam, and despite the presence of many scholars in Hausaland, traditional beliefs were mixed with Islamic beliefs and practices (Okene and Shukri, n.d.).

To understand and appreciate the role of Uthman bin Foduye in reforming his society, it is significant to understand the various problems that guided him to develop his thoughts on his mission and the systematic approaches that he used in eliminating the problems. Uthman's approaches to transforming the society that changed the central Sudan comprise three areas, namely, enlightenment and pedagogy, concern for entrenching the everlasting values of Islam and deep spirituality. He faulted scholars who supported rulers in the face of blameworthy acts, rather than guiding them to their personal interests. In return, he faced harassment and serious attacks from scholars who supported the existing order. Finally, he emerged victorious over his opponents and established the Caliphate that survived until the British colonisation of the region in the early 20th century.

### ***Shaykh Uthman's Promotion of Virtues and Prevention of Vices in Hausaland***

Uthman bin Foduye's efforts were focused on promoting the principles of Islam and implementing social and moral reforms in the region. His teachings emphasised the importance of education, justice and Islamic ethical conduct. He advocated for the eradication of vices such as corruption, oppression, social inequality and ignorance (Bello, 1957).

One of the major ways in which *Shaykh Uthman* promoted virtues was through his constant efforts to achieve widespread enlightenment among the people. He believed that education was crucial for individuals to understand and practice their faith properly. Under his leadership, numerous centres of Islamic learning emerged throughout what later became the Sokoto Caliphate. These centres provided education not only in Islamic sciences, but also in various other subjects such as mathematics, science and literature. By promoting education, the Shaykh aimed at instilling virtuous values and knowledge among the population (Usman, n.d.).

To further promote virtues and prevent vices, Uthman bin Foduye encouraged social reforms. He called for the abolition of practices such as the mistreatment of women. He emphasised the importance of treating all individuals with fairness and dignity, regardless of their social status or gender. Uthman bin Foduye's teachings and reform efforts had a profound impact on the social fabric of the Sokoto Caliphate, through the promotion of virtues such as compassion, justice and respect for human rights.

Moral leadership and good governance were part of the fundamental principles of *Shaykh Uthman bin Foduye*, who led by example, embodying the virtues he preached. He

emphasised the importance of good governance, righteous leadership and the establishment of an Islamic state based on justice and fairness. His teachings and actions inspired a sense of moral responsibility among his followers and the wider society, fostering a commitment to virtuous conduct and discouraging vices (Abdul-Rahman, 2010).

Another basic feature of Shehu's mission was moral upliftment through Islamic education: *Shaykh* Uthman bin Foduye emphasised the importance of education and the acquisition of knowledge, particularly in Islamic sciences. He established numerous Islamic centres wherever he went, where students were taught not only religious texts but also subjects like jurisprudence, language and ethics and other fields. This focus on education helped in promoting moral values and virtues among the people (Last, 2016).

### **Methodology of *Shaykh* Uthman bin Foduye in the Transformation of the Sokoto Caliphate**

The methodology of *Shaykh* Uthman in the transformation of the Sokoto Caliphate was based essentially on training people by personal example and not just theory. His own life was an embodiment of Islamic guidance. But that did not prevent him from going out to preach to others. Indeed, that was his main life-engagement. It was soon realised that his preaching was excellent and in compliance with Qur'anic guidance.

Muhammad Bello has explained in detail his methodology and even the curriculum he believed would provide the required training he envisaged. He preached with wisdom and good exhortation, and his training of the men around him and his call to people were all based on knowledge. Thus, the Shehu, as he was popularly called, made all efforts to transform his society through his teachings and emphasis on proper understanding of Tawhid, Arabic language, knowledge of the Hadith, Tafsir, Fiqh, as well as other basic sciences of Islam. Any aspect of knowledge which he and his lieutenants thought was of benefit to the community was taught and acquired. *Shaykh* Uthman was truly a great leader (Suleiman, n.d.). Though a man of peace, he sustained a lengthy war, and though an unworldly mystic, he created a territorial empire. According to Johnson, as in Sulaiman, his spiritual magnetism helped him maintain the loyalty of his followers for life. His moral courage enabled him, even in the most trying and desperate circumstances, to stand on his principles. His faith in his own destiny was so intense that it fired all who came into contact with him, inspiring them to turn defeat into victory in several instances. The *Shaykh*, moreover, remained totally unworldly, "unspoiled in triumph" as he had been unshaken in disaster. To the very end, Johnson concludes his assessment, *Shaykh* Uthman led a simple, pious and abstentious life, eschewing the world precisely at the time he had gained it. On achievements alone, he says, he deserved to be ranked as one of the greatest men whom Africa has produced. If his character and achievement are taken together, however, his place is unique (Suleiman, n.d.).

## **The Target Audience of Uthman's Teaching and Preaching**

Considering all the surrounding areas of Uthman's struggle to establish an ideal society based on the dictates of Shari'ah, one may conclude that those with whom he was concerned in his teaching and preaching activities would not go beyond the following categories:

### **The Ignorant People of Hausaland**

While in his hometown, Uthman discovered that people were in a state of ignorance about what Islam prescribed concerning belief. In his attempts to overcome such a problem, "He encouraged the common people to study the basic knowledge that is necessary for discharging their religious obligations, while advising that they should leave the details to the scholars" (Bolugun, 1967). He invited them to learn the fundamental principles of Islam. Before going any further to understand and appreciate the role of Uthman bin Foduye and his concerns about the ignorant people of Hausaland, it is important to note that his son, Muhammad Bello, describes the nature of the ignorance of people about Islam. Bello said:

It is so hard to find anyone among people in Hausaland who was not into syncretism. Most of them were ignorant about Islam and its rituals. Thus, Uthman bin Foduye categorises them into different categories, in which among them there were those who were pure believers at the same time worshipped stones. There were also those who pronounced Tawhid while at the same time mixed up Islam with blameworthy acts inherited from their predecessors. It was in this situation that Uthman bin Foduye started inviting them to Allah (Bello, n.d.)

In another quotation, Abdullah further explains the level of ignorance of the people of Hausaland, and how his elder brother, concerned with their situation, embarked on teaching them the laws of Islam. He has this to say:

In Zamfara, we stayed therein for almost five years, and it was a land on whose people ignorance was overwhelming. Most of its people had never smelt the fragrance of Islam. They used to come to *Shaykh* Uthman's council mixing with their women. He separated them and taught them that it is forbidden for men and women to intermingle. He then taught them the pillars of Islam. However, some evil people spread the rumour that the congregation was a meeting point for men and women (Foduye, n.d.).

Uthman bin Foduye, at a number of places in his writings and preaching sessions, was anxious about what most of the scholars of Hausaland were doing in leaving members of their families in the darkness of ignorance without teaching them or sending them to school to know their religious obligations. This was clearly mentioned in the essay of Muhammad bin Yusuf bin Salim bin Ibrahim. Wherein Uthman quoted that:

Scholars of Hausaland were day and night together with their students teaching them the religion of Islam, but carelessly they left their daughters, sons, wives and their slaves without knowing anything about Islam. In fact, they considered them as wild animals that have not any benefit attached to

them, or even as a pot, which once it breaks would be thrown away as a waste. They were not concerned to teach them about the rights of Allah on them. It was in this case that Uthman bin Foduye called upon women not to respond to the calls of any misguided scholar, who commanded them to obey their husbands by saying the success of women in this life is in obedience to her husband, but in reality, they do not command them to obey Allah and His Messenger (PBUH). Uthman, however, emphasised that this is nothing but self-glorification or seeking popularity among their students. (Foduye n.d.).

The above quotation shows the deep concern of Uthman bin Foduye about the education of the people of Hausaland, particularly women. It may be assumed that Uthman believed that women are the bedrock and foundation of society, so their knowledge of Islam would be of great importance for society to develop and flourish. Furthermore, in describing the methods of Uthman bin Foduye's public preaching and his approach to the people, Muhammad Bello elucidates in a long quotation, saying about his father thus:

Once he went to a place to deliver a lecture, he used to sit calmly and then he would greet people with the greetings of Islam three times in a laudable voice... While delivering his lecture, he never showed any anger to those who were sending questions; rather he would stop and answer their questions before proceeding. Uthman was never afraid of the presence of scholars who attended his lecture. He used to speak to them on what is acceptable to him. This is nothing but a little among his distinctive characters in his mission of preaching. His main intention was to teach ignorant people and remind the neglectful scholars... (Isma'il, 1975).

Muhammad Bello, may Allah have mercy on him, has further described his father's methods of teaching and preaching, whereupon he says:

He used to go out every Thursday to give admonition to the people... Many people used to join his lectures... He would go out in some of the nights after 'Isha' prayer diligently conveying the knowledge of Islam and important wisdom. He used to go out after the 'asr prayer to give instructions in the sciences of Tafsir of Qur'an, Hadith, Jurisprudence (fiqh) and Mysticism (Bello, n.d.).

Thus, intelligently and sympathetically, the masses were being prepared to accept and comprehend Islam and Uthman's ideas of changing their ailing society. Uthman's approach to teaching and preaching was in line with Islamic morals and without any embarrassment to the ignorant people who would repeatedly ask questions while he delivered lectures. Naturally and traditionally, anyone who wants to invite people to practice Islam and abstain from evil acts must be tolerant and kind; otherwise, people will distance themselves and will never listen to them.

### **The Traditional Rulers of Hausaland**

This was the second group that Uthman had an interest in advising on Islamic guidance. He gradually taught the people of Hausaland to differentiate between what is Islam and what is not. He never confined himself only to the common people, but rather, extended his Dawah activities to the rulers of Hausaland. In this regard, his brother, Abdullah, stated that Uthman was not used to going to the kings, nor did he have any relationship with them. However, when his people became numerous and his affairs became famous in the palaces of the kings and others, he found it necessary to go to them. He first went to Sultan Bawa, the King of Gobir, and drew his attention to the correct practices of Islam, instructing him to keep to that, and to establish justice in his land. Then Uthman returned to his homeland and continued calling people to religion on that account. Even the people who did not have the fear of Allah were afraid of rejecting Uthman's instruction because of his connection with the Sultan Bawa (Foduye, n.d.).

While meeting with the Sultan of Gobir, Bawa, "He showed wisdom and sensitivity in preaching Islam to the rulers of Hausaland. His approach was neither confrontational nor violent; it is clearly simple (admonition). He showed respect to them but advocated before them the tenets of Islam without any fear. He handled Bawa in such a manner that he granted all his requests" (Foduye, n.d.).

The above indicates that Uthman was fearless in telling the truth. His contact with the then powerful ruler of Hausaland shows his determination to let the words of Allah and His Messenger prevail in his society. It indirectly teaches Muslim scholars to be sincere and generous in disseminating their knowledge without any bias or supporting blameworthy acts of the rulers or the well-to-do for worldly interest, as in the case of those who are considered political scholars.

### **The Venal Scholars and Their Activities**

This is the third category that Uthman targeted in his efforts to effect societal change. Despite the successes he achieved through his teaching and preaching, he faced widespread criticism from venal scholars in Hausaland. This happened not because of his sticking to the message of the Glorious Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH), but rather because of the rapid spread of his mission throughout Hausaland. They attacked him with various accusations, among which was that he was misguiding the people of Hausaland (Foduye, n.d.). Some of their actions were clearly out of envy.

Abdullahi bin Foduye mentioned that when they arrived at a place called Daura in company of Uthman bin Foduye, an erudite scholar of Borno, called Mustapha and known by the nickname Gwoni, which meant "expert" (hence erudite scholar), came to them with his poem in which he instructed Uthman bin Foduye to prevent women from attending his admonition (Foduye, n.d.).

On the above-mentioned accusation by Mustapha Gwoni, Uthman told Abdullah that he was the right person to respond to him. In replying to Gwoni, Abdullahi initially stated that one should know that it is religiously obligatory, based on the consensus of scholars, to do the lesser of two evils concerning religion and worldly affairs. Relying on this rule, Abdullah vividly responded to Mustapha's poetry that the evil of leaving women in ignorance of what they do not know (their religious obligation) is greater than the evil of their mixing with men. Then Abdullahi told him that he should understand the ruling.

Similarly, most of the scholars who accused Uthman's *Da'awah* were connected with the ruler's palace. Their aim was to protect their interest, not the religion of Islam. Therefore, whatever the blameworthy acts that were prevalent in the land, they were not concerned. To understand some of their whims, Uthman bin Foduye stated that:

Among their misunderstandings is that some of them (i.e. scholars) tolerate worthless customs on the grounds of the saying, which is widespread in the lands that the custom of a land is Sunnah. But this is untruth and confusion according to the consensus of opinion (ijma') because a custom should not be abided if it contradicts the Sunnah (of the Prophet).

Uthman further asserted that:

Someone of the brethren told him that he heard some of them say 'Forbidding evil in the land of evil is the real evil'. And for this reason, they do not blame each other for committing an evil. I take refuge with Allah the exalted; this is one of the features of the Jews (Al-Hajj, 1975).

Given this understanding, it becomes clear that Uthman bin Foduye had to compile a special treatise to remind people of the necessity and permissibility of women's education outside the home, on the condition that they understand the basics of Islam. The treatise was purposely to refute the arguments of venal scholars against his teaching and preaching to women in Hausaland (Foduye, n.d.).

### **Analysis of Uthman bin Foduye's Teaching and Preaching Methodologies**

The previous discussion outlines the audience and target groups of the Shehu for changing the society of Hausaland. The methods ought to be extracted in order to shed more light on the rationale behind implementing them. They are as follows:

- 1. Teaching:** In his teaching, Uthman initially starts with teaching the people about the basics of tawhid and Islamic rituals. He did so in order to guide them on how to purify their Iman, perform prayers, fast during Ramadan, give alms and perform the pilgrimage. To understand the clear teaching methodology of Uthman bin Foduye, Muhammad Bello, his son, mentioned that he used to go out every Thursday to deliver sermons to the people. In addition, he used to go out after 'Isha' prayer to deliver lectures, as well as after 'Asr prayer to instruct people on various sciences, including the science of the Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh and Tasawwuf (Bello, n.d.). Thus, this shows that Uthman bin Foduye had a good systematic teaching methodology, in which every day had its own themes of discussion.

**2. Enlightenment and preaching:** Uthman bin Foduye was regarded as both a resident and an itinerant scholar, who toured from one place to another. For example, it has been said that he instructed the people in multiple languages; in essence, he preached in his mother tongue, Fulfulde, and the Hausa language. This was amazing to his people, because wherever he found Hausa people, he talked to them in Hausa and Fulfulde. Therefore, using a multiplicity of languages, no doubt, increased Uthman bin Foduye's acceptance in the eyes of the people of Hausaland. To substantiate this statement, it is important to refer to the Qur'an to understand that Allah's Messengers were all sent in the languages of their people. For example, Almighty Allah says:

And we sent not a Messenger except with the language of his people, in order that he might make (the Message) clear for them. Then Allah misleads whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And He is the Almighty, the all-Wise (Qur'an 14:4).

**3. Persistence and perseverance:** Uthman bin Foduye was persistent in conveying his mission. He was never discouraged by the attacks of others from going to the different parts of Hausaland. It is understood that he instructed people in both towns and villages. He was sure that for one to achieve his aims, one must be persistent and persevering, as well as sincere. It is not a matter of force or any other means unless it is warranted. Based on his preaching, "the effort to transform society, is basically a peaceful process which should not be disagreeing or create deliberate tension or complaint. He added that there is no way in which people can be changed through force. If using force becomes necessary, it should not be invited from the person whose job or assignment requires peace and cognitive (Suleiman, n.d.).

### **Deep Spiritual Training and Self-reliance**

It is very clear to all those who had even a cursory look at the movement that, as it was an intellectual movement, it was also a deeply spiritual affair in line with the concept of '*tazkiyat al-nafs*' and intense devotion to Allah and His cause. Their concept of societal reform was not merely material and superficial, but a total reform of the individual, both spiritually and socio-economically. An example of works on spirituality by Shaykh Abdullahi bin Foduye is *The Way of the Righteous to Felicity*. Shaykh Abdullahi bin Fodiyo, in his book titled *Sabil Ahl A-Salahi Ila Al-Falahi*, discusses numerous things about a responsible person. He must hasten to have provision and get ready for the Hereafter by repenting truthfully from his sins. He must give back the things he had unjustly taken. He must stay away from forbidden things, fight against the soul that incites evil, have remorse concerning his sinful past, and he must not do everything in order to know the laws of Allah for his success in this life and the next. He should learn from scholars who follow the practice (Sunnah) of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W), keep to what is good and leave what is bad. He should hold on concerning what he knows to be against Allah's guidance (Luwa, 2013).

Having realised that reformed Muslim individuals are the building blocks of any genuine Islamic Tajdid, they stressed not only the acquisition of knowledge and enlightenment, but also a deep attachment to their Lord, devotion to Him and self-reliance for their sustenance, livelihood and well-being.

### **Economic Stability in the Sokoto Caliphate**

Economically, the emergence of the Sokoto Caliphate provided opportunities for greater economic relations among people in the region. On the socio-economic front, the Sokoto Caliphate leaders contributed a lot to economic growth. Without a doubt, the most profound and easily visible impact of the jihad in the Caliphate was economic development, especially in agriculture. According to Abdulkadir Adamu (Adamu, 2006), sustainable development formed the bedrock of the economy by which the leaders provided food for the population and raw materials for the industries. In the book *Tanbih al-Ikhwan*, Sultan Muhammadu Bello cited verses from the Qur'an and Ahadith (prophetic traditions) to demonstrate that the most honourable and dignified member of the society was he who satisfied his personal livelihood requirements from gainful employment (Bello, n.d.).

Leaders of the Sokoto Caliphate encouraged the establishment of new towns and villages both for defense and for the enhancement of agricultural activities and related industries. In his book *Usul al-Siyasa* (Bello, n.d.), written to the Emir of Katsina, Umarun Dallaji, he advised that:

One of the duties of the Muslim leader was to see to the colonization of rural areas through the foundation of villages and walled towns. This was part of a general policy of fostering the material welfare of the people. It should involve the encouragement of farmers and artisans, the provision for the storage of food, and the regulation of market and road (Sheriff, 2016).

### **Value-based Economic System**

The Shehu advocated for an economic system based on values such as justice, sincerity, moderation, modesty, honesty, etc. According to him, justice is the key to progress, while injustice leads to decadence. A just government can last even with unbelief, but it cannot endure with injustice (Foduye, Uthman n.d.). On the other hand, he warned against the unhealthy practices such as fraud, adulteration and extravagance and their bad consequences on the economy. He exalted labour and hard work, and rejected begging. He encouraged his followers to engage in earning a livelihood even through an ordinary occupation.

The same role is reflected in economic matters. He argued for the revival of just Islamic economic institutions, such as *al-hisbah*, *hima*, *bayt al-mal*, *zakah*, *waqf*, etc. Mostly, his economic ideas are found in his work *Bayan Wujub al-Hijrah 'ala'-Ibad*. Other works that contain economic ideas include *Kitab al-Farq*, *Siraj al-Ikhwan*, *Bayan Bid'ah al-Shaytaniyah*, *Najm al-Ikhwan* and *Nur al-Ibad*.

## Self-Reliance in Local Production Taught by Leaders of the Sokoto Caliphate in Their Books

Considering the fact that the above traditional profession would not be maintained without ethics, a lack of ethics will definitely make youths fall into bad behaviour due to the failure of an effective working discipline.

In this regard, the work will select some of the above-mentioned professions to explain in accordance with the idea of Sokoto jihad leaders writing in their books (Adamu, 2006). Sokoto Jihad scholars and leaders preferably maintained the culture of combining about three important aspects of life, namely education, trade and rearing, as explained in their written books and imparted to their students in the various schools of learning within the Caliphate. In the book titled *Kitabul-Niyyati fee Aamali-Dunyawiyyah wal-Diniyyah*, written by Shaykh Uthman, he explained the features of the above professions known to Hausa land even before the arrival of western people in this land.

Shaykh explained in this book, saying:

فصل فى الحرف والصنائع وكيفية النية فيها وهى كثيرة نذكر هنا ما تعلق غرضنا به، وينبغى لكل محترف أن تكون نية أن يقوم بها عن نفسه وعن اخوانه المسلمين لأنها فرض كفاية ولا يرجع نظره الى ما ينال اذ الرزق لا يتقيد بجهة معلوه بل يصلح النية فيها لينال الثواب فيكون لا فرق بين صلاته وبين تصرفه اذ كله راجع لله.

A chapter on the skills and the works and how to do them: He mentioned here what is attached to our purpose, and each professional should have the intention to do it for himself and his Muslim brothers because it is an imposition of *kaifiyyah* (representation) and does not return his gaze to what is achieved. So there is no difference between his prayer and his behaviour, all of which is due to Allah (Foduye Uthman, n.d.).

*Shaykh* Uthman bin Foduye also maintained the same views in another book titled *Adabul-Ibadat Wal-Adat* (“Literature of Worship and Customs”), saying: “ It was the Ethics (of making business) sanitizing the business in accordance with the *Shari’ah* and the intention (of the business maker) should also be self-prevention from begging as well as being contented from the people’s possession, and making that (business or trade) as a helpful way towards establishing a lawful means in the religion (of Islam) and strengthen the right of family, to the extent that this business does not prevent him from saying the prayer in due time and in the congregational mosque (Foduye Uthman, n.d.).

Shaykh Uthman apparently explained the ethics in a trade and other business matters in considering certain religious obligations on the business person and some in maintaining his personality and some for his family’s rights. As stated above, these ethics seem to be objectives which a businessman or trader ought to maintain before getting involved in any business transaction.

## Factors behind Uthman bin Foduye's Success in the Transformation of the Sokoto Caliphate

1. He possessed a good generation of followership whose hearts were soft and who listened to him and obeyed his commands.
2. Assistance was given to him by scholars and students who were his assistants in all matters, in addition to intellectual preparation, which was a significant contribution to the success of the transformation of the Sokoto Caliphate. The Shehu took pains to build a formidable body of scholars, jurists and saints, both men and women, on whom he depended almost totally for the dissemination of the message for his contact with the masses, for the conduct of the war and eventually for the running of the Caliphate (Suleiman, n.d.).
3. His call was distinctly phased. It means *Shaykh* Uthman did not force one stage onto another. He patiently disseminated education and moral consciousness among the people for almost three decades, without seeking any occasion to provoke the rulers (Suleiman, n.d.). Throughout this period, he never mentioned jihad in any of his open-air preaching; rather, he sought to purify the people's faith, enlighten them about worship and transactions, and initiate them into the *tariqa*. When the Shaykh brought about the desired transformation that Allah permitted, according to Ibrahim Suleiman, the social and political transformation of the region as a whole was to take place (Suleiman, n.d.), and as soon as the jihad started, the Shehu's emphasis shifted, and he began to speak of Hijrah/jihad. This went on for several years. When victory came and the Caliphate was established, Shaykh Uthman bin Foduye changed his themes in response to historical and political changes. The emphasis was now on how to run the Caliphate, strengthen the solidarity of Muslims, apply the Shari'ah and, generally, preserve the order of the Ummah. The gradualist systematic approach is the natural one known to the Prophets and all genuine *Mujaddids*. Shaykh Uthman bin Foduye believed in the firmness of Islam, that no one can preserve Islam better than Allah, nor ever hope to love Islam more than Allah does, and that time has never been against Islam. He had confidence in Islam, confidence in Allah's judgment, confidence in the eventual triumph of his cause. The confidence paid off, and we had an *Ummah*, an Islamic order and a caliphate (Suleiman, n.d.).
4. According to Waziri Gidado, the Shehu took his appeal directly to the masses: the women, the poor and other under-privileged groups in society. The Ulama helped him to reach the masses. He lived like them, shared their aspirations and endeavoured to know and experience personally their plight and grievances. He identified with them completely and championed their cause unconditionally (Suleiman, n.d.).

It is Islam's abiding responsibility to defend the poor against the oppressive rich, a tyrannical social order and a tyrannical government, and to secure for them their interests. It is Islam's duty and commitment to work for the overthrow of

any government or social order that denies the poor their rights, or seeks to tilt the socioeconomic balance in favour of the rich.

5. The body of consultants who worked with the Shehu and those who migrated to him were keen and obedient; more importantly, perhaps, was the existence of this body of consultants itself. What appears clearly in the course of the movement is that the Shehu was not working alone: indeed, he hardly ever took any decision unilaterally. For example, the election of Amir al-Muminin was suggested to him, and he left the matter to his advisers. Throughout the jihad, decisions on the conduct of the war were left to the council. When these advisers became rulers, they were left to pursue their own initiatives, and the Shehu withdrew to devote himself to teaching and training. The movement was not a one-man affair, but a collective undertaking which rested very much on mutual consultation (Suleiman, n.d.).
6. The members of the *Jama'ah* related to Bin Foduye preferred the hereafter to the world, and they were ready to forego their homes, property, families and other personal conveniences in order to undertake the *hijra*. They chose knowledge rather than ignorance, hence each of them strove to learn and work by it. They preferred consciousness of Allah to moral degradation and were thus able to shun whatever preferred social transformation of society to corruption in the Caliphate.

The *Jama'ah* worked as a single body and were clear in their objectives and goals: that they were working for a cause, the reward which lay in the hereafter, that they had to acquire knowledge and live enlightened lives, that the triumph of their cause depended on their relationship with Allah and not on the pleasures of this world, that they were involved in a process of *tajdid* and could not accept what was bound to corrupt them, that keen consciousness of a common goal, mission, cause and a unique identity helped to weld the *Jama'ah* together and gave it the strength to work for many years and to fight continuously for more than a decade. A contributing factor to the successes of the transformation of the Sokoto Caliphate was the personality characteristics and methods of *Shaykh* Uthman himself.

### **Lessons from the Reform Movement for Our Time**

The wisdom and lessons that should be drawn from our discussion are that the achievements of *Shaykh* Uthman bin Foduye, Mallam Abdullahi bin Foduye and Sultan Muhammadu Bello, along with the various flagbearers who established the emirates, made great efforts to establish a new society based on the time-tested and time-honoured principles of justice and the rule of law. There is no doubt that the principle of justice and the rule of law in governance, firmly rooted in scholarship, is the Caliphate's most enduring legacy 200 years later. Books written by the Caliphate leaders on the management of public trust and the betterment of society were relevant in their time; they are relevant today and will remain

relevant for all eternity as we reflect on the glorious history of the Caliphate. Therefore we must not forget to draw inference and lessons for the contemporary period. In this respect, there are three critical issues around which the Caliphate was established which underscore its greatness and ensured the durability of its value and institutions over the years.

The basic teachings of Uthman bin Foduye on politics were on good governance. He set out its principles and lived by its transparent examples. He was, therefore, a reformer. Changing society for the better is always difficult, at times even painful. Reforms cannot be cosmetic; otherwise, relief for citizens will be ephemeral. It must be profound and involve total change in attitude at all levels and an overhaul of the institutions that will sustain and guarantee positive change. The second important factor is tolerance. From Masinal in present Mali Republic to Nikki in Benin Republic, and from Maradi in Niger Republic to Tibati in Cameroon, various ethnic groups, economic communities, religious groups and even religious sects peacefully existed. Of course, the glory of the past is always a reference point of how communities should live harmoniously with one another irrespective of whatever difference exist. The leaders of the Caliphate not only laid the groundwork but also provided the model for cooperation and integration in our sub-region and in the world.

Nowadays, it is difficult for most of the contemporary Muslim scholars to approach a king or powerful politician to admonish or advise him about a religious matter because they fear losing their jobs and falling from grace.

## **Conclusion**

This paper provided an introduction, background of the study and factors behind the success of *Shaykh* Uthman Danfodiyo, as he was popularly called, in the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate, the methodology and impact of the Sokoto Caliphate on transformation of the socio-political, educational, security and economic lives of the communities living within the Caliphate. More fundamentally, the paper has demonstrated how a single person was able to turn things around in the Sokoto Caliphate by transforming attitude, knowledge and the citizenry. The teachings of *Shaykh* Uthman bin Foduye continue to resonate with people even today. The corpus of scholarship left behind continues to throw up new thinking and debates on the relevance of Islam to progress and development. Not only that, the political model of governance left behind exemplified justice and the rule of law, soundly backed by religious zeal and commitment to a better human society. These legacies will no doubt continue to guide Islamic thought and jurisprudence both far and near, and could serve as a springboard for real societal reform not only in Nigeria, but even beyond.

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# CHAPTER 15

## Islam in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities

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### Introduction

Islam is a universal system of life revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to guide mankind to the straight path through sound creeds (*aqā'id*), correct acts of devotion (*ibadat*), sound moral behaviours (*akhlaq*) and just legislations (*tashri'at*) (see al-Qaradawi 157). It aims at the actualisation of servitude to Allah as God of creation through the protection of the five basic necessities of every human being, viz, religion, life, progeny, intellect, wealth and dignity (Al-Ghazali 174). Islam's higher objective is to link mankind with Allah to seek His pleasure and to submit wholeheartedly to His guidance in all aspects of life (see Abd al-Ati 24). The apex goal of its legislation is to turn human beings into willing servants of Allah, as they are necessary so by cosmic decrees.

Al-Shatibi postulated:

الْمَقْصِدُ الشَّرْعِيُّ مِنْ وَضْعِ الشَّرِيعَةِ إِخْرَاجُ الْمَكْلُوفِ عَنِ دَاعِيَةِ هَوَاهُ، حَتَّى يَكُونَ عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ احْتِيَابًا، كَمَا هُوَ عَبْدٌ لِلَّهِ اضْطِرَارًا.

The objective of the Lawgiver in prescribing the shari'ah is to emancipate the responsible human being from the call of his whims so that he becomes a servant of Allah willingly, just as he is a servant of Allah by necessity (2:128; see Nyazee 2:135).

This chapter addresses some of the key aspects shaping Islam in the 21st century. A library approach is adopted in the chapter, drawing upon relevant verses of the Glorious Qur'an and Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and utilising scholarly works, media reports and case studies from various Muslim societies. Content analysis is used to assess trends, policy implications and potential solutions to the challenges of Islam in the 21st Century.

### Islam in the 21st Century

In modern times, according to Ezzati (2), Islam is the religion of some 42 countries, the religion of the majority in 45 countries, and the religion of strong minorities (ten percent and over) in many other lands. Muslim communities live in almost every country of the

world. The Muslim population of over seven hundred million makes up more than 20 percent of the world's population. Islam has seen remarkable global growth in the 21st century. According to the Pew Research Center, Muslims made up about 25.6% of the global population as of 2020 and are projected to reach 29.7% by 2050, potentially becoming the world's largest religious group by the end of the century (Pew Research Center). This growth is attributed largely to high fertility rates, a young demographic profile and strong levels of religious commitment.

The majority of the world's Muslims live in the Asia-Pacific region, including countries such as Indonesia (the world's largest Muslim-majority country), India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. As of 2023, Indonesia had over 240 million Muslims, comprising nearly 87% of its population. Pakistan had approximately 231 million Muslims, making it the second-largest Muslim population (Washington Post). In India, although Muslims are a minority, the population exceeded 200 million in 2021. Sub-Saharan Africa is another region with substantial Muslim populations, notably in Nigeria, which has between 90 and 120 million Muslims, depending on sources (Times of India). In Europe, the Muslim population is growing steadily due to migration and natural increase, with projections estimating that Muslims could make up 10% or more of Europe's population by 2050. In North America, the number of Muslims is also rising, especially in the United States and Canada, due to both immigration and higher birth rates (Pew Research Center).

Muslims in the 21st century exhibit levels of religious commitment that are proportional at both the individual and communal levels. In Muslim-majority countries, religious identity is deeply intertwined with culture and daily life. Surveys by Pew show that in countries like Indonesia, Egypt and Pakistan, over 90% of respondents identify strongly with their faith and participate actively in religious practices, such as daily prayer, fasting during Ramadan and mosque attendance (Pew Research Center). Even in secular or multicultural societies, Muslim communities tend to maintain a strong religious identity and transmit it effectively across generations. While natural population growth is the primary factor behind the spread of Islam, conversion also plays a role, though modest. In Western countries, particularly in the United States and parts of Europe, Islam is one of the fastest-growing religions by conversion. However, globally, net conversion is not a major driver of Islamic population growth (Friedman).

### **Trajectories of Islam in the 21st Century**

The trajectories of Islam in the 21st century are diverse and often contested. One significant trend is the ongoing negotiation between tradition and modernity. Muslim communities around the world grapple with how to maintain their religious identity and core values while engaging with the advancements and challenges of the modern world, including issues related to science, technology, gender equality and governance. Different interpretations and approaches have emerged, leading to a spectrum of views within Muslim societies. A

noticeable trend is the rise of modern interpretations of Islam, emphasising human rights, gender equality and environmental stewardship (Abdul-Raof 138). On demographic growth, Islam is predicted to nearly equal Christianity in global population share by 2050, with significant growth in Africa, Asia and Europe (United Nations). This demographic shift underscores the importance of coexistence and representation in multicultural societies. The expanding Muslim population also signals opportunities for Islam to play a pivotal role in shaping policies and cultural norms.

Another trajectory is the increasing prominence of Muslim voices in global discourse. As Muslim populations grow and become more integrated into various societies, their contributions to intellectual, cultural, economic and political life are becoming increasingly significant. This necessitates fostering spaces for constructive dialogue and mutual understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims, challenging stereotypes and promoting informed perspectives on Islam. The Qur'an emphasises the importance of wisdom and engaging with others in a positive manner:

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ ۚ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۚ  
وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided” (An-Nahl 16:125).

This verse provides a guiding principle for engaging with diverse perspectives in a spirit of understanding and respect. The future of Islam in the 21st century will be determined by the ability of its adherents to uphold its timeless values while creatively and effectively engaging with the ever-changing realities of the modern world.

### **Challenges Facing Islam in the 21st Century**

There are multi-faceted challenges facing Islam in the 21st century. Al-Faruqi built his work on the implications of *Tauhid* to life based on the premise that:

The world *ummah* of Islam is undeniably the most unhappy *ummah* in the world in modern times. Despite the fact that it is the largest in number, the richest in land and resources, the greatest in legacy and the only one possessing the most viable ideology, the *ummah* is the very weak constituent of the world order. It is fragmented into an endless variety of states, divided against itself, at loggerheads with other *ummahs* on all its frontiers, incapable of producing of what it needs or consumes, of defending itself against its enemies. Above all, instead of being the *ummatan wasatan* (the median among the peoples of mankind) (Qur'an 2:143), which Allah ta'alah wished it to be, it is the prey of everybody. If it has made any contribution to the historical battle of humanity against disease, poverty, ignorance, hostility, immorality and impiety in modern times, it has been negligible (Al-Faruqi i).

The above captures the challenges of the Ummah in the 21st century. Some of these are internal, others are external, and others are multi-dimensional.

## **Internal Challenges**

### **1. Ignorance**

Ignorance (*jahl*) remains one of the most significant internal challenges confronting Islam and Muslims in the 21st century. This ignorance manifests not only in the lack of proper understanding of Islamic teachings among many Muslims but also in the misapplication of religious texts due to inadequate scholarship. The reductionist reading of the Qur'an and Hadith, without reference to their historical contexts and interpretive traditions, has contributed to extremism, sectarianism and disunity within the Muslim world (Esposito 119). Many Muslims, especially youth, are often influenced by populist preachers with limited knowledge, leading to confusion and a distorted understanding of Islam.

Moreover, ignorance has led to the decline of intellectualism within many Muslim societies (Ramadan 55). This internal intellectual stagnation hampers reform efforts and distances Islam from being perceived as a dynamic and progressive force. Additionally, ignorance fosters intolerance and hinders intra-faith dialogue. Instead of drawing from Islam's rich legacy of pluralism and scholarly diversity, many communities resort to exclusivist attitudes that fracture Muslim unity (Sardar 211).

### **2. Misrepresentation (Laxity and Extremism)**

Another challenge is the misrepresentation of Islamic teachings through the twin extremes of laxity and extremism. On one end, there is a growing trend of cultural laxity among some Muslims who detach religious practice from everyday life, reducing Islam to a mere identity marker without meaningful commitment to its values. On the other end, extremist interpretations have emerged, often fueled by political grievances and ignorance, leading to violence and ideological rigidity. Both trends distort the balanced nature of Islam, which calls for moderation (*wasatiyyah*) as emphasised in the Qur'an (2:143) (Esposito 134).

Extremism, particularly, has had far-reaching implications. Radical groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda have hijacked Islamic rhetoric to justify violence, presenting Islam as intolerant and militant. This has not only caused harm within Muslim societies through terrorism and internal conflict but has also contributed to global Islamophobia. These groups often exploit religious texts out of context, ignore centuries of scholarly consensus, and reject the pluralistic traditions that are part of Islamic history (Gerges 52).

Conversely, laxity among some modern Muslims leads to secularised or watered-down interpretations of Islam, often influenced by Western liberal norms rather than rooted in authentic scholarship. This approach tends to downplay core Islamic principles such as prayer, modesty or moral discipline, in the name of modernisation, leading to confusion and identity loss among youths (Ramadan 87).

### 3. Violence

Violence has been a global phenomenon that Islam has encountered from its beginning. Early Muslims suffered from excessive violent reactions to the new call. For this, Islam did not relent in providing solutions to violence. However, it is a reality that violence exists in many Muslim countries in the 21st century, regardless of who masterminds and fuels it. While the vast majority of Muslims globally adhere to peaceful interpretations of the faith, the actions of a vocal minority who espouse violence and intolerance have cast a long shadow (Abdul-Raof 53). These groups often selectively utilise religious texts, distorting their meanings to justify their political agendas and acts of terror. The Glorious Qur'an unequivocally condemns the killing of innocent life, stating:

مَنْ أَجَلَ ذَلِكَ فَتَنَّا عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَن قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

“Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land—it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one—it is as if he had saved mankind entirely” (Q5:32).

This verse underscores the sanctity of human life and the gravity of unjustly taking it. Furthermore, numerous ahadith emphasise the importance of peace and the prohibition of aggression, such as the Prophet's saying:

لَا تَرْجِعُوا بَعْدِي كُفَّارًا يَضْرِبُ بَعْضُكُمْ رِقَابَ بَعْضٍ

“Do not revert to disbelief after me by striking the necks of one another” (al-Bukhari, No. 121).

### 4. Schism

Schism, or division within the Muslim Ummah, remains a critical internal challenge in the 21st century. The Qur'an warns believers against division, stating, “*And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided*” (Qur'an 3:103). Despite this, divisions persist along sectarian, ideological and political lines among contemporary movements. These schisms are often rooted more in historical, ethnic and political contexts than in theological substance, yet they have profound effects on unity and cooperation among Muslims globally (Nasr 98).

In the 21st century, this challenge is exacerbated by social media and globalised communication, which amplify disputes, polemics and *takfir*, often without sound knowledge. These divisions weaken collective efforts in areas like education, development and advocacy, and they are frequently exploited by external forces for political gain (Safi 217).

## 5. Economic Impoverishment

Economic impoverishment is one of the most pressing internal challenges confronting many Muslim societies in the 21st century. Despite the presence of natural and human resources, many Muslim-majority countries struggle with poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment. The Qur'an emphasises the importance of economic justice and the fair distribution of wealth, stating, "*In their wealth there is a known right for the beggar and the deprived*" (Qur'an 70:24–25). The Islamic economic system, when properly applied, offers mechanisms such as *zakat* (obligatory almsgiving) and *waqf* (endowment) to alleviate poverty and promote social welfare, but these mechanisms are often underutilised or mismanaged due to weak institutions and lack of political will (Chapra 103).

In contemporary times, poor governance, corruption and dependency on foreign aid have exacerbated economic difficulties in many Muslim countries. Internal challenges, such as a lack of entrepreneurship, inadequate investment in education and misaligned development priorities, have contributed to cycles of economic stagnation, which in turn affect religious, moral and intellectual growth (Kamali 129).

## 6. Leadership Crises/Political Instability

In many Muslim-majority nations, political instability remains a chronic obstacle. Conflicts in countries such as Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan have devastated millions and disrupted the societal fabric. Additionally, the Sunni-Shia divide continues to fuel tensions, exacerbating regional conflicts and undermining unity within the Islamic world (Esposito 89).

Leadership in these nations is often compromised by corruption, authoritarianism and lack of accountability. This instability limits the capacity of nations to collectively address global challenges, such as poverty, climate change, security and health crises.

## External Challenges

### 1. Modernity

For many Muslims, especially in diaspora communities, identity and modernity coexist uneasily. Youths in such communities often grapple with how to reconcile their Islamic faith with the secular values of their host countries (Kamali 44). Questions about individual freedoms, gender roles and cultural assimilation often arise, sparking internal debates within families and communities.

The challenge of modernity is also evident in debates about traditional Islamic jurisprudence versus its applicability to contemporary issues. Topics like artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, environmental sustainability, climate change, cybersecurity, data science and digital privacy challenge scholars to reinterpret ancient teachings in light of new contexts (Sardar 132).

## 2. Secularism

Secularism, as an ideology that separates religion from public and political life, presents a significant external challenge to Islam in the 21st century. In many parts of the world, particularly in Western and increasingly in Muslim-majority societies, secular values are promoted as the foundation of modern governance, education and law. This paradigm often conflicts with Islam's holistic worldview, where religion is not only a private affair but a comprehensive way of life. The Qur'an states, "*Indeed, the religion with Allah is Islam*" (Qur'an 3:19), emphasising Islam's encompassing guidance for all aspects of life—spiritual, social, political and economic (Kamali 45). Secularism thus challenges the role of Shari'ah in public life and marginalises Islamic ethics from societal institutions.

The Hadith literature also reflects Islam's concern with public morality and leadership. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "*Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock*" (al-Bukhari, Hadith 893), indicating the responsibility of leaders to govern in accordance with divine principles. The secular model, however, often dismisses religion in governance, promoting individual autonomy above divine guidance. This has led to laws and policies in various countries that contradict Islamic teachings on family, gender, finance and morality. For Muslim minorities in secular states, maintaining religious identity amid increasing secular pressures, such as bans on hijab or Islamic education, has become a growing concern (Esposito 161).

## 3. Islamophobia

Islamophobia is the irrational fear, hatred or prejudice against Islam and Muslims. It manifests in various forms, including media bias, discriminatory laws, hate speech, physical attacks and institutional exclusion, particularly in Western societies. The Qur'an warns believers of enmity from others, stating, "*You will surely be tested in your possessions and in yourselves, and you will surely hear from those who were given the Scripture before you and from those who associate others with Allah much abuse*" (Qur'an 3:186). This ongoing hostility affects Muslim minorities, often forcing them to navigate between faith identity and societal acceptance (Esposito 154).

In today's world, Islamophobia is fueled by global events, such as terrorism committed by fringe groups, media misrepresentation and populist political rhetoric. Scholars like Edward Said have shown how the West has long constructed the image of a "threatening Muslim Other" to justify cultural and political domination (Said 287). Such narratives reinforce stereotypes and deepen mistrust between Muslims and non-Muslims.

## Solutions to the Challenges of Islam in the 21st Century

The following are some tactical and strategic solutions to the identified challenges of Islam in the 21st century:

## 1. **Promoting Sound and Balanced Islamic Education (Integration of Knowledge)**

Promoting sound and balanced Islamic education through the integration of religious and worldly knowledge offers a viable solution to many of the internal and external challenges facing Muslims in the 21st century. The Qur'an calls upon believers to reflect, ponder and seek knowledge, stating, "*Are those who know equal to those who do not know?*" (Qur'an 39:9). Islam historically encouraged a holistic approach to education that harmonised spiritual, ethical, scientific and philosophical learning. Institutions such as Al-Azhar and the House of Wisdom in Baghdad reflected this synthesis. However, the modern dichotomy between "Islamic" and "secular" education in many Muslim societies has led to fragmented thinking and underdevelopment (Al-Attas 112).

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) declared, "*Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim*" (Ibn Majah, Hadith 224), encompassing both religious obligations and useful worldly knowledge. A balanced curriculum that integrates Islamic values with contemporary sciences, such as medicine, economics and technology, can cultivate ethical professionals, critical thinkers and responsible citizens. Western scholars, such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Muslim reformers, like Fazlur Rahman, have stressed the need for intellectual renewal rooted in authentic Islamic principles while engaging with modern challenges (Nasr 63). This integration can counter ignorance, extremism and alienation by making Islam relevant and transformative for today's world.

The integration of knowledge also promotes unity, creativity and dignity among Muslims. Sound Islamic education should cultivate *adab* (ethical discipline), promote critical thinking and produce scholars and leaders who bridge tradition and modernity. Al-Qaradawi emphasised that Islamic education must prepare Muslims to live faithfully and effectively in the modern world without sacrificing their religious identity (Al-Qaradawi 98). A revival of integrated education models, such as those promoted by the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), can foster balanced worldviews, promote interfaith understanding and empower Muslim societies to flourish spiritually and intellectually.

## 2. **Encouraging Critical Thinking Renewal and Reform (Tajdid and Ijtihad)**

*Tajdīd* (renewal) and *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) are vital Islamic tools for reform and progress. The Qur'an repeatedly calls on believers to reflect, reason and engage their intellect: "*Do they not reflect upon themselves?*" (Qur'an 30:8). This spirit of reflection is essential for *ijtihād*, which allows scholars and thinkers to interpret Islamic teachings in light of changing circumstances while remaining grounded in core principles. Historically, *ijtihād* played a key role in Islamic civilisation's dynamism, contributing to jurisprudence, governance and science (Kamali-2 245).

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) confirmed the legitimacy of *ijtihad* when he said, “*When a judge gives a ruling, striving to decide correctly and he is right, he will have two rewards; if he is wrong, he will have one reward*” (al-Bukhari, Hadith 7352). This Hadith underscores the encouragement for intellectual effort, even when outcomes vary. In the contemporary context, Islamic scholars and thinkers advocate for a renewal of *ijtihad* to address modern issues like bioethics, economics, democracy and gender justice (Iqbal 176; Al-Qaradawi-1 143). Critical thinking guided by authentic sources can counter stagnation and restore confidence in Islamic intellectual traditions.

True reform must balance textual fidelity with contextual reasoning, fostering a vibrant, ethical and empowered Muslim community. As the Prophet promised, “*At the head of every century, Allah will send to this Ummah someone who will renew its religion*” (Abu Dawud, Hadith 4291). Renewal is not a deviation but a divine tradition in Islam.

### **3. Fostering Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation**

Fostering interfaith dialogue and cooperation has become an increasingly vital strategy for addressing the global challenges of the 21st century. The Qur’an emphasises common human values and encourages respectful engagement with followers of other faiths: “*Say: O People of the Book! Come to a word that is equitable between us and you...*” (Qur’an 3:64). Islam promotes mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence, seeing humanity as a diverse yet connected community: “*O mankind, We created you...into nations and tribes so that you may know one another*” (Qur’an 49:13). These verses serve as a Qur’anic foundation for modern interreligious cooperation and diplomacy (Kamali-2 178).

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exemplified interfaith engagement throughout his life, including in the Charter of Medina, which recognised the rights and responsibilities of Muslims, Jews and other groups within a pluralistic society. He also received and dialogued peacefully with Christian delegations in his mosque in Medina (al-Sarakhsi 27).

Interfaith dialogue is not merely a diplomatic necessity but a prophetic imperative rooted in Islamic teachings. True dialogue fosters empathy, corrects misunderstandings and diffuses religious tension. Institutions like the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) and the Muslim Council of Elders actively promote interfaith collaboration to advance peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. As the Prophet said, “*He is not a believer whose neighbor is not safe from his harm*” (al-Bukhari, Hadith 6016), emphasising ethical conduct beyond religious boundaries. Building bridges through dialogue can help Islam reclaim its voice as a faith of mercy, wisdom and peace in a fragmented world.

### **4. Addressing Socio-economic Backwardness**

Islam places significant emphasis on social justice, equitable distribution of wealth and

economic empowerment. The Qur'an commands: "*And in their wealth is a recognized right for the needy and the deprived*" (Qur'an 70:24–25), underscoring the obligation of the wealthy to support the economically disadvantaged. Islamic economic teachings such as *zakat*, *waqf* and the prohibition of *riba* (usury) are designed to reduce inequality and ensure a dignified life for all (Chapra 33).

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) addressed poverty not only through charity but also by encouraging productive work. He said, "*No one has ever eaten better food than what he earns with the work of his own hands*" (al-Bukhari, Hadith 2072). This highlights the Islamic value of self-reliance and economic dignity. Socio-economic backwardness often results in poor education, political disenfranchisement and exposure to ideological exploitation. The Islamic economic model merges ethical governance, wealth redistribution, and development-oriented policies as a remedy for poverty and marginalisation (Ahmad 78).

Addressing socio-economic backwardness in the Muslim world requires practical policy reforms, the revival of Islamic economic values and institutional capacity-building. Islamic teachings promote a welfare-oriented society in which both the state and the individual are responsible for uplifting the vulnerable. Strategic investments in education, health, entrepreneurship and infrastructure, guided by Islamic ethics, can uplift communities and restore the dignity and leadership role of the Muslim Ummah. As the Qur'an declares, "*Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves*" (Qur'an 13:11). This internal transformation, supported by economic justice, is essential to overcoming the broader challenges Islam faces today.

## **5. Sincere Advocacy, Promotion and Defense of Human Rights**

The sincere advocacy and defense of human rights is a crucial solution to many contemporary challenges facing Islam and Muslims in the 21st century, particularly in the context of global injustice, authoritarianism and misrepresentation of Islam as incompatible with universal values. The Qur'an affirms the dignity of every human being, stating: "*And We have certainly honored the children of Adam...*" (Qur'an 17:70). Islam upholds fundamental human rights such as the right to life, property, freedom of belief and justice, which are echoed in contemporary human rights frameworks. Islamic law and modern human rights can coexist when grounded in the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (objectives of Islamic law), which prioritise justice, human dignity and welfare (Kamali-3 191).

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasised justice and protection of the vulnerable, saying, "*Beware of the supplication of the oppressed, for there is no barrier between it and Allah*" (al-Bukhari, Hadith 2448). His Farewell Sermon is considered a foundational declaration of human rights, where he affirmed the sanctity of life, property and honour. In this light, sincere Muslim engagement in human rights advocacy—against torture, discrimination, gender-based violence and religious persecution—aligns with Islamic ethics. Prominent thinkers such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Western voices like

John Esposito emphasise that Muslims must reclaim and articulate the humanistic dimensions of Islam to challenge oppressive regimes and extremist narratives (Al-Qaradawi-1 88; Esposito-1 167).

The active promotion of human rights rooted in Islamic values enhances global understanding, counters Islamophobia and reaffirms Islam's compatibility with justice and modernity. It empowers Muslim communities to stand for the oppressed regardless of religion or background, reflecting the Prophet's universal message. The Qur'an declares, "*O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves...*" (Qur'an 4:135).

## 6. Holistic Political Reform

In the 21st century, many of the challenges facing Muslim societies—ranging from authoritarian governance, corruption, social injustice and marginalisation—are rooted in political dysfunction and a deviation from Islamic values of justice, consultation (*shūrā*), and accountability. The Qur'an commands: "*Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice...*" (Qur'an 4:58). This verse provides a foundational principle for governance based on trust, justice and responsibility. Islamic political reform must thus transcend mere regime change and aim for a comprehensive transformation of political culture grounded in Qur'anic ethics and Prophetic practice (Kamali 217).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) practised inclusive governance in Medina, establishing a multi-faith constitutional system that recognised rights, responsibilities and communal coexistence. He consulted companions, upheld justice and rejected tyranny. In the Hadith, he said: "*Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock*" (al-Bukhari, Hadith 893). This underlines the idea of leadership as trust and responsibility, not dominance.

Holistic Islamic political reform involves revitalising institutions of *shūrā* (consultation), justice (*‘adl*) and accountability (*muhāsabah*) in a manner that resonates with contemporary challenges. It must also empower civil society, promote transparency and protect human dignity, particularly against state oppression and extremism. As the Qur'an affirms: "*And consult them in affairs. Then when you have decided, put your trust in Allah...*" (Qur'an 3:159), the spirit of participatory governance is embedded in Islamic tradition. Political reform that integrates faith, ethics and civic responsibility can counteract alienation, restore Muslim agency and project Islam as a force for justice and renewal in global society.

## Opportunities for Islam in the 21st Century

Below are some of the opportunities for Islam in the 21st Century:

- a. **Global connectivity:** The rise of digital platforms has revolutionised the way Muslims interact and share knowledge (Sardar 148). Websites, applications and social media channels dedicated to Islamic education and interfaith dialogue have flourished, allowing Muslims worldwide to connect. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, X

(formerly Twitter) and TikTok host vibrant communities where scholars, influencers and everyday Muslims discuss topics ranging from spirituality to social justice.

Technology also facilitates the dissemination of progressive Islamic thought. Initiatives such as online *Khutbahs* (sermons), virtual Islamic schools and applications for Qur'anic study enable Muslims to deepen their faith and foster a sense of global belonging.

- b. Renaissance in scholarship and representation:** In academic, cultural and professional spheres, Muslims are reclaiming their narrative and challenging stereotypes (Nasr 92). Prominent Muslim authors, politicians and activists have emerged, using their platforms to highlight the contributions of Islam to science, art, logic, medicine and philosophy.

Furthermore, Islamic finance, characterised by its ethical principles, is gaining traction globally. Its prohibition of interest-based transactions and emphasis on fairness resonate beyond Muslim-majority nations, presenting opportunities for collaboration and growth. (Kamali 76).

- c. Interfaith collaboration:** Interfaith dialogue has become a beacon of hope for fostering understanding and cooperation between Muslims and people of other faiths. Organisations like the Interfaith Youth Core and Common Ground Institute work to create spaces where individuals can explore shared values and address global challenges collaboratively (Wuthnow 123).

These partnerships are instrumental in debunking myths about Islam and illustrating its universal teachings of justice, compassion and peace. From combating poverty to addressing climate change, interfaith initiatives pave the way for Muslims to actively contribute to humanity's progress.

## **Conclusion**

This study recommends, in conclusion, addressing the challenges of Islam in the 21st century, harnessing its opportunities and fostering its trajectories to growth and development. Islamic scholars should assume their duty, spread pure and integrated knowledge with all its Islamic features, using state-of-the-art tools. Islamic organisations should re-orient their missions and emphasise training and retraining, adopt inter-dependence, healthy competition and tolerance.

Islamic leaders should reform their political engagements, adopt nomocracy, allow reasonable freedom and ensure human rights as guaranteed by Islam among the citizens and in international relations. The international community should adopt equity and justice among the comity of nations. Humanity should adopt a balance between spirituality and materialism, and uphold religion as the basis for decisions on personal, interpersonal and public affairs of mankind.

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## **SECTION FOUR**

### **ARAB-ISLAMIC TRADITION IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

# CHAPTER 16

## Arabic Language, Literature and Modernity: Navigating Tradition and Transformation

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### **Introduction**

One of the oldest and most important languages in the world, Arabic has always been fundamental to the cultural and intellectual identity of the Arab world. Especially by means of classical Arabic, which still underpins cultural identity, it has provided a means of conserving extensive literary, philosophical and scientific heritage. Still, in the modern world, Arabic faces great obstacles because of globalisation, technological developments and the dominance of Western languages, especially English. One major problem is the conflict between classical Arabic (*Fusha*), used in official, religious and scholarly settings, and the many local dialects (*Amiyya*), which contain foreign words and idioms. The growth of fresh languages like *Arabizi*, a hybrid Arabic style predominantly used in informal digital communication like social media chatting and other hybrid constructions influenced by the digital age, has further complicated the existing dualism between classical and colloquial Arabic (Ali & Alsohaibani, 2016).

Arabic has been changed by digital technology and social media to include creative and informal linguistic forms that raise concerns about the erosion of classical grammar and literary norms. A recent study on digital transformation's impact on Arabic language evolution found that while social media fosters linguistic innovation, it also raises concerns about the potential erosion of formal Arabic language skills, particularly among younger generations (Auliya et al., 2025). Platforms like social media and instant messaging have made Arabic more accessible, but there is debate about whether these changes compromise the language's integrity or are a normal part of its evolution. Linguists such as Al-Khatib and Sabbah (2008) argue that these changes represent a natural evolution and adaptation, while others express concern that they fundamentally compromise the language's structural integrity (Auliya, et al., 2025). This article explores the intersection of modernism, literature and Arabic language by examining how Arabic literature has reacted to contemporary global influences and how these forces clash with conventional linguistic and literary norms (Ahmed, 2018).

Central to this transformation is education. Although many Arab nations emphasise classical Arabic in schools, the divide between official education and everyday language use is

widening. Particularly in science, commerce and technology, the increasing use of bilingual education has raised concerns about a decline in Arabic fluency among future generations. While keeping a link to classical traditions, Arabic literature is always changing and deals with present topics, including identity and globalisation. The essay also investigates how translation and cross-cultural interactions help to define the direction of Arabic literature.

The research ultimately contends that, rather than a menace, modernisation should be seen as an opportunity for Arabic to enrich and evolve. Language is fundamentally dynamic, and Arabic has traditionally changed with societal changes. The language can keep flourishing if one encourages policies supporting Arabic in internet, academic and international communication. Using modern creativity and classical legacy together in an inclusive strategy will help to maintain Arabic's ongoing power and reach in the future.

## **Section I: Arabic Language and Literary Heritage**

### ***Historical Significance of the Arabic Language***

With roots in the Arabian Peninsula as a subset of the Semitic language family, including Hebrew and Aramaic, the Arabic language has a rich and ancient past. Particularly in the Arab world, over centuries Arabic has grown to be a foundation of intellectual and cultural identity for many millions of people. Its complex architecture, rich history and influence on religion, philosophy and society have helped define much of Middle Eastern and North African identity (Al-Uri, 2016).

The 4th century CE is the first known writing in Arabic, and by the 7th century, it had become the main tongue of the Arabian Peninsula. Rooted in Bedouin culture and originating in Arabic poetry, ancient means of preserving history and social norms persisted. Arabic's most turning point in history was the 7th-century publication of the Quran in Classical Arabic. Setting a precedent that would influence the language for centuries, the grammar of the Qur'an standardised Arabic correct. Its impact extended well beyond religion, establishing rigorous criteria for Arabic writing and motivating scientists, poets and philosophers across the Islamic world ("Arabic Language," n.d.).

Arabic spread from the Arabian Peninsula to North Africa, Spain, Persia and Central Asia as the lingua franca with the rise of the Islamic caliphates. Arabic became the language of the arts, science, mathematics, medicine and philosophy during the Golden Age of Islam (8th to 13th centuries), thus preserving and extending ancient knowledge. Arabic acted as a bridge for knowledge sharing between cultures via translation projects in centres including Baghdad's House of Wisdom, so, notably, researchers such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Al-Razi produced great works.

Islamic philosophy, mysticism (Sufism) and law as well depended much on Arabic. Whereas Sufi writers such as Rumi used Arabic to convey religious and mystic ideas, philosophers

such as Al-Farabi and Avicenna combined Islamic thought with Greek philosophy. Notable works such as *The One Thousand and One Nights* helped to secure the standing of Arabic in the literary tradition of the planet. Arabic literature bloomed during the Abbasid Caliphate (Zarytovskaya & Al-Rahbi, 2023).

Even with the range of local dialects, Arabic has still been a unifying influence throughout the Arab world. Common linguistic and cultural ties, classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) have kept the history, traditions and customs of the Arab world. Even as local dialects change, Modern Standard Arabic remains the official language in several Arab countries, employed in education, media and literature.

From its birth on the Arabian Peninsula to its central place in Islamic civilisation, the historical relevance of Arabic lies in its impact on cultural, intellectual and religious spheres. Still evolving, Arabic maintains relevance worldwide and supports cultural coherence in the Arab sphere.

### ***Literature Review: The Evolution of Arabic Literature from Classical to Modern Times***

Reflecting the dynamic character of Arab society and culture, Arabic literature has changed greatly. Oral poetry, especially the Mu'allaqat (The Suspended Odes), which retained the history and values of the Arabian Peninsula during the Jahiliyyah (Age of Ignorance), started in the pre-Islamic period. Islam's emergence in the seventh century brought forth the Qur'an, which became the central literary piece that not only shaped religious thought but also moulded poetry, theology and philosophy across the Islamic world (Bakhsh, 2023).

Arabic literature thrived during the classical age (8th-15th centuries), as the Islamic Empire grew. Al-Jahiz and Ibn Khaldun advanced rhetoric and historical thinking, while Abu Nuwas and Al-Mutanabbi expanded the range of Arabic poetry to embrace ideas of love, politics and philosophy. This time set long-lasting benchmarks in literary style, especially in rhyme, meter and thematic depth (Mahmud, 2025).

The Nahda (Arab Renaissance) in the 19th century brought about a cultural revival influenced by Western ideas and political events. As academics promoted educational reform and modern knowledge, this era shifted from traditional poetry to prose and narrative writing. The Arabic novel surfaced; *Zaynab* (1914) by Muhammad Husayn Haykal, for example, dealt with love, class and cultural norms.

Modernism, postmodernism and existentialism shaped Arabic literature in the 20th and 21st centuries. Both Naguib Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy* and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* sought to investigate issues of identity, culture and modernity, as well as to address political and social difficulties in Egypt. Focusing on gender issues and women's rights, modern writers, including Nawal El Saadawi and Hanan al-Shaykh, helped to

advance feminist literature and magnify underrepresented voices.

Today, Arabic literature is varied and dynamic; through several forms, including poetry, prose, drama and historical fiction, it investigates subjects such as nationalism, independence and globalisation. Great authors such as Adonis, Mahmoud Darwish, and Ihsan Abdel Quddous keep on exploring Arab identity and political and social transformation. Arabic literature, from its traditional roots to more contemporary innovations, continues to influence and evolve in the global literary landscape, reflecting the continuous transformation of Arab society and culture.

## **Section II: The Impact of Modernity on the Arabic Language**

### ***Technological Advancements and the Digital Age***

The Arabic language has been profoundly changed by digital technologies and the Internet; both its spoken and written forms have suffered. Arabic has responded to changing means of communication by inventing fresh vocabulary and phrases to clarify technical ideas. Emerging terms include *مشاركة* (taṭbīq) for “application,” *مشاركة* (mushāraka) for “sharing” and *تحميل* (taḥmīl) for “download.” Others have borrowed English words like *هاشتاغ* (hashtag) and *غوغل* (ghūghil) for “Google.” These developments display how Arabic can assimilate the digital world while keeping its traditional form (Arak, 2024). These evolving digital sociolinguistic practices, including the use of emojis, memes and transliterated Arabic, reshape how Arabic is written and spoken online (Al-Tamimi, 2023).

The emergence of Arabizi, a hybrid Arabic style that uses the Latin alphabet and numbers to represent Arabic sounds, is a major advancement in digital communication. The Arabic letter ع (‘ayn) is replaced, for example, by the number 3. Allowing for faster communication and acting as a modernity indicator, Arabizi has gained recognition, especially among younger people. Critics fear it might weaken traditional Arabic; others view it as a required adjustment to digital surroundings and a link between local dialects (Morrow, 2025).

In technical, scholarly and commercial contexts as well, Arabic has incorporated many English words such as *كمبيوتر* (computer), *انترنت* (internet) and *موبايل* (mobile). This trend has given rise to code-switching, whereby Arabic speakers shift between Arabic and English within the same conversation, especially in professional contexts. A quantitative study by Al-Zahrani (2025) on Saudi Arabic self-reported code-switchers found that contextual factors, including location (home, workplace, etc) and type of interlocutor, significantly affect code-switching behaviour. English phrases have become more integrated in Arabic as a result of English supremacy in worldwide commerce and digital networks (Akee, 2016).

Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have also influenced Arabic by encouraging fresh styles, including the use of slang, colloquialisms and creative expressions like memes and hashtags. Especially among younger generations, this has resulted in a

more casual, flexible Arabic style. The development of new identities, such as millennial and Gen Z Arab identities, is increasingly moulded by digital communication, significantly aided by tools like auto-translation that facilitate social media chatting and broader digital interaction and worldwide trade, further transformed by the pervasive spread of digital culture.

While auto-translation tools have greatly assisted cross-linguistic communication and facilitated social media chatting, particularly between Arabic and other world languages, it is crucial to acknowledge their inherent limitations and drawbacks. These tools often struggle with the nuances of idiomatic expressions, cultural context and the subtle variations in meaning that are vital for accurate translation. Grammatical errors, awkward phrasing and the potential for misinterpretation remain significant concerns, especially in sensitive or formal contexts. Over-reliance on auto-translation can also hinder the development of genuine bilingual proficiency and a deeper understanding of linguistic and cultural intricacies.

Finally, the digital era has brought fresh language patterns, including neologisms, abbreviations and hybrid forms like Arabizi, that have transformed the way Arabic is written and spoken. English's impact in technical and international business environments still affects Arabic, therefore shaping a dynamic and ever-changing linguistic scene reflecting more general social and cultural changes.

### ***The Influence of Globalisation on Arabic***

Globalisation has increased exposure to foreign cultures, languages and ideologies, transforming how people communicate and engage with the world. For Arabic speakers, the ubiquitous presence of English has become a defining feature of this revolution, affecting a broad spectrum of fields, including science, business, entertainment and technology. This chapter discusses how Arabic has responded to the pressures of globalisation, how these global forces are realised in daily language use and literary production, and the broader consequences for the future of the Arabic language. It also questions the status of Arabic in a globalised world and whether the language can continue to remain relevant and true to its cultural identity without falling under the dominance of other languages, particularly English (Crystal, 1997).

As the world has moved closer through globalisation, English has emerged as the dominant global language, particularly in technology, science, business and popular culture. The supremacy of English in universities, multinational corporations and global media has shifted the linguistic preferences of Arabic speakers, particularly among the younger generation. English has emerged as the preferred language of communication in professional and academic circles for many, replacing Arabic in contexts that entail specialised knowledge or dealing with the globalised markets (Langer, 2012). A study of

Saudi university students' attitudes towards language use found that participants generally believed they used English more than standard Arabic, and had a positive attitude towards English, citing occupational opportunities as a factor (Al-Qahtani, 2017). Furthermore, an analysis of scientific publications from the region often indicates a prevalence of English, particularly in fields aiming for international dissemination.

In science and technology, much of the latest research, innovation and scholarly debate is in English. Arabic-speaking researchers, practitioners and students often have to learn and use English in order to access current knowledge, participate in global debates and publish in international journals. As a result, English has made a strong intrusion into professional and academic vocabularies, often leading to the use of code-switching, where Arabic and English are mixed within the same sentence or discourse. It is most obvious in scientific disciplines, such as medicine, engineering and computer science, where English terms like computer, software, internet and email have replaced their Arabic equivalents in daily usage and academic writing.

In business, English has also had an influence on the Arabic language context. As Arab economies become more integrated into the international market, English has become the lingua franca of international trade, finance and diplomacy. English is usually required by most multinational firms operating in the Arab world, and it is typically the predominant language for business negotiations, contracts and correspondence. This English hegemony in the business world has cast doubt on the future of Arabic in the business community, as younger generations are increasingly likely to use English as the language of career advancement and professional success (Agustiana, 2017). A data-driven analysis of job postings in the UAE indicated that approximately 14.5% explicitly require Arabic language skills, while a 2023 employer survey found that good communication in both Arabic and English was the top skill valued by 51% of employers (Coursetakers.ae, 2025). This suggests a strong emphasis on bilingualism for career advancement.

The Internet and electronic technologies have boosted the effects of globalisation on the Arabic language. The growth of social media platforms, global streaming services and online content creation has brought Arabic speakers into closer contact with foreign languages, particularly English. This increased exposure to global content has led to the incorporation of foreign expressions, slang and cultural references into everyday language use in Arabic. Particularly, social media websites like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram have become spaces where Arabic speakers mix languages, often using English words or even entire English sentences with their native Arabic.

The digital age has also seen the creation of Arabic language content for global audiences. In the entertainment industry, Arabic-language films, TV shows and music are typically presented with English subtitles or dubbed into English to reach wider audiences. Arabic-

speaking producers are increasingly incorporating English words and phrases, either out of necessity or as a way to reach a broader global audience. The trend is particularly pronounced in the media and entertainment industries, where global cultural products like Hollywood movies, English language music and international television shows are inundating the consumption habits of the younger Arab generations. Consequently, there is a growing concern that the Arabic language may be diluted, potentially leading to the native language of the younger generation taking a backseat, with more prominence given to English. While Selsam (1950) highlighted early concerns about language degradation, more contemporary sociolinguistic studies, such as those examining intergenerational language shift in Arab communities, explore these shifts in detail (Al-Sobhi et al., 2023). The effects of globalisation on Arabic are seen not only through conversation and the workplace, but also in literature. The forces of globalisation have created challenges and opportunities for writers writing in Arabic. On the one hand, there is a noticeable trend of Arabic authors increasingly writing and publishing in English, often with the aim of reaching broader audiences and tapping into the global literary market. This is especially apparent in genres like contemporary fiction and poetry, where writers seek international appeal while navigating the complexities of translating their work into a global framework. However, this shift has also raised concerns about the future of Arabic as a literary language. In the view of some critics, the increasing recourse to English in literary circles can threaten the unique cultural and linguistic character of Arabic literature, as writers may be tempted to abandon traditional Arabic syntax, style and cultural references in favour of more widely accepted English idioms (Zakaria, 2011).

On the other hand, there are Arabic authors who have embraced globalisation by engaging the worldwide literary community without losing their cultural identity. These authors tend to draw on the rich history of Arabic literature, poetry and storytelling while addressing universal issues such as migration, identity and the impact of technology on society. By preserving their cultural heritage and engaging with the global literary conversation, these writers are helping the Arabic language continue to evolve and remain relevant in a globalised world.

One of the main concerns about the effect of globalisation on Arabic is whether the language will remain relevant without compromising its cultural identity. The Arabic language is highly symbolic, binding speakers to history, faith and heritage. It is the language of the Quran and classical Arab literature, and a source of unity and pride for Arabs worldwide. However, as younger generations shift to speaking more English as the preferred language of education, work and social media usage, the future of Arabic is being increasingly questioned.

There is a growing controversy on whether Arabic can resist the forces of globalisation without sacrificing its language and cultural identity. Some hold the view that Arabic must adapt to the era of the Internet by embracing new technologies, inventing new terms and

becoming more linguistically accommodating. This involves incorporating foreign terms into Arabic and developing new ways to express modern concepts. Others believe that a compromise between modernity and tradition is the most effective way to ensure that Arabic remains culturally relevant. In this view, Arabic can evolve whilst remaining faithful to its linguistic tradition, provided efforts are made to promote and teach the language to younger generations (Herder, 2002).

Globalisation has undoubtedly affected the Arabic language in some significant ways, exposing it to new pressures and influences. While English has become the favoured second language among the majority of Arabic speakers (Alzaben et al., 2019), Arabic language has remained steadfast, meeting the demands of the digital age, business and academia. Such advancement does not come without its challenges, especially concerning the maintenance of the language's cultural and literary significance. As Arabic grapples with the demands of globalisation, it will require the efforts of teachers, policymakers and writers to keep the language relevant and culturally involved, without compromising its unique character to the demands of worldwide linguistic fashion. The fate of Arabic lies in its ability to balance modernity and tradition, making room for global developments while preserving the integrity of the language, which has occupied a central place in Arab identity for centuries (Al-Jabri, 1985).

### ***Linguistic Purism vs. Modernisation***

The linguistic purism-modern debate in Arabic presents two conflicting aims: preserving traditional classical Arabic norms and standardising the language for modern uses. Linguistic purism strives to maintain the integrity of classical Arabic as a unifying symbol of national identity and historical continuity, and emphasises its use in the educational system, literature and mass media. Organisations like Egypt's Arabic Language Academy help keep Arabic as alive as possible by coining new words for contemporary concepts and opposing the borrowing of foreign words, especially from English (Alhazmi, 2021). Opposed to this view, however, are those who believe that Arabic needs to transform itself to the needs of the digital era and globalisation. These involve embracing neologisms borrowed from languages like English and French, e.g., "تطبيق" (app) and هاشتاغ (hashtag), as well as the prevalence of Arabizi (Arabic written in Latin script and digits) among youth. These modifications are deemed inevitable if Arabic is to stay alive in a globalised world.

Language institutions like the Arabic Language Academy serve as middlemen in this tension by preserving classical Arabic while allowing it to modernise. Critics argue that these measures might not be enough to deal with rapid technological and cultural developments. Despite differing views, most suggest that purism and modernisation are compatible, and that classical Arabic can be reserved for formal use and more modern varieties for everyday use ("Contemporary Arabic Literature," 2025).

In short, the future of the Arabic language depends on obtaining linguistic preservation

and modernisation. Institutions like the Arabic Language Academy play a critical role in achieving this objective to keep Arabic an active language that can meet current demands while preserving its cultural and historical uniqueness.

### **Section III: Contemporary Arabic Literature and Its Challenges**

#### ***Innovations in Literary Forms***

Contemporary Arabic literature has come a long way, adopting new genres and addressing modern subjects such as urban existence, gender identity, political freedom and identity. Writers such as Naguib Mahfouz, Hanan al-Shaykh and Adonis have pioneered progress, adopting new modes of storytelling and addressing compelling issues of the times. Modernity in contemporary Arabic literature has brought about the adoption of experimental techniques such as disjointed narratives, stream-of-consciousness and unreliable narrators. Mahfouz, on the other hand, evolved from traditional oral tradition to newer genres with a focus on diverse perspectives and social change. Adonis revolutionised Arabic poetry with free verse and layered metaphors, responding to the political upheavals in the Arab world (Stanton, 2023).

Analysis of contemporary social issues has a priority, with issues such as gender equality emerging in the foreground, as seen in the novels of Hanan al-Shaykh, defying traditional gender roles. Political liberty, social justice and the challenging of authoritarianism also feature regularly, as seen in novels like *“The Yacoubian Building”* and *“Frankenstein in Baghdad”*, discussing corruption violence and the breakdown of society.

The role of globalisation and translation has also impacted contemporary Arabic literature, exposing Arab writers to global literary movements and compelling them to venture into genres such as science fiction and detective fiction. This encounter has introduced the impact of existentialism, surrealism and postmodernism on Arabic literature (Ahmad, 2022).

Overall, contemporary Arabic fiction is a dynamic fusion of tradition and contemporaneity, both addressing local and global concerns. Through the works of writers like Mahfouz, al-Shaykh and Adonis, Arabic literature continues to expand, offering a window into the complexities of the Arab world while drawing on global trends.

#### ***The Arab Spring and Literary Expression***

The Arab Spring, which began in 2010, transformed Arabic literature into a vehicle for both commenting on political revolutions and catalysing social change. As millions demanded democracy and freedom, writers and poets, who had once been under strict authoritarian control, began to write about rebellion, resistance and hope. People wrote about their frustrations in these works, addressing a new generation of writers who felt free to resist oppression (“Arab Spring,” 2025).

Throughout this period, Arabic literature was more a reflection of the political struggles.

Writers documented the revolutions, researched protest causes and wrote of dreams for a more democratic nation. Fiction, poetry and essays penned after the revolutions described the trauma and hope of the time. Novels such as *Frankenstein in Baghdad* by Ahmed Saadawi and poetry works by Ahdaf Soueif and Khaled Mattawa articulated the human cost of political repression and the resilience of resistance. These novels also provided citizens with the means to discuss their hopes for freedom, dignity and democracy, moving beyond the confines of previous authoritarianism (Reichert Verlag Wiesbaden, 2015).

Besides reflecting the political climate, Arabic literature contributed to mobilising social and political transformation. Writers used their works to voice public anger, advocate for human rights and call for the overthrow of oppressive systems. Poetry, in particular, continued to be a forceful presence, with poets taking to the streets in Tunisia, Egypt and other places to build resistance and hope. Writers like Abdelwahab Bouhdiba in Tunisia and Amr Diab and Ahmed Fouad Negm in Egypt became symbols of this revolutionary movement. The emergence of the Internet during the Arab Spring was crucial in disseminating the work of the literati. To publish their work, criticise governments and plan rallies, authors and poets turned to social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Bypassing government-imposed restrictions and reaching a wider audience, digital literary journals and blogs became the preferred medium for disseminating revolutionary ideas. Authors like Alaa Al Aswany, whose writing was previously restricted in Egypt, began using online media to participate in political discourse.

The Arab Spring introduced yet another era of “digital literature”, as the term went mainstream with readers accessing their work in real-time on blogs and social network site postings. This evolution from the traditional, sluggish writing enabled real-time responses to developments and greater reader control. This also provided scope for silenced voices, including those of women and children, to discuss the revolution’s gender aspects. Works such as *The Women of the Revolution* and those by Hanan al-Shaykh emphasised women’s involvement in the revolutions and documented their struggle for political as well as societal rights. The Arab Spring ultimately transformed Arabic literature, making it both an expression of the political upheaval in the Middle East and a force for change. Poets and writers became key players in the fight for freedom, human rights and social justice through their works. New media and web platforms enabled greater creative freedom and political discourse, amplifying the voices that had previously been silenced or marginalised. As Arabic literature evolves, it remains a driving force in the Arab world’s political and social currents, urging the next generation of Arabs to continue the battle for freedom, justice and dignity.

### ***Language and Identity in Modern Arabic Literature***

Language and identity are the hidden issues in contemporary Arabic literature as writers must navigate the complexities of modernity and globalisation. The rapid political, social and cultural transformations in the Arab world led writers to grapple with how to maintain

their cultural identity, which is deeply associated with Arabic language, and yet continue to prosper in the contemporary, globalised world. Arabic is not just a communicative language but also a powerful symbol of cultural heritage, and writers have the task of retaining its richness while engaging in international discourses (Ahmed, 2010).

Modern Arabic literature is an expression of this tension, with writers using both Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and local dialects to express regional and personal identities. While MSA connects formal classical Arabic and colloquial dialects, others employ dialects to articulate local realities, showcasing the Arabic language as a living language that adapts to current realities. Globalisation is evident through the works of authors who engage with themes of migration, exile and the search for belonging, with writers fluctuating between different identities (Elkalliny, 2017).

The majority of contemporary Arab writers, such as Hanan al-Shaykh and Ahdaf Soueif, write in Arabic and in foreign languages like English, illustrating the complexities of bilingualism and the tension between preserving cultural identity and becoming part of international literary culture. Their work often addresses issues of migration, exile and the state of existing between two worlds, synthesising modernity with a rich sense of Arab history and traditions. Migration and exile are dominant themes in Arabic literature, often symbolising the life of displacement and identity crisis. Diaspora authors such as Edward Said and Amin Maalouf refer to the struggle between the old world they had known and the new world in which they are now living, with migration also affecting the use of their language. Writing in foreign languages to appeal to broader readerships raises questions about preserving cultural identity in translation and about how well non-Arabic languages can convey the depth of the original Arabic experience.

Contemporary Arab writers also examine the evolving concept of Arab identity in the wake of social and political crises, such as the Arab Spring and recent wars. Such crises have led writers to reinterpret what it means to be “Arab” today. Writing, particularly the discourse of resistance, has played a key role in articulating a vision of a future both rooted in the past and open to change (Zubaida, 2012). The convergence of gender, class and religion has also become the defining characteristic of modern Arab identity. Writers like Mona Eltahawy and Nawal El Saadawi use literature as a means of reversing typical gender norms as well as questioning power, inequality and social justice. These writers in their work engage in a discourse about the status of the Arab woman in society and how literature can be used towards both retaining cultural identity and creating social change.

In short, modern Arabic literature continues to probe the complex interplay among language, identity and modernity. Writers find a balance between preserving their cultural heritage and the demands of globalisation and the new socio-political climate. Employing Arabic language, they articulate individual and collective identities with firmness, portraying the Arab experience in a globalised world (Al-Shamaa, 2006).

## **Section IV: The Role of Arabic in Education and Society**

### ***Arabic Language Education: Challenges and Opportunities***

Learning the Arabic language presents profound challenges and distinctive opportunities in today's world, especially in the context of globalisation and English dominance. The dominance of English, particularly in the scholarly, scientific and professional communities, has made it so that a majority of Arab students place English over Arabic in order to access more job prospects, and that can devalue their mastery of Arabic. A recent survey of Saudi university students found that participants generally believed they used English more than standard Arabic and had a positive attitude towards English, citing factors such as occupational opportunities (Al-Qahtani, 2017). English language publications are widespread, closing the gap in access to learning and intellectual exchange, especially in universities where many programmes are instructed in English, notably engineering and business (Ahmad, 2010). While this is rendering people more employable, it is diminishing Arabic's status as a scholarly language and weakening its intellectual richness in educational settings.

The emergence of colloquial Arabic dialects, including regional dialects and online slang, presents another difficulty. Arabic diglossia is the division between written and spoken Arabic caused by the coexistence of regional dialects as colloquial speech and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as the official language. Students find it hard to relate to MSA because of the usage of dialects and online slang, which makes it seem disconnected from reality. Because of this disparity, students' formal Arabic writing skills deteriorate as they become accustomed to using vernacular and shorthand, particularly when communicating online.

Despite these limitations, informal varieties offer teachers avenues to engage students by integrating dialects and internet slang into pedagogical practices. This can make Arabic more convenient while still pointing to the imperative of learning formal Arabic for academic and career success. Responding to these challenges, there has been a heightened demand for pedagogical solutions finding a compromise between the historic and modern faces of the language. The traditional method, targeting grammar and syntax, can be augmented by using multimedia materials like movies, social networking postings and online articles in both MSA and dialects so that the learner is employed across various modalities.

Fostering creativity and critical thinking in the study of Arabic is unavoidable. Instead of relying solely on memorisation, educators can encourage students to read and think critically about contemporary Arabic literature, social media or global news from an Arabic language perspective. This deepens their linguistic knowledge and enables them to appreciate questions of identity, modernity and globalisation. Additionally, Arabic teaching must emphasise its worldwide relevance, particularly as non-Arab students learn Arabic as

a second language. Developing functional language competencies across environments such as business, diplomacy and technology can increase Arabic's stature on the world stage. Technology also performs a two-fold role. Websites and software packages have made Arabic learning easier by allowing students to learn and use the language as they prefer. However, they tend to favour colloquial language at the expense of the formal. Colloquial language can hinder the development of concrete writing and reading skills in the formal style. Teachers should, therefore, find ways to introduce technology without dismissing the formal approach to language mastery.

Overall, Arabic language teaching is at a crossroads, with challenges such as the dominance of English, the rise of colloquial varieties and pedagogic reform. However, by blending classical and modern aspects of Arabic, promoting imaginative and critical thought and utilising technology in an equitable manner, teachers can guarantee Arabic thrives as a necessary language of learning, culture and communication. With apt reforms, Arabic education can be more dynamic, accessible and relevant, promoting linguistic proficiency and cultural pride.

### ***Promoting Digital Literacy in Arabic***

Arabic digital literacy is now more important than ever in the age of the digital economy, as Arabic speakers must be equipped with the right skills to engage, contribute and access information in the global digital economy. With over 400 million users, Arabic faces an increasing digital divide in which English and other European languages occupy the lion's share of the digital space, leaving Arabic content sparse and inaccessible. This void may lead to exclusion from crucial educational, commercial and technological opportunities for Arabic speakers (Siraj, 2025). A report by W3Techs (2025) indicates that Arabic content accounts for approximately 0.5% of total online content, significantly lower than its share of global internet users.

To fill this gap, various efforts are underway to promote Arabic language software, websites and learning materials. Major tech companies like Google, Microsoft and Apple have improved their Arabic offerings, such as Arabic language interfaces and voice recognition. Local startups are also developing Arabic language apps and platforms, such as Duolingo and Maktoob (acquired by Yahoo!), that cater to Arabic speakers. Open materials like Tadarab and Al Manhal are also raising digital literacy and Arabic education.

Production of educational material in Arabic is required. Projects such as ALECSO's Arab Digital Content Initiative target the production of educational materials in Arabic on various themes. Sites based on online learning, like Rwaq and Edraak, offer free courses, including digital literacy and ICT, to make lifelong learning a reality. In addition, computer programming and coding courses in Arabic, offered by institutions such as ArabCoders and the Qatar Computing Research Institute, equip Arabic speakers with the skills needed

for the technology-driven global economy.

Despite these advances, Arabic content accounts for approximately 1% of the digital sphere, limiting Arabic speakers ability to engage in digital dialogue and defend their language heritage. Governments, private enterprises and NGOs need to invest more to translate global content into Arabic and generate locally relevant content. Social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter also play an important role in enhancing digital literacy by offering Arabic speakers possibilities for digital debate and the creation of appropriate cultural content. Initiatives like YouTube's Arabic Language Content Creators help Arabic speakers engage in global digital debates.

To efficiently advance digital literacy, constructing the region's digital infrastructure is critical. Offering secure, high-quality internet access to cities and towns will enable more Arabic speakers to utilise digital tools. Investing in local technology firms and start-ups focused on digital literacy is equally essential to create Arabic-language tools and platforms tailored to regional needs. Encouraging Arabic digital literacy ensures that Arabic-speaking communities can access and participate fully in the digital economy while preserving their linguistic heritage. Though efforts through the development of Arabic-language materials have been successful, there is still much to be done in building digital infrastructure, creating Arabic content and ensuring access to digital tools for all Arabic speakers. This will keep Arabic a thriving and accessible language in the digital age.

### ***Bridging Classical and Modern Arabic Traditions***

The destiny of Arabic and its literary tradition is to bridge the gap between its classical and modern phases. Being long and deeply entrenched, Arabic language and literature has to balance between its classical origin and the demands of the contemporary global world. Despite being the official Arab lingua franca, regional varieties, internet slang and international fashion still prevail in everyday discourse. For Arabic to endure and continue to play a living role, there must be a vision of education that integrates the classical and the modern (Ernst, 2013).

The classical Arabic, which derives its basis from the Quran and early Islamic literature, is very much valued as it is incredibly eloquent and rich. Yet, it may appear distant and unattainable to younger generations exposed to local dialects and foreign influences, particularly English. MSA, despite being adapted to contemporary communication needs, retains considerable differences from classical Arabic in vocabulary and syntax, creating a gap between the two forms. The prevalence of informal dialects, employed mostly in everyday use, also complicates the connection between classical and modern Arabic.

To address such a dilemma, educational institutions need to focus even more on integrating both styles meaningfully. A comprehensive, balanced study of classic Arabic texts and contemporary literature can give students a great appreciation of how the language evolved through the ages. Reading the works of such great classic poets as Al-Mutanabbi, alongside

those of contemporary writers such as Naguib Mahfouz, and philosophers such as Al-Farabi enables students to appreciate the continuity and changes in the language. Education should also address how social media and online communication are shaping modern Arabic. The incorporation of internet slang, abbreviations and mixing Arabic with foreign elements has taken centre stage in communication, especially among the young population. Teachers need to equip students with the ability to engage with Arabic in both formal and informal contexts, while nurturing creativity and critical thinking when utilising language.

Encouraging creative literary work is the most effective way to fill the gap. The Arab world has a rich literary heritage, and Arabic literature has not fared well in maintaining its global popularity over the last few decades. By engaging young writers and poets to draw inspiration from both ancient linguistic traditions and modern themes such as globalisation, identity and technology, Arabic literature can evolve without losing its cultural identity. Promoting contemporary Arabic literature through translation and global media will allow Arabic to regain its place in the world of literature.

The future of Arabic also lies in keeping it current as a medium of communication throughout the world. Although English is preeminent in the world of business, science and scholarship, Arab speakers must preserve their language and introduce innovations to make Arabic an effective tool for these purposes. Providing Arabic language media, digital content, websites, podcasts and e-learning sites can open Arabic up to more people all over the world and become useful tools for learning Arabic as a second language.

Finally, institutions and governments must invest in programmes and policies that preserve Arabic's authenticity and promote its international presence. Collaboration with technology companies, the media and international organisations can help Arabic grow while preserving its cultural roots. In total, the future of Arabic depends on an equilibrium approach that bridges the classical and modern styles, promotes creative literary output and propels Arabic into digital and global spaces. This will render Arabic a living and dynamic language in the 21st century, preserving its rich heritage while adapting to contemporary needs.

## **Conclusion**

This study has discussed the shifting dynamics of the Arabic language, between maintaining its classical structures and adhering to modern linguistic developments. Arabic, as a language with deep cultural and historical roots, faces the challenge of maintaining its classical heritage while adapting to the demands of an ever-globalising, technology-driven world. One of the main findings is the tension between classical Arabic, grounded in the Quran and classical literature, and the more colloquial forms employed in everyday life, especially by younger generations exposed to regional dialects, mass culture and foreign languages such as English.

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) has emerged as the official form used in education, the media and formal communication, serving as a bridge between regional dialects. It does

not, however, fully reach the modern Arab world, creating a gap between classical Arabic and MSA that makes it hard for the new generations to connect with the cultural and literary significance of classical Arabic. The Internet era has contributed to this complication, with new forms of Arabic emerging through social media, texting and other online communication that mix Arabic with foreign phrases and colloquial dialects.

The research also pointed to Arabic's comparatively modest place in global academia, technology and media compared to other languages, and to the need for Arabic speakers to develop these fields without sacrificing cultural integrity. The research argues that modernisation is not something to be feared as threatening classical Arabic, but rather a way to expand its expressive range, so that both the classical and modern forms can coexist in a legitimate way.

The destiny of Arabic is to achieve a balance between its heritage and the demands of the modern age. Through educational reform, creative literary production and the development of electronic media, Arabic can continue to be a living global language, both serving its speakers and remaining faithful to its tradition. Last but not least, the study concludes that Arabic's survival and growth will depend on its ability to adapt, innovate and embrace both classical and modern varieties, ensuring it remains a viable tool for communication, identity and intellectual inquiry in the 21st century and beyond.

### **Recommendations for Future Research and Practice**

As the findings indicate, this section offers several recommendations to enhance the current usefulness of Arabic language and literature. They include:

1. Formulating new pedagogical models for teaching Arabic, combining classical and contemporary linguistic components.
2. Facilitating the creation of Arabic language digital content and Arabic digital literacy.
3. Encouraging global discussion about the evolving role of Arabic in an interconnected world.
4. Offering supporting research that bridges the gap between classical and modern Arabic

literature and language.

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# CHAPTER 17

## An Appraisal of Islamic Studies as a Discipline for National Development

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### Introduction

The acquisition of knowledge is *sine qua non* to the development of any society. The essence of knowledge acquisition lies in its use for human progress. Knowledge is the fact or condition of knowing something or acquaintance with or understanding of a science, art, technique or skill (Hornby, 2015). The fact that Islām emerged with the word *Iqra* ' (read) and *qalam* (pen) illustrates the divine and important position that knowledge acquisition holds in the religion. Through reading, listening and writing, individuals acquire knowledge and education (Paramole, 2016), which enables them to contribute to human development.

This explains why in Qur'ān 39:9, Allāh says that:

هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“Are those who know equal to those who do not know? Only they (who know) are people of understanding.”

Prophet Muḥammad is on record to have said: “Seeking knowledge is compulsory for every Muslim man and woman” (Ibn Majah, 2007:222). The point is that knowledge acquisition in Islām is not limited to *Ibādāt* (acts of worship) and *Sharī‘ah* (Islāmic law). In fact, the *Sharī‘ah* is Allāh’s revelation, encompassing all forms of knowledge meant to guide human society (Paramole, 2016). These forms of knowledge are embedded in the discipline of Islāmic Studies.

In Qur’ān 17:89, Allāh says:

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ فَأَبَى أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ إِلَّا كُفُورًا

“And We (Allāh) have certainly explained for the people in this Qur’ān every kind of similitude, but most of people refused to consent to it except disbelief.”

In Qur’ān 42:18, Allāh also says:

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَىٰ شَرِيعَةٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“Then We put you, (Muḥammad), on an ordained way concerning the matter (of religion); so follow it and do not follow the inclinations of those who do not know.”

Religion in this regard is not restricted to acts of worship; rather, it means a way of life. Indeed, Islāmic Studies cuts across all academic disciplines, ideas and thoughts aimed at advancing human development in the areas of economics, governance, ethics, law, science and technology, social, human and international relations, and so on. It is in this direction that this study shall be appraising the extent to which Islāmic Studies has profoundly contributed to Nigeria’s national development.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

**Islāmic studies:** According to Oloyede, Islāmic Studies is an academic discipline where “the knowledge of God reaches man through theological sciences while the understanding of human being, nature and society, all of which he is a part, one way or the other, is respectively accessible to him through human sciences, natural sciences and social sciences” (Oloyede, 2012:12). Oloyede (2012:12) further asserts that Islāmic Studies, as a “conflux of disciplines,” cuts across theological, human, natural and social sciences. Thus, Islāmic Studies embraces all academic disciplines. The elements of reading and writing, as entrenched in the first revelation of the Qur’ān, further substantiate the nature of knowledge in Islām. Indeed, the scope of Islāmic Studies transcends the sacred to the mundane, the sciences to the humanities and the theories to the realities, hence the difficulty in classifying the discipline as an Art or a Science” (Oloyede, 2012:16).

**National development:** National development has been described as the overall advancement, development or improvement of a country in all areas, including the political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and material spheres (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011). The Nigerian National Development Plan, 2021-2025 (Federal Ministry of Finance, 2025), embraces the following sectors and sub-areas as inclusive of its agenda towards achieving development:

**Table 1:** Nigerian National Development Plan, 2021-2025, Sectors and Sub-areas

Sectors	Sub-Areas
Economic Growth and Development	Macroeconomic framework, agriculture and food security, manufacturing, oil and gas, solid minerals, mining and steel development, culture, creative, hospitality and tourism, business environment, trade and competitiveness.
Infrastructure	Transportation, power and alternative energy, housing and urban development, digital economy, science, technology and innovation, and the financial sector.
Public Administration	Defence, peace and security, governance, institutions and national orientation, foreign policy and international economic relationships.
Human Capital Development	Education, human resources, health, food and nutrition.
Social Development	Water resources and sanitation, environment and disaster management, women and gender equity, poverty alleviation and social protection, humanitarian affairs, youth development, sport development, employment and job creation, persons with disabilities.
Regional Development	Subnational government cooperation and collaboration.

**Source:** Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning

**Theoretical framework:** This study is based on functionalists' argument on education, which focuses on the functional requisites of a social system that must be met to survive. According to the functionalists, education is one of the functional needs that maintain the stability and contribute to the smooth functioning of society (Ogunbameru, 2008). Functionalists argue that the role of schools and education is to prepare students for participation in the institutions of society. Thus, this theory is relevant in establishing the contributions of Islāmic Studies to Nigeria's national development.

### Literature Review

The history and development of Islāmic Studies in Nigeria have attracted considerable scholarly attention (Fafunwa, 2018). Scholars have also identified the challenges inhibiting Islāmic Studies in Nigeria (Adebayo, 2016). It has also been argued that, beyond the theory and practice of acts of worship, the value system and Sharī'ah (Islāmic law), the discipline also extensively accommodates science, technology and other areas of human development (Bidmos, 2016). In recent times, Islāmic Studies scholars have not only called for the revival of Islāmic thought, but have also shown the extent to which researchers have been contributing to the Islāmisation of knowledge, especially in the areas of economics, banking, finance, law and public administration (Adebayo, 2016; Adebayo, 2018). In this direction, concerns have also been raised for an improvement in the methodological framework

for research in Islāmic Studies that addresses the nature of Islāmic thought and practice (Fahm, 2023). This framework is aimed at integrating interdisciplinary perspectives, which embrace new technologies and emphasise contextual analysis, all of which would help to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of Islām in the contemporary era.

Some other studies (Opeloye, 2012; Je’adayibe, 2016) generally focus on various aspects of Islām as a religion and Islāmic Studies as an academic field having impacts on Nigeria’s national development both in theory and practice. This is evident in the various Islāmic principles that have been analysed in scholarly Islāmic works as well as their practices that have been demonstrated by various Muslim groups, institutions and individuals in the areas of socio-economic practices, local and international relations, peace and conflict resolution, legal and political institutions, healthcare, moral values, and so on (Sanni & Muhibbu-din, 2009). A general gap in all these academic works is that they do not really demonstrate the extent to which Islāmic Studies in Nigeria has contributed to the country’s national development in recent times, given the new NUC philosophy, objectives and features of the discipline.

### **Knowledge Acquisition and Utilisation in the Early Period of Islām**

Unarguably, the two primary sources of guidance in Islām, the Qur’ān and the *Aḥādīth* (sayings of Prophet Muḥammad) instructed Muslims to acquire knowledge. By the end of the 8th century, the Abbāsīd dynasty (750-1258), regarded as the Golden Age of Islām, had begun to extensively promote the culture of knowledge acquisition, dissemination and utilisation across various fields. Significantly, Abbāsīd caliphs such as Hārūn Rashīd (786-809) and Al-Ma’mūn the Great (813-833) made the Islāmic empire prosper administratively, economically, militarily and educationally. They attracted men of talent and learning to the extent that Baghdad became the capital of the Islāmic empire and the home of learning and culture (Rahim, 1981). On Ma’mūn, Rahim asserts:

It is the great intellectual awakening in his reign that has made his caliphate memorable in history. He gave liberal patronage to men of learning. His court became the resort of philosophers, astronomers, physicians, scientists, poets and other men of letters, of every caste and creed. Ma’mūn considered that true happiness of his people (is) consisted in education and culture. So he made generous provisions and took effective measures for the promotion of learning and culture. He enlarged the translation bureau and raised it to a great academy for study and research. This was known as *Baitul-Hikmah* (House of Wisdom). His astronomers made valuable contributions to knowledge. They discovered the roundness of the earth and many valuable information about the solar system. Abul-Hasan invented the telescope from a tube. Substantial progress was also made in the knowledge of philosophy, medicine and other branches of arts and science (Rahi, 1981:200-201).

The Muslim scholars, scientists and philosophers during the Abbāsīd period translated the ancient Greek and some Asian works (Morrissey, 2021), and assimilated and developed them, with philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and medicine first attracting their interest (Tahir, 2012). As acknowledged by W. Muir, “it was through the labours of these learned men that the nations of Europe, then shrouded in the darkness of the Middle Ages, became acquainted with their own proper but forgotten patrimony of Grecian science and philosophy” (Rahim, 1981:201). Beyond the popularly known and revered Islāmīc traditional scholars, jurists, philosophers, mystics, theologians, exegetes and historians, the Abbāsīd period and beyond produced numerous Muslim physicians, astronomers, scientists, mathematicians, geographers, sociologists, and so on, whose contributions to knowledge laid the foundation for a significant part of European modern academic disciplines of especially science, medicine and technology. Some of the prominent Muslim philosophers, scientists and scholars who marked their time by the genius of their minds and innovations (Tahir, 2012; N0jimudeen, 2014; Owosho, 2021) include Muhammad Ibn Musa Al-Khwarizmi (c.780-850), Ya‘qūb ibn ‘Ishāq aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ al-Kindī (c.801-873), Abūl-Qasim Abbās ibn Firnas (c. 810-88), Abūl-Qāsim Az-Zahrawī (c.936-1013), Abū ‘Ali Ibn Sīnā (c.980-1037), ‘Abdul-Wālid Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rushd (c.1126-1198), Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad Ibn Battuta (1304 -1368/69) and Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406).

One major thing that should be noted here is that the scholars and scientists who sprang out from *Baytul-Hikmah* were well-trained in various aspects of knowledge in the arts and sciences. For example, Ibn Rushd (Averroes) was an Andalusian polymath and jurist who wrote about many subjects, including theology, medicine, astronomy, physics, mathematics, and Islāmīc jurisprudence and law. This is an indication that compartmentalisation of academic disciplines does not necessarily limit the acquisition of knowledge in various areas. The famous fourteenth-century Muslim scholar, Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328), despite being famous as an Islāmīc jurist and theologian, contributed to the law of supply and demand when he wrote that “If desire for goods increases while its availability decreases, its price rises” (Tahir, 2012:3-4). This was before Western scholars such as John Locke, Sir James Stuart, Adam Smith and Alfred Marshall propounded theirs in a similar manner. Indeed, the accomplishments of Muslim scholars and scientists were passed to the Europeans through Spain, Italy, the Crusades, and so on. In fact, the University of Al-Quaraouiyine, in Fez, Morocco, which was originally founded as a mosque in 859, and Al-Azhar University, which started as a *Madrasah* (local Islāmīc school) in 970/72 in Cairo, “provided the models for Europe’s eventual emergence into enlightenment” (Bidmos, 2018:102).

It is pertinent to note that some passages of the Qur’ān illustrate the way Allāh presents the universe and also the relationship between nature and man, as well as how this relationship inspired Muslim scholars to study natural phenomena in order to understand Allāh’s guidance for the benefit of humanity (Ahmad, 2010).

In Qur’ān 44:38-39 and Qur’ān 2:164, Allāh says as follows:

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لِعِبَادٍ ۚ إِنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“And We (Allāh) did not create the heavens and earth and that between them in play; We did not create them except in truth, but most of them do not know.”

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفَلَاقِ الَّذِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَأَخْبَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيْحِ وَالسُّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allāh has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every (kind of) moving creature, and (His) directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth are signs for a people who use reason.”

Prophet Muḥammad exemplified some of the guidance of the Qur’ān, calling to the importance of knowledge in societal progress. For example, he honoured the knowledge of Salman al-Fāris that a trench (a form of Persian military strategy) should be dug around the city in defence of the Muslims against the attack of the unbelievers during the Battle of Khandaq (Trench). He also proffered solutions to various physical, biological, mental, emotional and physiological illnesses as comprehensively compiled in the work of Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, titled *The Prophetic Medicine*. At this juncture, to use the words of Faruqi, one can firmly assert that, indeed:

The (early) Muslims were not just the preservers of the ancient and Greek knowledge, but that they contributed original works to the different fields of science. They were inspired by the Islāmic view of nature that is, mankind had a duty to ‘study nature in order to discover God and to use nature for the benefit of mankind.’ This knowledge was transferred to Western Europe and subsequently played an important role in revitalising a climate of learning and exploration in Europe, leading to the Renaissance in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Faruqi, 2006:391).

### **An Overview of Islāmic Studies in Nigeria**

The emergence of Islām in Nigeria in the eleventh century was accompanied by Islāmic education. This is because without this education, Islām cannot be practised. As early as the fourteenth century, Kanem-Borno was known as a centre of Islāmic learning, and by the late twentieth century, traditional Islāmic institutions of learning, or Qur’ānic schools (*Madrasahs*), had saturated Nigeria (Adetona, 2009; Fanfuwa, 2018). By the 1970s, especially after the convergence of Nigerian Muslim intellectuals and educationists at the then Bayero University College in 1977 (Adebayo, 2018), the first set of Nigerian universities had realised the substantial contributions of Arabic and Islāmic education to the culture, development and civilisation of not only Nigeria but the world. Thus, courses related to Islāmic education were offered as part of the undergraduate syllabus in, for example, the Departments of Arabic and Islāmic Studies,

University of Ibadan, as well as in Religious Studies and Philosophy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Fafunwa, 2018). At present, many colleges of education and universities in Nigeria offer Islāmic Studies. Indeed, the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) recognises Islāmic Studies as one of the programmes of the national philosophy of education in the country.

Prior to 2023, when the NUC’s programmes were reviewed, among the objectives of Islāmic Studies were: to acquaint the students with the broad outlines of Islām as a religion and a way of life; to prepare the students to understand Islām as a culture and civilisation; to maintain a rigorous scholarly approach to the problems of contemporary Muslim communities with particular reference to Nigeria; and to prepare candidates that would adequately serve the staffing needs of schools and colleges in Nigeria (National University Commission, 2015). Meanwhile, the new 2023 NUC’s Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) states that Religious Studies “deals with the development of the knowledge of world religions and the appreciation of all religious traditions for peaceful co-existence and national development” (National University Commission, 2023:569). The objectives of the programme are to:

1. Acquaint students with the main contents of the major religious traditions commonly practised in Africa, namely Christianity, Islam and Traditional Religion;
2. Equip the products of this programme for the teaching career, administration, social work and offer them a solid academic background for professional degrees in Journalism and Law;
3. Orient students towards developing minds of a broad spectrum conducive to a pluralistic society such as Nigeria; and
4. Prepare students for further studies in the discipline (National University Commission, 2023).

In line with the objectives of the NUC, the courses offered in Nigerian universities for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Islāmic Studies include: Textual Studies of the Qur’ān and *Hadīth*, *‘Ilm at-Tawhīd* (Islāmic Creed), *Ibādāt* (acts of worship), Islāmic Law (Sharī‘ah and *Usūlul-Fiqh*), the Sources and Development of Islāmic Law, Islāmic Law of *Mu’amalat* (interpersonal relationship), Islāmic Family Law, *Mirāth* (Islāmic Law of Inheritance), Laws of *Wasiyyah* (Bequest) and *Waqf* (Endowment), Islāmic Thought and Philosophy, Islāmic Political Thought and Movements, Comparative Study of Religions, Islāmic Art and Architecture, Moral Philosophy in Islām, Islāmic Civilisation and History, and Status of Women in Islām. This is an indication that the themes of the numerous courses of Islāmic Studies offered in Nigerian universities cover a gamut of issues surrounding theology, acts of worship, law, history, economics, banking and finance, peace and conflict studies, international relations, sociology, political science, ethics, gender studies, and so on, all of which in various ways, learning and practice, contribute to the development of Nigeria. While there are numerous Islāmic Studies undergraduate projects, dissertations and theses submitted to various Islāmic Studies Departments across Nigerian universities, the following table highlights the available PhD theses submitted to the Department of Religions and Peace Studies, Lagos State University, Ojo.

**Table 2:** List of Islāmic Studies PhD Theses submitted to the Department of Religions and Peace Studies, Lagos State University, Ojo, between 2006 and 2025

S/N	Author	Title	Year	Theme
1.	Adetona, Lateef Mobolaji	Effects of <i>Da'wah</i> (Propagation) on the Development of Islam in Lagos (1900-2006)	2006	Da'wah (Propagation of Islām)
2.	Paramole, Kabir Olawale	Attitudes of Yoruba Muslim Communities to HIV and AIDS	2011	Contemporary Issue/Health
3.	Sulaiman, Kamal-Deen Olawale	A Study of <i>Da'wah</i> Activities of Selected Islāmic Clerics and their Contributions to the Development of Islām in Ekiti Land, 1947-2000	2011	<i>Da'wah</i>
4.	Badmus, Olawale Abdul-Azeez	A Study of <i>Tafsir</i> Tradition in Yorubaland with Special Reference to Shaykh Ādam 'Abdullah Al-Ilori	2014	Qur'ānic Exegesis
5.	Adesope, Fatimah Bunmi	Muslim Women in Public Space: A Case Study of Academics in Southwest Nigeria	2017	Education/ Women
6.	Agbaje, Monsurat Adeola	An Appraisal of Welfare Programmes for Muslim Prisons' Inmates in Yorubaland (1996-2016)	2017	Social Welfare
7.	Bameyi, Ali Imam	An Analysis of Westernisation in Murtada Mutahhari's Works	2017	Biography/ Thoughts
8.	Bello, Mustapha Adebayo	Islām and Environmental Abuses: Lagos and Ogun States in Nigeria as Case Studies	2017	Environmental Issue/Ethics
9.	Quadri, Nurudeen Popoola	Impact of <i>Da'wah</i> Activities of Selected Muslim Preachers on the Lives of the People of Ibadanland: 1943-2011	2017	Da'wah
10.	Sanni, Mukaila Akanni	An Islāmic Critique of the United Nations' Conflict Intervention Programmes in Africa and the Middle-East from 1945 – 2012	2017	Conflict and Peace/ International Relations
11.	Yusuf, Shareefah Adejoke	Feminist-Oriented Civil Societies and Social Transformations among Muslim Women in Selected States in Nigeria	2017	Contemporary Issue/Women
12.	Adenigba, Sikiru Atanda	A Study of the Relationship between <i>Sharī'ah</i> and <i>Aqīqah</i> (naming) with Special Reference to Shaykh Ibrāhīm Inyās Al-Kawlakhi	2018	Sharī'ah and Thought

13.	Sidiq, Uthman Okanlawon	An Analytical Study of Contemporary Illicit Occurrences in Nigeria (1999-2012) in the Light Of Qur’anic Discourse on <i>Fasād</i>	2018	Contemporary Issue/Ethic
14.	Asamu, Rasheed Adebimpe	The Roles of Selected Muslim Non-Governmental Organisations in the Alleviation of Poverty in Lagos State	2020	Socio-economic Mechanisms
15.	Uthmān, Razaq Bolawaye	The MURIC and Promotion of Human Rights Activities in Nigeria (1996-2016)	2021	Human Rights
16.	Adebiyi, Mueezdeen Ajibade	An Assessment of a Decade of Activities of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) 2006-2016	2022	Islāmic Fundamental/Ḥajj
17.	Akolade, Akanbi Mukaila	A Study of “Science of Authenticity of <i>Aḥādīth</i> ” and Socio-Cultural Issues Causing Dissensions among Muslims in South Western Nigeria	2022	Contemporary Issue/Conflict/ <i>Hadīth</i>
18.	Adelaja, Moshood Kolawole	Financing Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis of Interest-Based and Islamic Banking Systems	2023	Banking and Finance
19.	Gidado, Taofiq Miqdad	Islam and Marital Discords among Muslim Naval Personnel in Selected Barracks in Lagos and Abuja	2024	Contemporary Issue/Marriage
20.	Rauf, Adeola Lateef	An Appraisal of <i>Sukuk</i> (Islamic Bond) on National Development	2024	Finance
21.	Salami, Murtadha Olawale	An Analytical Study of Islamic Contents in Selected Yoruba Nollywood Films and Their Effects on Muslims in Yorubaland	2024	Entertainment/Ethics
22.	Sofolahan, Ibrahim Adisa	Insurgencies and Ideological Campaigns: An Examination of the Roles of the Directorate of Islamic Affairs, Nigerian Army, in the Deradicalisation Process	2024	Conflict and Peace/Contemporary Issue
23.	Sanni, Mubarak Oluwadamilola	Historical Review of Youth’s Involvement in Crimes and the Applicability of the Islāmic Justice System in Lagos State, Nigeria (1967-2023)	2025	Contemporary Issue, Ethics and Legal System

**Source:** Extracted by the authors from the Departmental Office of Religions and Peace Studies, Lagos State University, Ojo.

It could be deduced from the above PhD theses that the topics illustrate the extent to which Islāmic Studies graduates have continued to further their studies on various themes towards achieving national development in Nigeria. They also depict some of the features of Islāmic Studies as highlighted by NUC, that, at the end of the programme, students would have been

equipped with creative abilities and motivated to solve societal problems, having been exposed to the all-encompassing issues in religious studies (health, dietary rules, economy, arts and crafts, literary education, etc). However, there is a dearth of science- and technology-oriented works in these theses. This does not mean that there are no Islāmic Studies-related works in relation to the disciplines of science and technology. In fact, one could point to Paramole’s thesis, titled “Attitudes of Yoruba Muslim Communities to HIV and AIDS”, as being related to Medical Science. Islāmic Studies scholars have also contributed numerous articles and chapters, from an Islāmic perspective, on issues surrounding science and technology. Some examples are: “Theological, Ethical and Legal Perspectives of Human Cloning” (Paramole, 2009), “Contagious Disease and Preventive Medicine: An Islāmic Overview” (Paramole, 2022a), “Management Measures of Pandemic Diseases and Modern Health Services in Islām with Reference to the Covid-19 Pandemic” (Paramole, 2022b) and “Utilizing Islamic Principles as a Paradigm in Combating Disease for Sustainable Development in Nigeria” (2017).

It should further be noted that the emphasis on the promotion of the Islāmisation of knowledge (IoK) (Maiwada, 1997; Al-Alwani, 2005; Adebayo, 2018) has increasingly led to the offering of courses such as Islāmic Banking and Finance, both in relevant departments across Nigerian universities. Similarly, researchers from other disciplines have been integrating Islāmic knowledge into their scholarly work. For example, in the area of Medical Science, Adebayo cited the 271-page thesis of Umar Faruk of Usman Danfodiyo University (Adebayo, 2018). This thesis, which was later published in 2002 as a book, systemically and scientifically espoused the intellectual and rich cultural heritage of Islām as drawn from the Qur’ān and *Sunnah* (practices of Prophet Muḥammad) with regards to the principles and practice of medicine and its representation to the world in the language of today (Adamu, 2012). Recent developments in the technological areas of cryptocurrency and Artificial Intelligence (AI) have also attracted the concerns of Islāmic Studies scholars, researchers and students in Nigeria (Paramole & Sanni, 2022; Sidiq, 2024). Thus, as Adebayo puts it, “the programme of Islāmisation is becoming useful, as it seems to have been breaking the barrier of compartmentalisation of knowledge into secular and religion” (Adebayo, 2018:55). Indeed, in various Nigerian universities, students are increasingly being encouraged to embark on researches that depict Islāmic Studies as an all-encompassing field of knowledge.

### **Islāmic Studies and a Reflection of NUC’s Objectives**

Looking at the second objective of NUC for Religious Studies – to equip the products of this programme for the teaching career, administration, social work and offer them a solid academic background for professional degrees in Journalism and Law – realities have abundantly proven this right. This is unlike one of the previous objectives of NUC, which stated that Islāmic Studies graduates are prepared to “adequately serve the staffing of schools and colleges in Nigeria.” Indeed, the best exponent of Islāmic Studies, Prophet Muḥammad, and many of his companions, as well as notable early Muslim scholars, were not only teachers, but also religious leaders, military personnel, astute administrators,

physicians, judges, scientists, traders, economists, business moguls, and so on. The fact that Islāmic Studies scholarship is not limited to the four corners of the mosque and the affairs of the Muslims alone, but for the development of the generality of the society has been greatly demonstrated by numerous Islāmic scholars in Nigeria. The examples of Emeritus Professor Is-hāq O. Oloyede, Professor Isa Ali Pantami, and his eminence, the Emir of Kano, Dr. Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, could be cited.

Of particular significance is Prof. Oloyede, who, as a scholar of Islāmic Studies, became the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ilorin, and within five years of his administration (2007-2012) catapulted the university to the frontline in African university ratings. The university has since then remained the most sought-after university in Nigeria (Hallmarks of Labour Foundation, ny). Prof. Oloyede deployed information technology to Nigeria's educational system as he pioneered the Computer-Based Test (CBT) method for the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) screening of candidates for admission into the university and also for internal large-class examinations in the university. This system has now been adopted by most tertiary institutions, several government establishments and some private organisations in Nigeria for examination-related screenings and employment purposes (Adegboyega, 2024). His promotion of technological advancement for national development is further revealed in the 2024 University of Ilorin Lecture Series, where, in the topic titled "Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanities", he explored the intersections of AI with various aspects of society, including academics, technology, religion and social realities. While recognising that AI represents the cutting-edge technology that can simulate human intelligence, process language and even create art, he "tasked scholars in the Humanities to take up the challenge of generating well-researched content for AI to ensure that its contents conform to fundamental human rights, values, and Islāmic doctrines and principles" (Adegboyega, 2024).

Unarguably, Prof. Oloyede understands the all-encompassing nature of Islāmic Studies and has thus continued to demonstrate this in his academic and administrative career. Indeed, since his appointment in 2016 by President Muhammadu Buhari as Registrar of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), Prof. Oloyede has been praised for transforming JAMB into a reference point for effective public service delivery, transparency and accountability:

In fact, he stunned Nigerians when in his first year, turned in into the Federal Government's coffers a whopping ₦7.8 billion, a thing that the then finance minister found difficult to believe and indeed felt there must have been a mistake somewhere because JAMB never attained anything near that before. It not only failed in its core mandate, it was always a source of loss to government... (Adegboyega, 2024).

In a show of integrity and commitment to transparency and accountability, and in delivering the best service possible, when the 2025 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) experienced technical glitches, he took absolute responsibility for the problem in

an uncommon display of accountability in the Nigerian public service and responded swiftly to address it. Although he was erroneously and irresponsibly condemned and criticised by some individuals who introduced ethnic and religious undertones to the issue in the Nigerian public space, he was absolved by numerous prominent journalists, columnists, ICT experts and academic individuals and institutions (Olagunju, 2025). The point to be emphasised is that, like Prof. Oloyede, Prof. Pantami's and Emir Sanusi's outstanding background in Islāmic scholarship did not hinder them from contributing to Nigeria's national development in their areas of expertise – ICT and banking.

There are many other individuals who are products of Islāmic Studies, yet have distinguished themselves in other fields of learning and career paths, where they are also contributing their quota to Nigeria's development (Adebayo, 2016). Particularly in the areas of ethical and human values, this crop of individuals could easily be guided and influenced by their Islāmic educational background in whatever career they pursue or organisation they find themselves. In fact, one could argue that having an Islāmic education background greatly guided and enhanced the administrative and leadership prowess of the like of Prof. Oloyede, Prof. Pantami and Emir Sanusi. This is because Islāmic education teaches competence and good character, and it has been argued that people who possess these two qualities are often effective administrators, and “when such people become leaders, they play veritable roles in engendering rapid growth and development” (Paramole & Sanni, 2020:362).

### **Contributions of Islāmic Studies to Nigeria's National Development**

At this juncture, it is imperative to further discuss some ways in which Islāmic Studies has been contributing to Nigeria's national development. These ways include the teaching, learning and practising of the contents of Islāmic Studies. Through the teaching of Islāmic Studies, its students learn the guidance of Islām, both spiritual and mundane. Importantly, the hallmark of these teachings and learning is to put them into practice. As a matter of fact, the introduction of Islāmic Studies in Nigerian universities has given rise to the teaching of numerous aspects of Islām. These numerous aspects, as noted under the NUC's objectives, portray Islām as a religion, way of life, culture and civilisation. Thus, the fact that since the 1970s, various federal, state and private universities and other educational institutions in Nigeria have continued to produce a significant number of Islāmic Studies graduates is a strong indication of the discipline's contributions to Nigeria's development, especially in the area of human capital. Essentially, many of Islāmic Studies products have learnt, imbibed and have been practising the teachings of Islām in their various lives and careers, the consequence of which contributes to Nigeria's development.

Notably, graduates of Islāmic Studies have also, as intended med by the NUC, continually maintained a rigorous scholarly approach to the problems of contemporary Muslim communities and, by extension, Nigeria. This is particularly in the areas of economic, social, political, health, environmental (Bello, 2024), judicial, educational and, in recent times,

technological issues. In other words, Islāmic Studies researchers and scholars have continued to make notable academic contributions and recommendations, from especially an Islāmic perspective, to solving, or at least reducing, many of the contemporary problems affecting Nigeria's national development. Although the compartmentalisation of academic disciplines has severely limited Islāmic Studies' scholarship in Nigeria to the Arts and Humanities, Islāmic Studies scholars have consistently contributed their scholarly work to the fields of science and technology, particularly from ethical and eschatological perspectives. This is to ensure that Nigeria is not adversely affected by the innovations and developments in science and technology in the contemporary global world. Importantly, in the realm of finance, Islāmic scholarship and mechanisms have proven significantly contributive to Nigeria's national development. Practically, Islāmic banking, *Sukuk* (Sharī'ah-compliant bonds) financing, Islāmic cooperative societies and access to credit, among others, are increasingly making positive contributions to Nigeria's economic system. Based on the Islāmic banking system, several banks have been established in the country that operate free of *ribā* (interest). These include Jaiz Bank, Taj Bank, Lotus Bank, and Summit Bank. Additionally, some commercial banks, such as Stanbic IBTC and Sterling Bank, offer non-interest banking windows. The point is that many Muslims and non-Muslims continually benefit from this development, freeing themselves from the financial burdens associated with interest-based banking systems.

Similarly, in infrastructure development, *Sukuk* financing has been instrumental in addressing Nigeria's road deficit while providing financial gains for interested investors, both Muslim and non-Muslim (Tunji, 2025). *Sukuk* ensures that every financial activity is backed by real economic activity, thereby promoting financial stability and sustainable economic development (Donald, 2024). Moreover, these Islāmic banking and financial mechanisms have generated numerous jobs and financial security for people through labour opportunities, empowerment programmes, earnings and services. Interestingly, the employed advisory experts to supervise and guide these Sharī'ah-based transactions are often Islāmic scholars with reputable, sound knowledge in Islāmic Studies, including Sharī'ah and the Islāmic economic system. For example, among the members of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Financial Regulation Advisory Council of experts (FRACE) are Sheikh Shariff Ibrahim Saleh Al Husaini (chairman), Dr. Bashir Aliyu Umar (deputy chairman), Prof. Abdul-Razzaq A. Alaro (member) and Dr. Yakubu A. Umar (Special Adviser to the CBN Governor on Islāmic Finance) (Central Bank of Nigeria, ny).

## **Findings**

This study shows that Islāmic Studies in Nigeria covers virtually all the sectors of the country's national development, including Economic Growth and Development, Infrastructure, Public Administration, Human Capital Development, and Social Development. However, unlike the early period of Islām, in the contemporary period, both in theory and practice, Islāmic Studies in Nigeria has not really contributed to the area of infrastructure, including science, technology, innovation, housing, alternative energy and power. The major reason for this is

obviously the compartmentalisation of the academic field of study. At best, Islāmic Studies students, researchers and scholars are often concerned with the ethical and eschatological aspects of the infrastructure sector rather than with creating or developing it.

Notwithstanding the shortfall of Islāmic Studies in Nigeria in the area of infrastructure, this study found that the discipline has provided numerous economic systems to cater for the business environment, trade and competitiveness, while prohibiting transactions involving gambling, uncertainty and dishonesty that may affect them. By extension, in theory and practice, this study found that Islāmic Studies has continually addressed the social development sector by not only providing sustainable suggestions from Islāmic perspectives to solving the problems of poverty, unemployment and lack of job opportunities, but by also bringing many Muslims and non-Muslims out of these socio-economic problems through its various welfare mechanisms. In the area of human capital development, the fact that many people have become educated by virtue of studying Islāmic Studies is a testament to the discipline's contribution to Nigeria's development. Additionally, because of the importance of human capital to the development of any society, the discipline has also been addressing the moral, spiritual and medical lives of its students, but also Nigerians at large.

In the areas of public administration (e.g., governance, defence, peace, security, foreign policy) and regional development (subnational government cooperation and collaboration), this study found that Islāmic Studies curricula and scholarly works significantly cover these areas. However, there is no significant evidence that suggests that the Islāmic perspectives on these areas have been meaningfully embraced by the Nigerian government. At best, it is individual persons (e.g. Prof. Ishāq Oloyede) who, finding themselves in a position of leadership, have within their authority and capability significantly exhibited Islāmic teachings in, particularly, the area of governance. The issues of peace and security, aside from the scholarly works on them, are at best addressed at a religious level where inter-religious dialogue is often instituted to curb religious conflict in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

1. In line with the above findings, this study recommends that, firstly, there should deliberate and serious efforts by Islāmic Studies scholars, researchers and other relevant stakeholders to collaborate with the disciplines of science and technology. This should be aided by the government, Islāmic organisations and philanthropists, for Islāmic knowledge and civilisation to optimally contribute to Nigeria's national development.
2. Secondly, the Nigerian government should meaningfully embrace Islāmic Studies by significantly funding its researches (e.g. through TETFund grants) and implementing its recommendations. This would further enhance the government's efforts to improve the country's economic growth and development, human capital, public administration and social development.

3. Furthermore, the political class in Nigeria should notably appoint proven products of Islāmic Studies and scholars to guide and help them drive the country's development. Among other things, this is because the knowledge acquired from the discipline, as noted by the NUC, is all-encompassing and imbued with moral inclination, which many people lack in their career, job, administrative and leadership positions. The competence of these appointees in delivering their mandates would further enable the public to better understand that Islāmic Studies directs to a cultured, civilised and better way of life, and its guidance in solving problems is extended to the whole society.
4. Finally, in the area of infrastructure where Islāmic Studies in Nigeria is lacking, its graduates should also be meaningfully employed, particularly in its administrative department (e.g. human resources and ethics units). This would further create job opportunities for Islāmic Studies graduates in Nigeria. It would also enable them to apply their acquired knowledge to contribute to Nigeria's development in areas such as science, technology, innovation, transportation, housing and urban development, at least from an ethical perspective, beyond the current *Sukuk* financing of road and bridge constructions in Nigeria, where Islāmic scholars are employed to supervise.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has appraised the extent to which Islāmic Studies has contributed to Nigeria's development. It emphasised that Islām, as a promoter of all forms of knowledge, signifies the all-encompassing nature of Islāmic Studie. It is noted that the compartmentalisation of disciplines in the contemporary period has significantly limited Islāmic Studies in Nigeria to the areas of Arts and Humanities. Yet, available evidence has shown that the promotion of the Islāmisation of knowledge has increasingly made Islāmic Studies scholars and students to delve into the areas of science and technology, at least, from ethical and theological perspectives. Indeed, across all areas of knowledge, in theory and practice, Islāmic Studies products have been making contributions to national development in Nigeria through the guidance of Islāmic teachings. A significant increase in governmental, organisational and philanthropic support for Islāmic Studies would, however, further help the products of the discipline to hugely contribute to the development of the country, just as Prof. Oloyede demonstrated at the University of Ilorin and has continued to prove as the Registrar of JAMB.

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# **CHAPTER 18**

## **Arabic Language Proficiency and Library Management in Southwest Nigeria**

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### **Introduction**

Libraries are very important because they help keep knowledge safe, organised and easy to find. In Nigeria, Arabic books are a key part of the resources found in university libraries. These books include religious texts, modern Arabic writings, historical documents and school materials that are useful for students, researchers and everyday readers. This study was inspired by an experience during a National Universities Commission (NUC) accreditation visit to a Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies. It was discovered that only the staff who understood Arabic were able to catalogue the Arabic books properly. When other librarians were asked to help, they admitted they faced serious challenges because they did not understand the language. This situation showed a gap that needs to be addressed; the experience necessitated this paper.

Because Arabic uses a different script and has unique grammar rules, organising and managing books written in Arabic in the library is not the same as doing so for English or other local languages. If a librarian cannot read or understand Arabic, it becomes difficult to classify the books correctly or make them easy for users to find. This affects the way students, lecturers and researchers access important Arabic materials. Unfortunately, many Nigerian libraries do not have enough staff who are trained in Arabic or who know how to handle Arabic cataloguing tools. As a result, Arabic books are sometimes left uncatalogued, wrongly classified or stored in ways that make them hard to locate. This not only limits access to knowledge but also affects the quality of academic work in Arabic and Islamic studies.

This study, therefore, looks at how the ability to understand Arabic affects the way librarians catalogue and manage Arabic books in some selected university libraries in southwest Nigeria.

### **A Brief Literature Review**

Arabic and Islamic book collections are a valuable part of Nigeria's intellectual and cultural heritage. These collections cover many important subjects, but they often face problems such as poor storage, lack of professional care and poor management. As a result, many of these materials are difficult to find or use. These are the assertions of Muhammad (2013) in his study titled "Arabic and Islamic collections in Nigerian university libraries: The state of the art". The study recommends proper preservation techniques to restore these works, and careful handling to protect them for both current use and future generations. This shows that managing these resources effectively is very crucial to keeping them safe and useful over time. His inability to examine the impact of Arabic proficiency on the cataloguing and management of books in Nigerian libraries, especially in southwest Nigeria, creates a gap in the work which this study fills.

The Arabic-Islamic collection established at the University of Ibadan library was meant to support the teaching and research of African and Nigerian history. As the value of Arabic writings for studying West African history became clear, the university appointed an expert in Arabic, W.E.N. Kensdale, as Deputy Librarian in 1953. This was done when John Harris became the founding librarian in 1953, with the aim of enhancing the collection further (Mahmud, 1964). While the study provides valuable insights into the reason for the establishment, the significant gap in the role of Arabic proficiency, particularly regarding the cataloguing and management of books in Nigerian libraries, remains.

Many Arabic works by Nigerian authors are valuable because they contribute to the country's political, social and cultural development. Although there have been efforts to introduce these works to the academic world, both locally and internationally, many of them have not been included in the school curriculum. This makes it harder for students and researchers to access and use them. It is important to update the curriculum to include these Arabic resources so they can benefit more people (Abdullahi, 2010). Abdullah's work could not cover the area of this research.

In a separate study, Siddique et al. reviewed the extent of research by Library and Information Science (LIS) scholars in the 22 Arab League countries. Using data from the Scopus database, they analysed 863 studies published between 1951 and 2021. They found that research in this area has increased in recent years, with the highest output in 2020. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were among the top contributors, with key institutions like Kuwait University and King Fahd University playing major roles. The research mostly focused on topics such as academic libraries, social media, bibliometrics and knowledge management; the work also covered new areas such as artificial intelligence, digital libraries and cloud computing (Siddique et al., 2021; Ibrahim, 2020). Nonetheless, there is limited empirical evidence on the impact of Arabic language proficiency among librarians on the cataloguing and management of Arabic book collections in selected university libraries in southwest Nigeria.

Ibrahim examined the use of statistical methods in Library and Information Science (LIS) research in Arab literature while analysing articles from eight Arab journals published between 2014 and 2018. He found that most researchers used basic statistics, such as percentages and frequency counts, followed by predictive methods. The most common advanced methods used by them were t-tests, ANOVA and Chi-square test. He also found that the choice of statistical method often depended on the researcher's background and the type of research, rather than on the article's structure. This shows that LIS researchers in the Arab world need stronger training in statistical analysis (Ibrahim, 2021). This means that statistical literacy and Arabic proficiency are not to be overlooked among LIS researchers in the Arab world. It must be mentioned that the latter is highly needed when it comes to the cataloguing and management of Arabic books in Nigerian libraries. Oladosu and Adetunji (2023) provide a comprehensive historical and contemporary analysis of Arabic manuscript collections at the University of Ibadan, highlighting the university's pioneering role in preserving Islamic literary heritage in Nigeria and West Africa. Their study details the establishment of the Arabic unit in the 1960s, the collaborative efforts of scholars like John Hunwick and Ibrahim Mukoshy in cataloguing manuscripts and detailed challenges facing Arabic manuscripts in the University of Ibadan, such as institutional support.

Osman and El-Masry discussed the difficulties Arab libraries face in adapting to modern information technology and international cataloguing standards. Their study investigated whether Arab libraries are actively shaping these standards or merely following along. They recommended that Arab libraries adopt up-to-date cataloguing systems such as Resource Description and Access (RDA) and BIBFRAME to stay connected with global library practices. They also explored how Arab libraries are involved with international library networks like the Online Computer Library Center and the American University in Cairo (Osman & El-Masry, 2016; Ibrahim, 2015). This is missing in the studies of the cataloguing and management of books in Nigerian libraries.

Dawood analysed 27 LIS journals between 2020 and 2021 and reviewed 884 studies. He found that the International Journal of Library and Information Sciences had the highest number of publications, while other journals had very few. The most common research topics were on technology and databases, while topics related to cultural and Islamic heritage were among the least covered. The study emphasised the need for better-quality research in LIS, especially from a scientific and scholarly perspective, that can match work done in other languages (Dawood, 2021; Ibrahim, 2014). His study could not cover the area of this research. Calhoun (2006) studied the state of library catalogues in research libraries. Her work focused on how to improve these catalogues through collaboration, planning and practical solutions. The study is especially beneficial for library decision-makers, business stakeholders and library service providers. It encourages cooperation among professionals to modernise library systems and improve access to information for all users.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is guided by two interrelated theories: the Linguistic Relativity Theory (Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis) and the Information Processing Theory. Together, these theories provide a strong foundation for understanding how language proficiency, specifically in Arabic, affects librarians' ability to catalogue and manage Arabic book collections effectively.

The Linguistic Relativity Theory, also known as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, posits that the structure of a language shapes the way its speakers perceive, think and understand the world. Developed by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, the theory holds that language is not merely a communication tool but a framework that influences cognition and worldview. In the context of this study, the theory implies that librarians who are proficient in Arabic will naturally understand and interpret Arabic texts more accurately, making them more capable of applying correct classification schemes, subject headings and metadata standards when cataloguing Arabic books. Recent studies support the relevance of this theory across various disciplines. For instance, Fruchter (2018) emphasises the power of language in shaping identity, action and culture, while Silalahi (2017) argues that linguistic categories influence cognitive processes. These findings align with the present study's view that Arabic language proficiency enhances librarians' professional competence in dealing with Arabic collections. Similarly, Kasap (2021) and others underscore the inseparable relationship between language and culture, reinforcing that cataloguing Arabic materials requires not only technical skill but also deep cultural and linguistic understanding. Without such proficiency, librarians may misinterpret key bibliographic elements, resulting in poorly organised or inaccessible Arabic resources.

Complementing this, the Information Processing Theory offers a cognitive explanation for how individuals handle complex tasks based on their internal mental structures. Originating from the work of Newell and Simon (1972), the theory likens the human mind to a computer that processes information through stages—receiving input, organising it and producing an output. Applied to this study, the theory suggests that librarians process information about Arabic books based on their internal understanding, which is significantly shaped by their knowledge of the language. A librarian proficient in Arabic is more likely to interpret book titles, subject content and cataloguing standards correctly, resulting in better organisation and retrieval of Arabic texts. Simon (1978) and Payne (1980) emphasise that problem-solving and decision-making are shaped by an individual's internal "problem space"—their mental model of the task. In cataloguing, this means that librarians who lack Arabic proficiency may form incomplete or inaccurate mental models of Arabic texts, leading to errors in cataloguing and reduced accessibility for users. By contrast, Arabic-proficient librarians can navigate these tasks more effectively, using their language skills to interpret meaning and apply appropriate bibliographic rules.

Additionally, Rogers, Miller and Judge (1999) demonstrate how organisations apply

different strategies based on how they process and use information. In library settings, if cataloguing Arabic books is viewed as a strategic goal, then the institution must ensure that the necessary informational resources, especially language skills, are present among its staff. If not, the effectiveness of cataloguing Arabic materials is compromised, just as in banks where planning fails without the right strategic information.

In summary, Linguistic Relativity Theory explains the influence of language on thought and interpretation, while Information Processing Theory highlights how internal cognitive models guide complex task performance. Together, they support this study's focus on Arabic language proficiency as a critical factor affecting how librarians catalogue and manage Arabic book collections. Both theories confirm that improving librarians' Arabic skills is essential for accurate classification, better information retrieval and overall efficiency in managing Arabic resources in Nigerian university libraries.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore how Arabic language proficiency impacts the cataloguing and management of Arabic books in selected university libraries in southwest Nigeria. The use of this approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the subject by combining statistical trends with detailed personal experiences of librarians actively involved in cataloguing tasks.

The research focused exclusively on university libraries, targeting institutions known for offering Arabic and Islamic Studies programmes and maintaining substantial Arabic book collections. A total of six universities were purposively selected based on these criteria: the University of Ibadan (UI), Oyo State; the University of Ilorin (UNILORIN), Kwara State, Lagos State University (LASU); Osun State University (UNIOSUN); Fountain University; and Adeleke University, all located in southwest Nigeria. These universities were chosen for their relevance to the subject matter and their accessibility for data collection.

To gather data, the researcher designed and distributed a structured questionnaire using Google Forms. The questionnaire was shared through verified librarians' WhatsApp and Telegram groups to ensure that only professional librarians participated, thereby reducing the risk of non-librarians filling the form. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions that gathered demographic information, assessed levels of Arabic language proficiency and explored cataloguing practices, challenges and use of Arabic-compatible cataloguing tools. In addition to the survey, 20 professional librarians were selected from the participating universities for semi-structured interviews. These interviews provided deeper insights into the librarians' lived experiences, focusing on the challenges they face when cataloguing Arabic books and how language proficiency influences their effectiveness. The interviews were conducted virtually and in-person, depending on the participants' availability and convenience.

To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed and tested by three experienced librarians not included in the main study. Their feedback was used to revise ambiguous or unclear questions. Reliability was ensured by using consistent methods of administration and clear, standardised language across all instruments.

The quantitative data from the questionnaire responses were analysed using Microsoft Excel, where descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarise the data. This helped in identifying trends and general patterns related to Arabic language proficiency and cataloguing practices. The qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis, which involved coding the responses and grouping them into recurring themes relevant to the study objectives.

While the study was limited to six universities in a specific region and therefore not fully generalisable to all Nigerian libraries, the insights gathered offer meaningful contributions to understanding the role of language in cataloguing Arabic resources. Additionally, the inclusion of interviews helped to validate and enrich the findings from the questionnaire, offering a well-rounded view of the current state of Arabic book cataloguing in Nigerian academic libraries.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Demographic Information***

The demographic profile of the respondents offers valuable insight into the background of librarians involved in cataloguing and managing Arabic books in university libraries across southwest Nigeria. Understanding their gender distribution, age, educational qualifications and roles helps to assess the professional landscape in this specialised area of library services. The survey data show that the field of Arabic book management in Nigerian university libraries is male-dominated, with 70% of respondents identifying as male and 30% as female. This imbalance may be due to broader gender trends in library employment or reflect specific institutional preferences in assigning Arabic materials to staff. It raises questions about gender equity in professional roles associated with culturally and linguistically specific collections.

In terms of age distribution, none of the respondents were in the 18–25 age group, indicating a lack of young professionals in this field. Fifty percent (50%) of respondents were between the ages of 36 and 45, 30% were aged 26–35 and 20% were above 46 years. This suggests that those working with Arabic collections are generally mid-career professionals with a reasonable level of experience. However, the absence of younger age groups poses a potential challenge to the future sustainability and succession of expertise in Arabic book management.

The respondents' educational qualifications were notably high. Fifty percent (50%) held doctoral degrees (Ph.D.), 30% had master's degrees and 20% possessed bachelor's degrees. None of the respondents reported having only a diploma. This high level of academic attainment indicates a strong intellectual and professional foundation among the librarians.

However, this also invites reflection on the extent to which their formal education included specialised training in Arabic language proficiency and cataloguing techniques—skills crucial to managing Arabic language materials effectively.

Further analysis showed that 90% of the respondents currently work with Arabic books in their libraries. While this reflects a strong professional engagement with Arabic resources, the level of Arabic language proficiency among these librarians—and how it influences the accuracy and efficiency of their cataloguing work—remains a topic for further investigation. Overall, the demographic data underline key trends in Arabic book management in Nigerian university libraries: a workforce that is experienced and highly educated, but also ageing, gender-imbalanced and possibly lacking specialised linguistic training. These findings underscore the need for capacity-building, succession planning and targeted professional development, particularly for younger librarians.

**Table 1:** Demographic distributions of respondents

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	70%
	Female	30%
<b>Age Group</b>	18–25	0%
	26–35	30%
	36–45	50%
	46 and above	20%
<b>Highest Academic Qualification</b>	Bachelor’s Degree	20%
	Master’s Degree	30%
	Ph.D.	50%
	Diploma	0%
<b>Currently Work with Arabic Books</b>	Yes	90%
	No	10%

**Source:** Authors’ calculations

### **Arabic Proficiency**

One of the central aims of this study was to assess the level of Arabic language proficiency among librarians handling Arabic books and how this affects their cataloguing and management practices. The results reveal a mixed level of proficiency, which has direct implications for cataloguing accuracy, metadata consistency and overall resource accessibility.

Out of all respondents, only 30% reported having advanced proficiency in Arabic—meaning they could read, understand and interpret Arabic texts independently. Another 40% indicated intermediate proficiency, suggesting they could engage with Arabic content but required assistance or had limitations in understanding complex texts. The remaining 30% had only basic proficiency or none, indicating difficulty with Arabic script or a reliance on transliteration tools and secondary sources.

This variation in language ability directly influences how well librarians can transliterate titles, assign accurate subject headings and classify Arabic materials. Librarians with higher proficiency were more confident in navigating Arabic bibliographic records and applying standardised cataloguing rules specific to Arabic. In contrast, those with limited proficiency faced several challenges, including incorrect metadata entry, misclassification of books and delays in processing Arabic materials. During the interviews, participants identified several challenges in cataloguing Arabic books, many of which stem from inadequate training and a lack of Arabic-compatible cataloguing systems. Key challenges included:

1. Difficulty in transliteration and subject indexing;
2. Limited availability of Arabic MARC fields or cataloguing templates;
3. Reliance on foreign databases that do not match local academic needs;
4. Lack of training opportunities focused on Arabic cataloguing standards; and
5. Inadequate support from library management for specialised language materials.

Despite these issues, many librarians expressed a willingness to undergo specialised training if such programmes were made available. This highlights the urgent need for institutional support, capacity-building workshops and policy integration to improve Arabic resource management.

**Table 2: Arabic Proficiency**

Variable	Category	Percentage/Observation
<b>Arabic Language Proficiency Level</b>	Advanced	30%
	Intermediate	40%
	Basic or None	30%
<b>Key Cataloguing Challenges</b>	Transliteration difficulties	Frequently reported
	Subject classification errors	Frequently reported
	Metadata inconsistencies	Frequently reported
	Lack of Arabic-friendly cataloguing tools	Widely acknowledged
	Limited institutional training	Widely acknowledged
<b>Willingness to Receive Training</b>	Yes	High across all proficiency levels

**Source:** Authors' calculations

### **Cataloguing Arabic Books: Challenges Linked to Low Language Proficiency**

The findings of the study revealed that 60% of librarians are actively involved in cataloguing Arabic books, while the remaining 40% are not engaged in such activities. This indicates that a significant proportion of library professionals directly contribute to the organisation and accessibility of Arabic language collections in their institutions.

However, among those who do catalogue Arabic materials, a majority (75%) reported experiencing challenges related to limited Arabic language proficiency. These challenges include errors in subject classification, inaccurate transliteration, metadata inconsistencies and overall difficulties in interpreting Arabic script and content. Only 25% of respondents indicated they did not face language-related challenges during cataloguing, suggesting that they likely have a higher level of proficiency in Arabic.

This clearly underscores the critical role of language proficiency in the cataloguing process. Cataloguers who lack fluency in Arabic are more prone to misclassifying texts, assigning incorrect subject headings or creating records that hinder effective retrieval. These errors can compromise the accessibility and usability of Arabic resources, leading to inefficiencies in library services and reduced support for academic research.

The findings highlight an urgent need for language-based training and professional development programmes tailored to librarians working with Arabic materials. Improving their proficiency will not only enhance cataloguing accuracy but also ensure that users can fully benefit from the rich Arabic collections housed in university libraries.

**Table 3:** Cataloguing Arabic Books and Challenges Faced

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
<b>Librarians Involved in Arabic Cataloguing</b>	Yes	60%
	No	40%
<b>Challenges Faced Due to Low Arabic Proficiency</b>	Yes	75%
	No	25%

**Source:** Authors' calculations

### **Frequency of Challenges in Cataloguing Arabic Books**

The study further examined how frequently librarians face challenges when working with Arabic books, particularly in relation to language barriers. The results show that 70% of respondents reported encountering such challenges either “always” or “often”. This highlights a persistent and widespread difficulty among a significant portion of librarians handling Arabic language materials.

Interestingly, no respondent selected “sometimes” as a response. This suggests a stark divide: librarians either regularly experience challenges or do not at all. Such a pattern points to varying levels of Arabic language proficiency among librarians—those who are proficient rarely encounter issues, while those who are not encounter them consistently. The findings reinforce the conclusion that language proficiency plays a decisive role in the successful cataloguing of Arabic books. Without sufficient command of the language, librarians are likely to struggle continuously with classification, indexing and metadata entry. This situation underscores the need for targeted professional development interventions, particularly in Arabic language training.

**Table 4:** Frequency of Cataloguing Challenges Related to Arabic Language Proficiency

<b>Frequency of Challenge</b>	<b>Response Rate (%)</b>
Always	40%
Often	30%
Sometimes	0%
Rarely	15%
Never	15%

**Source:** Authors' calculations

### **Impact of Arabic Language Proficiency on the Organisation of Arabic Books**

The findings of the study clearly suggest that Arabic language proficiency significantly affects the organisation of Arabic book collections in university libraries. According to the interviews conducted, 60% of respondents affirmed that a lack of proficiency negatively influences the proper classification, arrangement and accessibility of Arabic materials. On the other hand, 40% of the respondents did not perceive language limitations as a major issue in book organisation. Nevertheless, the majority response highlights the critical role of linguistic competence in ensuring that Arabic materials are well-organised and easily retrievable.

Proper organisation is not only essential for cataloguing but also crucial for making Arabic resources visible, accessible and usable for students, researchers and scholars. Poorly organised Arabic collections can hinder users' ability to locate materials efficiently, thereby diminishing the library's functional value. The study shows that many librarians face major hurdles in this regard due to their limited proficiency in Arabic. Indeed, 75% of librarians reported significant difficulties related to language barriers. These challenges are not merely occasional; 70% of respondents indicated that these issues occur either "always" or "often", signalling a persistent disruption in service delivery. Without adequate proficiency in Arabic, librarians struggle with accurate classification, indexing and subject cataloguing, which are core functions required to make resources accessible and useful.

Another finding revealed that 70% of respondents rely heavily on translation tools when working with Arabic texts. While digital tools provide some support, they cannot fully substitute the deep contextual and cultural understanding that human language competence offers. As such, translation tools often serve as stop-gap solutions rather than effective long-term strategies. These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted Arabic language training programmes for cataloguing librarians. Alternatively, libraries may consider recruiting or appointing Arabic-speaking cataloguers to manage these collections more efficiently. Without such interventions, Arabic materials risk remaining underutilised, misclassified or hidden in the catalogue, contributing to a significant gap in service and accessibility.

**Table 5:** Impact of Arabic Proficiency on Book Organisation and Accessibility

Indicator	Response Rate (%)
Acknowledges the impact of Arabic proficiency on an organisation	60%
Does not see proficiency as an issue	40%
Faces major challenges due to language barriers	75%
Experiences challenges “always” or “often”	70%
Relies on translation tools	70%

**Source:** Authors’ calculations

### The Role of Arabic-Speaking Librarians in Effective Book Management

The study strongly indicates that Arabic-speaking librarians play a vital role in the efficient management of Arabic-language collections in Nigerian university libraries. According to the survey results, 80% of respondents agree that the presence of Arabic-speaking librarians enhances the organisation, cataloguing and accessibility of Arabic books. In contrast, only 20% disagreed, believing that having Arabic-speaking staff may not be essential. This overwhelming consensus supports the idea that linguistic proficiency is not optional but foundational to managing Arabic collections. Effective cataloguing and classification depend heavily on understanding the language and content of the materials. Arabic books often contain nuanced expressions, classical forms and subject-specific terminology that require accurate interpretation—a task best handled by those fluent in Arabic. The minority opinion (20%) may reflect a growing reliance on translation tools, digital cataloguing system or outsourcing for Arabic book cataloguing. While these methods can provide temporary support, they are often prone to inaccuracies, delays and inefficiencies, especially during material retrieval. Automated tools can misinterpret titles, authorship or subject classification, leading to misplaced entries and reduced accessibility.

Thus, the presence of Arabic-speaking librarians is not just beneficial—it is essential. These professionals bring cultural competence, linguistic accuracy and subject familiarity to the library environment, significantly improving the cataloguing process and user experience. Their inclusion can also inform policy development, support capacity building and ensure the long-term sustainability of Arabic resource management in academic libraries.

**Table 6:** Respondents’ Views on the Role of Arabic-Speaking Librarians

Viewpoint	Response Rate (%)
Arabic-speaking librarians enhance Arabic book management	80%
The presence of Arabic-speaking librarians is not essential	20%

**Source:** Authors’ calculations

### Summary of Findings

Proficiency in the Arabic language has been found to be a critical factor in the effective cataloguing and management of Arabic books in Nigerian libraries. The study revealed that

70% of librarians possess only basic proficiency in Arabic or none at all, posing significant challenges in handling Arabic collections. Despite this, 60% of respondents reported that they are actively involved in cataloguing Arabic books. However, 75% acknowledged that language barriers make the process difficult.

As a result of these limitations, 70% of librarians rely on translation tools or external assistance to manage Arabic book cataloguing. Although they may be helpful, these alternatives often fall short of ensuring accuracy and efficiency. The findings also show that 60% of respondents believe that poor Arabic proficiency negatively impacts the organisation and accessibility of Arabic resources in their libraries.

Notably, 80% of participants agreed that having an Arabic-speaking librarian would greatly improve the management of Arabic collections. This highlights the need for targeted Arabic language training for librarians and suggests that investing in linguistic capacity is essential for improving cataloguing practices and ensuring users can access Arabic materials effectively.

### **Implications of the Study's Findings**

The findings of this study carry significant implications for the management of libraries that house Arabic collections, particularly in academic institutions. First, the lack of Arabic language proficiency among librarians poses a serious challenge to effective cataloguing. Inaccurate classification directly affects the organisation of materials and complicates their retrieval, thereby limiting users' access to important resources. These cataloguing errors can hinder research and learning outcomes, reducing the overall effectiveness of library services. Second, the study highlights a critical issue regarding accessibility and usability from the perspective of library users. When librarians are unable to correctly catalogue Arabic books, patrons, especially students and researchers, encounter difficulties in locating the materials they need. This undermines the library's ability to fulfil its core role of supporting academic success and knowledge dissemination.

Another key concern raised by the study is the heavy reliance on external tools and support, such as translation aids and consultations with Arabic-speaking colleagues. While these may offer temporary relief, they are not sustainable long-term solutions. These methods often lead to delays, introduce inconsistencies in metadata and may compromise the accuracy of bibliographic records. The study thus emphasises the need for long-term strategic planning, particularly through the enhancement of Arabic language competence among librarians. Investing in human capacity is more effective and sustainable than relying solely on technology. Finally, the findings underscore the urgent necessity for continuous professional development programmes. These training initiatives should be designed to equip librarians with the linguistic and technical skills required to manage Arabic books effectively and meet users' evolving needs.

### **Recommendations for Librarian Training in Arabic Proficiency**

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be put forward to enhance librarians' efficiency in developing Arabic book collections. First, structured Arabic language training programmes should be introduced for librarians. These programmes should focus on reading comprehension, cataloguing terminology and the basics of Arabic grammar to enable librarians to understand and classify Arabic books more efficiently. In addition, collaboration between libraries and Arabic language departments in universities can be established. These partnerships can offer specialised training according to the needs of librarians who are engaged in dealing with Arabic texts. Further, recruitment of Arabic-speaking librarians should be considered by libraries with extensive Arabic collections. Employment of individuals with Arabic proficiency will thus help lessen the gap in cataloguing efficiency and improve the overall arrangement of Arabic books. Lastly, integration between digital Arabic cataloguing tools and the human knowledge of cataloguing is a huge recommendation. Libraries should invest in advanced cataloguing that supports Arabic script in its functions while making sure librarians receive adequate training on how to utilise these tools effectively.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

For further studies, it is recommended that future research should explore the current state of Arabic cataloguing in Nigerian university libraries by examining the advent of e-libraries and their impact on traditional library settings. While the present study addresses conventional cataloguing practices, it would be valuable to assess how digital transformation is reshaping Arabic collections. Additionally, given previous evaluations of the dilapidated state of Arabic resources at institutions such as the University of Ibadan, further investigations should reflect on the condition of these collections across other universities. Moreover, exploring the interaction between Arabic collection centres in Nigerian universities and their counterparts in the Arab world, as well as internationally renowned institutions like the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, could offer deeper insights into global linkages and the development of Arabic libraries. Such efforts would significantly contribute to extending the frontiers of knowledge in this field.

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# CHAPTER 19

## Social Media's Role in Islamic Knowledge and Misinformation

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### **Introduction**

The significance of technology in the contemporary era is undeniable, with its pervasive influence rendering it nearly indispensable in modern life. Among the most prominent drivers of technological advancement is social media, which has ushered in an era of unprecedented interconnectedness and information dissemination. Social media platforms have transformed the way people communicate and build relationships, with networks facilitating connections across geographical and cultural boundaries (Bandura, 6).

It is evident that digital transformation has profoundly impacted the landscape of human communication. Digital platforms are characterised by ease of use, accessibility and the capacity to facilitate rapid and widespread communication (Davis, 319). As such, the digital landscape has become a critical force in shaping various aspects of contemporary life, including moral and ethical frameworks. Within the global Muslim community, social media has emerged as a complex and dynamic space where established Islamic moral principles are both reinforced and challenged.

In other words, social media presents a dual-edged challenge. While it offers numerous benefits that enhance communication, information sharing and social connectivity, it also presents significant ethical dilemmas and risks. Issues such as the spread of misinformation, cyberbullying, privacy breaches, reduced face-to-face interaction with family and peers, exposure to inappropriate content and engagement in harmful online behaviours, such as slander and the sharing of compromising images, are all inherent dangers associated with social media use (Grigorisu & Biasu, 2).

The rapid spread of misinformation, misinterpretations of Islamic teachings and the commodification of Islamic content are notable concerns in the digital age. Moreover, the growing influence of social media challenges traditional religious authority and raises ethical questions surrounding online conduct, privacy and the potential moral degradation

caused by exposure to certain forms of Islamic content. This paper examines how social media is influencing the understanding and practice of Islamic morality, while posing critical questions about its established norms and interpretations in the increasingly digital world. It stresses the need for a critical engagement with online platforms and the development of digital literacy within Muslim communities to navigate the complex relationship between virtual spaces and Islamic ethical principles.

Islamic moral frameworks, traditionally grounded in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, have long provided guidance for Muslim individuals and societies. However, the rise of social media introduces a new and potent influence that necessitates careful scrutiny. This research contends that social media acts as a significant force in reshaping Islamic morality by:

- a. democratising access to religious knowledge and facilitating the dissemination of diverse interpretations;
- b. enabling the formation of online religious communities and fostering the development of new ethical discourses; and
- c. amplifying certain voices and perspectives while marginalising others.

Conversely, social media also presents challenges to traditional Islamic moral frameworks by exposing individuals to a range of sometimes conflicting ethical viewpoints, creating spaces for the questioning of established religious authority, facilitating the spread of misinformation and potentially harmful content, and raising novel ethical dilemmas related to online behaviour, privacy and digital identity.

### **Social Media**

Social media is a fusion of “social” and “media.” The term “social” refers to a mode of communication whereby individuals exchange information with one another, while “media” pertains to the devices used for communication, such as the Internet, television, radio and newspapers. Social media, therefore, encompasses a broad array of online platforms and digital technologies that enable the creation, sharing and exchange of information, ideas, interests and various forms of expression within virtual communities and networks. According to Mujib, social media platforms are internet-based services that allow individuals to connect with others through sharing, communication and interaction, while enabling users to customise their profiles within a controlled network (Mujib, 4). These platforms are web-based communication tools that allow users to create and share content, such as text, images, videos and more, while also interacting through comments, messages and other features. In doing so, social media fosters the development of online communities and networks rooted in shared interests, relationships or affiliations.

Commonly used social media platforms for cultivating and maintaining relationships include Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and MySpace (Boyd & Ellison, 230). At its core, social media shifts the paradigm of information consumption from a predominantly one-way broadcast model to a multi-directional, participatory environment, where users function both as consumers and creators of content.

Harvey (4) identifies various forms of social media, including Wikipedia, blogs, microblogs (e.g., Twitter), content communities (e.g., YouTube), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), virtual game worlds and social media worlds. He further asserts that social media has evolved into a crucial tool for acquiring large volumes of information quickly, dependably and affordably. The ease of use and the convenience of communication have made social media an integral part of daily life for a significant portion of the global population. Recently, there has been a notable surge in social media subscriptions among youth and children worldwide.

The following characteristics have been identified as key attributes of social media:

1. **User-generated content (UGC):** According to Kaplan and Haenlein (59), the majority of content on social media platforms is created and shared by individual users, rather than solely by platform owners or traditional media organisations. This content can include text posts, images, videos, audio recordings, live streams, and more.
2. **Reach and scalability:** Social media has the capacity to reach vast audiences across geographical boundaries and time zones, enabling the rapid and widespread dissemination of information and ideas (Van Dick, 13).
3. **Interactivity and engagement:** Social media platforms are designed to facilitate interaction and engagement between users. Features such as comments, likes, shares, direct messaging, polls and live Q&A sessions enable users to engage in meaningful exchanges (O'Reilly, 17).
4. **Networking and community building:** These platforms provide users with the opportunity to connect with individuals who share similar interests, professional affiliations, personal relationships or geographical locations. This results in the formation of online communities and social networks (Boyd & Ellison, 10).
5. **Personalisation and customisation:** Social media platforms allow users to personalise their profiles and tailor their content feeds to reflect their specific interests and connections, leading to a more individualised user experience (Sundar, 8).

### **The Role of Social Media in Shaping Islamic Moral Frameworks**

Social media plays a complex and multifaceted role in shaping Islamic moral frameworks. It serves as a potent force capable of both reinforcing and challenging established Islamic beliefs and ethical standards, with outcomes that can be either beneficial or detrimental. While social media influences all aspects of human life across various societal levels, its impact on religion, particularly among children and young adults, is particularly pronounced in the contemporary era.

In Islamic jurisprudence, the concept of *Maslaha* refers to actions that serve the public interest of the Muslim community, emphasising benefit over harm. Setiyawan (41) defines *Maslaha* as the benefit provided by Allah for His servant in safeguarding religion, soul, property and lineage. Conversely, any actions that contradict or undermine the protection

of *Maslaha* are considered *Mafsada* (harm). Social media, with its dual potential for both benefit and harm, exemplifies this dual nature, functioning as a “double-edged sword.” The following sections will explore the constructive roles that social media can play in shaping Islamic moral principles.

### **Dissemination of Islamic Knowledge and the Propagation of Islam**

The teaching and spreading of Islam is a fundamental duty for every Muslim, as emphasised in the Qur’an (3:103):

Let there arise from you a group inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong; and it is they who are the successful.

In line with this, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) stated:

Convey (my teachings) to the people, even if it were a single sentence (Bukhari 3461).

The Prophet further emphasised the value of learning and teaching the Qur’an, stating:

The best among you are those who learn the Qur’an and teach it (Bukhari 5027).

Allah has created the entire world in the service of humanity, as articulated in Qur’an (45:13):

He subjected for you whatever is in the heavens and on the earth, All by His grace. Surely in this are signs for people who reflect.

In this context, modern technology, particularly social media, has emerged as a significant tool for spreading Islamic knowledge and raising awareness. Unlike traditional, time-consuming communication, social media enables Muslims to access and share Islamic teachings more widely, thereby facilitating connections with scholars and religious leaders globally. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) advised that any means to facilitate the principles of Islam should be adopted, saying:

Make things easy, do not make things difficult; give glad tidings and do not repel people. (Bukhari 3452).

Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and TikTok provide unprecedented opportunities to disseminate Islamic teachings. They offer global outreach through lectures, Qur’anic recitations, hadith and scholarly discussions. Notably, YouTube and similar platforms provide access to Islamic educational content in various languages, expanding learning opportunities. Prominent Islamic scholars, such as Nouman Ali Khan, Mufti Ismail Menk, Bilal Philips, Professor Isa Ali Pantami and Dr. Abubakar Yusuf Lokoja, have adopted social media as a means of promoting *da’wah* and Islamic teachings. The real-time nature of online communication facilitates immediate engagement, further enhancing accessibility (Surati, Faridah, & Damayanti 145).

## **Digital Tools for Exploring the Qur'an and Hadith**

Several digital platforms have been developed to facilitate easy navigation of the Qur'an and Hadith, enabling users to locate specific verses or topics. Websites, software applications and mobile apps offer these resources in various languages, making Islamic research more accessible. *Maktaba Shamila* is a prominent software that provides access to a wide range of Islamic texts, making it indispensable for conducting comprehensive Islamic research.

As online platforms, such as blogs, enable the sharing of religious insights, social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube serve as channels for conveying Islamic messages. Mobile devices play a critical role in global Islamic outreach, providing Muslims with tools to share diverse content, including translations and interpretations of the Qur'an (Islam T.md, 97). Platforms such as Zoom, Skype and Facebook Live allow for virtual Qur'anic learning sessions, making it easier for modern youth to engage with scholars online (Muhammad & Attahir, 1). However, it is crucial that religious content shared via social media adheres to Sharia principles and promotes interactivity (Zafri, Opir, & Yahya, 98). Muslims must also actively engage in countering misinformation and correcting misconceptions about Islam on social media (Siti, Mohd Shafei et al., 51).

## **Formation of Online Islamic Communities**

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp, have become essential tools for global Muslim communities. These platforms enable Muslims to connect, communicate and share ideas instantly, regardless of geographic location. Social media also fosters online friendships, facilitates information sharing and supports emotional bonds within families, irrespective of physical separation (Abel, 21). This aligns with Islam's emphasis on family unity.

Social media is instrumental in the formation of virtual Muslim communities based on shared beliefs and values. These online spaces offer a sense of belonging and mutual support, particularly for Muslims in minority or isolated settings. The Qur'an emphasises this sense of brotherhood among believers:

The believers are but brothers, so make reconciliation between your brothers and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy (Qur'an 49:10).

Online platforms also provide tools for collective action, as evidenced during high-profile events, such as the 2010 Qur'an-burning plans by an American pastor or the anti-Islam video, *Innocence of Muslims*. These incidents led to widespread protests, organised and amplified through social media, resulting in calls for the removal of offensive content (Desrués 23). By leveraging social media, Muslims can foster greater unity, amplify their voices and build a more interconnected and informed global Muslim community.

### **Promotion of Islamic Values and Ethical Discourse**

Islamic teachings emphasise the fundamental principles of submission to God, obedience to His will and striving for peace. According to scholar Yousuf Estes, Islam's core values include sincerity, obedience and inner tranquility, all of which inherently oppose violence and injustice. In the face of negative influences on social media, Muslims are encouraged to share positive, uplifting content that highlights the benefits of Islam in this life and the hereafter. The Qur'an (3:104) advocates for a community that encourages goodness, enjoins virtue and discourages wrongdoing.

In today's fast-paced digital world, using media to spread the beauty and ideals of Islam is crucial. The concept of *da'wah*, or inviting others to Islam with wisdom and kindness, is central to this effort (Qur'an 16:125). Muslims can help dispel misunderstandings about their faith and foster intercultural dialogue through respectful engagement. Furthermore, issues such as environmental sustainability, animal welfare, social justice and digital ethics are increasingly being discussed in online Islamic spaces, contributing to the development of Islamic moral frameworks that are relevant to modern societal concerns.

### **Amplification of the Voices of Influential Religious Figures and Scholars**

Social media has enabled Islamic scholars and prominent religious figures to reach wider audiences and shape public discourse on moral issues. These platforms offer scholars opportunities to engage directly with their followers, answering questions, offering guidance and reinforcing Islamic moral values. This digital presence contributes to the dissemination of particular interpretations of Islamic morality, reinforcing ethical discourses within online communities.

### **Challenging Islamic Moral Frameworks through Social Media**

While social media offers substantial opportunities for disseminating and reinforcing Islamic morality, it also poses significant challenges to established frameworks and authorities. Scholars have noted that social media is increasingly being used by individuals with ulterior motives (Muneera & Fowzul Ameer, 20). This has led to the Internet, particularly social media, being targeted as a platform for propagating anti-Islamic narratives and alienating Muslims from their religion.

The open and often unregulated nature of these platforms exposes individuals to a diverse array of perspectives, some of which contradict or challenge traditional Islamic teachings. This exposure can lead to the questioning and re-evaluation of previously held moral beliefs. Moreover, social media platforms introduce novel ethical dilemmas that traditional Islamic jurisprudence may not have directly addressed. Issues related to online privacy, data security, cyberbullying, the spread of misinformation and the ethical implications of artificial intelligence require the development of new moral frameworks and guidelines within an Islamic ethical context. The rapid pace of technological change necessitates ongoing reflection and adaptation of Islamic moral principles to address these emerging challenges.

Below are the specific challenges posed to Islamic moral frameworks through social media:

- 1. Erosion of traditional gatekeepers of religious knowledge:** A significant challenge posed by social media is the erosion of traditional religious authorities. Individuals now have access to religious information from a myriad of sources, not all of which are credible or authoritative. This democratisation of information can lead to the spread of misinformation, the proliferation of unorthodox interpretations and the potential for individuals to be influenced by extremist or misguided ideologies (Berger, 11). The lack of established mechanisms for verifying the authenticity and reliability of online religious content poses a serious challenge to maintaining the integrity of Islamic moral frameworks.
- 2. Misrepresentation of religion:** The proliferation of social media has, unfortunately, facilitated the spread of misinformation about Islam. This has been exploited to incite discord between individuals of different faiths, both publicly and within communities. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google Plus have been used to disseminate false rumours and biased portrayals of Islamic principles. Western media, in particular, often frame conflicts involving Muslims under the singular banner of “Islam,” rarely extending such generalisations to conflicts involving other religious groups. The propagation of fabricated rumours about Islamic leaders and the misrepresentation of Muslims contribute to the stigmatisation of Muslims as disloyal or as terrorists. While the negative impacts of social media are considerable, it is important to note that social media’s influence is not exclusively harmful; it can also offer benefits (Nasr, 109).
- 3. Incentivising indecency:** The growth and well-being of the Muslim community (Ummah) are traditionally linked to the ethical conduct of its members, as guided by Islamic teachings. The Quran (24:30) instructs believers to maintain modesty in their gaze and protect their chastity, emphasising humility for both men and women. However, this system of ethical refinement is being undermined by the widespread disregard for these principles, particularly on social media platforms (Nasr, 113). The prevalence of inappropriate images and videos has surged across social media. Despite the stated policies of major platforms to remove such content, the principle of freedom of expression is often invoked to justify the unchecked dissemination of offensive material. Consequently, the Internet has become a significant conduit for the circulation of harmful content, contributing to social ills such as women’s molestation, rape, eve-teasing, acid violence, murder and general societal disorder. The Quran strongly condemns the desire to spread indecency among believers, warning of severe consequences both in this life and the hereafter (24:19).
- 4. Potential social media addiction, crime and diminished well-being:** Social media fosters dependency, leading to excessive time spent online and disrupted sleep patterns, which negatively impact mental well-being. This addiction to social

networking contributes to the development of an uninformed and disengaged youth. From an Islamic perspective, the preservation of intellect, alongside mental and emotional well-being, is a fundamental principle. Al-Siyatibi (2004) highlights the importance of protecting the intellect as a means of safeguarding the mind from harmful influences. Islamic teachings encourage a balanced and moderate approach to all aspects of life, including digital interactions. Increasingly, individuals are detached from real-life experiences, seemingly unable to function without their virtual existence. This preoccupation with social media erodes essential skills like reading and writing. Moreover, this addiction diminishes young people's respect for others, fostering a culture of unhealthy competition and contributing to disrespectful online interactions. The bonds between young individuals are weakening, and their moral compass is being compromised, potentially leading them to engage in criminal activities without fully understanding the consequences. According to Vaynerchuk, a significant majority (75%) believe that the improper use of social media contributes to social corruption, illegal activities and the formation of negative cultural groups (56). These misuses are seen as a cause of moral decline and social problems. Alarmingly, these platforms are also easily exploited by terrorist organisations to facilitate their operations.

5. **Creation of fake news and dissemination of rumours:** Social media platforms are rife with unsubstantiated news, negatively impacting the public's perception of media credibility (Ordway, 27). Experts (Ajao, Bhowmik, & Zargari, 28) confirm that social media serves as a tool for disseminating fabricated information. Popular social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Snapchat are plagued by irrelevant and harmful content, exacerbating the issue. The lack of editorial oversight on many blogs allows unverified information to spread rapidly. The digital age has amplified the speed at which rumours circulate, escalating their potential to be exploited by opportunists. Religious texts, particularly the Quran, provide clear guidance on the issue of rumours. The Quran (49:6) urges believers to verify news from unreliable sources to prevent unintentional harm and regret. It further emphasises (17:36) the importance of refraining from spreading information that one lacks knowledge of, as individuals will be held accountable for their hearing, sight and hearts. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) considered the propagation of rumours a grave falsehood (Muslim Sharif). These religious teachings offer explicit guidance against spreading falsehoods and rumours, outlining the severe consequences for such actions.
6. **Gambling and fraudulent practices:** The anonymity provided by fake profiles on platforms like Facebook has led to disturbing trends, such as individuals using fabricated identities to deceive others. Young men, in particular, may create fake profiles using female names and pictures to initiate romantic relationships under false pretences. This deceptive behaviour has led to instances of cheating and,

tragically, sexual assault, contributing to social instability. Conversely, some individuals are also falling victim to scams orchestrated through these fabricated online personas. Religious texts emphasise the accountability of one's actions, including those conducted online. The Quran (50:18) states that every word uttered is recorded, highlighting the moral implications of online deception. This misuse of social media reflects broader societal issues, including family upbringing, social norms, a decline in values and insufficient moral education.

- 7. Instrument of slander and defamation of character:** A widespread issue involves individuals being ridiculed on social media, often through jokes, stories and offensive nicknames. This behaviour contradicts the teachings of the Quran, which forbids believers from mocking others, warning that those being mocked might be superior in the eyes of Allah. The Quran also prohibits insulting or labelling others with bad names, emphasising the severity of such actions after embracing faith and warning that those who persist in this behaviour are unjust. Often, those who troll and engage in offensive speech hide behind anonymity, making it difficult to hold them accountable. This lack of responsibility emboldens them to spread harmful content without the fear of consequences. Social media platforms face significant challenges in balancing freedom of expression with the need to combat hate speech. The subjective nature of hate speech laws and the sheer volume of content on these platforms complicate the identification and removal of harmful material. Additionally, the global nature of these platforms means that varying legal frameworks and cultural sensitivities must be navigated carefully, requiring robust content moderation systems and well-trained staff.

### **Responses and Adaptations within Muslim Communities**

Muslim communities are increasingly engaging with the opportunities and challenges presented by social media in diverse ways. Religious institutions and scholars are increasingly leveraging these platforms to disseminate authentic Islamic knowledge, counter misinformation and foster constructive dialogue with online audiences. Notable adaptive strategies include the development of fatwa websites, online Islamic education programmes and social media campaigns aimed at promoting ethical online behaviour.

In addition, Muslim digital activists and influencers are utilising social media to advance social justice causes, advocate for ethical practices and build online communities rooted in Islamic values. These individuals often employ creative, engaging content to reach younger generations and address contemporary issues from an Islamic perspective.

However, navigating the complexities of the digital sphere requires cultivating critical media literacy and developing ethical guidelines for online conduct within Muslim communities. Ongoing efforts seek to promote responsible social media use, encourage critical evaluation of online content and nurture a culture of respect and ethical communication in online Islamic spaces.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The analysis presented in this paper highlights the dual nature of social media's impact on Islamic moral frameworks in the contemporary era. The findings suggest that social media platforms serve as both a potent catalyst for the dissemination and reinforcement of Islamic ethics and a significant challenge to established moral authorities and interpretations.

On the one hand, the study emphasises the democratising influence of social media on religious knowledge. The ease with which Quranic verses, the Hadith and scholarly interpretations are shared online facilitates broader access to foundational Islamic texts. This increased accessibility empowers individuals to seek knowledge directly and engage with online religious communities, fostering the development of shared moral understandings and the emergence of new ethical discourses that address contemporary concerns such as environmental sustainability and social justice. Additionally, amplifying influential religious voices online facilitates the wider dissemination of specific moral values and guidance.

On the other hand, the paper underscores the challenges posed by social media to traditional Islamic moral frameworks. Exposure to diverse, and sometimes conflicting, ethical viewpoints can prompt the questioning of established beliefs. The erosion of traditional gatekeepers of religious knowledge, combined with the potential spread of misinformation and unorthodox interpretations, threatens the integrity of Islamic moral frameworks. Furthermore, the anonymity and perceived distance of the online environment can embolden critiques of religious authorities and established norms, leading to fragmentation within the community. Novel ethical dilemmas arising from online behaviour, privacy concerns and digital identity further complicate the application of traditional jurisprudence.

The study also identifies the active responses and adaptations within Muslim communities to these evolving dynamics. Religious institutions and scholars are increasingly using social media for educational purposes and to counter misinformation. Muslim digital activists are leveraging these platforms to promote ethical practices and foster online communities anchored in Islamic values. Efforts to promote media literacy and ethical online behaviour are also gaining momentum.

## **Conclusion**

Social media has undeniably emerged as a powerful force in shaping and challenging Islamic moral frameworks in the contemporary era. It offers unparalleled opportunities for disseminating religious knowledge, forming online communities and developing new ethical discourses. However, it also presents substantial challenges, including the erosion of traditional authority, the spread of misinformation and the emergence of novel ethical dilemmas.

A nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between social media and Islamic morality is essential for navigating the evolving religious landscape of the 21st century.

Muslim communities are actively adapting to these changes, utilising digital platforms to reinforce traditional values while simultaneously addressing the ethical challenges they present. Future research should focus on the long-term impact of social media on Islamic moral frameworks, examining the evolving role of religious authority, the development of digital Islamic ethics and the experiences of diverse Muslim communities in the online sphere. Ultimately, ongoing engagement with social media will continue to shape the future of Islamic morality, requiring both critical reflection and proactive adaptation to ensure the continued relevance and integrity of Islamic ethical principles in the digital age.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this analysis, the following recommendations are proposed:

**Enhance digital literacy and critical thinking:** Muslim communities should prioritise the development of digital literacy skills among their members, enabling them to critically evaluate online religious content and identify credible sources of information. Educational initiatives that focus on media literacy and critical thinking will empower individuals to navigate the complexities of the digital sphere responsibly.

**Strengthen online religious authority and verification:** Religious institutions and scholars should actively build and maintain a strong, trustworthy online presence. This includes developing mechanisms to verify the authenticity and reliability of online religious content and providing clear, accessible guidance on contemporary ethical issues.

**Foster ethical online engagement:** Islamic bodies and institutions should make deliberate efforts to promote a culture of respectful, ethical communication in online Islamic spaces. Guidelines for online behaviour, emphasising the principles of sincerity, honesty and constructive dialogue, should be developed and disseminated.

**Develop contemporary Islamic digital ethics:** Islamic scholars and legal experts should proactively engage in the development of contemporary Islamic ethical frameworks that address the novel challenges of the digital age. This includes issues related to online privacy, data security, cyberbullying and the ethical implications of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.

**Support Muslim digital activism and education:** Efforts should be made to support and amplify the voices of responsible Muslim digital activists and educators who are effectively utilising social media to disseminate authentic Islamic knowledge and promote ethical values.

**Promote collaboration and resource sharing:** Collaboration between religious institutions, educational organisations and technology experts should be encouraged to develop effective strategies for engaging with social media in ways that preserve and adapt Islamic moral frameworks for the contemporary era.

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## CHAPTER 20

### Tutelage as Spiritual Transmission: A Case Study of Shaykh Nasirudeen Kabara and Shaykh Abdul Yekeen Mustapha

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#### **Introduction**

The word tutelage is a Latin verb, *tueri*, meaning “to guard,” “to protect,” “to defend” or “to watch over.” It refers to the act of keeping something safe or looking after something with care and attention. The word is the root of several English terms, including “tutelage” (meaning the act of guarding, protecting or teaching someone, often in the context of guidance and mentorship), “tutoring” (the act of providing educational guidance or instruction), as well as “intuition” (derived from *intueri*, meaning to look at or to observe). In a broader sense, *tueri* conveys the idea of protection and careful attention, which aligns with its usage in related terms that involve guidance and safeguarding. In essence, the word “tutelage” first began appearing in print in the early 1600s, and it was used mainly in the protective sense of *tueri*, as writers described serfs and peasants of earlier eras as being “under the tutelage of their lord.”

Findings also indicate that “tutelage” can be traced back to ancient Egyptian times. Tutoring or tutelage back then focused on educating the elite, particularly the royal family and scribes who were responsible for writing and maintaining records. Young people,

especially those aiming to serve in the temple or royal courts, would receive training from priests and scribes. The system of education then was not only deeply connected to governance, but it was a tool for proper religious guidance. This was indeed a significant path chosen by Shaykh Nasirudeen Kabara, as his lifestyle was purely knowledge-driven, hence, the historic achievements of Isobatul Qadiriyyah worldwide will be incomplete without his impact both covertly and overtly.

It is pertinent to state that traditional Islam values training and teaching. This fact often gave birth to sectarian schools by Islamic scholars to project their teachings and philosophies. Shaykh Nasirudeen Kabara, the founder of the Nasiriyyah School of thought, birthed under the Qadiriyyah Sufi Brotherhood, is another proof of the above assertion.

### **Tutelage as a Timeline of Development in the Islamic Eras**

Tutelage or tutoring, in its most basic sense, refers to the educational guidance or instruction provided by a tutor or mentor. This tradition has evolved over millennia, influencing cultures and societies worldwide. Tutelage in Islam is a system of education and mentorship that has played essential roles in the intellectual and spiritual development of individuals and communities. The Qur'an emphasises the importance of knowledge, and the tutor-student relationship has been a central aspect of the transmission of both religious and worldly knowledge, as Allah (S.A.W) described the educational mission of Prophet Muhammad as a means of guidance and divine tutelage:

“He it is Who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom” (Qur'an 62 verse 2).

### **The Early Islamic Period: The Foundation of Knowledge (610 CE - 661 CE)**

- 1. The revelation to Prophet Muhammad (610 CE):** The 610 CE marks the beginning of the Islamic era, with the first revelation to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the cave of Hira. The very first word revealed to the noblest prophet Muhammed through his teacher, Jubril, was “Iqra” (Read) Qur'an 96:1: “Read in the name of your Lord who created.”

It is pertinent to note that this does not only connote the significance of knowledge but also indicates that for anyone to attain success, one must be readily available to seek the tutelage of a teacher, as it emphasises the significance of acquiring knowledge and learning. The impact of this revelation still has its significance in Islam to date.

- 2. Prophet Muhammad's role as a teacher:** Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the first teacher in Islam. He provided personal tutoring to his companions and established the foundation for Islamic education. His companions (*Sahabah*) learned directly from him and passed on their knowledge to future generations. The methods of learning adopted by the Prophet were recorded to be majorly face-to-face methods.

The companions, being the students, understood so well every attribute of the Prophet; thereby, when a strange event occurred, they were never in doubt of his sayings, even when some happenings seemed so illogical to ordinary human reasoning.

- 3. The role of the Companions:** In the early years of Islam, the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), such as Abu Bakr, Umar, Ali and Aisha (may Allah be pleased with them), were prominent students who later became scholars in their respective endeavours, even during the life of the Prophet Muhammad. They were often sought after by the community for religious education and legal rulings. Many of them also tutored the next generation of scholars (Siddiqi, 1993; Suyūṭī, 2005).

عَنْ عُثْمَانَ بْنِ عَفَّانَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “The best of you are those who learn the Qur’an and teach it” (Sahih al-Bukhari, 5027).

### **The Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates: The Institutionalisation of Education (661 CE - 1258 CE)**

- 1. The Umayyad period (661 CE-750 CE):** The Umayyad Caliphate marked the expansion of Islam beyond the Arabian Peninsula, bringing Islamic culture and education into regions such as North Africa, Spain and Central Asia. During this period, education became more formalised, and private tutors were used by the elites to educate their children in various subjects such as jurisprudence, literature and history.
- 2. The Abbasid period (750 CE-1258 CE):** The Abbasid Caliphate is often seen as the Golden Age of Islamic scholarship. The period saw the establishment of Bayt al-Hikma (The House of Wisdom) in Baghdad, which became a major centre for learning and research. Scholars and students from all over the Muslim world gathered there to study, teach and exchange ideas. Al-Khwarizmi (circa 780–850 CE), Ibn Sina (Avicenna) (980–1037 CE) and Al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE) were notable scholars who received tutoring and also became tutors themselves during this period. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave” (Al-Bayhaqi). During this period, *madrasas* (Islamic schools) began to be established as centres for both religious and secular education. The madrasa system included formal tutelage by teachers (called *mu'allim*) who taught students a wide range of subjects, including the Qur’an, the Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence and philosophy.

## **The Ottoman Empire and the Spread of Islamic Education (1299 CE - 1924 CE)**

**The Ottoman period (1299 CE - 1924 CE):** Under the Ottoman Empire, the madrasa system continued to flourish, and formalised tutoring became an important part of education. The Ottomans established a network of madrasas across their empire, from the Balkans to the Arabian Peninsula, where students received a comprehensive education in Islamic law, theology and sciences. Scholars such as Suyuti (1445–1505 CE) and Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (1372–1449 CE) played crucial roles in shaping the intellectual landscape during this time. These scholars were both students and teachers who passed on their vast knowledge to generations of students.

### *Important Institutions:*

- The Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul, built by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566), housed a major madrasah and became an important centre of Islamic learning.
- Al-Azhar University in Cairo, founded in 970 CE, became a leading educational institution for Islamic jurisprudence and theology, attracting students and teachers across the Muslim world.

## **Modern Era: Reform and the Continued Tradition of Tutelage (1800 CE - Present)**

1. **The 19th century (1800s):** With the advent of European colonialism and modernisation, traditional systems of education, including tutoring and madrasa-based learning, began to face challenges. However, tutoring remained an important aspect of Islamic education, particularly in private settings. In countries like Egypt and India, both traditional Islamic education and Western-style education systems coexisted. Many families continued to hire personal tutors to ensure their children received an education grounded in Islamic knowledge alongside modern subjects. Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905 CE) in Egypt and Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898 CE) in India were key figures in educational reform who advocated for the integration of Western knowledge with Islamic teachings while maintaining the importance of traditional scholarship.
2. **The 20th century and beyond:** As formal education systems became more widespread throughout the Muslim world, the role of personal tutoring continued, especially in the fields of Islamic law (Fiqh), theology and Qur’anic studies. In the post-colonial period, many Muslim-majority countries began to modernise their educational systems, incorporating both secular subjects and religious education. However, private tutoring remained a prominent feature, especially in areas such as religious studies and languages. In contemporary times, Islamic scholars who specialise in areas such as Hadith studies, Tafsir (Qur’anic exegesis) and Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) often serve as tutors, offering personal guidance to students, both locally and through online platforms.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا، سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ

*“Whoever takes a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him the path to Paradise”* (Sahih Muslim 2699).

In the Islamic Golden Age (8th to 14th centuries), tutelage played an essential role in the transmission of knowledge. Islamic scholars were often tutored by more experienced teachers and emphasis was placed on acquiring knowledge from a variety of fields, including theology, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics and medicine. Notably, scholars such as Al-Farabi, Avicenna (Ibn Sina) and Al-Ghazali were tutored by great masters, passing on their knowledge to future generations. Islamic education emphasised a close teacher-student relationship, and learning often took place in private settings or within the context of study circles.

Going forward, it is pertinent to state that the role of tutelage in every era, as explained above, cannot be undermined and this played out in the method adopted by Shaykh Nasirudeen Kabara, the erstwhile leader of Qadiriyyah in the entire Africa. He was able to adopt an open method with his students, one of whom was Shaykh Abdul Yeqeen Mustapha Adisa (founder of Isobah Worldwide) (Ajape & Shittu, 2024).

### **A Brief Biography of Shaykh Nasirudeen Kabara**

Sulaiman et al. (2024) noted that the full name Mallam Nasirudeen Kabara is Nasirudeen Kabara Muhammed Nasiru bn Muhammed bn Muhammad Mukthar bn Muhammad bn Muhammad Nasiru bn Muhammad bn Mallam Umar Kabara bn Ibrahim bn Sayyid Al-Khalifah bn Salih bn Ali bn Alli bn Daud. He was a prominent and highly revered scholar and spiritual leader who hailed from Guringuwa in Kano State, Nigeria. Research has it that his real birth date was not recorded; however, some people recorded that he was born in the early 20th century. Shaykh Kabara was known for his deep knowledge of Islamic theology, jurisprudence and mysticism. He was particularly influential in the propagation of the Qadiriyya Sufi order in the region (Sulaiman et al., 2024).

Shaykh Kabara’s education began at an early age. He studied under local scholars in Kano and later travelled to various Islamic centres of learning, including cities like Mecca and Medina, further enhancing his knowledge. His scholarship was rooted in both traditional Islamic teachings and Sufism and he became a renowned teacher and spiritual guide. As a leader, Shaykh Kabara was known for his commitment to promoting Islamic values, peace and unity within the community. He established a significant following in Kano and across northern Nigeria. His teachings emphasised the importance of devotion to Allah, the significance of spiritual purification and the importance of adhering to the Sunnah (the practices of Prophet Muhammad). In addition to his scholarly pursuits, Shaykh Kabara

was an influential figure in Kano's political and social spheres. He was a key figure in advocating moral conduct and Islamic principles in the governance of the region. He maintained a close relationship with both the local rulers and the people, helping to shape the religious and social fabric of Kano.

Shaykh Kabara passed away in 1996, but his legacy continues to be felt in Kano State and beyond. His descendants and followers continue to uphold his teachings, and his influence on Islamic thought in northern Nigeria remains significant. It is pertinent to note that, like several Islamic dynasties of the past, there have been cases of rancour among the descendants of Shaykh Kabara, though this seems not to be so relevant to this study, but still needs to be mentioned. However, this does not undermine the deserving recognition of Kabara's legacy, as it not only gained momentum amongst the Sufi contemporaries, but is also highly respected in the Islamic world across the globe.

### **Understanding the Relationship between Shaykh Kabara and his student Shaykh Abdul Yekeen**

The affinity shared between Mallam Kabara, the then leader of Qadiriyyah in Africa, and his mentee, Abdul Yekeen Mustapha, became stronger due to the potential noticed in him by Mallam Kabara. This reached its climax with Mallam Kabara's visit to Lagos in the mid-90's aimed at illuminating the historical significance of Shaykh Abdul Yekeen. It was an activity that will continue to linger in the memory of every lover of Qadiriyyah.

Beyond the turbaning that occurred on that fateful day, it was a day that pronounced the sincere nature of a student toward his teacher; every statement of that day signified loyalty, an attribute every student of knowledge should absorb. Mallam Kabara conferred the esteemed titles of Grand Khalifah and leader of Qadiriyyah Lagos State upon Shaykh Abdul Yekeen Mustapha through a formal turbaning ceremony. The occasion was witnessed by all the Qadiriyyah stakeholders in Yoruba land, and it was after the occasion that Mallam Kabara visited the house of Shaykh Abdul Yekeen and instructed all the leaders of the Qadiriyyah sect in Yoruba land, to meet him there. During his visitation on that day, he showed his love and affection for Shaykh Abdul Yekeen: "So, Abdul Yekeen, come to me and I will feed you with a cup of divinity until you are satisfied and healthy" (Ajape & Shittu, 2024). According to Ajape and Shittu, every statement of Mallam Kabara at the event established the fact that Sufism is an Islamic knowledge and practice that involves the training and guidance of a follower, *murid*, through the instruction of a leader (Shaykh) who has enough knowledge to guide his followers to actualise the aims and objectives of Sufism.

Pertinent to say that the goal of Sufism is the development of certain noble qualities such as the purification of the self, purification of the heart, moral etiquette and the state of doing what is beautiful (*ihsan*). All these and many more fostered the relationship between Abdul Yekeen and Mallam Kabara, as he made it mandatory on himself to become one of his students and followers, which necessitated him to travel every month consecutively

for more than two years to visit Mallam Kabara in his house in Kano before death did the two of them apart (Ajape & Shttu, 2024).

The most memorable aspect of this spiritual relationship happened in 1996 during the commissioning of the Isobatul-Qadiriyyah Mosque. It was at this occasion that Mallam Kabara turbaned Abdul Yekeen for the third time. He gave him a Muslim gown (*‘Abaya*) and a rosary in the presence of all the important Muslim personalities of Yoruba land who had come to witness the occasion (Ajape & Shttu, 2024).

Ajape et al. quoted Mallam Kabara as having extensively made this statement to his mentee (Abdul Yekeen):

“May God bless you, Abdul Yekeen. You are their leader, and I have turbaned and clothed you today as they turbaned and clothed me in Baghdad, and I have given you the rosary they gave me. You must be patient and honest. You are their leader. May God grant you success” (Kabara, 1996).

This action of Mallam Kabara on that day signified the convocation of Abdul Yekeen after he graduated from the Sufism training school of Mallam Kabara. Moreover, it was after this occasion that Mallam Kabara went back to Kano to organise the annual celebration of the birthday of Shaykh Abdul Qadiri Jilani, which is the normal practice of the Qadiriyyah followers in Kano, known as *Mawkib*. The occasion was also graced by Abdul Yekeen, who was joined by many of his followers. Coincidentally, he made another impromptu journey back to Kano after his return from the *Mawkib*. Mallam Kabara died during this period while Abdul Yekeen was still in Kano, thus making him the only Qadiriyyah leader from the south-west of Nigeria to witness the death and participate in the funeral prayer (Salat l-Janazah) of Mallam Kabara. This incident was reported by Ajape (2015). However, in understanding every deed of Mallam Kabara and Shaykh Abdul Yekeen, they were purely spiritual and often looked strange to those who did not engage in the school of thought. Interestingly, every activity was not just in tandem with the principles and teachings of the noblest Prophet Muhammad, they were truly the facet of the origins of the knowledge he has instilled in his students. The learning process in this regard was outside the four walls of the classroom as compared to modern ways of teaching that are often done within the four walls of the class.

Mallam Kabara was an individual who not only walked the talk, but was also a person who was vast in the Sunnah of the Prophet. History still has it that he was one of the best memorisers of the Hadith during his lifetime, and it was not recorded that anyone else surpassed his level of knowledge in Nigeria while he was alive (Shaykh Muhydeen, 2014). Zarnuji (2003) noted that in seeking knowledge, it is necessary that one not choose by himself the kind of learning to pursue, but to entrust the matter to the teacher. For, indeed, the teacher has gained more experience in these matters, so that he is better informed about what is needed for each person and what is suitable to each student’s nature.

The traditional Islamic pedagogy analysed the significance of learning outside the four walls of a classroom; this system makes the teacher a central part of the learning experience and a situation which emphasised learning within mosque-based circles. Students embody humility and *adab* (etiquette) before their teachers, who are central to the learning experience (Az-Zarnuji, 2003). The formal schools and the introduction of the bureaucratic institutions replaced many of those informal settings. Scholars argue that this shift, together with modern practices such as formal seating arrangements and the emphasis on certificates, weakened the spiritual purposes and sincerity of learners. This concern was raised both in classical/Islamic critiques of *adab* and in sociological accounts of credentialism (Al-Attas, 1986; Collins, 1979).

It is pertinent to state that one of the factors that blossomed Shaykh Abdul Yeqeen was the fact that he listened carefully to his teacher (Shaykh Kabara), having understood that every method he introduced was actually to make him better at every point.

### **The Weekly Prayer (*Awrad*) as a Tool Used by Kabara for His Students**

One of the major tools used by Shaykh Nasirudeen Kabara to imbibe proper knowledge of Sufism into Shaykh Abdul Yeqeen was the introduction of the weekly prayer, which consisted of selected prayers from the Qu'ran and Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The permission to actively use this weekly *awrad* was given to Shaykh Abdul Yeqeen and members of his congregation, Isobah Worldwide, by Mallam Kabara (Shaykh Muhydeen, 2014). In an interview with Khalifah Muhydeen Mustapha, the leader of Isobah Worldwide and the Grand Khalifah of the Qadiriyyah Movement in Lagos State, there are records of several other prayers that were given to Shaykh Abdul Yeqeen Mustapha by Mallam Kabara, most of which were covertly revealed to him by his father, Shaykh Abdul Yeqeen. These prayers were never taught in the four walls of a class, but every individual who was consistent in their recitation got divine succour from Allah.

According to Sulaimon and Obansa (2024), the *awrad*, otherwise known as *Al-Musabiat Al-Ashr*, is one of the weekly liturgies of the Qadiriyyah order that is usually performed after *Salatul Asr* every Friday, preferably in congregation. It is considered to be one of the obligatory acts of the Qadiriyyah order which must be recited in arrears if missed. It is technically known as *Al-Musabiatu'l Ashr* (the ten recitals repeated seven times). Listed below are the recitations in chronological order:

Translation: In the name of Allah, the Beneficent and the Merciful

1. Suratu'l-Fatihah (The opening chapter of the Glorious Quran) (7 times)
2. Ayatu'l-Kurisiy (Quran 2:255) (7 times)
3. Suratu'l-Kafirun (Chapter 109, the Disbelievers) (7 times)
4. Suratu'l-Ikhlash (The Purity, Chapter 112) (7 times)
5. Suratu'l-Falaq (The Daybreak, Chapter 113) (7 times)
6. Suratu'l-Nas (The Mankind, Chapter 114) (7 times)

7. Glorified is Allah, all praise and thanks are due to Allah, there is no deity worthy of being worshipped except Allah. Allah is the Greatest. There is no might and no strength except with Allah, the Most High, the Most Great. (7 times).
8. O Allah! Shower your peace and blessings upon our leader, Muhammad, Your servant, Prophet and Messenger, and upon his household and companions. (7 times)
9. O Allah, forgive me and my parents and the generality of the faithful; men and women and the believing men and women, the living ones among them and the dead ones. Surely You are the closest (to Your creations) Answerer of (His) callers (in supplications). (7 times).
  - a. O Allah! Guide us and them (the believers) now and ever, here on earth and in the hereafter to what pleases You and do not allow us to live by our own whims, surely, You are the Most Lenient, the Most Generous, the Most Honourable, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. (7 times).
  - b. *Hizbu'ls-Majlis: Hizbu'l-Majlis*: It is another weekly programme of Qadiriyyah, which takes place on Thursdays in some places and/or on Sundays in other places, depending on the local arrangement by the *Muridun* and their *Muqaddam*.
  - c. *Suratu'l-Naba'* (Qur'an 78): The chapter forms part of the weekly *adhkar* offered together after *Hizbu'l-Majlis* and before *Hizbu'sh-Shahadah*.
  - d. *Hizbu'sh-Shahadah* (Testimony to the Unity of Allah): It is another weekly prayer of the Qadiriyyah offered in congregation.
  - e. *Hizbu'l-Ishraq*: This is also another weekly *awrad* of the Qadiriyyah order. It is also performed congregationally. It reads: Translation: The light of Allah is (ever) bright. The words of Allah are manifest. The commandments of Allah are firmly established. The judgment of Allah is supreme. I believe in Allah and I rely (solely) on Allah. Whatever Allah wills (come to pass). There is no power except that of Allah. I seek protection in the hidden kindness of Allah and in the kind work of Allah and in the beautiful covering of Allah and in the great remembrance of Allah and the power of the sovereignty of Allah. I got covered by the protection of Allah and I seek for the guidance of the Prophet of Allah (S.A.W.). I renounce any power and strength attributed to me and I seek support in the strength and power of Allah. O Allah, cover me and protect me in (affairs) of my religion, my earthly life, my family, my property, my progeny, my people and my friends with Your covering (of secrecy) with which You cover Your essence in such a way that no eye sees You and no hand touches You O The Most Merciful of those who show mercy (thrice). Protect me from the wrongdoing people by Your power, O The Most Powerful, The Strong, The Most Merciful of those who show mercy (thrice). From You we

seek help, O Allah! Provider of sustenance! O Hearer of the voice (of people who call him)! O Coverer of bones with flesh after death, protect me and save me from disgrace of the earthly world and punishment of the hereafter. There is no strength and no power besides that of Allah, the Highest, the Greatest (thrice). May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon our leader Muhammad (S.A.W.) and his household and companions.

- f. *Hizb Fahi'l-Basa'ir*: This is another form of weekly *dhikr* performed by members of the Qadiriyyah Order. It is called *Fahi'l-Basa'ir*, as its constant recitation is expected to connect the inner sight of the *Murid* to the essence of Allah. It contains the whole of *Suratul-Fatihah* (Qur'an 2) interlaced with special prayers.
- g. *As-Salatu's-Sabiq*: This is the *as-salat* chosen by the *Murid* of the Qadiriyyah Sufi order for their recitals.
- h. *Qasidatu'l-Ghawthah*: These are lines of poems composed by one of the leaders in the Qadiriyyah Sufi order, Shaykh Muhammad as-Sammani. It has been incorporated into Qadiriyyah recitals. This is followed by reciting the names of the twenty-five prophets mentioned in the Glorious Qur'an.

It is significant to note that the method deployed by Mallam Kabara to conduct these prayers was very easy, as it was a process that involved building one's spirituality as well as learning more about one's religion, which happens to be fundamental to every human's existence.

Shaykh Muhydeen Mustapha, at one of the monthly *Tahajjud* congregation statutorily scheduled for every last Friday of the month, held in March, 2023, noted that the bulk of the prayers composed in the *Awrad* book (*Ifadatus Sulak*) of Isobah Worldwide are part of the teachings of Mallam Kabara to his father, Shaykh Abdul Yekeen. He emphasised that, compared to the other groups of the Qadiriyyah sect in Nigeria, Shaykh Kabara was able to compose more prayers, especially the aspect of *Ghausau* in the *Ifadatus Sulak*.

Muhydeen (2023) noted that the *Dhikrul Anfas*, which is now widely accepted by all groups of the Qadiriyyah Movement in Nigeria, was specially conferred on Shaykh Mustapha Abdul Yekeen by his teacher, Shaykh Nasirudeen Kabara. He noted that Shaykh Kabara later mandated him to transfer this teaching to other groups in Lagos State and by extension some states in the southwest (Yoruba land) (Oral Interview, Shaykh Muhydeen, 2023). This teaching was possible as a result of the extra efforts and sacrifices Shaykh Abdul Yekeen made to learn, as well as his understanding of the unique teaching style adopted by his teacher (Shaykh Nasirudeen Kabara). According to Muhydeen (2023), all these prayers have benefited all members of the Isobah Worldwide to date (Oral Interview, Shaykh Muhydeen, 2023).

## Recommendations

1. ملازمة أحوال الشيخ: Understanding that every attribute of a mentor is an important part of the process of tutelage that should be well monitored by every student.
2. Mentors must have a deep sense of trust in the competence and ability of their mentees, as exemplified by Shaykh Kabara towards Shaykh Abdul Yekeen Mustapha. This will surely enhance the relationship between teachers and their students.
3. Followers should watch their teachers and abide by their instruction as long as their teachings do not negate the supreme book of Islam (the Quran) and Sunnah.
4. The futuristic approach adopted by Mallam Kabara must be embraced by teachers; this will enhance their ability to foresee the good traits possessed by their mentees.
5. Students, irrespective of their social status, must understand that teachings related to the Religion are sacred and divine, hence, being respectful to their teachers should be an aspect that should be easily absorbed in their daily ways.
6. For students to thrive knowledge-wise, the integrative mentorship model that sustains the moral, intellectual and spiritual vitality of Muslim communities should be taught to learners.

## Conclusion

It has been established that tutelage in Islam has a rich and long history, rooted in the early days of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who was the first teacher and mentor in Islam. From the early companions who carried forward Islamic knowledge to the rise of madrasas and Islamic universities, the tutor-student relationship has been central to the intellectual and spiritual development of Muslims. Today, the tradition of tutelage continues in various forms, from private tutoring in various fields to a more public style, such as the one adopted by Mallam Kabara during his lifetime.

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- Interview with Khalifah Muhydeen Mustapha, leader of the Qadiriyyah sect in Lagos State, at his residence, 18/21, Alimosho Road, Iyana Ipaja, Lagos State.
- Recordings from the oral speech of Khalifah Muhydeen Mustapha during the monthly Dhikr.

# CHAPTER 21

## Content Review of I.A.B. Balogun's "The Twin Disciplines..."

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### **Introduction**

The emergence of Islam in West Africa over a millennium ago through trans-Saharan trade routes has facilitated the development of Arabic and Islamic studies as inseparable twin disciplines deeply rooted in religious rituals, socio-economic transactions and the civilisations of Muslims (Robinson, 2004). In essence, learning and teaching are intertwined with Islam (Q96:1-5) and, through it, all genres of Islamic sciences and Arabic literature are mastered for the sustainability of Islamic identities, Arabic language and the fulfilment of Allah's injunctions in worship. Hence, Islam goes with education and permeates through the settings of every civilisation with indelible marks (Saho, 2020).

Nigeria, a multi-ethnic, multi-religious country, has enjoyed the beauties of the Islamic education through Arabic and Islamic studies before the advent of the European imperialists (Kurfi, 2022). This religious adventure of knowledge acquisition and dissemination was carried out by various itinerant scholars, from the Arabian Peninsula and the North African region in many West African enclaves, including Nigeria (Abass & Lawal, 2016). Through this, indigenous Africans accepted Islam, such as Aare Latoosa of Ibadan, who viewed the religion as relatively synonymous with African traditions in the area of dressing, communal settings and marital life of restricted polygyny (Abass & Lawal, 2016). It is also on record that westernised European education spread like wildfire across Nigeria through missionary works, including the conversion of people to Christianity and the establishment of medical centres across the country (Eliazar, 2022).

Nevertheless, prior to this period, some Muslims in Nigeria and several Islamic societies and organisations had established local schools of Arabic and Islamic studies with the aim of nurturing young Muslims in the way of Allah and His Prophet. The proliferation of Arabic and Islamic studies, according to Hassane (2008), was ubiquitous, and as corroborated by John Hunwick (1997, 210-223), the Arabic character, either in its original form or as *'Ajami script*, which involves the use of Arabic script in the transcription of African languages, was the only form of written communiqué used in the writing of letters, for other purposes and in diplomatic correspondences long before the advent of the British colonialists in Nigeria.

However, the exigencies in the acquisition of western education encountered hostilities which destabilised the steady growth of Islamic education (Oloyede, 2015). In salvaging this retrogression, wealthy and enlightened individuals, in conjunction with Islamic organisations, especially in southwest Nigeria, such as *Ahmadiyyah Muslim Jama'ah* (Maigida, 2018; Aina-Obe, 2022) and *Ansar-u-Deen* Society of Nigeria (Reichmuth, 1996; Yahya, 2004), established schools with a blend of both Islamic and western curricula. Through this new system, Muslims children were afforded the opportunity to learn both Islamic and western education, which prepared them for further education in higher institutions in Nigeria and abroad. Consequently, Arabic and Islamic studies were reluctantly taught in schools after the colonial government adopted some of these institutions as government schools and accommodated the teaching and learning of the twin disciplines (Fafunwa, 1974).

In 1947, Yaba College of Technology (formerly known as Yaba Technical Institute) was established in Lagos as the first higher institution of learning in Nigeria (see <https://yabatech.edu.ng/history.php>) before the subsequent establishment of the University College, Ibadan, as an affiliate of the University of London, United Kingdom, in 1948, which later metamorphosed into Nigeria's premier university, the University of Ibadan (UI) (see <https://ui.edu.ng/content/history>). Among the foremost departments that were established within the first one and a half decades of the university (UI) was the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies. In this regard, Yahya Imam (2024, p.97) enunciates the history of the department *inter alia*:

The Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, was established in 1961 as a unit of the History Department. Still, it became a full-fledged Department in 1962 with the concerted efforts of John Hunwick, a British, and Keneth Dike, a Historian and the first indigenous Vice-Chancellor of the University. This effort was not accidental but a product of the conviction that Arabic is a veritable tool for understanding African history.

Thus, the department became the first of its kind in Nigeria, where foremost Nigerian trailblazers in Arabic and Islamic studies, such as Prof. Musa Oladipupo Ajilogba Abdul-Aziz (d.1986, popularly known as M.O.A. Abdul) and Prof. Ismail Ayinla Babatunde Balogun (d. 2005, popularly known as I.A.B. Balogun), who were both trained locally and internationally, worked as lecturers, groomed and produced Nigeria's generations of scholars in the fields of Arabic and Islamic Studies. It is then the aim of this paper, through content review, to examine and appraise a lecture delivered by I.A.B. Balogun as the guest lecturer at the first M.O.A. Abdul memorial lecture held at UI in 1987, as a tribute and celebration of his works and legacies.

Following the introduction, this study is divided into six sections: A brief introduction of the guest lecturer's personality, scholarship and professionalism and the occasion where the lecture was delivered. Others are the retrieval and reproduction of the manuscript under review, and a content review of the lecture, with the aim of enlivening the work of an erudite scholar which might not have been seen nor accessed by many in almost four decades. The paper concludes with the lessons learned not only from the lecture under review, but also from the truthfulness and boldness of Balogun's life of weathering storms and of practising Islam built on the Qur'ān, *Sunnah* and an understanding of the predecessors (*As-Ṣalaf As-Ṣālihūn*).

The study adopted a rendition of Balogun's precise sentences, as used in his lecture, with inverted commas, showcasing his prowess in the choice of words and sentences, while the paper concludes in affirmation of Balogun's erudition as an academic, Islamicist cum Arabist, interreligious advocate, historian, astute administrator and a foremost versatile Islamic scholar of repute in Nigeria.

### **The Guest Lecturer: A Concise Introduction**

Prof. Ismail Ayinla Babatunde Balogun could be described as '*a scholar of many positive faces*'. Born and bred in Lagos, Nigeria, he studied widely in Nigeria in various local Islamic traditional schools, including *Ta'lim Al-Islam Ahmadiyyah* Primary School, Elegbata, Lagos; Eko Boys High School, Lagos; *Ansar-u-Deen* Teachers Training Centre, Otta; and School of Arabic Studies (SAS), Kano, respectively, among others (Akanni, 2003). For his brilliance, he won many awards and scholarships and studied Classical Arabic at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, where he graduated with degrees in Classical Arabic (1963) and a PhD in Arabic and Islamic Studies in 1967 (Akanni, 2003). He was born and nurtured within the *Ahmadiyyah* family, a religious organisation he promoted and defended for many years before he later denounced its tenets and returned to pristine Islam. The decision was the biggest of his life's endeavours as a teacher, preacher and scholar of Islam in Yorubaland and Nigeria at large. In weathering the storms, he wrote and published several newspaper articles refuting *Ahmadiyyah* in Nigerian dailies such as *Sunday Sketch* and *Sunday Times*, as well as a collection of refutations and responses tagged "*Islam versus Ahmadiyyah*" (Balogun, 1977), among others.

Academically, Balogun taught Arabic and Islamic Studies in various educational institutions within Nigeria. He was appointed lecturer at the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, in October 1967, and rose to the Senior Lecturer cadre in 1972 (Balogun, 1987). In 1976, he joined the service of the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin (UNILORIN), as one of the pioneer staff of the department. He became a respected professor in his chosen discipline and the Head of Department (HOD) before he retired in 1990 (Balogun, 1987). To his credit are

many distinguished scholars of Arabic and Islamic Studies who have positively shaped the two disciplines and risen to professorial cadres in Nigerian universities, such as Prof. Muibi Omolayo Opeyole, the author of *A Dictionary of Peoples and Places in the Holy Qur'an* (2010), who formerly worked at the Lagos State University (LASU), Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) and Osun State University (UNIOSUN), as well as Prof. Ishaq Olanrewaju Oloyede, former Vice Chancellor of UNILORIN and current Registrar of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), among others.

As an academic and administrator, Balogun held several positions in various establishments in Nigeria. Prominent among these were his appointment as the Acting Vice Chancellor, UNILORIN, in 1981, and Dean, Faculty of Arts, UNILORIN, 1981-1984 (Akanni, 2003). As 'hydra-headed' faculty, he was also invited to spend his sabbatical leave with the newly established Lagos State University (LASU) in 1984, where he was saddled with the responsibility of developing the new institution during its formative years as the Foundation Dean, Faculty of Law and Humanities (Lawal, 1996). He was a versatile author of several books and articles, and a widely travelled scholar who attended many conferences, seminars and workshops locally and internationally for the promotion of Islam, Arabic and Islamic Studies, and humanity.



*Sheikh Ibrahim Al-Qattan, Head of the Islamic Sharia Courts (Jordan), right, with Professor Ismail A.B. Balogun (Dept. of Religion, University of Ilorin, Nigeria) at the International Symposium on the Concept of Monotheism in Islam and Christianity (Rome, 17-19 November, 1981): Culled from <https://i-p-o.org/qattan-balogun.htm>*

Having contributed to the growth of Arabic and Islamic studies and the promotion of peace and interreligious understanding through teachings, researches, publications and advocacies, Balogun retired in 1990 and died in 2005. He is remembered as one of the

pioneers of the studies of Arabic and Islamic sciences across Nigeria, an indelible mark and contribution he shared with M.O.A. Abdul to date.

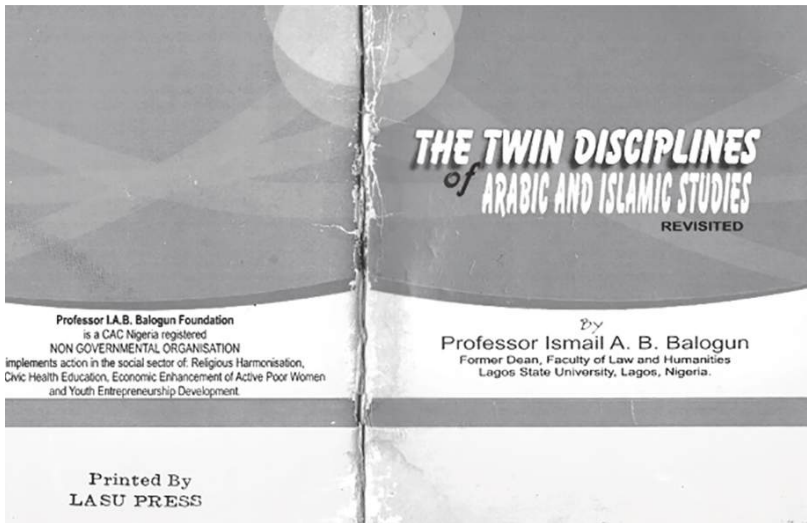
In his honour, several memorial lectures have been organised by his family through the Professor I.A.B. Balogun Foundation, in conjunction with his students of many generations. The first of its kind was held in 2008 in honour of the former Professor Emeritus in Arabic and Islamic studies, at the MBA Hall of LASU, Ojo, with the topic “The Shepherd and His Flock: Islamic Perspectives on Leadership Responsibilities”, delivered by a distinguished Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Prof. Daud O.S. Noibi, while the then Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babatunde Raji Fashola (SAN), was the Special Guest of Honour at the occasion (see *ThisDay*, September 6, 2008. <https://allarica.com/stories/200809070035.html>). Since then, several such memorial lectures have been held in his honour amidst several encomiums.

### **The Occasion**

The maiden memorial lecture titled “The Twin Disciplines of Arabic and Islamic Studies Revisited” was delivered at the Conference Centre, University of Ibadan (UI), in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, on Yawmu-Sabti, 30 Jumādah Thānī, 1407 A.H, equivalent to Saturday, 28th February, 1987. The event, the first in the series, was organised by the department of Arabic and Islamic Studies of UI in honour of Prof. M.O.A. Abdul, who died as head of the department in 1986, while the guest lecturer was Prof I.A.B. Balogun. It was a glorious occasion which had many personalities from all walks of life in attendance, including the then Vice Chancellor of UI, Prof. L.O. Banjo.

### **The Manuscript Reproduction and Retrieval**

According to the Professor I.A.B. Balogun Foundation, a Nigerian Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC)–registered non-governmental organisation, the manuscript under review was discovered by Dr Musibahudeen Olalekan Raheemson (who later retired as Professor of Islamic Studies) at the Department of Religions and Peace Studies, LASU, while searching through his library. He immediately drew the attention of Alhaji Abdulateef Femi Okunnu to the finding because of its immense usefulness to the public and the academia as regards the development of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigeria and beyond. In appreciating the monumental efforts of the late sage and erudite scholar, Alhaji Okunnu opined that such knowledge and research, presented as a memorial lecture in 1987, should not be left in the archive to degenerate, but should be reprinted for academic and public use (Balogun, 1987, p.38).



*Front cover of the reprinted book*

Therefore, in collaboration with the duo (Raheemson and Okunnu), the Foundation reprinted the book to enliven the scholarship of the late Professor Emeritus. The manuscript was republished and printed in Lagos, Nigeria, by the Lagos State University Press (LASU Press). By coincidence, the present reviewer bumped into a reprinted copy of the lecture while perusing the residential library of Prof. Ishaq Lakin Akintola, a retired Professor of Islamic Eschatology at the Department of Religions and Peace Studies, LASU, on Sunday, 4th July, 2025. He got the kind permission of Prof. Akintola to borrow the book for an academic *cum* content review thereof in honouring the monumental legacies of the late scholar and teacher of teachers for the benefit of other scholars and researchers.

### **Content Review of the Lecture Paper “The Twin Disciplines of Arabic and Islamic Studies Revisited”**

The lecture, a 42-page paper presented by Prof Balogun, was aimed at revisiting the development and importance of Arabic and Islamic Studies. Through our content review, the lecture is divided into five distinct parts: the heartwarming preface, the all-encompassing discussion about “The Growth and Development of Arabic and Islamic Studies”, the “Relevance of Arabic and Islamic Studies to Nigeria”, the “Conclusion” and the “References”.

## The Preface

Prof. Ismail Balogun commenced the lecture with a unique preface (*Muqaddimah*), which could be divided into seven: first, the praise prologue of Almighty Allah in the Arabic language, which goes thus:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمَلَكُوتِ وَلَمْ  
يَكُنْ لَهُ وِلْدَانٌ مِنْ الذُّلِّ وَكَهَيْدُهُ تَغْيِيرًا. اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ كَثِيرًا. وَالْحَمْدُ  
لِلَّهِ كَثِيرًا. وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ بُكْرَةً وَأَمْسًا. أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ  
وَخَدَّهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ. أَمَّا بَعْدُ  
فَأَسْأَلُ بِأَنَّهُ مِنَ الشُّبُهَاتِ الرَّجِيمِ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ.  
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ. مَا لِي يَوْمَ الدِّينِ  
إِيَّاكَ كَعَبْدٍ وَإِيَّاكَ كَسْتَعِينُ. إِيهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ  
الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ كَثِيرٌ الْمَكْتُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ.  
رَبِّ اسْتَرْخِ لِي صَدْرِي وَبَسِّطْ لِي أَمْرِي وَأَخْلِقْ عَقْدَةَ مِنْ  
لِسَانِي بِمَقْتَدَرِكَ الْكَوْلِيِّ وَأَجْعَلْ لِي وَرَثَةً مِنْ أَعْلَى سَمَاوَاتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ  
الرَّحِيمِينَ. آمِينَ يَا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ

In the name of Allah, the Most compassionate the most merciful. Mr Vice-Chancellors, sir, and Chairman of this occasion, members of the family of Professor Musa Oladipupo Ajilogba Abdul, Distinguished Guests, colleagues of the Academic, Ladies and Gentlemen, may the peace, mercy and blessing of God, Most High, be with every one of you.

All praise is due to Allah for making this gathering in memory of the late Professor Musa Abdul possible. We thank Him and beseech Him to continuously shower His blessings on our noble leader, the prophet Muhammed (S.A.W), and grant him everlasting peace. We earnestly request Him also to have mercy on the soul of the late Professor Musa Abdul and grant him Paradise. Rahimahullah Amin thuma Amin.

The remaining parts of the preface included the salutation of eminent personalities at the occasion, prayers for the repose of M.O.A. Abdul's soul, expression of gratitude to the organisers, Balogun's association with late Prof. M.O.A. Abdul, which started in 1946 at the Ansar-ud-Deen Teacher Training Center, Otta, and their journeys to scholarship and employment as lecturers who later rose in rank to Professorship at both UI and UNILORIN, respectively. He also mentioned their admittance to various citadels of learning outside Nigeria through scholarships, including studying at SOAS in London, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, among others (Balogun, 1987, pp. iii-v).

Furthermore, Balogun also mentioned the intrigues that interplayed in the appointment of Prof Abdul as the first indigenous lecturer of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigeria, at UI in 1964, and how he later joined the same department during the 1966/67 session. He chronicled the puzzles of their elevation to professorship cadres at UI and how he later joined the service of UNILORIN in 1976, where he became a full Professor in 1983 after a series of administrative bottlenecks. Lastly, he applauded the relevance of the chosen topic of the inaugural memorial lecture, "The Twin Disciplines of Arabic and Islamic Studies Revisited", to the life and works of Prof Abdul, who had spent a considerable part of his life in the pursuit of the twin disciplines of Arabic and Islamic Studies (Balogun. 1987, pp. iii-v).

## **Growth and Development of Arabic and Islamic Studies**

In enunciating the growth of Arabic and Islamic Studies around the world, the lecturer unearthed the *raison d'être* behind the nomenclature of UI's "Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies" which, according to him, was the first of its kind in Nigeria, in total departure from what was obtainable in other universities, such as the University of London, McGill University, Ahmad Bello University (ABU), Zaria, and Bayero University, Kano (BUK), both in Nigeria. In these latter universities, the two disciplines are separated as the "Department of Arabic Studies" or "Department of Islamic Studies", with overlapping courses taken by the students because of the inseparable relevance of the two disciplines, with the exception of the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria, where the nomenclature remains the same with UI (Balogun, 1987, p.1).

As Balogun reiterated, the fusion of the two disciplines was informed by the need to satisfy the yearnings of the university and the people, especially the study of Arabic language and literature, because of its importance to the history of West Africa. Unequivocally, African history could only be sourced from the archives of the Arabists, as recorded in the Arabic language; therefore, the university, according to Balogun, recognised the fact that "Islam as a culture had come to stay in Nigeria" (Balogun, 1987, p.2). He then affirmed Arabic "as the youngest, purest and the most distinct of the Semitic languages", with scripts purportedly dating back to 328 C.E. as "being an inscription on a tombstone of Nemara in the Syrian Desert", as the literary and oral compositions that existed centuries before the revelation of the Qur'an (Balogun, 1987, p.2).

The great work of documentation during the Abbasid period of Islam between 750 and 900 C.E., according to Balogun, "was an impetus to the preservation of the Holy Qur'an as an uncorrupted divine book which gave rise to the studies of Arabic grammar and lexicography by early Muslim scholars" where scholars "collected in writing the old Arabic poetry and traditions which otherwise might have become extinct" (Balogun, 1987, pp.2-3).

He also adduced to the notions that there are three types of Arabic recognised thereof: "colloquial Arabic (dialects or vernacular), Classical Arabic (language of pre-Islamic poetry, Qur'an, ḥadīth and medieval writings), and Modern Literary Arabic (language of the modern Arab writers, Newspapers and electronic media as inspired by the classical Arabic)" (Balogun, 1987, p.3). Therefore, in accentuating the importance of Arabic and Islamic learning, Balogun divided the stages of the growth of the Arabic and Islamic Studies into six:

- 1. The Prophet's time:** The synergy between the preceding hundred years of the pre-Islamic period of ignorance (*Al-ʿAsr Al-Jāhiliyyah*) and the advent of Islam in 610 C.E. – where "unwholesome customary practices such as promiscuity, loose unions, frequency of divorce, infanticide, homicide and inter-tribal wars on flimsy excuses"

– formed the basis of discussion by the lecturer. He enumerated the importance of Makkah in Arabian Peninsula as a “cosmopolitan and commercial city” which housed the then “Arab’s National Shrine, the Kabah’ and ‘Ukaz, a place where the most celebrated fair of the Arabs take place” through which poetries and proses were composed and recited in honour of different Arab tribes and during occasions by poets and orators; hence Makkah was “a flourishing commercial, religious and literary centre” (Balogun, 1987, p.4).

It is to the credit of Islam, as he noted, that writing was encouraged among the Arabs and non-Arabs after 610 CE through the revelation of Q96:1-5 and all the subsequent verses and chapters of the Qur’an, hence, the revelation was the “greatest impetus for the growth and development of Arabic language and literature” and “progressive development of Arabic as a language, and Islam as a culture and civilization”, while the Prophethood and Messengership of Prophet Muhammad was the inalienable driving force that enhanced the development of Arabic language and Islamic learning to date (Balogun, 1987, p.5).

2. **The time of the right-guided Caliphs (*Al-Khulafa’ur Rashidun*):** The era of the four right-guided Caliphs (632-661 C.E.), according to Balogun, also served as impetus for the development of Arabic and Islamic Studies, with the compilation of the Holy Qur’an which was hitherto “not collected into a book form”, but was “preserved then in bits and pieces contained in scattered palm leaves, stones, bones, leather, parchments, other durable materials and in human memory” This meritorious exercise by the *Khulafāu Ar-Rāshidūn* not only led to the collection and standardisation of the Qur’an, but also enhanced the protection, preservation and dissemination of Arabic as the language of the Qur’an itself (Balogun, 1987, p.5).
3. **The Umayyad period (661-750 C.E):** In the view of Balogun, the Umayyad dynasty laid a “firm foundation of Arabic linguistic studies”. Charismatically, he called the attention of the audience to the movement of the headquarters of the Muslim community from Madinah, as a result of the civil war that erupted during the reign of Khalīfah Ali bn Abi Ṭālib. The headquarters was “briefly shifted to Kufah, where Ali was eventually assassinated in 661 C.E” prior to the emergence of “Damascus as the headquarters by the Umayyad”. This development, as opined by Balogun, “laid the foundation for further progress of Arabic and Islamic culture as orchestrated by the Umayyad”. As he recounted, the development started during the reign of Abdul Malik bn Marwan (685-705) when Arabic became the state’s official language. Dots were invented and introduced by Al-Hajjaj bn Yusuf (d.714) to differentiate the Arabic Alphabet, which was entirely consonants with vowel marks, and facilitate reading. Also, in Basrah, the “study of Arabic grammar, panegyric and invective poetry fashioned on the pre-Islamic pattern thrived” with personalities such as Farazdaq (d.709) and Jarir (d. 728), while in Hijaz, “love poetry of chaste

and profligate” emerged, as exemplified by Umar bn Abi Rabi’ah (d.719). Balogun further explained that it was during the Umayyad dynasty that “religious oratory, Adab or belles-lettres literature, translation of useful knowledge from languages such as Pahlavi to Arabic (as in the case of Kalilah wa Dimanah) and the emergence of religious movements such as Mu’tazilah and Murji’ah in addition to the existing sects of Shi’ah and Khawarij” were recorded (Balogun, 1987, pp.7-8).

- 4. The Abbasid period (750-1258 C.E.):** In 750, the Umayyad dynasty, was overthrown by the Abbasid dynasty, and Baghdad became the new headquarters of the new government. As emphasised by Balogun, the new dynasty faced both “religious and social problems that resulted in political disintegration just 50 years after its enthronement”. Nonetheless, as he affirmed, the Abbasid is credited with the “expanse of the Islamic territory from Spain via North Africa in the West to intellectual efflorescence that covers the field of knowledge such as language and literature, Qur’anic exegesis, hadith studies, philosophy, historiography, mathematics, natural sciences, medicine, law, theology, mysticism and astronomy”, hence the period witnessed the “zenith of Islamic civilization and culture, and bequeathed to the world the basis of modern science and technology”. (Balogun, 1987, p.9).

According to Balogun, the period also witnessed the flourishing of *ḥadīth* collections and their methodologies, after the documentation of the first book of *ḥadīth* by *Imām Mālik bn Anas* (d.795), known as “Muwatta’ of *Imām Malik*”, a magnum opus from which arose the emergence of the “authentic six collections of Hadith” of al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Majah, Abū Dāwud, al-Tirmidhi and an-Nasī. Also, he pointed out that the four Sunni schools of law – *Imām Abu Hanifah (Hanafiyyah)*, *Imām Mālik (Malikiyyah)*, *Imām Shāfi’i (Shāfi’iyyah)* and *Imām Hanbali (Hanbaliyyah)* – emerged during this period. Also, Islamic theology featured *Imām Al-Ash’ari* (d.935) and *Imām Al-Ghazālī* (d.1111) prominently, while *Imām al-Tabari* (d.923) and *Imām Az-Zamakhshari* (d.1147) are featured in the field of Qur’anic exegesis, among others (Balogun, 1987, p.9).

As further reiterated by Balogun, “the period between ninth and eleventh centuries of the Christian era which witnessed the efflorescence of Arabic and Islamic learning is referred to as the Golden Age of Islam” which witnessed unprecedented studies and translations of Persian and Greek eruditions. This was championed and financed by *Khalīfah Al- Ma’mun* (d.833), a build-up to the initiation of *Khalīfah Haruna ar-Rashīd* (d.809) as domiciled in Bayt al-Hikmah (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad, where the scholars of that period excelled in “alchemy, astronomy, mathematics, geography, law and jurisprudence, medicine, philosophy, meteorology, mechanics, navigation, cartography, botany and natural history, industrial arts, agriculture, painting and architecture” (Balogun,1987, pp.9-14).

In presenting a balanced reportage about the flourishing of the two disciplines during the Abbasid period, Balogun also articulated the immeasurable development that occurred in some areas outside the Middle-Eastern Muslim-dominated territories, especially Egypt in North Africa and Spain in Europe, where Islam has penetrated since the seventh and eighth centuries of the Christian era, respectively. He chronicled all the political intrigues that led to the emergence of what he called “petty dynasties” in Egypt and its environs, such as the “Tulunids and Fatimids”, where the development of Arabic and Islamic learning led to the establishment of various learning centres and mosques which became renowned centres of learning to date, such as Al-Azhar University, established in 972 C.E by the *Fatimid* Egypt (Balogun, 1987, pp.14-15).

Also, the Muslim Spain, known as *Asbaniyyah*, witnessed the efflorescence of Islamic learning which, according to Balogun, “served in many respects as an eye-opener to civilization and culture for the Europeans during the Dark Age after the Muslims have conquered Spain from the eighth to thirteenth centuries C.E.” (Balogun, 1987, pp.15-16). It is on this note that Balogun, in extolling the influences of Islamic scholarship and civilisation submitted thus: “Nevertheless, the point is that, were it not for the connecting link provided by Islamic scholarship in the medieval times, between the ancient glory Europe and its subsequent renaissance after its temporary decline, it would have taken the West much longer time to arrive at their present level of attainment in science and technology, if ever they do” (Balogun, 1987, p.16).

- 5. The period of decline (1258-ca. 1800 C.E.):** Prof. Balogun cited Gibb Hamilton’s classification of the Abbasid period into the Golden Age (1050-1055 C.E), when the Ummah reached its peak in education and civilisation, and the Silver Age (1055-1258 C.E.), which ushered in the decline as a result of many factors. He then cited the “occupation of Baghdad by the Turkish Seljuks whose rule, with rare exception, was one of constant revolts and political anarchy” as the major turning point from the celebrated era to gradual decline. Though, as he noted, Nizamul Mulk, one of the Seljuk rulers, encouraged learning and culture, the “final blow to the efflorescence of the earlier period came in 1258 C.E with the onslaught of the Mongol hordes on Baghdad and the Muslim Ummah, hence, the eastern and western sections of the Muslim world became shattered into separate and gradually diverging cultural areas” (Balogun, 1987, p.17).

As Balogun noted further, the disintegration of the Umayyad dynasty of Spain led to the emergence of “petty Muslim States within the first two decades of the eleventh century, such as kingdoms in Seville, Granada, Malaga, Toledo, Saragosa, which ended up with the *Murabitun* (Almoravides-1090-1147) and the *Muwahhidun* (Almohades-1147-1269) who made Morocco their capital”. He posited that the decline in the political and religious power of Muslims also resulted in the decline in

scholarship because “Muslims became disillusioned when the non-Muslims such as Crusaders started to gain victory over them, the Mongols presented another stumbling block to the progress of learning and culture in the Islamic world by smashing a glorious civilization, killed, destroyed and scattered the best that was in Islam, the latter generations tabooed speculations (*Ijtihad*) and believed the gate of Ijtihad was closed which confined the subsequent scholars to imitation (*taqlid*) despite the prevalent of *Shariah* application among the early generations of Muslims based on Qur’ān and *Sunnah* while Muslims also became demoralized with the continued defeats of Muslims at war against those they considered infidels, as demonstrated by the difficulties of the Ottomans with European powers since the sixteenth century, and believed that they must have offended God, hence, He was punishing them through the hands of the infidels” (Balogun, 1987, pp.17-21).

6. **The modern resurgence (c.a 1800 C.E. to date):** In relating the modern trend of the resurgence of Islam and its knowledge, Balogun noted that the starting point is synonymous to “Napoleonic expedition to Egypt in 1798 which ushered in new ideas from Europe permeating through the Muslim world, and giving rise to some re-thinking of accepted norms and values, as well as reformulation of traditional concepts and precepts” leading to the “cross-fertilization and interaction between the West and the Muslim world” that “aroused and stimulated the Muslims to be conscious of the rich legacy which Arabic and Islam had bequeathed to the world”. The fusion and reawakening of the twin disciplines of Arabic and Islamic Studies, as noted by the guest lecturer, led to the “pursuance of the disciplines by the Orientalists and the Muslim scholars and the appearance of a succession of reformers and reforming movements that urged Muslims to remember the original teaching of Islam and uphold the old spirit which had accorded the early Muslims laudable achievements and glory” (Balogun, 1987, pp.21-22).

Intrinsically, according to Balogun, these movements included the “*Wahhabiyyah*” of Arabia started by Muhammad b. Abdulwahab (d.1791) which led to the creation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Jamaluddin al-Afghani (d.1897), a revolutionist and pan-Islamic reformist who sought to blend together an Islamic national feeling with European radicalism and his prominent follower, Muhammad Abduh (d.1905) who worked directly with him in Paris with the aim of reforming the Muslim society of his time before he carried out his own reform in Egypt” (Balogun, 1987, p.23). The reforms of Muhammad Abduh in Egypt, as documented by Balogun are remarkable, as he aimed at “bridging the widening gulf within Islamic society by producing a new set of Ulama who would be a cross-breed of both the traditional Islamic education and acceptable western ideas”. He was credited with “modern reforms and reorientation that exist today in al-Azhar University as the then Minister of Education and later, Shaykh-ul-Azhar”. Other notable reformists of this era in Asia and North Africa, according to Balogun, included “Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Sir Muhammad Iqbal and

Agha Khan, all of India; Midhat Pasha in Turkey; Khayruddin Pasha in Tunisia; Saad Zaghlul Pasha in Egypt; and Rashid Rida and others” (Balogun, 1987, pp.23-24).

Balogun also discussed Shaykh Uthmān Dan Fodio of West Africa and Shaykh Sayyid Abu'l A'la Mawdudi of Pakistan. He extolled the influence of Shaykh Dan Fodio (d.1817), who “carried out his reform in Hausaland but its impact cut across the whole of West Africa”. Though, as he noted, “Islam had been spread to the Hausa land in the fourteenth century C.E among the ruling class but with the influx of Fulani teachers and preachers from Mali who taught Islam, common people also embraced the religion, while both rulers and the ruled practiced Islam with syncretism and hand of levity, hence, Dan Fodio fearlessly condemned the corrupt Ulama’ who tolerate immorality and pagan practices, the common people who engaged pagan practices on the pretext of local custom and the rulers who usurped the populace” (Balogun, 1987, p.24). On the other hand, Balogun pointed out that “Shaykh Sayyid Abu'l A'la Mawdudi, an Urdu-speaking scholar who was grounded in Arabic, Persian and English founded his movement known as Jama'at- i-Islami, a strong and highly organized religio-political organization while his major work was his commentary of the Qur'an in Urdu entitled Tafhīmul-Qur'an which has been translated into Arabic, Bengali, English and Turkish while his other works have been translated to many languages including French, German, Hindi, Persian, Swahili and Tamil”. He reiterated that Mawdudi's “influences were felt in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, Africa, including Nigeria, Japan and America, where he had travelled to and gave lectures on Islam or his works were read and assimilated” (Balogun, 1987, p.25).

Indeed, as concluded by Balogun, Mawdudi was an advocate of “religious gradual and well-calculated advance to change as Islam brings about the transformation of society. Gradually through his tons of treaties on religious struggle, he condemned forceful revolution and rejected the Western dictum of “end justify means” but emphasized that both ends and the means ought to be clean and commendable in Islam, hence, Mawdudi's reformation is, indeed, a Jihad of the pen rather than the sword” (Balogun, 1987, p.26).

### **Relevance of Arabic and Islamic Studies to Nigeria**

In this section, Balogun extensively discussed the relevance of the twin disciplines to Nigeria. He noted that prior to the “advent of the Europeans in West Africa, Arabic was used for religious, social, economic and cultural purposes. It was also the language of scholarship which linked together the people of West Africa and those of North Africa along the shores of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic”. He further noted that in the “pre-colonial era, Arabic was the research tool which enlivened the lives and activities of the West African people through which indigenous languages borrowed many Arabic loan words, which were also written in Arabic script” (Balogun, 1987, p. 26). These languages

as noted by Busari (2024) included Hausa, Dagbani, Mamprule, Ghanyito, Fulfulde, Kanuri and Yoruba. Thus, as Balogun affirmed, “available Arabic manuscripts contain details of the religious, economic, social, political, cultural, and military pursuits of the people which were preserved in the National Archives at Kaduna and Ibadan, University Library, Ibadan, the Institute of African Studies” Centre for Arabic Documentation, University of Ibadan; as well as in other universities across West Africa, British Museum, London and the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris among other places” (Balogun, 1987, p.27).

In enumerating the relevance of studying Arabic and Islamic Studies to Nigeria, Balogun quoted the words of Prof Kenneth Dike, the first Nigerian Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, as reported by John Hunwick (d.2015), where he said:

Arabic documents form the raw material of research work in the field of West African Islamic Studies and African history, and it is through the aid of these Arabic documents, and those written in African languages in the Arabic script that the scholar will be aided in his task of unlocking the secrets of the African past (Balogun, 1987, p. 27).

In addition, the august lecturer enumerated the advantages of studying the two disciplines to include “political, social and economic advantages to Nigerians besides the spiritual satisfaction derived by many Muslims from studying Arabic and Islamic studies across the country, Arabic is one of the major official languages of diplomacy recognized by the Organization of Africa Unity (now African Union), the United Nations Organization, while Arabic language enhances Nigeria’s diplomatic relations with Arab-speaking countries in the areas of politics, social and economy. Also, there is linguistic connection between Arabic and some African languages which include Hausa and Yoruba in Nigeria, and it is also the language of the Shuwa Arabs who form a sizeable proportion of Nigerian population” (Balogun, 1987, pp. 27-28).

Balogun concluded this section with a clarion call for Muslims to assist in the development of the two disciplines amidst the incessant problems confronting them despite huge publications in this direction by scholars, such as the late Musa Abdul and himself, in the field. He applauded the “recognizable strides taken in Nigeria which included the establishment, in 1934, of the School for Arabic Studies, Kano, at the instance of the then Emir, Alhaji Abdullahi Bayero”. He informed his audience that the school started originally “as a Law School, and became School of Arabic Studies (SAS) in 1947 and has produced several personalities including Grand Qadis, Directors, Professors, Doctors, lecturers, teachers, businessmen, civil servants, commissioners and so on” (Balogun, 1987, pp.27-28). He also commended the efforts of some states in Nigeria where similar institutions, such as SAS, have been established, and he asked rhetorically, “who then is there to say that Arabic and Islamic Studies, including Shariah, have not been beneficial to Nigeria?” (Balogun, 1987, pp.28-29).

Lastly, Balogun mentioned the good works being done in several universities (as at then), such as the “Universities in Ibadan, Jos, Sokoto, Maiduguri, Kano and Lagos State University (LASU) where the two disciplines are offered for both single and combined Honours Degrees”, and not forgetting the rigorous but commendable work being done by “proprietors of institutions of Arabic and Islamic Studies which bear different nomenclatures such as Mahad, Markaz, Kuliyyah with their products climbing the academic ladders in various universities and institutions” with the advice that “such institutions, however, need some coordination in tune with Islamic educational resurgence that started a decade ago with the First World Conference on Muslim Education held in Makkah at the College of Education and Shariah, King Abdul Aziz University”. Thus, as a pragmatist, Balogun advocated for the conversion of “Zulikha Abiola College of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Abeokuta to an Islamic University of Nigeria by 1995 through which the Nigeria Academy of Arabic and Islamic Studies could be formed” (Balogun, 1987, pp.29-30).

### **Conclusion of the Lecture**

The memorial lecture in honour of Prof M.O.A. Abdul, as delivered by his contemporary, I.A.B. Balogun, offered him the opportunity to express the profound connections between Islam, Arabic and Islamic Studies and human endeavours in all spheres of life. In concluding the thought-provoking and awakening lecture of almost four decades ago, the guest lecturer concluded the lecture with a concise retrospection on his paper. He submitted that “we have traced the growth and development of Arabic and Islamic learning up to the Golden Age of Islam and subsequently, we have given the possible reasons for the decline of Islamic culture and civilization. Even though for centuries, the Muslim spirit gradually weakened but it never died. On the contrary, the spirit was revived by Reformers, leading to the modern resurgence of Islam and its adherents” (Balogun, 1987, p.30).

Balogun further said, “we also considered briefly the importance of Arabic and Islamic Studies to our fatherland, Nigeria, in particular, and West Africa in general, and we have called attention to the need for an Islamic University of Nigeria before the end of this century”. He also reiterated the “need for Muslims to go back to their roots contained in the Qur’an and the Hadith and uphold Shariah through thick and thin” and that “Muslims are generally convinced that it is their return to the practices of the Salaf that would save them, with Allah’s help and succour, from the impending doom that confronts the world. Muslims in Nigeria are fully prepared to apply the remedy. Let nobody stand in our way any further. Let the Shariah control the life of every Muslim in this country. It is our fundamental human right” (Balogun, 1987, p.30).

In concluding the lecture, Balogun re-affirmed the undiluted commitment of Late M.O.A. Abdul to “what he lived and died for”, that is, the development of Arabic and Islamic Studies and application of Shari‘ah in Muslim life without any hindrance, and he reiterated that “the struggle continues until success is achieved, by Allah’s grace and mercy”. He

then prayed for Prof Abdul when he said “it remains for me now to pray for the soul of the late Professor Musa Abdul in the way we are taught by the Salaf”, and read the following prayers in Arabic, which were also translated to English in his paper (Balogun, 1987, pp.30-31).

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّهُ عَبْدُكَ وَابْنُ عَبْدِكَ وَأَمْتِكَ أَنْتَ خَلَقْتَهُ وَرَزَقْتَهُ وَأَنْتَ  
أَمَّمْتَهُ وَأَنْتَ كَخَبِيئِهِ وَأَنْتَ أَعْلَمُ بِسِرِّهِ وَعَلَانِيَتِهِ حَيْثُ أَنْتَ  
سَمِعَاءُ لَهُ فَسَلِّمْهُنَا فِيهِ.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَسْتَجِيرُ بِكَ بِحِطِّ جِوَارِكَ لَهُ إِنَّكَ ذُو وَهَابٍ وَذِمَّةٍ  
اللَّهُمَّ لِغَيْرِ لَهْ وَأَرْحَمَهُ وَأَعْفُ كَعَفْوِكَ وَأَكْرِمْ نَزْلَهُ وَوَسِّعْ مَدَى  
خَلْقِهِ... وَنَقِّهِ مِنَ الْخَطَايَا كَمَا تَنْقِي الْقَوَابِ الْأَبْيَسَ  
مِنَ الدَّنَسِ...

اللَّهُمَّ لِأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ أَجْرَهُ وَلَا تَقْبَلْنَا بَعْدَهُ. (ابن ابى زيد القيروانى:  
281 - 282)

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ.  
أَمِينَ يَا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ.  
الْفَاتِحَةُ.

*O Allah, he is your servant, the son of your servant, the son of your maid servant. You created him and provided for him. You caused him to die and you will cause him to be alive again (in heaven). You know both his secret and his manifest action. We come to You as intercessors for him, please accept our intercession for him.*

*O Allah, we seek protection for him with the cord of Your Protection, You are the possessor of protection and security. O Allah, please save him from the trial of the grave and the punishment of hell.*

*O Allah, please forgive him, have mercy on him, overlook his shortcomings, keep him healthy (with You), honour his descent and widen (for him) his entrance (into Paradise).*

*O Allah, please purify him from sins as a white cloth is cleansed of every impurity.*

*O Allah, please do not deny us the reward of this prayer; nor cause us any trial after it.*

*Our Lord, please grant us the good of this world, and the good of the hereafter; and save us from the punishment of hell. Amin.*

## Notes and References from the Lecture

The guest lecturer, in his mastery of academic citations and referencing, had separate pages each for ‘Notes’ and ‘References’. In the former, he offered insightful explanations of some issues raised in the paper by numbering the ‘notes’ from 1 to 17. For example, in Note 1, he explained the official shortening of M.O.A. Abdul’s name, which was originally “Abdul-Aziz” (surname) to “Abdul”, probably for “convenience”, as he noted, despite its incompleteness as a ‘Mudaf’, which need a ‘Mudaf Ilayhi’ in Arabic grammatical and morphological arrangement. On the other hand, he used the latter (references) extensively to cite all the valuable sources he had consulted while writing the paper. An example of Balogun’s references, which spanned 27 citations, included Reference 21, which was cited as “Mahmud, S.F., A Short History of Islam, Oxford, 1960” (Balogun, 1987, pp.31-37).

## Lessons from I.A.B. Balogun’s Lecture and Life

This evergreen lecture on the development of Arabic and Islamic Studies is laden with lessons for the Muslim Ummah, both academic and non-academic. The analysis of the guest lecturer regarding his journey, and that of M.O.A. Abdul, as well as the intrigues that ensued towards the zenith of their careers as authorities in Arabic and Islamic studies, is noteworthy. Furthermore, the eruditions and indept analysis of I.A.B. Balogun of the field of Arabic, Islamic Studies, history and the socio-political intricacies in the Muslim world from the time of Prophet Muhammad to the present period (1987) of “scarce books, no internet nor e-library repositories”, is commendable. His ability to strive beyond limitations in research, citation, documentation and oratory remains a challenge to present researchers who are fond of engaging in plagiarism and other unethical conducts in research in the twin disciplines.

Above all, the all-encompassing lesson from this lecture, which resonates to date, could be inferred from the lecture when Balogun, in his charismatic and fearless conviction, while discussing the disintegration of the Muslim Ummah during the “Period of Decline”, says, “During those periods of the disintegration of the Ummah, there was one major occurrence that is relevant to us in Nigeria. It was the Crusades which represented the reaction of Christian Europe against Muslim Asia” (Balogun, 1987, p.37). His assertion chronicled the confrontation between the Christian Crusaders, which included the Byzantine Christians, led by their Emperor, Alexius Comnenus, who had appealed to Pope Urban II in 1095 to assist him against Muslims. The Pope, as he narrated, preached at “Clermont in South-east France urging all Christians -both Catholics and Byzantine- to join hands in capturing back the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem from Muslims”. Eventually, the appeal, according to Balogun, “caught on very well with the Christians who responded in tens of thousands, leading to the beginning of the Crusades” (Balogun, 1987, pp.17-19).

As he noted, by the end of the fierce crusades, conquests and reconquests, two leaders worthy of note, according to him, emerged: “one on each side of the divide, and were laudable examples for Nigeria as a country. They were Richard the Lion Heart of England who led the Crusaders, and Salah-ud-din bn Ayyub (known as Saladin) of Egypt” (Balogun, 1987, p.18). After briefly relating the story of what transpired between these two great men and their achievements which, as Balogun put it, “included marriage between Richard’s sister and Saladin’s brother, al-Malik al-Adil, with Jerusalem as wedding present to the new couple, ending the strife”, he encapsulated the lessons learned as a pointer to Nigeria’s interreligious engagement for peace and development and wished that “Nigerian Christians and Muslims can learn from this spirit of reconciliation and put a total end to the cat and dog existence that obtains among them in the overall interest of the nation. Nigeria belongs to all of us, and it is by salvaging it together and keeping it harmoniously united, that we too, within our respective religion, can feel and remain secure” (Balogun, 1987, pp. 18-19). This showcases I.A.B. Balogun as an advocate of peace, an interreligious dialogue ambassador and a promoter of humanity and social welfare for all and sundry.

Equally, all Muslims, irrespective of their indoctrination, must uphold the truth of Islam based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah. The Ahmadiyyah episode in the life of Balogun – from childhood to adulthood, to fame and scholarship, subsequent denunciation and the barrage of refutations, as well as his steadfastness in the face of provocations and alienation – is a lesson for all.

Also, unequivocally, the erudition and contribution of Balogun to the development of the twin disciplines would have been null in the toxic environment of hostilities, interreligious altercations and enmities as being witnessed in Nigeria today; hence, firm and strong advocacy for peace and interreligious respect and understanding is non-negotiable for the sustainability of I.A.B. Balogun’s works and legacy for all eternity.

## **Conclusion**

This study showcased the erudition of a trailblazer in the field of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigeria, Prof. I.A.B. Balogun. From humble beginnings as a staunch loyalist of Ahmadiyyah Jama'ah in Nigeria to being a renowned scholar of Sunni Islam, Balogun belonged to the first generation of Nigerian scholars of the twin disciplines, who sandwiched their traditional Islamic knowledge with both western education and advanced Islamic studies around the world. His brilliance in publication, mentorship, teaching, administrative shrewdness, extinguishing of truth from falsehood without fear or favour, and promotion of peace and interreligious understanding can never be over-estimated.

In recognition of all these qualities, this paper was able to mirror I.A.B. Balogun's life from the memorial lecture he delivered at the University of Ibadan (UI), organised by the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies in memory of Prof M.O.A. Abdul. It is believed that this content review and analysis of Balogun's paper would serve as an impetus that galvanises generation after generation into more fruitful scholarship and advocacy for peace, development and understanding in the Nigerian society.

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## CHAPTER 22

### التخصص في الإسلاميات وأهمية اللغة العربية

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#### المقدمة

في مقدمة مقالته عن نشاطات المعهد العربي العلمية في القرن الحادي والعشرين، يركّز عبد الحفيظ أولادوسو (2020) على أهمية العلم والتعليم في تكوين الهوية الإسلامية لدى المسلمين، أفراداً وجماعات. ويعود ذلك إلى أن المسلمين، قديماً وحديثاً، ظلّوا يتمتعون بالثقة في الشريعة الإسلامية، التي تُشبه المصابيح المنيرة في ظلمات الجهل، وتهدّهم نحو التقدم في العلم والثقافة. وهذه الشريعة الإسلامية، التي أشار إليها أولادوسو، لا سبيل إلى فهمها إلا من خلال اللغة العربية التي هي من أقدم اللغات وأكثرها ثراءً، وهذه اللغة قد نالت مكانةً مرموقةً بين لغات العالم، لما لها من صلة عميقة بالهوية الإسلامية والتراث العربي. فهي لا تقتصر على كونها أداة للتواصل، بل تؤدي دوراً جوهرياً باعتبارها حاضنة للمعرفة ووسيلة لفهم أمهات المصادر الإسلامية. ومن أبرز دلائل هذه المكانة أن الله سبحانه وتعالى أنزل القرآن الكريم بلغة عربية بيّنة، مما يدل على أن مفرداته وتراكيبه وإعرابه تنتهي جميعها إلى اللسان العربي الفصيح، كما في قوله تعالى: (بلسان عربي مبين) (الشعراء:195) ومن هذه الآية نفهم أنّ اللغة العربية تمثل البوابة الأساسية لفهم المصادر الإسلامية الأصلية، وعلى رأسها القرآن الكريم والسنة النبوية. وقد أكد العديد من الباحثين أن عدم الإلمام باللغة العربية يشكل عائقاً حقيقياً أمام الوصول إلى الفهم العميق والدقيق للتراث الإسلامي (الندوي، 2005) وتبرز الحاجة إلى بناء كفاءات لغوية قوية لدى الباحثين الأجانب في

ظل الطبيعة النصية التي تقوم عليها أغلب مصادر هذا الحقل لإعطاء الدراسات الإسلامية ما تستحقه.

لقد أصبحت الدراسات الإسلامية مجالاً واسعاً يثير اهتمام الباحثين من مختلف الجنسيات والخلفيات الثقافية والدينية والمهنية، نظراً لما تمثله من أهمية في فهم الفكر الإنساني، والحضارة الإسلامية، والعلاقات الدولية (Syedah Mahparaa, 2021). وقد برز العديد من المتخصصين في هذا المجال من غير الماهرين بالعربية، ممن يسعون إلى فهم النصوص الإسلامية وتحليلها، والمساهمة في إنتاج معرفة أصيلة تخدم مجتمعاتهم والعالم. غير أن هذه الجهود تواجه تحديات كبيرة، وفي مقدمتها عدم ضعف التمكن اللغوي، فضلاً عن عوائق منهجية وثقافية قد تحول دون التأثير الفاعل لهؤلاء الباحثين. وهذا يدل إلى أن هناك علاقة متينة بين الدراسات الإسلامية واللغة العربية (Masqon, 2015).

والجدير بالذكر أن اللغة العربية ليست مجرد وسيلة للتواصل في العالم الإسلامي، بل هي الوعاء الذي أنزل فيه الوحي الإلهي، هذا يعني أن القرآن الذي أنزله الله إلى الرسول، أنزله بلسانه العربي الفصيح الكامل الشامل، ليكون بياناً واضحاً ظاهراً، قاطعاً للعذر، مقيماً للحجة، دليلاً إلى المحجة ووسيلة للتفاهم مع القوم الذين أرسل إليهم الرسول، وبدأت الدعوة في محيطهم قبل أن تبلغ لغيرهم. إذا، فاللغة العربية هي المفتاح الأساسي لفهم المصادر الأصلية في الإسلام (زرزور، 1996). إن إدراك المعاني الدقيقة لهذه النصوص الدينية بحاجة ماسة إلى إتقان ودراية كاملة باللغة العربية، بفروعها المختلفة من نحو وصرف وبلاغة ودلالة (Suja, 2019).

كما تشمل الدراسات الإسلامية مجالات متنوعة مثل التفسير والحديث والفقهاء وأصول الدين والتصوف والفكر الإسلامي والفلسفة الإسلامية والتاريخ الإسلامي وما إلى ذلك من العلوم والمعارف (عبد المجيد بيرم، 2012). وتعدُّ اللغة العربية الركيزة الأساسية لفهم مصادر الإسلام الأصلية، فإن القدرة على التعامل مع النصوص باللغة الأصلية تعد عنصراً أساسياً في جودة البحث ودقته. غير أن كثيراً من الباحثين الذين لم يتقنوا اللغة العربية يعتمدون على ترجمات أو شروح باللغة الإنجليزية، مما قد يؤدي إلى نقص أو تحريف في الفهم.

يتبين من خلال ما سبق أن اللغة العربية لا تُعد مجرد وسيلة للتواصل فحسب، بل تمثل حجر الزاوية في فهم المصادر الإسلامية الأصلية، وهو الأساس الذي تنطلق منه هذه الورقة، إذ تدرك

بعمق مكانة اللغة العربية بوصفها الأداة الرئيسة الفهم المصادر الإسلامية الأصلية. وفي ظل اتساع نطاق الدراسات الإسلامية عالمياً وتزايد الإقبال عليها من قبل باحثين من خلفيات متعددة، تبرز أهمية التوقف عند مسألة الكفاءة اللغوية كعامل حاسم في جودة البحث، وسلامة الفهم، ودقة الاستنتاجات، ولا سيما بالنسبة إلى الباحثين غير الماهرين بالعربية، الذين يواجهون تحديات لغوية قد تؤثر على قدرتهم على استيعاب النصوص الإسلامية في لغتها الأصلية، مما يجعل الإمام باللغة التي نزل بها الوحي شرطاً أساسياً في تحقيق الفهم الصحيح والاستنتاج العلمي الدقيق.

### الدراسات العربية والإسلامية في نيجيريا

تُعدّ دولة نيجيريا من أكبر الدول الأفريقية (Onah, 2020). ويؤدي تعليم اللغة العربية والدراسات الإسلامية دوراً هاماً في تعزيز الهوية الثقافية والدينية للمسلمين فيها، إذ يُعتبر ارتباط الإسلام بلغته العربية متجذراً عبر التاريخ، فلا يوجد دين في العالم يتصل بلغته ارتباطاً وثيقاً كمثّل الإسلام (Al-Faruqi, 1986). وقد ورد عن الخليفة عمر رضي الله عنه قوله: "تعلّموا العربية فإنها من دينكم"، مما يعكس الأهمية العظيمة التي توليها الأمة الإسلامية لتعلم العربية (Ibn Kathir, 2003).

ولذلك، لم يتوان المسلمون في جميع أنحاء العالم عن الاهتمام بتعلّم اللغة العربية، باعتبارها الوسيلة الوحيدة لفهم الدين الإسلامي الغني، والغوص في علومه وثقافته المتنوعة، وهي الرابط الأساسي الذي يوحد الأمة الإسلامية. (Saeed, 2010) وظهرت اللغة العربية في نيجيريا متزامنة مع انتشار الإسلام فيها، إذ إن اللغة العربية والإسلام يسيران جنباً إلى جنب؛ فأينما حل أحدهما وجد الآخر. (Abdul-Rahman, 2015) وقد اتخذت العربية لغة رسمية في التعليم والإدارة قبل دخول الاستعمار، إلا أن نشاطات الدعاة والدراسين واجهت تحديات عديدة نتيجة إهمال الحكومة لتطوير الدراسات الإسلامية واللغة العربية. (Okonkwo, 2012)

ومع ذلك، فإن إرادة المسلمين المتعطشة للتعليم دفعتهم إلى إنشاء أول قسم للغة العربية والدراسات الإسلامية في جامعة إبادن عام 1946م، مما مهد الطريق أمام نهضة تعليمية عربية إسلامية في نيجيريا (Adeyemi, 2016). ومنذ ذلك الحين، تأسست العديد من الأقسام الأخرى التي أعادت إشعال روح اللغة العربية والدراسات الإسلامية في البلاد. ورغم ما حققته هذه الدراسات من تقدم، إلا أنها لا تزال تواجه مجموعة من التحديات العامة والخاصة التي تؤثر على المتعلمين

(Onah, 2020). وتكمن أهمية هذه الدراسة في مناقشة هذه التحديات واستعراض الحلول الممكنة لرفع مكانة اللغة العربية والدراسات الإسلامية في نيجيريا.

### أهمية تعلّم العربية والتخصص في الإسلاميات في نيجيريا

تُعتبر اللغات من أهم المعايير التي تقاس بها فاعلية الأمم وتقدمها، وقد اهتم الطلاب الراغبون في تعلّم اللغة العربية، وحرصوا على التحدث بها والتواصل مع الناطقين بها لتعريف شعوبهم بهذه اللغة العريقة بما تحمله من فكر وعمل (العارفي، 2008). وترتبط الرغبة في الاتصال بأصحاب اللغة العربية بالتعاون الثقافي والاجتماعي والسياسي والاقتصادي. (Suleiman, 2013)

لا شك أن اللغة العربية من أبرز وأهم اللغات السامية العالمية، فهي لغة القرآن الكريم والإسلام، ومرآة حضارة وثقافة عريقة تمتد لآلاف السنين. (Versteegh, 2014) ويتيح تعلّم العربية للفرد مزايا عديدة، منها فهم الإسلام وأداء واجباته بشكل صحيح، وفهم الثقافة العربية وتقاليدها، فضلاً عن تسهيل تعلم لغات أخرى مرتبطة بها. (Habib, 2017). وفي نيجيريا، لقد أدّت اللغة العربية دورًا محوريًا في الحياة الثقافية والاجتماعية قبل الاستعمار وبعده، حيث كانت لغة الحضارة والتعليم الرسمي، ودوّن بها التاريخ والتراث النيجيري. (Onah, 2020) ومن أبرز الشواهد على ذلك إنشاء قسم اللغة العربية والدراسات الإسلامية في جامعة إبادن عام 1946، والذي ساهم في حفظ المخطوطات العربية ونقل التراث العلمي والأدبي إلى الأجيال الجديدة (أمين، 2020؛ أمين، 2023؛ أمين، 2024؛ إبراهيم، 2024)

يجب على المتخصصين في الدراسات الإسلامية إتقان اللغة العربية إتقانًا تامًا، إذ إن ضعف المعرفة بها يؤدي إلى فهم منحرف أو ناقص للنصوص الشرعية (ابن جني، ح. 1967). فاللغة العربية ليست مجرد أداة تواصل، بل هي أساس فهم آيات القرآن وأحاديث النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، والتي تتطلب دراسة دقيقة وعميقة. كما أن الترجمات لا تغني عن الأصل العربي في نقل المعاني الدقيقة للمصطلحات الشرعية (المنصور، 2022). لذا، فإن تعلّم وتعليم اللغة العربية يشكّلان واجبًا أساسيًا لكل طالب متخصص في مجال الدراسات الإسلامية (المنصور، 2022).

مجالات العمل المتاحة للمتخصصين في العربية والإسلاميات

أثبت الباحثون أن تعلم العربية والدراسات الإسلامية في نيجيريا، سواء في فترة الاستعمار أو قبل الاستقلال، كان موجهاً لخدمة الدين الحنيف. فقد ذكر أوغنبية (Ogunbiyi, 1991) أن تعلم اللغة العربية عند المسلمين في نيجيريا كان وسيلة للوصول إلى غاياتهم الروحية، كما كان تعلمها عند علماء المسلمين مصدرًا حقيقيًا لدفع حركة الإسلام وتعزيز انتشاره. ومن الجدير بالذكر أن متعلمي العربية في هذا المجتمع، خصوصًا بعد الاستقلال، كانوا في أدنى مراتب التقدير؛ إذ لم تعترف بهم الحكومة ولا تسمح لهم بتولي أي وظيفة، فضلاً عن المناصب في الإدارات والوزارات الحكومية الفيدرالية. (Onah, 2020) وكانت هذه القيود تمتد إلى الشؤون الدينية، مثل مجالس الحجاج، حيث لم تكن قيادتها من الخبراء والمتخصصين، مما أدى إلى تهميش العلماء الراسخين في العلم واقتصر دورهم على الأنشطة الدعوية وإدارة المساجد. ومن تمكّن منهم من التدريس في بعض المدارس الحكومية كان يُلقَّب بملام (Mallam)، وهو مصطلح يوضح الفارق الكبير بينهم وبين زملائهم المدرسين (Adewale, 2018).

أما في العصر الحالي، فتتمثل أهمية اللغة العربية لدارسها غير الناطقين بها في ظهور العالم العربي على الساحة العالمية في مختلف المجالات السياسية والاقتصادية والعلمية والاجتماعية والدينية (Suleiman, 2013). كما أصبح الوطن العربي قوة بشرية ذات وزن وتأثير في موازين القوى العالمية، وانفتاح سوق العمل في الدول العربية على العمالة الأجنبية يشكل دافعًا قويًا لتعلم اللغة العربية كلغة أجنبية. (Versteegh, 2014) وهذا يتيح للأفراد المتقنين اللغة العربية من غير الناطقين بها، مثل النيجيريين، اغتنام فرص للتفاوض على صفقات مربحة وإقامة علاقات فعالة مع رواد الأعمال العرب. (Al-Hassan, 2015)

وتجدر الإشارة إلى أن اللغة العربية مطلوبة بشدة في مختلف المهن، بدءًا من الهيئات الحكومية والمنظمات غير الحكومية، وصولاً إلى المنظمات الدولية. (Fadel, 2012) وبذلك، تجاوزت فوائد تعلم اللغة العربية في العصر الحديث مجرد التواصل وعلاقتها بالدين لتشمل مجالات متعددة، مما أدى إلى زيادة ملحوظة في رغبة تعلمها كلغة أجنبية. وتقدم العديد من الجامعات النيجيرية، مثل جامعة إبادن، وجامعة إلورن، وجامعة بايرو، برامج متنوعة في الدراسات الإسلامية سواء كأقسام مستقلة أو بالاشتراك مع الدراسات العربية، وتشمل مستويات علمية متعددة (NUC, 2019). وكان الهدف الأساسي من إنشاء هذه الأقسام إعداد الطلاب لشغل وظائف في التعليم، والخدمة المدنية، والعلاقات الدولية، وغيرها من المجالات. (Nafeh, 2021) ويشير

نافع (Nafeh, 2021) ، مستشهداً بتقرير هيئة الجامعات الوطنية النيجيرية (NUC) ، إلى أن فرص التوظيف لخريجي الدراسات الإسلامية تشمل التدريس في جميع المستويات، وإدارة المدارس، والعمل في الوزارات والوكالات الحكومية، بالإضافة إلى مجالات مثل الإعلام والسينما. ويُظهر ذلك أن هيئة الجامعات الوطنية النيجيرية لديها خطة متميزة لتأهيل خريجي الدراسات الإسلامية، وإن كانت تحتاج إلى مزيد من التطبيق العملي.

### الإسلاميون وتحديات تعليم اللغة العربية

ومع اتساع رقعة المهتمين بالإسلام في الأوساط الأكاديمية النيجيرية، ظهرت فئة متزايدة من الباحثين والمتخصصين في الدراسات الإسلامية الذين لا يتقنون اللغة العربية أو لا يمتلكون كفاءة كافية فيها. وقد أدى هذا الواقع إلى جملة من التحديات المعرفية والمنهجية التي أثّرت، ولا تزال تؤثر، في طبيعة إنتاجهم العلمي، وطرق قراءتهم للنصوص، ومدى قدرتهم على التعامل النقدي مع التراث الإسلامي بلغته الأصلية. إن فقدان الكفاءة اللغوية لا يعني فقط صعوبة في الوصول المباشر إلى النصوص الأصلية، بل يتجاوز ذلك إلى مشاكل في فهم المصطلحات في سياقها التاريخي والثقافي، والوقوع في فخ الترجمات الناقصة، والاعتماد المفرط على مصادر ثانوية قد لا تمثل وجهات النظر الإسلامية التقليدية بدقة. كما أن التفاعل مع المدارس الفقهية أو المذاهب الكلامية يظل قاصراً في عدم إدراك لغوي دقيق لمصطلحاتها وأساليبها الجدلية.

لذا، فإن دراسة هذه التحديات أمرٌ ضروري لفهم حدود البحث في الدراسات الإسلامية المعاصرة خارج العالم العربي، ولمحاولة وضع استراتيجيات تُمكن غير الناطقين بالعربية من الوصول إلى مصادر الإسلام بشكل أعمق وأكثر أصالة، سواء من خلال تحسين برامج تعليم العربية لأغراض أكاديمية، أو تعزيز التعاون بين الباحثين من مختلف الخلفيات اللغوية والثقافية. ونذكر بعض هذه التحديات على سبيل المثال.

### التحديات اللغوية

إنّ من المسلم به أنّ الله سبحانه وتعالى أنزل القرآن الكريم بلسانٍ عربيّ مبين، كما قال تعالى: ﴿إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ﴾ (يوسف: 2)، وهذا يدلّ دلالة واضحة على أنّ ألفاظ القرآن، وتراكيبه، وأساليبه، ونظمه النحوي، واشتقاقاته، كلها جاءت وفق لسان العرب الفصيح بما يحمله

من خصائص لغوية وبلاغية فريدة (الزرقاني، 2004). وقد أشار الإمام الشافعي - رحمه الله - إلى هذا المعنى حين قال بعد استعراضه لهذه الآية: "فأقام الله حجته بأنه كتاب عربي"، وهو ما يدل على أن العربية ليست مجرد وسيلة لفظية، بل هي الوعاء الذي اختاره الله لحمل وحيه وبيان مراده (الشعراوي، 1998).

ويعود هذا الاختيار الإلهي إلى حكم بالغة منها ما تمتاز به العربية من فصاحة وبلاغة وقدرة فائقة على التعبير عن المعاني الدقيقة بألفاظ موجزة، فضلاً عن سهولة انتشارها وقوة حضورها في الوجدان العربي آنذاك (ابن جني، 1967). من هنا، تتبين الأهمية البالغة لإتقان اللغة العربية في فهم القرآن الكريم وتفسيره، إذ لا يمكن فهم مقاصد هذا الكتاب العظيم إدراكاً صحيحاً إلا من خلال إدراك أساليب العربية وقواعدها ودلالاتها (الطبري، 2001). ولذلك، فإن المفسر ملزم بأن يكون على قدر كبير من الإمام باللسان العربي حتى يتمكن من استيعاب مرامي القرآن ومقاصده على وجهها الصحيح (الشاطبي، 1997).

تتسم اللغة العربية بتركيب لغوي غني وتعقيدات صرفية ونحوية، مما يجعل تعلمها تحدياً كبيراً، وخاصة إذا كان الهدف التعامل مع اللغة الكلاسيكية، وليس العامية أو الحديثة فحسب (بكر، 2017). كما تعاني الترجمات من إشكالية المصطلح؛ فكثير من المفاهيم الإسلامية مثل "التقوى"، و"الاجتهاد"، و"القدر"، و"الشرك" لا تجد مقابلاً دقيقاً في اللغات الأخرى، مما قد يؤدي إلى سوء فهم محتمل أو اختزال هذه المفاهيم (Usman Muhammad Maunde & Bello, 2020).

ويعتمد المتخصصون على الكتب المترجمة لفهم الإسلام، ويعتمدون اعتماداً كبيراً على المراجع المترجمة في أعمالهم البحثية، مما يؤدي إلى آثار سلبية على نتائجهم العلمي وبشكل خطراً على المجتمع بشكل عام. ومن أكبر التحديات التي تواجه الباحثين والمهتمين بفهم الإسلام في العصر الحديث هو الاعتماد الزائد - بل أحياناً الحصري - على الكتب المترجمة من لغات أجنبية، خاصة من اللغات الغربية. وهذه الظاهرة تنطوي على مخاطر منهجية وعقدية وعلمية تستدعي التنبيه والوعي بها (سر يسر ملكية، 2012).

أولاً، الترجمة ليست مرآة صافية للنص الأصلي، فهي خاضعة لاجتهاد المترجم وثقافته وخلفيته الفكرية والعقدية، وقد تؤدي هذه العوامل إلى تحريف المعنى أو تقزيمه أو إسقاط دلالات شرعية

دقيقة لا يمكن نقلها باللفظ فقط بل تحتاج إلى إدراك سياقها اللغوي والشرعي (سر يسر ملكية، 2012). ولهذا السبب قيل في المثل الإيطالي الشهير "Traduttore, traditore" ويعني "المترجم خائن" (فينوتي، 2008، ص. 12) يُستخدم كثيراً في أدبيات الترجمة للدلالة على صعوبة تحقيق الأمانة الكاملة في النقل بين اللغات ويشير إلى أن الترجمة خيانة وإن أخلص المترجم.

علاوة على ذلك، كثير من الكتب المترجمة - خاصة تلك المعروضة على الجمهور غير العربي - تنطلق من رؤية استشراقية أو ليبرالية تتعامل مع الإسلام بوصفه موضوعاً ثقافياً أو تراثياً، وليس حياً إلهياً متكاملًا. ونتيجة لذلك تُنتزع النصوص من سياقاتها، ويُقدّم الإسلام كمنظومة أخلاقية أو فلسفية مجردة لا كدين شامل ينظم حياة الإنسان. (Said, 1978)

وفي الوقت نفسه، فإن الاعتماد على الترجمات يؤدي إلى انقطاع الصلة بالمصادر الأصلية: القرآن الكريم، والسنة النبوية، وأقوال العلماء الراسخين الذين كتبوا بلغتهم الأصلية، وصدر خطابهم من داخل المنظومة العقديّة الإسلامية لا من خارجها. ومن ثم، فإن من يعتمد على هذه الترجمات قد يغفل المناهج الإسلامية الأصلية أو يقع في فهم مغلوط (الخطيب، 2013). ويزيد من حدة المشكلة ضعف الترجمة الفنية في كثير من الأحيان، حيث يُنقل النص دون دقة لغوية أو شرعية، مما يؤدي إلى تضييع المعاني أو اختلاطها، وقد يصل الأمر إلى تشويه المفاهيم الأساسية في العقيدة والعبادة والمعاملات (الغزالي، 2010).

وعليه، فإنه من الضروري أن يتحلى الباحث والداعية وطالب العلم بالدقة والحرص في اختيار مصادر التلقي، بحيث تكون الكتب العربية الأصلية التي كتبها علماء ثقات هي المرجع الأساسي في بناء المعرفة العلمية (الزرقاني، 2004). كما يُستحب الرجوع إلى النص الأصلي لكل ما يُقرأ من ترجمات كلما كان ذلك ممكناً، أو استشارة أهل العلم لتوضيح ما قد يشكل غموضاً في المعنى، وذلك لضمان صحة الفهم وسلامة النقل (الشعراوي، 1998).

ومن الجدير بالذكر أن اللغة العربية تُعدّ من اللغات ذات البنية اللغوية المعقدة، لا سيما على المستويات البلاغية والنحوية والصرفية (ابن جني، 1967). وتتضاعف صعوبة الفهم عندما يتعلق الأمر باللغة الكلاسيكية المستخدمة في القرآن الكريم والحديث الشريف وكتب التراث الإسلامي التي تختلف في تراكيبها ودلالاتها عن اللغة العربية المعاصرة (الطبري، 2001). وهنا تكمن

أهمية التمكن من اللغة الأصلية، إذ إن الترجمة لا تنقل دائماً الدلالات الدقيقة للمصطلحات الشرعية أو المفاهيم العقدية، مما قد يفضي إلى لبس أو غموض في تفسير النصوص (الشاطبي، 1997).

ومع ذلك، يلاحظ أن بعض الباحثين الأكاديميين يكتفون بقراءة الترجمات، معتبرين إياها بديلاً كافياً للنصوص الأصلية، وهو ما قد يؤدي إلى نتائج غير دقيقة. فمثلاً، تُترجم كلمة "الربا" في الكتب الاقتصادية عادة إلى "interest"، إلا أن هذه الترجمة تفقد الكثير من الدلالات الفقهية الدقيقة المتعلقة بأنواع الربا مثل ربا الفضل و ربا النسيئة (ابن قدامة، 2003). وهذا الخطأ في الترجمة يمكن أن يؤدي إلى استنتاجات اقتصادية تخالف الشريعة الإسلامية، مما يبرز ضرورة الاعتماد على النص العربي وفهمه بعمق عند دراسة مثل هذه الموضوعات الحساسة (الغزالي، 2010).

#### التحديات المنهجية والأكاديمية

يعد المنهج الأكاديمي من أهم المظاهر المميزة لعصرنا الحالي، فهو عماد كل تخطيط وعصب كل تنمية، فبواسطته يتم وضع خطط التنمية على أسس سليمة ومتمينه (علي سايج جبور، 2018). وعلى الرغم من أهمية المنهجية، فإن بعض البرامج الأكاديمية عند المتخصصين غير الماهرين في اللغة العربية تعاني من غياب الرؤية المنهجية المتوازنة والمناسبة، حيث يتم التركيز على الأبعاد الاجتماعية والسياسية للإسلام مع إهمال الجوانب الإيمانية والروحية. (Ernst, 2003)

كما أن نقص الأساتذة المتخصصين غير الماهرين بالعربية أو محدودية الوصول إلى المصادر الأصلية يؤدي إلى قراءة النصوص بعيداً عن معانيها الدقيقة، لا سيما في الألفاظ متعددة المعاني أو ذات السياق الشرعي الخاص. مثال على ذلك، تفسير قول الله تعالى: ﴿وَلَا تُكْرِهُوا فَتِيَاتِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَاءِ﴾ (النور: 33)، حيث ترجم بعض الباحثين غير المتكئين كلمة "فتياتكم" بمعنى "بناتكم"، وهو معنى لغوي صحيح، لكنه في السياق العربي المقصود به "الإماء"، فوقعوا في خطأ تأويلي عقدي وأخلاقي (الضمور، 2021).

كما يؤدي ذلك إلى الخلط بين المصطلحات الشرعية واللغوية، مثل عدم التفريق بين المصطلح الشرعي والمصطلح اللغوي، مما يفضي إلى تفسيرات خاطئة. على سبيل المثال، مصطلح "الإيمان" عند أهل السنة يختلف عن المعنى العام له في اللغة؛ فالبعض يظنه مجرد "تصديق"، بينما هو في

الاصطلاح: "قول باللسان، واعتقاد بالقلب، وعمل بالجوارح" (علي سايج جبور، 2018). ومن هنا يتضح أن المتخصصين غير الناطقين بالعربية يواجهون إشكالات في اختيار المنهج المناسب لدراسة الظواهر الإسلامية، خصوصًا في ظل تعدد المدارس الفقهية والكلامية والمناهج التأويلية.

كما يعاني بعضهم من نقص الإشراف الأكاديمي المتخصص في الجامعات التي لا تهتم بتوفير أساتذة متمكنين من اللغة والتراث معًا. ويضاف إلى ذلك التفاوت في جودة البرامج الأكاديمية وافتقار بعضها إلى التوازن بين البعد العلمي والروحي في دراسة الإسلام. (Ernst, 2003)

وينتج عن ذلك اعتماد الباحثين على مصادر ثانوية مترجمة، مما يؤثر سلبيًا على دقة البحث العلمي (الضمور، 2021). أما التحديات الأكاديمية فتظهر جليًا في صعوبة التعامل مع المصادر الأصلية، مما يعوق الوصول المباشر إلى كتب التراث، ويؤدي إلى الاعتماد على المصادر الثانوية. فعلى سبيل المثال، قد يستشهد باحث في العقيدة الإسلامية بترجمات لكتب ابن تيمية أو الغزالي، ويغفل عن السياق الكامل للفكرة، أو يُسقط فهمًا معاصرًا عليها (علي سايج جبور، 2018).

كثير من الباحثين يستخدمون تصنيفات استشراقية لفهم الفرق والمذاهب الإسلامية، دون إدراك البعد العقدي لها، مثل تصنيف "السنة والشيعة" كأديان مستقلة أو ثقافات متضادة في بعض الدراسات الغربية المترجمة، بينما هو خلاف عقدي وتاريخي داخل دائرة الإسلام (Ernst, 2003).

كما تظهر التحديات الأكاديمية في التأثير بالمصطلحات الحديثة، مثل استخدام مصطلحات دخيلة كـ"القراءة الجديدة"، "النسوية الإسلامية"، و"الإسلام السياسي"، دون فهم الأصول الشرعية التي تُبنى عليها الأحكام. مثال على ذلك، استخدام مصطلح "النسوية الإسلامية" في تفسير دور المرأة في الإسلام، حيث يُقاس ذلك على مفاهيم المساواة الغربية دون الرجوع إلى مفهومي "العدل" و"القوامة" في النصوص الشرعية (الضمور، 2021).

### التحديات الثقافية والسياقية

اللغة ليست مجرد أداة للتواصل، بل هي وعاء للثقافة والفكر والتاريخ (البطيخي، 2022). ويتأكد هذا بشكل جلي في حالة اللغة العربية التي لا تنفصل عن القرآن الكريم، والسنة النبوية، وتراث

الحضارة الإسلامية. لذلك، فإن المتخصصين في الدراسات الإسلامية غير المتمكنين من اللغة العربية يواجهون تحديات ليست فقط لغوية، بل ثقافية وسياقية تؤثر مباشرة في قدرتهم على الفهم العميق للنصوص والظواهر الدينية الإسلامية.

من أبرز هذه التحديات الثقافية التي تعترض الباحثين المتخصصين في الدراسات الإسلامية، مشكلة البحث والتعامل مع الإسلام في بيئات غير مسلمة، حيث تُقدّم بعض المفاهيم الإسلامية في سياق نقدي أو غير موضوعي. (Ramadan, 2009) كما تؤثر الصور النمطية السائدة عن الإسلام في الإعلام أو في السياسات الحكومية على تقبل الجمهور لما يقدمه الباحث من معالجات علمية.

ينشط عدد كبير من الباحثين في بيئات علمانية أو متعددة الديانات، مثل نيجيريا، مما يفرض عليهم قيودًا في تقديم المفاهيم الإسلامية، سواء بسبب الصور النمطية أو الفهم المسبق المشوش عن الإسلام. إضافة إلى ذلك، تفتقر بعض المفاهيم الإسلامية إلى معادل ثقافي أو مفهومي دقيق في اللغات الأخرى، مما يصعب على الباحثين تقديمها بصورة مقنعة، مثل مصطلحات "البر"، "التقوى"، "الحياء"، "القوامة"، و"الجهاد" التي تحمل جذورًا ثقافية وتاريخية وأخلاقية عميقة لا تنقلها الترجمة ببساطة.

فعلى سبيل المثال، ترجمة "الحياء" بـ "modesty" في السياق الغربي قد تفقد أبعادها الإيمانية المرتبطة بحديث النبي ﷺ: "الحياء شعبة من الإيمان"، فتُصبح مفهومًا اجتماعيًا لا دينيًا. وأحيانًا يُفهم النص خارج سياقه الثقافي والاجتماعي، علمًا أن النصوص الإسلامية نشأت في بيئة عربية ذات أعراف وتقاليد ومعايير خطاب تختلف عن البيئات الأخرى. ومثال ذلك تفسير آية: ﴿واضربوهن﴾ في سورة النساء، حيث إذا تم فهم كلمة "الضرب" دون الإحاطة بالسياق الاجتماعي والتاريخي واللغوي، قد تؤدي إلى اتهامات خاطئة بالإساءة للمرأة، دون إدراك مقاصدها الشرعية (البطيخي، 2022).

كذلك، يؤدي عدم التمكن اللغوي إلى فقدان فهم الإشارات الرمزية والثقافية، إذ تحتوي النصوص الشرعية على إشارات تراثية ورمزية مألوفة في الثقافة العربية، كتشبهات النبي ﷺ المرتبطة بالصحراء والجمال والتمر، مثل قوله: "إن من الشجر شجرة لا يسقط ورقها... النخلة"، والتي تفقد دلالتها العميقة عند قارئ لا يعرف قيمة النخلة في الحياة العربية. (Ramadan, 2009)

فهم النصوص الشرعية - من قرآن وسنة - لا يكتمل إلا بالإحاطة بسياقاتها المختلفة: اللغوية، والثقافية، والتاريخية، والاجتماعية، إذ نزل الوحي في بيئة عربية خاصة، ذات أنماط لغوية وتقاليد اجتماعية وأعراف ثقافية شكّلت الإطار الذي تفاعل معه النص وفسره الصحابة والتابعون (البطيخي، 2022).

لذلك، فإن قراءة النصوص الشرعية بمعزل عن هذا السياق، أو إسقاطها على بيئات ثقافية معاصرة دون مراعاة الفروق الجوهرية، تؤدي غالبًا إلى فهم مبتور أو مغلوط. وتبرز هذه الإشكالية بوضوح عند المتخصصين غير الماهرين بالعربية، الذين - رغم تخصصهم - قد يفتقرون إلى الوعي بالسياقات التي تشكل الخلفية الحقيقية للنصوص، مما يفتح الباب أمام التأويل الخاطئ والتطبيق غير المنضبط، بل وأحيانًا تبني مواقف فكرية أو تشريعية تتنافى مع مقاصد الشريعة (Ramadan, 2009).

تزداد أهمية السياق في ظل الانفتاح الثقافي العالمي، ودخول الأكاديميين الإسلاميين من خلفيات غير عربية في البحث الديني، حيث تُطرح مفاهيم شرعية كبرى مثل الجهاد، والمرأة، والحدود، والحرية في فضاءات معرفية لا تشارك الإسلام سياقه المرجعي، مما يستدعي وقفة منهجية لتأصيل أهمية السياق وبيان أثر غيابه على نتائج البحث والفهم والاستنباط (البطيخي، 2022).

من هنا، تبرز أهمية تناول التحديات الثقافية والسياقية التي تواجه المتخصصين، لتسليط الضوء على جذور الفهم القاصر وبيان الطرق العلمية لتجاوزه، بما يحفظ للنصوص هيبتها، وللشريعة مقاصدها، وللفكر الإسلامي أصالته واستقلاله. وتُعدُّ إحدى التحديات البارزة في الدراسات الإسلامية في نيجيريا، خصوصًا لدى الباحثين غير المتمكنين من السياق الثقافي واللغوي للنصوص الشرعية، هي محاولة تعميم المفاهيم الإسلامية على بيئات وسياقات ثقافية مختلفة دون مراعاة الفروق الجوهرية التي تنشأ من خصوصية النصوص وأطرها التاريخية والاجتماعية.

فعلى سبيل المثال، يُستحضر مفهوم "الشورى" أحيانًا في السياق السياسي الغربي بوصفه مرادفًا تامًا لـ"الديمقراطية"، مع تجاهل الفروق العقدية الأساسية بين الشورى التي تقوم على مرجعية الشريعة الإسلامية، والديمقراطية التي تقوم على سيادة الشعب وإرادته التي قد تخالف النصوص الشرعية. (Esposito, 2002) هذا الانفصال عن السياق العربي الإسلامي الأصلي للنصوص

يضعف الفهم العميق لمقاصد الشريعة ويؤدي إلى نتائج غير دقيقة أو مغلوبة في التفسير والتطبيق.

كذلك، فإن محاولة فهم الأحكام الشرعية المتعلقة بالمواريث أو تعدد الزوجات خارج السياق الاجتماعي للمجتمع العربي القديم أو بعيداً عن القواعد المقاصدية التي تراعى العدل والرحمة، تؤدي إلى استنتاجات غير سليمة أو انتقائية. إذ إن هذه الأحكام قد تبدو ظاهرياً متشعبة أو غير ملائمة، لكن إدراك السياق التاريخي والاجتماعي والقيمي الذي نزلت فيه هذه الأحكام، بالإضافة إلى مقاصدها الشرعية، يوضح الحكمة والمرونة الكامنة فيها. (Al-Attas, 1993)

علاوة على ذلك، يُلاحظ في بعض القراءات الحدائية للنصوص الشرعية إهمال تدرج الأحكام أو أسباب النزول، مما يؤدي إلى اجتزاء المعاني وسوء الفهم. فمثلاً، فهم حد السرقة في قوله تعالى: ﴿والسارق والسارقة فاقطعوا أيديهما﴾ (المائدة: 38) بمعزل عن الشروط الدقيقة لتطبيق الحد، كالضرورة والظروف الاجتماعية ومقاصد الردع، يُفقد النص بُعدَه العدلي والرحمي، ويؤدي إلى تفسيرات صارمة قد لا تتفق مع الحكمة الإلهية والمقاصد الشرعية. (Al-Shatibi, 1997)

وهكذا، فإن تعميم المفاهيم الإسلامية على سياقات غير ملائمة، دون دراسة عميقة للسياق التاريخي، الثقافي، والعقائدي، يشكل عائقاً كبيراً أمام الفهم الصحيح للإسلام، ويُسهّم في تأويلات خاطئة تعطي صورة مشوهة عن الدين.

#### اقتراحات وتوصيات

لمواجهة التحديات التي تعترض المتخصصين في الدراسات الإسلامية غير المتمكنين من اللغة العربية، تبرز مجموعة من الحلول على المستويين الفردي والمؤسسي. في مقدّمها، ضرورة تعزيز تعليم اللغة العربية من خلال برامج أكاديمية مكثفة تركز على اللغة الفصحى، لا سيما في بعدها التراثي والشرعي. كما أن تطوير مناهج تعليمية مصممة خصيصاً للدارسين في هذا المجال، مع التركيز على المصطلحات الإسلامية وأساليب النصوص الأصلية، يُعدّ خطوة محورية. إلى جانب ذلك، ينبغي تشجيع الباحثين على القراءة المزدوجة للنصوص، أي الاطلاع على النصوص الإسلامية بلغتها الأصلية وبترجمات، مما يعزز الفهم السياقي والدلالي.

على الصعيد المنهجي، من المهم تشكيل فرق بحثية متعددة التخصصات تجمع بين من يمتلكون الكفاءة اللغوية ومن يتمتعون بخلفيات معرفية متنوعة، بما يثري البحث ويقلل من مخاطر إساءة الفهم. أما على الصعيد التقني، فتُعدّ الموارد الرقمية، كالمعاجم الإلكترونية، ومحركات البحث في النصوص التراثية، وأدوات الذكاء الاصطناعي المتخصصة في الترجمة والتفسير، أدوات مساندة هامة تسهم في تجسير الفجوة اللغوية.

كما تتحمل المؤسسات الأكاديمية دورًا مهمًا في هذا السياق من خلال إلزامية إدراج تعلم اللغة العربية ضمن متطلبات برامج الدراسات الإسلامية، وتوفير فرص للتبادل الأكاديمي مع مؤسسات في العالم العربي لاكتساب الكفاءة اللغوية والثقافية. في النهاية، لا بد من تنمية وعي عميق بأهمية اللغة العربية في فهم الدين، باعتبارها ليست فقط وسيلة لفهم النص، بل مدخلًا رئيسًا لفهم البنية الحضارية والفكرية التي نشأت في ظلها العلوم الإسلامية.

#### الخاتمة

تشير المعطيات إلى أن المتخصصين في الدراسات الإسلامية من غير الناطقين بالعربية يواجهون جملة من التحديات المعقدة، التي تتراوح بين الجوانب اللغوية والمنهجية والثقافية. غير أن هذه التحديات ليست عصية على الحل، بل يمكن تجاوزها عبر توجيه الجهود نحو تطوير المهارات اللغوية والمنهجية، وبناء جسور التواصل والتعاون العلمي مع المراكز الإسلامية الناطقة بالعربية. ومن شأن هذا أن يثري الحقل العلمي العالمي ويعمق الفهم المتبادل بين الحضارات.

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## **SECTION FIVE**

### **ISLAM, TECHNOLOGY AND EMERGING EPISTEMOLOGIES**

## CHAPTER 23

### AI Technology and Qur'an Memorisation in the 21st Century

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#### Introduction

In the 21st century, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has revolutionised various fields, including education, healthcare, business and even religious studies. One significant area where AI is making an impact is in *Tahfizul Qur'an*— memorisation of the Qur'an. Traditionally, Qur'an memorisation has been passed down through disciplined oral transmission, guided by teachers in mosques and *madrasahs*. However, with advancements in AI, digital tools, such as AI-powered apps, voice recognition software and adaptive learning systems, have emerged to assist students in their memorisation journey.

The integration of AI in *Tahfizul Qur'an* brings both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, AI offers innovative solutions such as real-time pronunciation correction, personalised learning plans and increased accessibility for learners worldwide. On the other hand, concerns arise regarding the effectiveness of AI in preserving the spiritual and traditional essence of *Hifz*, the potential loss of human mentorship and issues related to data privacy and ethical use of the Qur'an.

This paper explores the benefits and challenges of using AI technology for *Tahfizul Qur'an* (memorisation of the Qur'an), providing an analytical perspective on its implications in the 21st century. The purposes of doing these are to:

- i. explore the role of AI in *Tahfizul Qur'an* by examining how AI technologies, such as speech recognition, machine learning and virtual tutors, are being used to assist in Qur'an memorisation. It also helps to identify ways AI can enhance traditional *Tahfiz* methods.
- ii. highlight the advantages of AI in Qur'anic memorisation by discussing how AI-powered applications can improve accuracy in pronunciation and *Tajweed*, and to analyse how AI provides personalised learning experiences, catering to individual memorisation speeds and styles. It is also to examine the accessibility benefits of AI, especially for students in remote areas or those without access to qualified teachers.
- iii. address the challenges and limitations of AI in *Tahfizul Qur'an* by exploring the risks of over-reliance on AI, including reduced human interaction and spiritual guidance. It is also to discuss concerns regarding data privacy, errors in AI-generated

- feedback and potential misinterpretations of Qur’anic verses. The purpose is also to evaluate the ethical and theological implications of using AI in religious education.
- iv. compare AI-Assisted *Tahfiiz* with traditional methods by assessing how AI complements or differs from this approach, which relies on direct teacher-student interaction. In other words, the paper investigates whether AI can replace or only supplement human teachers in Qur’anic memorisation.
  - v. provide a balanced perspective on AI in *Tahfiizul Qur’an* by offering a critical analysis of both the benefits and drawbacks, helping educators and students make informed decisions about AI integration. The paper will suggest ways to optimise AI tools while maintaining the spiritual and traditional essence of *Tahfiiz* education.

By critically evaluating these aspects, this paper aims to provide a balanced perspective on the role of AI in shaping the future of *Tahfiizul Qur’an*.

### **The Importance and Benefits of Studying and Memorising the Qur’an for Muslims**

The Qur’an is the most sacred and central text in Islam, guiding every aspect of a Muslim’s life. It is Allah’s final revelation to humanity, serving as a guide for life. The Qur’an describes itself in various ways, emphasising its divine origin: *Guidance* (Qur’an 2:2), *Light (Nur)* (Qur’an 4:17), *Healing and Mercy* (Qur’an 17:82), *Reminder (Dhikr)* (Qur’an 15:9) and an *Everlasting Miracle* (Qur’an 17:88). Similarly, the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) highlights its virtues, significance and impact on believers. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “The best of speech is the Book of Allah, and the best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad” (Sunan Ibn Majah 1:46, Sahih). He also describes it as a means of intercession on the Day of Judgement when he (ﷺ) said: “Read the Qur’an, for it will come as an intercessor for its companions on the Day of Resurrection” (Sahih Muslim 804). In another Hadith, he calls it a Source of Elevation. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Indeed, Allah raises some people by this Book and lowers others by it” (Sahih Muslim 817). He also sees it as a Light in Darkness when he (ﷺ) said: “Hold fast to the Qur’an, for it is a light in the darkness and guidance in times of confusion” (Sunan Ad-Darimi 3283, Hasan). Above all, the Prophet describes the Qur’an as a Cure for the Heart. He (ﷺ) said: “There is no envy except in two cases: a person whom Allah has given the Qur’an, and he recites it throughout the night and day...” (Sahih al-Bukhari 7529).

Thus, the Qur’an is not just a book; it is a divine miracle, a source of guidance, mercy and healing. It is a light for those who seek truth and an intercessor for those who recite and act upon it. The sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) further emphasise its immense virtues and the need to engage with it sincerely.

The Qur’an is the foundation of a Muslim’s faith, providing guidance for all aspects of life. Its significance extends beyond religious rituals to shape moral conduct, social justice and personal development. It provides instructions on faith, worship, ethics and law, helping believers navigate life in accordance with divine wisdom. It encourages virtues such as patience, gratitude and justice while warning against arrogance, dishonesty and oppression. The Qur’an also encourages reflection, learning and the pursuit of knowledge.

It contains signs about the universe, creation and human nature that continue to inspire scientific discoveries. The Qur'an unites Muslims worldwide, transcending language, culture and geography. It serves as a common foundation for belief and practice, fostering unity and brotherhood. Studying and memorising it is considered one of the greatest acts of worship, bringing immense rewards in both this life and the Hereafter. Studying the Qur'an helps Muslims distinguish between right and wrong. It protects against ignorance, misconceptions and deviation from the truth. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "I have left among you two things, and you will never go astray as long as you hold fast to them: the Book of Allah and my *Sunnah*" (Sunan Al-Muwatta 1628). By studying the Qur'an, therefore, Muslims learn how to live a righteous life, follow moral values and fulfil their duties toward Allah and society.

Reciting the Qur'an is an act of worship that earns great rewards. It plays a central role in *Salah* (prayer), fasting and supplications. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Whoever recites a letter from the Book of Allah will receive a reward, and that reward will be multiplied by ten" (Sunan At-Tirmidhi 2910). Muslims also turn to the Qur'an for solace and healing in times of distress. The Qur'an will speak on behalf of those who recite and act upon it. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Read the Qur'an, for it will come as an intercessor for its companions on the Day of Resurrection" (Sahih Muslim 804). Regular recitation helps purify the soul, remove doubts and provide emotional comfort. The more a Muslim engages with the Qur'an, the closer he feels Allah. Reciting, understanding and applying its teachings bring spiritual enlightenment and inner peace. Allah says: "Indeed, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest" (Qur'an 13:28).

Memorisation of the Qur'an, known as *Tahfizul Qur'an*, holds a significant place in Islamic tradition. This practice involves committing the entire Qur'an to memory and preserving it in the hearts of believers. It has been an essential part of Islamic scholarship and religious devotion since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The importance of *Tahfizul Qur'an* is evident in its spiritual, educational and social benefits, ensuring the preservation of the divine message and strengthening the faith of the Muslim community. Studying and memorising the Qur'an is a lifelong journey that brings countless benefits. It strengthens faith, purifies the soul, grants protection and ensures success in this life and the Hereafter. It is not just an intellectual pursuit but a spiritual and moral obligation that every Muslim should strive for. Through the Qur'an, one finds peace, guidance and the ultimate path to *Jannah*.

One of the most crucial aspects of *Tahfizul Qur'an* is the preservation of the Qur'anic texts. The Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) over 23 years, and it was memorised by his companions before being compiled into a written form. The Prophet himself encouraged his followers to memorise the Qur'an, as seen in the Hadith: "The best among you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 5027). Memorisation ensures that the Qur'an remains unchanged and protected

from distortion, fulfilling Allah's promise: "Indeed, We have sent down the Reminder (the Qur'an), and indeed, We will preserve it" (Qur'an 15:9).

Memorising the Qur'an also brings immense spiritual rewards. It deepens a believer's connection with Allah and enhances his/her understanding of Islamic teachings. The Qur'an is considered a source of guidance, mercy and healing (Qur'an 17:82), and memorising it allows Muslims to internalise its messages and apply them in their daily lives. Memorisation of the Qur'an also fosters unity and continuity within the Muslim community. It creates a shared religious identity and strengthens the bonds between generations.

Furthermore, the Qur'an will plead for those who memorise and act upon it. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Read the Qur'an, for it will come as an intercessor for its companions on the Day of Resurrection" (Sahih Muslim 804). The more a person memorises and recites the Qur'an, the higher their rank in Paradise. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "It will be said to the companion of the Qur'an: Recite and ascend (in ranks); recite as you used to recite in the world, for your position will be at the last verse you recite" (Sunan At-Tirmidhi 2914, Hasan and Sunan Abu Dawood, 1464). M

Memorising the Qur'an provides spiritual and worldly protection. Reciting certain Surahs (like Al-Fatihah, Ayat al-Kursi, and Al-Mulk) shields one from harm, evil and punishment in the grave. Moreover, Qur'anic memorisation enhances cognitive abilities, such as memory retention, concentration and linguistic skills. Studies have shown that those who memorise the Qur'an develop strong analytical and critical thinking skills, benefiting both their religious and secular education (Al-Azzam, 2020).

Memorising the Qur'an (*Hifz*) grants a special status in this world and the Hereafter. A *Hafiz* (one who memorises the Qur'an), for example, is honoured in Islamic gatherings, prayers and leadership roles. *Huffaaz* (plural of *Hafiz*) play a crucial role in leading prayers, particularly during *Taraweeh* in Ramadan, where the Qur'an is recited in full. Their presence ensures that the correct pronunciation and recitation of the Qur'an are preserved in Muslim communities worldwide. Many cultures celebrate *Haafiz* (a memoriser of the Qur'an) with special recognition and honour, reflecting the high regard given to this achievement.

Additionally, a *Haafiz's* parents are honoured with a crown of light on the Day of Judgment. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Whoever recites the Qur'an and acts upon it, his parents will be given a crown of light on the Day of Judgment, the brightness of which is like the sun" (Sunan Abu Dawood 1453).

*Tahfizul Qur'an*, therefore, is a cornerstone of Islamic education. Traditional Islamic schools (*madaris*) emphasise memorisation as a foundational step in religious learning. Many scholars begin their journey by memorising the Qur'an before proceeding to advanced studies in Islamic jurisprudence, theology and Hadith.

Conclusively, *Tahfizul Qur'an* is a fundamental part of Islamic tradition, ensuring the preservation of the Qur'an, deepening spiritual commitment and enriching Islamic education. It carries immense rewards in both this life and the Hereafter. The roles of *Huffaaz* (memorisers of the Qur'an) in leading prayers, teaching and safeguarding the Qur'anic texts highlight the enduring significance of memorisation in the Muslim world.

For Muslims, therefore, the Qur'an is more than just a book—it is a divine roadmap for life, a source of spiritual nourishment and a guiding light for both this world and the Hereafter. It is recited in worship, memorised by millions and followed as the ultimate standard of truth. Engaging with the Qur'an with sincerity and understanding strengthens faith, shapes character and brings one closer to Allah.

### **Traditional Methods of Studying and Memorising the Qur'an**

For centuries, Muslims have preserved the Qur'an through structured and disciplined methods of study and memorisation. These traditional methods have proven highly effective in ensuring the accurate transmission of the Qur'an across generations. The traditional methods include:

1. ***The Kuttaab or Madrasah system:*** The *Kuttaab* (plural: *Katātīb*) and *Madrasah* systems have been the most common institutions for teaching the Qur'an, particularly in the Muslim world. Children and adults gather in a dedicated learning space under the guidance of a qualified teacher (*Ustadh* or *Sheikh*). Students begin by learning the Arabic alphabet (*Qaaidah*) and pronunciation rules (*Tajweed*). They progress to memorising the Qur'an in small sections, repeating verses until mastery.
2. ***The Halaqah (study circle) method:*** A *Halaqah* is a circle of students who gather around a teacher to recite and study the Qur'an. Students recite in turns while the teacher corrects mistakes. This method fosters a group learning environment, enhancing motivation and discipline. It is commonly practised in mosques and Islamic centres.
3. ***The repetition and recitation method (Tardid):*** Memorisation is achieved through continuous repetition of verses: the teacher recites a verse multiple times while students listen carefully. Students then repeat the verse individually or collectively until they memorise it. This method is highly effective for auditory learners.
4. ***The writing method (Kitabah):*** In this method, students write out the verses on slates (*Lawh*), wooden boards or paper. Writing reinforces memory and helps with the recognition of Arabic script. After memorisation, students wash the slate and rewrite new verses. This method is widely used in traditional Qur'an schools in Africa and South Asia.
5. ***The daily portioning (Manzil) system:*** Students divide the Qur'an into portions for systematic memorisation: a fixed number of verses or pages is memorised daily. Previously memorised sections are regularly revised to ensure retention. This method prevents forgetting and builds long-term retention.

6. **The Sabak, Sabki and Manzil technique:** This structured method includes three stages;
  - i. **Sabak (new lesson)** – Students memorise a fresh portion daily.
  - ii. **Sabki (recent revision)** – Recently memorised verses are revised.
  - iii. **Manzil (old revision)** – Older memorised portions are reviewed frequently.
 This method ensures gradual progress while reinforcing past memorisation.
7. **The Talaqqi (oral transmission) method:** Students recite directly to a teacher who corrects pronunciation and *Tajweed*. This method preserves the exact pronunciation and recitation style as passed down from the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) through authentic chains of transmission (*Sanad*).
8. **The Ijaazah system:** A formal certification (*Ijaazah*) is granted when a student successfully memorises and recites the entire Qur'an with proper *Tajweed*. The student recites the Qur'an multiple times to an authorised teacher who ensures accuracy. This chain of certification links back to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), ensuring an unbroken transmission of the Qur'an.
9. **The listening and echoing method:** Students listen to a teacher, senior student or recorded recitation and then echo the verses. This method is particularly effective for improving pronunciation and *Tajweed*.
10. **The role of parents and home-based learning:** Traditionally, parents play a significant role in teaching Qur'an memorisation at home. Children start learning short *Surahs* from an early age through daily recitation with parents. Family involvement reinforces consistency and motivation.

The traditional methods of studying and memorising the Qur'an emphasise repetition, oral transmission and discipline. These methods have preserved the Qur'an flawlessly for centuries, ensuring both accuracy and a deep spiritual connection. Despite modern technological advancements, these traditional techniques remain highly effective and are still widely practised across the Muslim world.

### **AI Technology and Its Rise for Educational Purposes**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the ability of machines and computer systems to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as problem-solving, learning, reasoning and decision-making (Russell & Norvig, 2020). AI technology encompasses various subfields, including machine learning, natural language processing and computer vision, enabling computers to process data, recognise patterns and make autonomous decisions.

AI is broadly defined as the simulation of human intelligence in machines designed to think and learn (Goodfellow, Bengio, & Courville, 2016). It can be categorised into two main types:

1. **Narrow AI (Weak AI):** It is designed for specific tasks, such as voice assistants (e.g., Siri, Alexa), recommendation systems and chatbots (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2019).

2. **General AI (Strong AI):** This is a theoretical form of AI that would have human-like cognitive abilities and could perform any intellectual task that a human can do (Goertzel, 2014).

### **Core Components of AI Technology include:**

1. **Machine learning (ML):** This is a subset of AI that enables systems to learn from data and improve their performance without being explicitly programmed (Murphy, 2012). ML algorithms analyse large datasets to detect patterns and make predictions. Applications include fraud detection, medical diagnosis and recommendation systems.
2. **Natural language processing (NLP):** It allows computers to understand, interpret and generate human language. It is used in applications like chatbots, language translation and speech recognition (Jurafsky & Martin, 2021). Examples include AI-driven assistants such as Google Assistant and customer support chatbots.
3. **Computer vision:** This enables AI systems to interpret and analyse visual data from the world, such as images and videos (Szeliski, 2022). It is widely used in facial recognition, medical imaging and autonomous vehicles.
4. **Robotics and automation:** They are AI-powered robots used in manufacturing, healthcare and logistics to perform complex tasks with precision. Autonomous robots, such as self-driving cars, rely on AI to navigate and make real-time decisions (Thrun, 2010).
5. **Expert systems:** These are AI programmes designed to simulate human expertise in specific domains, such as medical diagnosis (Shortliffe & Cimino, 2013). These systems analyse vast amounts of data and provide recommendations or solutions.

AI technology is a rapidly evolving field with transformative applications across industries. It is transforming various industries by enhancing efficiency and decision-making. By leveraging machine learning, natural language processing and robotics, AI enhances efficiency and decision-making. In healthcare, for example, AI assists in diagnosing diseases, predicting patient outcomes and personalising treatment plans (Topol, 2019).

In finance, it is used for algorithmic trading, fraud detection and risk assessment (Bishop, 2006). In transportation, autonomous vehicles and smart traffic management systems use AI for improved safety and efficiency (Litman, 2021). Its impact is also greatly felt in the education industry. For instance, AI-powered tools, such as adaptive learning platforms and virtual tutors, enhance personalised learning (Luckin *et al.*, 2016).

### **Applications of AI Technology and the Education Industry**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed education by providing personalised, efficient and scalable learning experiences. AI-powered tools, such as language learning applications, adaptive learning systems and intelligent tutoring platforms, have revolutionised the way students engage with educational content. These applications leverage AI technologies

like machine learning, natural language processing (NLP) and predictive analytics to enhance learning outcomes (Luckin *et al.*, 2016). Below is an overview of AI applications in learning and their specific uses.

1. ***Language learning apps:*** Examples are Duolingo, Babbel and Rosetta Stone. The purpose of these AI-driven language learning applications is mainly to personalise instruction by adapting lessons based on a learner's progress, strengths and weaknesses. These apps utilise speech recognition to enhance pronunciation skills and provide instant feedback, improving language proficiency (Zawacki-Richter *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, AI algorithms implement spaced repetition techniques, ensuring that vocabulary and grammar retention are optimised over time (Chaudhry & Kazim, 2022).
2. ***Adaptive learning systems:*** Examples are Knewton, DreamBox and Smart Sparrow. The main purpose of adaptive learning systems is to use AI to tailor educational content to individual student needs. These systems analyse user performance and modify lesson difficulty, ensuring students receive customised learning experiences. For instance, DreamBox adjusts math problems based on student responses, promoting mastery at an appropriate pace (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020). Such systems enhance engagement and comprehension by presenting material at optimal difficulty levels.
3. ***Intelligent tutoring systems (ITS):*** Examples are Carnegie Learning, MATHia, Tutor.com. The major purpose of intelligent tutoring systems is to mimic human tutors by providing step-by-step guidance, personalised feedback and targeted interventions. These systems analyse student responses to identify misconceptions and provide tailored explanations (Baker & Inventado, 2014). For example, MATHia assists students in solving complex mathematical problems by adapting to their learning styles and offering hints when needed.
4. ***Automated writing evaluation tools:*** Examples include Grammarly, Turnitin's Revision Assistant and ProWritingAid. The purpose of AI-powered writing tools is to assess grammar, coherence and originality in student writing. These tools use NLP to provide real-time feedback on sentence structure, clarity and plagiarism detection (Jordan, 2020). Grammarly, for instance, suggests vocabulary improvements and grammatical corrections, enhancing students' writing skills and academic performance.
5. ***Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR/AR) in education:*** Examples are Google Expeditions, ClassVR. The purpose of AI-powered VR/AR applications is to create immersive learning environments that enhance student engagement and comprehension. These tools allow students to explore historical sites, conduct virtual science experiments or visualise complex biological structures (Chowdhury, 2021). Google Expeditions, for example, enables learners to take virtual field trips, making abstract concepts more tangible and interactive.

6. ***AI-Powered chatbots and virtual assistants:*** Examples include Replika and IBM Watson Tutor. The purpose of AI chatbots is to assist students by answering academic queries, providing explanations and offering study support. Virtual assistants like IBM Watson Tutor analyse student performance and recommend resources for improvement. These tools provide 24/7 support, enhancing accessibility and reducing the dependency on human instructors (Selwyn, 2019).
7. ***Predictive analytics tools in education:*** Examples are BrightBytes and Civitas Learning. The purpose of predictive analytics tools is to use AI to analyse student performance data and identify those at risk of academic failure. These tools enable early interventions by providing educators with insights into learning trends, attendance patterns and engagement levels (West *et al.*, 2019). For instance, Civitas Learning helps universities implement personalised strategies to improve student retention and success.
8. ***Gamified learning platforms:*** Examples include Kahoot!, Quizlet and Classcraft. The purpose of gamified learning platforms is mainly to integrate AI to adapt quizzes and educational games to student progress. AI-driven gamification enhances motivation, engagement and knowledge retention by incorporating elements of competition and rewards (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020). Kahoot! and Quizlet use AI to personalise question difficulty and provide instant feedback, making learning enjoyable and interactive.

AI applications in learning have consequently reshaped education by offering personalised, adaptive and engaging experiences. From language learning apps to predictive analytics tools, AI enhances accessibility, efficiency and effectiveness in education. As AI continues to evolve, its role in education will likely expand, further optimising teaching and learning processes.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has thus revolutionised numerous sectors, including education, by enhancing teaching and learning processes. AI-powered tools, such as virtual tutors, automated grading systems and adaptive learning platforms, have transformed traditional education methods, making learning more personalised and accessible.

AI's integration into education has grown rapidly due to advancements in machine learning, natural language processing and data analytics. AI applications range from intelligent tutoring systems to automated assessments, making education more efficient and customised (Luckin *et al.*, 2016). According to Selwyn (2019), AI-driven educational technologies have gained traction due to their ability to analyse vast amounts of student data and provide personalised feedback, thereby improving learning outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of AI in education, as schools and universities shifted to online learning platforms (Zawacki-Richter *et al.*, 2019). AI-powered chatbots, virtual classrooms and automated assessment tools played a crucial role in facilitating remote education.

One of the benefits of AI in education is personalised learning. AI adapts to each student's learning pace and style, providing tailored content and assessments. Intelligent tutoring systems, such as Carnegie Learning and Coursera's AI-driven recommendations, personalise educational content, ensuring students receive targeted support (Baker & Inventado, 2014). Another benefit of AI is automated grading and administrative efficiency. AI reduces teachers' workload by automating grading and administrative tasks. Tools like Turnitin and Gradescope use AI to assess essays and detect plagiarism, allowing educators to focus more on teaching (Jordan, 2020). AI also offers enhanced accessibility. AI technology has made education more inclusive for students with disabilities. Speech-to-text software, AI-powered screen readers and language translation tools help students overcome learning barriers (Chowdhury, 2021). For instance, Microsoft's Seeing AI assists visually impaired students by describing their surroundings and reading text aloud.

Data-driven insights for educators is another benefit of AI, as it enables educators to analyse student performance data and identify learning gaps. Predictive analytics help institutions intervene early and provide targeted support to struggling students (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020). AI is expected to play an even greater role in education in the coming years. Emerging trends include AI-driven adaptive assessments, virtual reality-based learning and AI-generated content.

### **Challenges and Ethical Concerns in AI Development**

Despite its advantages, AI poses ethical challenges. Challenges and ethical concerns of AI include bias, user privacy and data security (Zuboff, 2019), as well as concern about job displacement (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). This is because AI in education relies on vast amounts of student data, raising concerns about privacy and security. Improper handling of sensitive information can lead to breaches and ethical dilemmas (Selwyn, 2019). AI algorithms can also reflect biases present in their training data, potentially leading to unfair assessments or discrimination. Studies have also shown that AI-powered grading systems may favour certain demographics, reinforcing educational inequalities (West *et al.*, 2019). Over-reliance on AI may also undermine students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, excessive screen time and reduced human interaction can negatively impact social and emotional learning (Luckin *et al.*, 2016). AI-driven education also requires significant investment in infrastructure and training, making it less accessible to underprivileged schools and developing nations (Zawacki-Richter *et al.*, 2019).

Although AI technology has transformed education by personalising learning, automating assessment and enhancing accessibility, challenges such as data privacy, bias and over-reliance on technology identified above must be addressed to ensure AI's responsible and effective integration. With proper implementation, AI has the potential to make education more efficient, inclusive and engaging. Policymakers and educators must establish ethical guidelines and ensure equitable access to AI-powered learning tools to maximise benefits and minimise risks (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020).

## AI Apps for *Tahfizul Qur'an*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly enhanced the methods used for *Tahfizul Qur'an*, the memorisation of the Qur'an. Several AI-powered applications have been developed to assist individuals in this spiritual endeavour by providing interactive and personalised learning experiences. Here are some notable AI apps designed for *Tahfizul Qur'an*:

1. ***Tarteel AI***: Tarteel AI is a leading application that utilises artificial intelligence to aid Muslims worldwide in memorising the Qur'an. It offers features like hiding verses for memorisation practice, real-time feedback on recitations and mistake detection to help users identify and correct errors. The app also allows users to recite any verse and it automatically identifies and displays the corresponding text.
2. ***i-Tasmik***: i-Tasmik is a mobile platform designed to enable *Tahfiz* students to memorise the Qur'an independently. It provides a platform for students and teachers to enhance memorisation through interactive tools and resources, facilitating self-paced learning and regular assessments.
3. ***EzHifz application***: EzHifz is an application developed to support the teaching and learning of Qur'an memorisation. It allows students to select their preferred learning styles and provides interactive features to track progress, making the memorisation process more engaging and effective.
4. ***Quran companion***: Quran Companion is an app designed to make Qur'an memorisation easier and more enjoyable. It offers guided lesson plans, progress tracking and group challenges to motivate users. The app also includes audio recitations from various *Qaris* to aid in correct pronunciation and recitation.
5. ***Quran Majeed***: Quran Majeed is a comprehensive app that provides the complete Qur'an with audio recitations, translations and *Tafsir*. It includes features like prayer times, *Qibla* direction and memorisation aids, making it a valuable tool for those looking to memorise the Qur'an.
6. ***Quran circle***: Quran Circle is an AI-powered app that facilitates Qur'an memorisation by providing daily personalised plans. It adapts to individual learning needs, guiding users through review, memorisation and recall exercises to fit into their daily schedules.
7. ***Qur'an memorizer***: Qur'an Memoriser is a mobile app designed to help Muslims efficiently memorise *Surahs* and understand the Qur'an. It offers features like looping audio for repetition, multiple reciters and visual immersion that mimics a printed Qur'an, catering to various learning styles.
8. ***BeHafizh***: BeHafizh is an android application developed to assist users in memorising Qur'anic verses. It includes features such as an audio player with repeat functions, memorisation tests, colour-coded indicators for progress tracking and achievement badges to motivate users.

These applications leverage AI technology to provide personalised and interactive experiences, making the journey of memorising the Qur'an more efficient and engaging.

### **Technological Advancements in AI for Enhancing Qur'anic Memorisation**

Memorisation of the Qur'an (*Tahfiizul Qur'an*) is a fundamental aspect of Islamic education, requiring discipline, repetition and precision. AI technology has introduced innovative tools to aid learners in memorisation, pronunciation and retention. Advances in speech recognition, natural language processing (NLP), machine learning and adaptive learning systems provide personalised and efficient learning experiences. This section explores how AI-driven technologies can enhance Qur'anic memorisation.

1. ***Speech recognition and pronunciation feedback:*** AI-powered speech recognition has significantly improved the accuracy of voice analysis and pronunciation correction. Deep learning models in speech processing can detect pronunciation errors and offer corrective feedback (Haque *et al.*, 2019). AI systems, such as Google's Speech-to-Text and IBM Watson, analyse phonetics and provide instant corrections, making them useful for Qur'anic recitation. AI-powered apps like Tarteel AI and ReciteQuran use speech recognition to evaluate recitation accuracy. These tools provide feedback on *Tajweed* (rules of Qur'anic pronunciation), helping learners perfect their recitation. Users receive real-time corrections, ensuring precise memorisation and phonetic accuracy (Ahmed *et al.*, 2021).
2. ***Natural Language Processing (NLP) for text analysis:*** NLP enables AI to understand, interpret and analyse text, making it possible to detect errors in Qur'anic recitation and text memorisation (Jurafsky & Martin, 2021). AI models trained on classical Arabic can differentiate between correct and incorrect recitations and highlight errors. AI-driven text analysis ensures that learners memorise verses with proper diacritics and syntax. NLP-powered Qur'anic apps help students recall verses by prompting missing words or predicting the next verse based on context (Zubair *et al.*, 2022). AI chatbots integrated with NLP provide interactive quizzes to reinforce memorisation.
3. ***Adaptive learning systems for personalised memorisation:*** AI-driven adaptive learning platforms use machine learning algorithms to adjust lesson difficulty based on individual progress. These systems analyse user performance and modify lesson plans to improve learning efficiency (Luckin *et al.*, 2016). AI personalises memorisation schedules based on a learner's retention ability, reinforcing weaker areas with additional practice. Smart revision techniques use spaced repetition algorithms to optimise memorisation retention over time (Ebbinghaus, 2013). AI apps like MemorizeQuran suggest personalised revision plans based on the frequency of mistakes.
4. ***AI-Powered gamification for engagement:*** Gamification techniques leverage AI to create interactive learning experiences, boosting motivation and engagement. AI analyses user behaviour and tailors games to challenge and reinforce learning (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020). AI-powered quiz-based learning strengthens verse recall

through interactive exercises. Rewards and progress tracking systems keep students engaged and committed. Multiplayer AI-driven Qur'anic recitation challenges create a social learning environment, encouraging collaborative memorisation.

5. ***AI-based predictive analytics for learning improvement:*** AI-driven predictive analytics analyse learning patterns and forecast potential challenges a student may face. These systems identify weaknesses and recommend corrective actions (West *et al.*, 2019). AI monitors mistake patterns and provides targeted revision exercises. Predictive models detect which verses or *Surahs* require more practice based on user errors. Teachers and parents receive progress reports, allowing for better student support.
6. ***Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR/AR) for immersive learning:*** AI-powered VR and AR create immersive environments that enhance engagement. VR allows learners to visualise the context of Qur'anic revelations, reinforcing memorisation through experiential learning (Chowdhury, 2021). Virtual Islamic learning spaces simulate an interactive classroom for remote students. AR overlays visual representations of Qur'anic verses, aiding in memorisation through association. AI-driven voice assistants in VR guide students through recitation practice in a realistic environment.

AI has revolutionised Qur'anic memorisation by providing personalised, interactive and data-driven learning experiences. Speech recognition, NLP, adaptive learning, gamification, predictive analytics and VR/AR enhance retention and pronunciation while making learning more engaging. However, ensuring AI's accuracy, ethical application and alignment with traditional *Tahfiz* methods is crucial for its effective adoption.

### **Advantages of Using AI for *Tahfizul Qur'an***

Memorisation of the Qur'an (*Tahfizul Qur'an*) is a sacred tradition in Islam, requiring precision, repetition and guidance. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has introduced innovative tools that enhance the efficiency, accessibility and personalisation of Qur'anic memorisation. AI-driven applications leverage speech recognition, natural language processing (NLP), adaptive learning and gamification to assist students in memorisation and pronunciation. This section identifies the key advantages of using AI for *Tahfizul Qur'an*.

***Enhanced accuracy in recitation and Tajweed:*** AI-based speech recognition tools analyse and correct pronunciation errors, ensuring precise recitation according to *Tajweed* rules (Haque *et al.*, 2019). By using deep learning models trained on classical Arabic phonetics, AI can detect subtle errors in articulation and provide instant feedback. AI-powered platforms, such as Tarteel AI and Recite Quran, guide students by highlighting mispronunciations and missing words. These tools provide real-time corrective feedback, reducing reliance on constant teacher supervision (Ahmed *et al.*, 2021). Learners can repeatedly practice and refine their pronunciation without feeling pressured in a traditional classroom setting.

**Personalized learning experience:** AI adapts learning materials based on a student's progress, identifying areas that require more practice (Luckin *et al.*, 2016). Machine learning algorithms analyse individual performance and adjust memorisation schedules accordingly. AI tracks progress and suggests personalised revision plans, ensuring retention of memorised verses. Spaced repetition algorithms enhance long-term memorisation by reinforcing weaker areas at optimal intervals (Ebbinghaus, 2013). Learners receive customised lesson plans that cater to their specific strengths and weaknesses.

**Increased accessibility and inclusivity:** AI allows students to access Qur'anic memorisation tools from anywhere in the world, removing geographical and financial barriers (Chowdhury, 2021). This is particularly beneficial for learners in regions where access to qualified Qur'an teachers is limited. AI speech-to-text transcription and text-to-speech conversion support students with learning disabilities. Visually impaired learners can use AI-powered Braille Qur'an readers for memorisation (Al-Khamaiseh *et al.*, 2023). AI chatbots provide 24/7 assistance, enabling students to practice at their convenience.

**Engaging and motivational learning methods:** AI incorporates gamification techniques, making memorisation more interactive and enjoyable (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020). AI-powered platforms use rewards, progress tracking and leaderboards to encourage consistent learning. AI apps introduce recitation challenges and quizzes, increasing motivation through friendly competition. Virtual badges and certificates recognise milestones, reinforcing a sense of accomplishment. AI multiplayer memorisation games create a social learning environment, allowing students to compete and collaborate.

**Efficient progress tracking and feedback:** AI can analyse a student's learning patterns and predict areas where they are likely to struggle (West *et al.*, 2019). Teachers and parents can use this data to provide targeted support. AI identifies patterns of mistakes and suggests additional exercises to address weaknesses. Performance reports allow teachers to monitor progress without manually assessing each student. Parental involvement is enhanced as AI generates daily or weekly progress summaries.

**Cost-effective and scalable learning solutions:** Traditional *Tahfiz* programmes often require dedicated teachers and physical classroom spaces. AI-based solutions provide affordable alternatives (Selwyn, 2019). AI can teach thousands of students simultaneously, making quality Qur'anic education more widely accessible. AI-powered apps reduce the need for printed materials, lowering costs associated with books and workbooks. Schools and institutions can integrate AI without significant investment in physical infrastructure.

**Preservation and digitisation of Qur'anic knowledge:** AI contributes to the preservation of Qur'anic knowledge by digitising manuscripts and analysing historical texts (Zubair *et al.*, 2022). NLP models enhance text searches and provide insights into linguistic structures. AI-powered Qur'an search engines allow scholars to study themes, meanings and interpretations. AI assists in transliteration and translation, making Qur'anic learning accessible to non-Arabic speakers. Advanced AI algorithms ensure that digitised Qur'anic content remains error-free and true to its original form.

AI technology has introduced groundbreaking advancements that enhance *Tahfizul Qur'an* by improving accuracy, accessibility and engagement. Speech recognition tools refine pronunciation, adaptive learning personalises memorisation and gamification increases motivation. AI also provides scalable and cost-effective solutions, making Qur'anic memorisation more inclusive. While AI cannot replace the role of traditional teachers, it serves as a powerful supplementary tool that empowers learners worldwide.

### **Disadvantages of Using AI for *Tahfizul Qur'an***

While Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers numerous benefits for *Tahfizul Qur'an* (Qur'anic memorisation), it also presents several challenges and limitations. AI cannot fully replicate the human elements of traditional *Tahfiz* education, such as spiritual guidance, emotional support, and personalised mentorship. Additionally, concerns about accuracy, dependency on technology, ethical implications and data privacy must be considered. This section examines the disadvantages of using AI for *Tahfizul Qur'an*.

***Lack of spiritual and emotional connections:*** Traditional *Tahfiz* learning is not only about memorising words but also about spiritual development, character building, and discipline under the guidance of a qualified teacher (*ustadh*). AI lacks the ability to instil *Taqwa* (God-consciousness) and spiritual depth (Ahmed *et al.*, 2021). AI cannot provide spiritual mentorship, which is essential in Islamic education. Learners may memorise mechanically without understanding the deeper meaning and significance of the Qur'an (Selwyn, 2019). AI lacks the emotional intelligence to encourage students during struggles, unlike human teachers who provide moral support.

***Potential for errors in pronunciation and interpretation:*** AI speech recognition, while improving, still struggles with complex Arabic phonetics and *Tajweed* rules (Haque *et al.*, 2019). AI models trained on general speech may misinterpret subtle pronunciation differences in Qur'anic recitation. Inaccurate pronunciation correction can lead to mispronunciations (*Lahn*), affecting the meaning of words. AI may fail to recognise dialectical variations in Arabic, leading to incorrect assessments (Zubair *et al.*, 2022). Over-reliance on AI feedback might undermine the role of qualified teachers, who provide nuanced and context-aware corrections.

***Dependence on technology and reduced human interaction:*** As students become accustomed to AI-driven learning, they may lose the ability to memorise independently or without digital assistance (Luckin *et al.*, 2016). Learners might struggle in traditional settings where AI is unavailable. AI-based memorisation methods can reduce face-to-face learning and weaken student-teacher relationships. Excessive screen time and digital engagement can lead to reduced focus and concentration (West *et al.*, 2019).

***Ethical concerns and data privacy issues:*** AI-powered Qur'anic apps collect user data, including voice recordings, progress reports and learning patterns (Zuboff, 2019). This raises privacy concerns, especially if such data is stored or shared without proper security measures. Sensitive voice recordings of Qur'anic recitations could be misused if not securely protected.

AI data tracking may create ethical concerns about how memorisation progress is monitored and used. The potential for AI surveillance in religious education raises questions about privacy in faith-based learning (Chowdhury, 2021).

***Risk of altering traditional learning methods:*** Islamic tradition emphasises oral transmission of the Qur'an from teacher to student, ensuring authenticity. AI-based learning might disrupt centuries-old memorisation techniques (Al-Khamaiseh *et al.*, 2023). AI-driven memorisation might prioritise efficiency over deep engagement with the text. Traditional methods emphasise repetition, communal recitation and teacher-guided refinement, which AI cannot fully replicate. Overuse of AI could diminish the role of scholars and teachers in Islamic pedagogy.

***AI bias and limited contextual understanding:*** AI lacks the ability to understand context, historical background and deeper meanings of the Qur'an. NLP models, which power AI-based Qur'anic applications, are trained on existing data, which may introduce biases (Jurafsky & Martin, 2021). AI cannot distinguish among the various schools of *Tajweed* and *Qira'at*, leading to potential inconsistencies. Over-reliance on AI might limit critical thinking in Islamic education, as students may trust AI outputs without questioning them. AI cannot replace scholars in explaining difficult concepts, which may result in superficial memorisation.

***Cost and technical limitations:*** While AI offers cost-effective solutions for large-scale learning, its development and maintenance require significant investment in infrastructure, software and updates (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020). Many AI-based Qur'anic apps require high-speed internet and advanced devices, which may not be accessible to all students. AI technical errors, bugs or outdated algorithms could result in incorrect guidance. Some institutions may struggle with implementing AI-based learning due to financial constraints.

While AI offers valuable tools for Qur'anic memorisation, it cannot replace traditional *Tahfiz* learning methods. Challenges such as lack of spiritual guidance, pronunciation errors, dependence on technology, privacy concerns and AI biases highlight the limitations of AI-based *Tahfizul Qur'an*.

### **Recommendations for Harmonising AI Use for *Tahfizul Qur'an* with Traditional Islamic Teaching Methods**

Islamic education should balance AI-assisted learning with traditional human-led methods to ensure accuracy, spiritual depth and authenticity in memorisation. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into *Tahfizul Qur'an* (Qur'an memorisation) has the potential to enhance the learning process while preserving the spiritual and traditional aspects of Islamic education.

To achieve a balanced approach, the following recommendations can be considered:

1. ***Blending AI with traditional Talaqqi and Musyafahah methods:*** Traditional *Tahfiz* institutions rely on *Talaqqi* (oral transmission) and *Musyafahah* (face-to-face recitation) under the guidance of a qualified teacher (*ustadh*). AI can complement this by providing real-time pronunciation feedback and error detection, but it should not replace human supervision. AI applications, such as speech recognition, can assist in identifying memorisation errors, while human teachers ensure proper recitation and spiritual connection (Aljumily, 2021).
2. ***Ensuring AI aligns with Islamic pedagogical ethics:*** AI tools must be designed in accordance with Islamic pedagogical principles, emphasising sincerity (*ikhlas*), discipline (*mujahadah*) and respect for the Qur'an. Developers should collaborate with Islamic scholars to ensure that AI applications do not undermine the sanctity of Qur'anic learning (Rahman *et al.*, 2022).
3. ***Using AI for personalised learning without replacing teachers:*** AI can be used to personalise the learning experience by identifying a student's strengths and weaknesses, suggesting customised revision plans and tracking progress. However, human teachers should remain central in fostering moral and spiritual development, as AI lacks the ability to instil *adab* (ethics) and *barakah* (blessings) in learning (Khir, 2020).
4. ***Maintaining the spiritual and emotional aspects of learning:*** Traditional *Tahfiz* emphasises not only memorisation but also spiritual engagement. AI tools should be designed to support, rather than detract from, this aspect by integrating features that encourage contemplation (*tadabbur*) and connection to the meaning of the Qur'an (Nasir & Ghani, 2021).
5. ***Developing AI with proper Tajweed and Qira'at support:*** AI applications must accurately reflect the various styles of recitation (*qira'at*) and proper *Tajweed* rules. Any AI-generated recitations should be verified by experts to avoid incorrect pronunciations or misinterpretations (Rahman *et al.*, 2022).
6. ***Facilitating remote learning without losing human interaction:*** AI can help students in remote areas access quality *Tahfiz* instruction. Still, it should be paired with periodic live sessions with *Ustaadhs* to ensure that the personal, spiritual and ethical aspects of *Tahfiz* are maintained (Aljumily, 2021).
7. ***Ethical considerations and data privacy:*** The use of AI in *Tahfiz* should prioritise data privacy, ensuring that students' recitations and personal information are protected. Developers must create AI tools that uphold Islamic ethics, avoiding the misuse of recorded recitations (Khir, 2020).

8. ***Training Ustaaahs to use AI effectively:*** Teachers should be trained on how to use AI tools to complement their teaching, rather than seeing them as replacements. This will help ensure a smooth integration of AI into *Tahfiz* programmes (Nasir & Ghani, 2021).

By thoughtfully integrating AI into *Tahfizul Qur'an*, we can enhance efficiency while preserving the traditional, spiritual and ethical dimensions of Islamic education. AI should serve as a supportive tool that enriches the experience rather than replacing the essential human elements of *Tahfiz*.

## **Conclusion**

The use of AI technology in *Tahfizul Qur'an* in the 21st century presents both remarkable opportunities and significant challenges. On the one hand, AI offers unparalleled benefits, such as personalised learning, instant error detection and accessibility for students in remote areas. It can enhance the efficiency of memorisation through adaptive learning algorithms and provide real-time feedback to improve *Tajweed* and recitation accuracy.

However, the integration of AI must be approached with caution. AI lacks the spiritual depth, moral guidance and personal mentorship that human teachers provide. The risk of over-reliance on technology could diminish the traditional values of *Talaqqi* and *Musyafahah*, which emphasise direct transmission from teacher to student. Furthermore, concerns about data privacy, ethical considerations and the potential for AI errors in Qur'anic recitation require careful oversight.

To truly harness the power of AI for *Tahfizul Qur'an*, we must strike a delicate balance—using technology as a tool to aid memorisation while ensuring that human interaction, spiritual connection and ethical responsibility remain at the heart of Qur'anic education. AI should serve as a complement, not a replacement, for traditional methods, reinforcing the sacred trust of Qur'an preservation passed down through generations. Only by maintaining this balance can we ensure that technology serves to strengthen, rather than dilute, the rich legacy of *Tahfizul Qur'an* in the modern era. The wisdom of scholars, the warmth of human mentorship and the blessing of traditional learning cannot be replicated by any machine. Our challenge, then, is not to choose between AI and tradition, but to find a balance where technology serves as a tool while human guidance remains at the heart of *Hifz*. If used wisely, AI can be a means to preserve and spread the Qur'an like never before. However, if misused or relied upon blindly, it may weaken the very essence of *Tahfizul Qur'an*. It is up to us to ensure that while we embrace technological advancements, we do so with wisdom, sincerity and a firm commitment to the spiritual legacy of the Qur'an.

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## CHAPTER 24

### The Third Race, the Third Sex and the *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī‘ah*

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#### Introduction

In contemporary academic discourse, the constructs of race, gender and identity have evolved beyond conventional binaries, necessitating critical engagement with alternative categorisations such as the Third Race and the Third Sex. These terminologies have emerged in response to the limitations of traditional racial and gender classifications, challenging normative frameworks that fail to capture the complexities of human diversity. The Third Race broadly refers to marginalised racial identities that transcend dominant socio-political taxonomies, often shaped by historical legacies of colonialism and systemic exclusion (Meer, 2021). Meanwhile, the Third Sex encompasses individuals who do not conform to binary gender norms, including *khunthā* (intersex), transgender and non-binary persons, whose existence complicates rigid gender dichotomies (Wadud, 2022). These discussions intersect with broader questions of legal recognition, human rights, and ethical considerations, particularly within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence, which has long sought to establish principles of *al-‘adl*, *karāmah* and *maṣlaḥah* (Auda, 2022).

Islamic legal thought, particularly through *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, has historically addressed identity-related issues with an emphasis on equity and ethical responsibility. Classical jurists, including al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) and al-Shāṭibī (d. 1388), articulated a legal philosophy aimed at preserving life, intellect, lineage, faith and property (Kamali, 2021). However, contemporary scholarship on *maqāṣid* has sought to re-interpret these objectives to accommodate evolving socio-cultural realities, including gender plurality and racial inclusivity. For instance, Auda (2022) argues that *maqāṣid*-based jurisprudence must be dynamic, conforming with contemporary ethical imperatives while remaining grounded in Islamic epistemology. Similarly, Kamali (2021) contends that the universality of Islamic legal principles provides a framework for addressing issues of identity and human rights, though institutional and cultural barriers continue to pose significant challenges. This evolving discourse underscores the need for renewed *ijtihād* to critically re-assess traditional rulings in the light of present-day complexities.

The Qur’ān explicitly affirms human diversity as a divine construct, as reflected in *Sūrah al-Hujurāt* (Q49:13), which states:

O mankind! We created you from a single pair of male and female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the most honored of you in the sight of God is the most righteous.

This verse serves as a foundational principle for racial and social inclusivity in Islam, reinforcing the idea that moral worth supersedes constructed hierarchies of race and gender. Nevertheless, despite Islam's universalist outlook, historical and contemporary socio-political structures have impeded the full realisation of these ideals. Studies on gender identity and Islamic law reveal that while classical *fiqh* acknowledges the *khunthā* category, modern understandings of gender fluidity remain contested among contemporary jurists (El Fadl, 2023). As noted by Brown (2023), pre-modern Islamic legal systems operated within specific socio-historical contexts, and the challenge today is how to extend Islamic legal frameworks to accommodate gender diversity without compromising core ethical values.

Against this backdrop, this study critically examines how Islamic jurisprudence can engage with the constructs of the Third Race and the Third Sex through a *maqāṣid*-oriented approach that prioritises *al-ʿadl*, *karāmah* and *maṣlahah*. It investigates how classical and contemporary Islamic legal thought accommodates identity plurality while maintaining fidelity to Islamic ethical imperatives. The study interrogates how *ijtihād* (independent legal reasoning) can be leveraged to reconcile doctrinal interpretations with evolving sociocultural realities by employing thematic analysis and critical discourse evaluation. Ultimately, it underscores the potential of a *maqāṣid*-driven jurisprudence in fostering inclusivity and legal coherence within the Islamic legal tradition. The study examines primary *fiqh* texts, *fatāwā* and historical case studies, integrating perspectives from Islamic legal scholars, ethicists and social theorists.

The study adopts a qualitative, exploratory research design to examine how Islamic jurisprudence engages with the constructs of the Third Race and the Third Sex through a *maqāṣid*-oriented approach. The qualitative methodology is chosen for its suitability for exploring complex socio-legal phenomena and interpreting the nuanced relationship between *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* and evolving identity categories. Through a combination of thematic analysis, *ijtihād*-driven interpretations and case studies, the study critically assesses how Islamic legal thought addresses racial and gender plurality. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of classical and contemporary legal discourses while providing the flexibility to analyse emerging interpretations of identity within the Islamic legal framework.

The data collection process is multi-faceted, incorporating textual analysis and historical case studies to capture diverse perspectives on racial and gender identity. The textual analysis focuses on classical Islamic legal sources, including the works of Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 767 CE), Mālik (d. 795 CE), Al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820 CE) and Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855 CE), as well as modern *fatāwā* and contemporary scholarly contributions. Historical case studies examine examples of racial and gender inclusivity in pre-modern Islamic societies to provide contextual grounding for modern interpretations. Additionally, semi-structured interviews are conducted with Islamic jurists, ethicists and social theorists to capture contemporary views on identity plurality and the applicability of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* to these issues.

For data analysis, the study employs thematic and comparative techniques to evaluate how Islamic jurisprudence has historically and contemporaneously addressed identity plurality. Thematic analysis is used to identify core principles, patterns and interpretive frameworks within legal texts and scholarly debates. Comparative analysis traces jurisprudential reasoning across different historical periods and Islamic legal schools, facilitating a critical examination of continuity and change in the treatment of racial and gender identities. This dual approach provides a robust analytical framework to assess how *ijtihād* can address contemporary identity concerns while maintaining alignment with the ethical imperatives of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **A. Conceptual Framework**

#### ***The Third Race***

The concept of the “Third Race” refers to marginalised racial identities that transcend traditional socio-political classifications, challenging the rigidity of conventional racial constructs. Historically, race has been defined by biological essentialism, where physical characteristics such as skin colour and facial features served as markers of identity and social hierarchy. However, scholars increasingly argue that race is a social construct shaped by cultural, political and historical forces rather than biological determinism (Hacking, 1999). This shift emphasises the fluidity of racial identities and the inadequacy of binary or monolithic frameworks in capturing the lived realities of individuals who exist outside dominant racial categories (Omi & Winant, 2015).

Critical race theorists highlight that race is a social construct shaped by political and historical forces rather than biological reality (Hacking, 1999). This perspective dismantles essentialist definitions of race and focuses on how power structures use racial classifications to sustain social hierarchies. According to Omi and Winant’s “Racial Formation Theory,” racial categories are products of social, political and economic struggles, which means that emerging racial identities, such as the Third Race, destabilise these fixed classifications (Omi & Winant, 2015). In this framework, the Third Race emerges as a challenge to racial essentialism and advocates for the recognition of hybrid identities that reflect modern demographic realities (Crenshaw, 1991). For example, the growing multiracial population in regions such as the United States, Latin America and the Middle East underscores the inadequacy of binary racial categories and the need to conceptualise race more fluidly (U.S. Census Bureau, 2025).

Furthermore, legal scholars examine how racial classifications embedded in legal systems perpetuate exclusion and invisibility for those who identify outside the dominant racial framework (Spencer, 2016). In the context of the Third Race, there is a call for more inclusive legal policies that acknowledge and protect the rights of individuals with intersecting racial identities. For instance, Hernández (2013) argues that civil rights frameworks must evolve to accommodate the complexities of multiracial experiences,

ensuring these identities are not rendered invisible in public policy and social justice discourse. Moreover, scholars advocate for decolonial approaches to race that interrogate how imperial histories continue to shape contemporary racial classifications (Mignolo, 2005). These discussions accentuate the necessity of recognising plural identities and adopting intersectional frameworks that address both race and other structural inequalities (Collins, 2019).

Other scholars extend the scope of the Third Race to encompass communities whose racial identities have been historically erased or ambiguously classified (Collins, 2019). For example, Glenn (2016) describes the Third Race as including mixed-race populations, indigenous groups and other racialised communities whose identities resist simplistic categorisation. This expanded scope also includes individuals who occupy liminal spaces in racial discourse, challenging the stability of dominant racial identities. Crenshaw's (1991) intersectional framework underscores how the Third Race is not merely a racial category but a lived reality marked by overlapping systems of oppression that affect individuals across racial, gender and class lines. Thus, the Third Race serves both as a conceptual tool for critiquing racial essentialism and as a political category for advocating for the recognition and protection of racially ambiguous and marginalised groups (Hernández, 2018).

The scope of the Third Race also extends to legal frameworks and public policy. Scholars like Hernández argue that civil rights laws must adapt to accommodate the complexities of multiracial identities and prevent the legal erasure of those who do not fit within conventional racial classifications (Hernández, 2018). This has led to calls for legal reforms that recognise the Third Race as a distinct category to ensure equity and inclusivity in social justice initiatives (Spencer, 2016).

The historical development of the Third Race reflects broader struggles over racial classification and social belonging. Historically, racial systems emerged through colonialism and imperialism, which imposed rigid categories to sustain power hierarchies (Mignolo, 2011). In early modern colonial societies, the emergence of mestizo mulatto and creole categories signalled the beginning of racial hybridity, effectively establishing an early framework for what is now understood as the Third Race (Katzew, 2005). For instance, the Spanish *Casta* system in Latin America codified complex racial hierarchies that distinguished individuals of mixed ancestry, laying the foundation for racial categories beyond the Black/White binary (Martínez, 2008).

In the United States, the legal principle of the one-drop rule reinforced racial binaries by categorising anyone with African ancestry as Black, thereby denying the existence of intermediate racial identities (Harris, 1993). However, by the mid-20th century, the Civil Rights Movement and Multiracial Identity Movement began to challenge these reductive classifications (Daniel, 2002). These movements advocated for the recognition of racially mixed identities and the establishment of legal frameworks that acknowledged the diversity of racial experiences (Spencer, 2016).

Globally, the concept of the Third Race evolved through postcolonial critiques of Western racial ideologies. Scholars such as Fanon and Mbembe argue that colonial racial systems created artificial categories to subjugate populations, and that dismantling these categories is crucial for decolonial liberation (Fanon, 1967). In contemporary contexts, the growing acceptance of multiracial identities reflects both the persistence of racial categories and the increasing acknowledgement of racial fluidity (Mbembe, 2017). The Third Race discourse continues to shape conversations about identity, belonging and social justice, pushing legal and social institutions to accommodate the complex realities of modern racial identities (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

### ***The Third Sex***

The concept of the Third Sex refers to individuals who do not conform to conventional binary classifications of male and female (Herdt, 1996). This term encompasses a range of gender identities and expressions that challenge the rigid biological and social definitions of male and female (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Scholars describe the Third Sex as a sociocultural category that recognises non-binary, intersex, transgender and other gender-diverse identities across various societies (Butler). According to Herdt (1996), the Third Sex includes both culturally sanctioned third-gender roles – such as the *Hijra* in South Asia – and those who transcend Western gender binaries. This category reflects an intersectional understanding of gender, where identity is shaped by biological, cultural and legal factors (Fausto-Sterling, 2000).

The term is broadly used to describe individuals whose biological, psychological or social identities fall outside the conventional male-female binary. In medical and sociological literature, intersex is a key category under this umbrella. According to Fausto-Sterling (2000), biological sex exists along a spectrum, challenging rigid binary classifications. Intersex individuals are born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not fit typical definitions of male or female, and estimates suggest this occurs in approximately 1.7% of live births globally (Fausto-Sterling, 2000).

From a social and identity-based perspective, the Third Sex also includes transgender and non-binary individuals. Transgender refers to those whose gender identity does not align with their assigned sex at birth, while non-binary people reject the male-female dichotomy altogether (Roselli, 2018). Societies throughout history have recognised and institutionalised forms of third-gender identities. In South Asia, the *hijra* community has legal and social recognition, while Native American cultures acknowledge *Two-Spirit* identities (Nanda, 2000). Islamic scholarship, particularly in classical jurisprudence, recognises gender variance. Islamic jurists categorise intersex individuals as *khunthā*, distinguishing between *khunthā wāḍih* (discernible intersex) and *khunthā mushkil* (ambiguous intersex) (Ibn Qudāmah, 1997). Classical scholars addressed these distinctions to provide legal rulings on inheritance, prayer leadership and marital rights.

Philosophically, the Third Sex raises profound questions about ontology (the nature of being) and epistemology (how we know what we know). Classical Aristotelian philosophy posited a biological essentialism, arguing that sex is a natural and immutable category (Aristotle, 1885). However, postmodern thinkers, such as Butler (1990), challenge this view by arguing that gender is performative – an ongoing social construct rather than a biological reality. Michel Foucault’s work on biopolitics further complicates the discussion by highlighting how power structures regulate bodies and identities (Foucault, 1978). He argues that medical and legal institutions do not merely observe biological differences but actively produce categories of sex and gender through discourse.

Anthropologists have documented non-binary gender systems across diverse societies, illustrating how the concept of the Third Sex is not unique to modernity but deeply embedded in human history (Nanda, 2000). For instance, Hijras of South Asia, recognised as a third gender in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, have a socio-religious role and legal recognition under non-binary identity categories (Reddy, 2005). Two-Spirit People of Indigenous North America are acknowledged with Two-Spirit identities, which combine masculine and feminine qualities and serve spiritual and ceremonial roles (Roscoe, 1998). *Fa’afafine* is a socially recognised third gender category in Samoan culture that transcends Western gender binaries (Besnier, 2014). These examples challenge Western-centric notions of gender and highlight the cultural fluidity of sex and gender identities.

Sociologists view the Third Sex through the lens of social constructionism, where gender identity emerges from cultural, historical and institutional forces. Raewyn Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity suggests that non-binary identities disrupt dominant norms of masculinity and femininity, posing a challenge to entrenched power relations (Connell, 2005). Psychologically, gender identity development is understood as an interaction of biological, psychological and social factors. Modern research indicates that gender identity is not merely a psychological choice but reflects neurobiological processes (Roselli, 2018). This aligns with the argument that gender diversity is part of the natural human spectrum.

From a medical perspective, intersex conditions illustrate the biological complexity underlying the Third Sex. Conditions such as Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS) and Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH) result in physical traits that do not fit typical male or female categories (Blackless *et al.*, 2000). Fausto-Sterling’s (2000) seminal work argues that sex is not binary but exists on a continuum. Advances in genetics and endocrinology further demonstrate the inadequacy of reducing sex to XX or XY chromosomes alone, as variations such as XXY (Klinefelter Syndrome) complicate traditional classifications.

Theological responses to the Third Sex vary across religious traditions. Traditional Christian doctrines assert binary gender based on the book of Genesis, but some theologians, like DeFranza (2015), argue for an inclusive reading of intersex persons in the *Imago*

*Dei* (image of God). Meanwhile, Hindu scriptures recognise *Tritiya-Prakriti* (the third nature), encompassing *hijras* and others beyond binary norms (Doniger, 2004). Classical Buddhist texts acknowledge *paṇḍaka*, a term describing individuals with gender variance (Cabezón, 2017). Ethically, the capability approach advanced by Martha Nussbaum holds that all individuals, regardless of gender identity, should have the freedom to flourish and achieve basic human capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011).

### **Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah**

*Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah* refers to the higher objectives and ultimate purposes of Islamic law. It encompasses *ḥikmah* (the underlying wisdom) and moral imperatives intended to secure *maṣlahah* (the well-being) of individuals and society (Kamali, 2003). The term *maqāṣid* (plural of *maqṣad*) denotes “goals” or “purposes,” while *al-Sharī‘ah* signifies the divinely revealed law guiding human conduct (Auda, 2008). The *maqāṣid* framework extends beyond the literal interpretation of *naṣṣ* (legal texts) to prioritise the overarching intent and benefit embedded in divine legislation (Ibn ‘Āshūr, 2006).

Classical Islamic scholars, including al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and his student al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), articulated the foundational principles of *maqāṣid*, while later scholars like al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388) systematised and expanded these concepts (Al-Ghazālī, 1993). Al-Ghazālī (1993) defines *maqāṣid* as the preservation of *ḍarūriyyāt* (five essential values): *dīn* (religion), *nafs* (life), *‘aql* (intellect), *nasl* (progeny) and *māl* (wealth). This five-fold categorisation remains the cornerstone of *maqāṣid* theory in both classical and contemporary Islamic jurisprudence.

The first category, *ḍarūriyyāt*, consists of necessities indispensable for individual and societal survival. Al-Ghazālī identified five core necessities: *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (protection of religion), *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (protection of life), *ḥifẓ al-‘aql* (protection of intellect), *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (protection of lineage) and *ḥifẓ al-māl* (protection of property) (Al-Ghazālī, 1993). Without the preservation of these fundamental elements, social order would deteriorate, leading to chaos and moral decay. For example, the prohibition of homicide and theft directly serves the objectives of preserving life and property. Al-Ghazālī emphasised that any ruling contradicting these necessities should be reconsidered in light of the *Sharī‘ah*’s ultimate goal – *maṣlahah wa mafsadah* (promoting human welfare and preventing harm) (Al-Ghazālī, 1993).

The second category, *ḥājīyyāt*, encompasses matters that ease human life and alleviate hardship, but are not essential for survival. This level allows for *rukhaṣ* (legal concessions) to prevent undue difficulty. For instance, the permissibility of consuming otherwise prohibited substances in cases of necessity reflects the *maqāṣid*’s concern for mitigating hardship. According to al-Shāṭibī (1997), the purpose of *ḥājīyyāt* is to provide flexibility and ease within the bounds of Islamic law, allowing for legal adaptations to the changing circumstances of human life. In contemporary contexts, this category supports modern

financial transactions and medical interventions that serve human welfare while remaining consistent with Sharī‘ah principles. The third category, *taḥsīniyyāt*, refers to actions that enhance moral and social refinement. These embellishments foster ethical excellence and societal decorum, such as encouraging acts of *ṣadaqah* and promoting personal hygiene. Although not obligatory, *taḥsīniyyāt* enrich the spiritual and ethical dimensions of life (Al-Shāḥibī, 1997). Al-Shāḥibī (1997) stressed that these actions reflect the Sharī‘ah’s broader vision of cultivating *karāmah* (human dignity) and moral integrity.

The origins of *maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah* trace back to the formative period of Islamic jurisprudence, when jurists sought to reconcile textual sources with emerging social realities (Kamali, 2003). Early scholars like *Mālik* ibn Anas (d. 179/795) applied principles of *maṣlahah mursalah* (public welfare) to extend the legal framework to unprecedented cases (Ibn ‘Āshūr, 2006). Al-Juwaynī (2001) introduced the notion of *maqāṣid* (legal objectives) as a means of resolving apparent contradictions within the Sharī‘ah. Al-Ghazālī (1993) further refined *maqāṣid* by categorising them into three hierarchical levels: *darūriyyāt* (necessities), *ḥājjiyyāt* (needs) and *taḥsīniyyāt* (complementary interest). This classification provided a structured methodology for deriving legal rulings in accordance with human welfare. Al-Shāḥibī (1997), in his seminal work *al-Muwāfaqāt*, systematised the theory and emphasised the primacy of *maqāṣid* over rigid textualism. Modern scholars, including Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ‘Āshūr (d. 1393/1973) and Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (b. 1926), have extended the *maqāṣid* framework to address contemporary socio-political and ethical dilemmas (Kamali, 2003).

*Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah* plays a critical role in *ijtihād*, guiding jurists in developing legal rulings that align with divine objectives while addressing new challenges. This approach transcends a literalist interpretation of *naṣṣ* by focusing on the underlying purposes of the law (Kamali, 2003). Classical and contemporary scholars use *maqāṣid* as a methodological tool to resolve complex legal and ethical dilemmas in the light of the *maṣlahah*. Several jurisprudential methodologies stem from the *maqāṣid* framework. One such methodology is *istiṣlāḥ* (consideration of public interest), which allows jurists to prioritise the common good in cases where no explicit legal text exists (Kamali, 2003). This principle is rooted in the idea that the Sharī‘ah promotes welfare and prevents harm. Another methodology, *istiḥsān* (juristic preference), permits jurists to adopt rulings that achieve justice when the literal application of legal texts may lead to hardship or inequity (Kamali, 2003). Additionally, *sadd al-dharā‘i‘* (blocking the means) prohibits actions that, while not inherently forbidden, may lead to harmful outcomes (Kamali, 2003).

Contemporary scholars, such as Auda (2008), argue for a dynamic and systematic application of *maqāṣid* to contemporary issues. Auda’s (2008) “systems approach” emphasises the interconnectivity of legal, social and ethical concerns, advocating for a holistic understanding of the Sharī‘ah’s objectives. According to Auda (2008), the *maqāṣid* framework enables jurists to navigate modern complexities while preserving

the moral and ethical essence of Islamic law. For example, the application of *maqāṣid* to environmental sustainability emphasises the *ḥifẓ al-naḥs* (preservation of life) and public welfare, advocating for ethical stewardship of natural resources (Auda, 2008).

The *maqāṣid* framework has gained renewed relevance in addressing contemporary socio-legal challenges across various domains, including human rights, bioethics and Islamic finance. Modern scholars have expanded the *maqāṣid* beyond the classical five essentials to include additional values such as *ḥurriyyah* (freedom), ‘*adālah* (justice) and *karāmah* (human dignity) (Al-Qaraḏāwī, 1995). In Islamic finance, the *maqāṣid* emphasise socio-economic justice by prohibiting exploitative practices such as *ribā* (usury) and promoting ethical investments through instruments such as *zakāh* (almsgiving) and *waqf* (endowment). In the domain of bioethics, the *maqāṣid* provides a framework for evaluating complex medical interventions, such as organ transplantation and genetic engineering. Moreover, the *maqāṣid*-oriented approach contributes to global discourses on human rights by advocating for universal values rooted in the Sharī‘ah’s objectives. Scholars like Kamali (2007) argue that *maqāṣid* conform with many aspects of international human rights frameworks, emphasising the preservation of life, dignity and freedom of belief.

## **B. Theoretical Framework**

Intersectionality theory has been identified as appropriate in this study. The theory, first conceptualised by Crenshaw (1989), is a socio-legal framework that analyses how multiple identity factors – such as gender, race, class, religion and disability – interact to create unique experiences of oppression or privilege. The theory challenges essentialist perspectives that treat identities as singular and instead emphasises how overlapping systems of power shape individual experiences (Collins, 2000). Within legal and social discourse, intersectionality is crucial in understanding marginalised groups whose identities do not fit neatly into established legal or social classifications. In the context of gender variance and Islamic jurisprudence, intersectionality theory is instrumental in analysing how *khunthā* (intersex persons) and gender-variant individuals navigate multiple axes of identity – biological, legal, religious and social. Traditional *fiqh* classifies individuals strictly into male and female, yet the existence of *khunthā* and *khunthā mushkil* (ambiguous intersex cases) challenges binary gender norms. Intersectionality allows for a multifaceted understanding of these individuals’ experiences within Islamic legal frameworks.

Islamic jurisprudence has historically recognised *khunthā* and established legal mechanisms for their classification based on biological indicators such as urination patterns and secondary sexual characteristics. However, contemporary medical advancements have demonstrated that biological sex is more complex than classical scholars assumed, creating new jurisprudential dilemmas. An intersectional approach reveals how *Khunthā* individuals face legal, medical and religious challenges that intersect in shaping their identity; modern cases of gender dysphoria, intersex conditions and transgender identity require a holistic jurisprudential re-evaluation; *Khunthā* individuals

from elite backgrounds may have been treated with more legal flexibility than those from marginalised communities; the rights of *mukhannathūn* (effeminate men, often equated with transgender individuals) varied based on regional customs and societal perceptions.

## Discussion and Analysis

### A. *The Symbiosis of the Third Race, the Third Sex and Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah*

The term Third Race, as noted earlier, refers to marginalised racial identities that transcend conventional ethnic and racial classifications. Classical Islamic civilisation, particularly during the ‘Abbāsīd and the Umayyad periods, engaged in extensive discourse on racial justice, particularly regarding *muwalladūn* (mixed-race individuals) and other groups who did not fit neatly into Arab, Persian or other dominant racial categories. The Qur’ān explicitly rejects racial superiority, affirming that human nobility is based on *taqwā* (God-consciousness), not lineage or ethnicity:

And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colours. Surely, in this are signs for those who know.” (Q 30:22)

This principle is reinforced by several ḥadīths of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAAS), including:

In his final sermon, the Prophet Muḥammad (SAAS) proclaimed: “O people, your Lord is one. No Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; a white person has no superiority over a black person, nor does a black person have any superiority over a white person – except through piety.” (Al-Bukhārī, 1997)

The Prophet Muḥammad (SAAS) warned against boasting about one’s lineage: “Let people cease to boast about their ancestors. They are merely fuel in Hell; or they will certainly be of less account with Allah than the beetle which rolls dung with its nose.” (Muslim, 2007)

The Prophet stated: “Allah does not look at your forms and possessions, but He looks at your hearts and your deeds.” (Muslim, 2007)

Despite this principle, historical instances of institutional and cultural biases necessitate renewed legal discussions on racial justice. Ibn Khaldūn (2015) theorised that race is socially constructed and shaped by historical power dynamics rather than intrinsic biological determinants. Similarly, al-Māwardī (1996) examined the role of racial and ethnic diversity in governance, asserting that an inclusive leadership structure aligns with Islamic political ideals. In modern contexts, the Third Race concept is particularly relevant in post-colonial Muslim societies, where hybrid racial identities have emerged due to colonial legacies and transnational migration. The *maqāṣid*-oriented jurisprudence necessitates policies that promote racial equity, ensuring that *taṣarrufāt al-ḥākīm* (governmental ordinances) reflect the Qur’ānic imperatives of justice and inclusivity.

The Third Sex concept refers to individuals who do not conform to binary male-female classifications, including *khunthā* (intersex), *mukhannathūn* (effeminate men) and contemporary non-binary and transgender identities. Classical Islamic jurists addressed the legal status of *khunthā mushkil* (ambiguous intersex persons) using criteria such as urinary function, reproductive potential and secondary sexual characteristics (Al-Nawawī, 2001). Ibn Qudāmah (1997) and al-Nawawī (2001) affirmed that intersex individuals retain full legal agency, necessitating tailored legal rulings that uphold their dignity. Beyond intersex individuals, Islamic jurisprudence also recognised *mukhannathūn*, a category that partially aligns with modern transgender identities. The Prophet Muḥammad (SAAS) engaged with such individuals, indicating that gender variance was acknowledged within pre-modern Islamic societies (Al-Bukhārī, 1997). However, legal perspectives on gender transition remain debated, with Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 1355) advocating for jurisprudential flexibility in cases where *ḍarūrah* (necessity) and *maṣlahah* (welfare) justify gender-affirming interventions (Al-Subkī, 1995).

The recognition of *mukhannathūn* (effeminate individuals) and other gender-diverse identities in Islamic jurisprudence has generated substantial debates among classical and contemporary scholars. These discussions centre on whether Islamic legal principles accommodate gender variance and gender-affirming interventions, or whether such practices conflict with the ontological boundaries established by the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. This section examines both sides of the debate, drawing on classical juristic opinions, modern *fatāwā* and ethical considerations rooted in *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

### **B. *Legal Status of Khunthā (Intersex) and Khunthā Mushkil (Ambiguous Intersex) in Islamic Jurisprudence***

The inclusion of the legal status of *khunthā* (intersex) and *khunthā mushkil* (ambiguous intersex) in this study is imperative because it directly addresses how Islamic jurisprudence navigates complex identity categories beyond the binary understanding of gender. Classical Islamic legal theory has long recognised the existence of intersex individuals, developing detailed legal frameworks to determine their rights concerning inheritance, marriage and ritual obligations. This legal recognition demonstrates the adaptive capacity of the *sharī'ah* to engage with biological and social realities, providing a historical foundation for contemporary discussions on gender variance.

The legal status of *khunthā* (intersex) and *khunthā mushkil* (ambiguous intersex) in Islamic jurisprudence is intricately connected to the broader discourse on the Third Race, the Third Sex and the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* through the shared concerns of identity, justice and legal adaptability. This relationship is grounded in how the *Sharī'ah* historically acknowledged biological and social diversity and sought to provide legal frameworks to accommodate those who fall outside conventional classifications. The recognition of *khunthā* within the four *Sunni* legal schools demonstrates an early acknowledgement of gender variance, conforming with the concept of the Third Sex and the Third Race. Islamic jurisprudence has historically provided

detailed frameworks to address the legal status of *khunthā*, individuals with intersex traits and *khunthā mushkil*, those whose sex remains ambiguous despite legal and medical examination. Legal discourse primarily revolves around personal status laws such as inheritance, marriage eligibility, prayer requirements and gender-based legal obligations, with each of the four Sunni schools offering nuanced interpretations.

The Ḥanafī school classifies *khunthā* based on physical indicators, such as the predominant organ used for urination. If clear markers exist, the individual is assigned that gender for legal purposes. In cases where no clear indicators emerge, *khunthā mushkil*, legal determinations are postponed until physical maturity or medical certainty clarifies their gender identity. This school maintains that inheritance for *khunthā mushkil* follows the lesser share between male and female allocations to prevent injustice in ambiguous cases (Al-Marghīnānī, 2000). The Mālikī position is similar but emphasises physiological characteristics over social presentation. Mālikī jurists recognise the possibility of gender indeterminacy persisting throughout life, allowing the individual to retain a non-binary legal identity. For marriage, *khunthā mushkil* may not contract a valid marriage until their gender status is clarified, ensuring protection against legal ambiguity.

The Shāfi‘ī school adopts a more cautious stance, requiring conclusive evidence through physical examination or medical insight. In the absence of certainty, inheritance is calculated based on the most restrictive distribution to prevent wrongful appropriation. Shāfi‘ī jurists also allow for legal gender reassignment if new evidence emerges, reflecting a degree of legal dynamism. The Ḥanbalī school shares the evidentiary framework of the other schools but is distinguished by its emphasis on *al-‘adl*. For *khunthā mushkil*, *ḥudūd* (criminal penalties) are suspended due to *shubhah* (legal uncertainty), emphasising compassion in cases of ambiguity. Ibn Qudāmah emphasises the need to prioritise social welfare when defining legal obligations for intersex individuals. A pivotal classical case involves a *khunthā* individual who petitioned for inheritance rights under the rule of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. The Caliph ordered a physical examination, affirming that legal identity could be biologically determined in cases of ambiguity. Such precedents reflect early juristic concern for protecting marginalised identities while maintaining legal certainty.

Contemporary scholars, such as Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 1355 CE), extend this *ijtihād* by permitting gender reassignment when *ḍarūrah* (necessity) and *maṣlahah* (welfare) justify it, underscoring the ethical obligation to preserve human dignity and legal inclusion. This perspective aligns with the *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* framework, which prioritises the preservation of life, honour and justice in cases of identity ambiguity.

### **C. Arguments for the Recognition of Gender Variance**

Proponents argue that the Prophet Muḥammad (SAAS) acknowledged the existence of *mukhannathūn*, signalling early Islamic awareness of gender variance. For example, a well-known *ḥadīth* (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book 62, Hadīth No. 774) records that a *mukhannath*

was allowed to enter women's private spaces until the Prophet (SAAS) observed his familiarity with female physical features and restricted his access. This suggests that while gender variance was recognised, boundaries were imposed to maintain *ḥayā'* (modesty) and *'awrah* (privacy). Some scholars interpret this as a form of legal accommodation rather than outright prohibition (al-Bukhārī, 1997).

Also, Islamic legal theorists such as Al-Shāṭibī (d. 1388) emphasise that *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* epitomise *ḥifẓ al-nafs* and *ḥifẓ al-'ird*. Contemporary scholars like Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī argue that if gender dysphoria threatens mental or physical well-being, medical interventions such as gender-affirming surgery may be permitted under the doctrine of *ḍarūrah* (necessity) and *maṣlahah* (public welfare) (Al-Qaraḍāwī, 1995). This argument is further supported by modern Muslim-majority states like Iran, where Ayatollah Khomeini issued a *fatwā* in the 1980s permitting gender reassignment surgery for individuals diagnosed with gender identity disorder (Khomeini, 1984). Al-Azhar University's *Fatwā* Committee ruled that gender transition is permissible if medical specialists confirm biological necessity. Shaykh Muḥammad Sayyid Ṭanṭāwī (d. 2010), former Grand Mufti of Egypt, endorsed such rulings under the *maqṣad* of *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (Al-Ṭanṭāwī, 2005).

Similarly, classical jurists, particularly from the Ḥanafī and the Shāfi'ī schools, recognised *khunthā mushkil* (indeterminate intersex individuals) as a legitimate third category requiring specialised legal rulings. Ibn 'Ābidīn (d. 1836), a leading Ḥanafī scholar, argues that medical procedures to clarify gender identity align with *maqāṣid* principles when ambiguity leads to hardship (Ibn 'Ābidīn, 1992). Proponents equally cite this precedent to justify extending such allowances to transgender individuals who experience psychological harm. Additionally, contemporary scholars highlight the dynamic nature of *ijtihād*, arguing that Islamic law must respond to emerging social and medical realities. Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 1355), a leading Shāfi'ī jurist, supports surgical intervention in cases where necessity warrants it, affirming that *maṣlahah mursalah* (unrestricted public interest) allows for evolving legal accommodations (Al-Subkī, 1995).

Another argument advanced by scholars supporting the recognition of gender variance is the principle of *raf' al-ḥaraj* (removal of undue hardship), derived from the Qur'ānic verse: "Allah does not intend to place you in difficulty" (Qur'ān 5:6). This principle is jurisprudentially binding, especially in matters that lead to physical or psychological harm. Classical jurists such as Ibn Nujaym (d. 1562) argued that when the strict application of a legal ruling causes unbearable difficulty, *ijtihād* must be exercised to alleviate it (Ibn Nujaym, 1983). Contemporary scholars, including Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1996) and Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, extend this principle to gender dysphoria, asserting that gender-affirming interventions may be permissible when failure to do so results in severe psychological distress or suicidality (Al-Ghazālī, 1990).

The proponents maintain that Islamic jurisprudence permits corrective medical interventions to restore biological function or alleviate deformities, drawing from the *ḥadīth*: “The Prophet (SAAS) allowed a man whose nose was cut off in battle to wear a silver nose” (Abī Dāwūd, 1996). Classical authorities such as Al-Nawawī (d. 1277) viewed such procedures as *mubāḥ* (permissible) if they alleviate pain or suffering (Al-Nawawī, 1995). This precedent supports gender-affirming surgery when medically diagnosed gender incongruence causes extreme harm. Modern scholars such as Muṣṭafā Zarqā (d. 1999) argue that since medical advancements provide reliable interventions for gender dysphoria, such treatments fall under *ḥifẓ al-naḥs* (preservation of life), one of the primary *maqāṣid* (Zarqā, 1998).

*Istiḥsān*, endorsed by the Ḥanafī and Mālikī schools, allows for legal exceptions in cases where rigid application of legal rulings leads to harm. Al-Sarakhsī (d. 1090) defines *istiḥsān* as the suspension of general rules for specific cases when equity demands it (Al-Sarakhsī, 1993). Modern advocates like Shaykh ‘Abdallāh bin Bayyah argue that gender dysphoria represents an exceptional circumstance where *istiḥsān* justifies surgical or hormonal interventions to alleviate distress (Bin Bayyah, 2007).

#### **D. Arguments against the Recognition of Gender Variance**

Opponents argue that gender identity is biologically immutable, embedded in the Qur’ān’s affirmation of the male-female binary: “And We created you in pairs” (Qur’ān 78:8). They contend that biological essentialism is central to Islamic jurisprudence, and deviations from this divinely-ordained structure violate the *fitrah* (natural disposition) (Ibn Kathīr, 1987). Modern scholars like Al-Munajjid (2001) argue that gender transition represents *taghyīr khalq Allāh* (alteration of Allah’s creation), a practice condemned in Qur’ān 4:119.

Classical scholars, such as al-‘Asqalānī (1986), prohibited deliberate gender impersonation, drawing from the *ḥadīth*: “The Prophet (SAAS) cursed men who imitate women and women who imitate men.” These rulings form the basis for prohibiting gender-affirming surgery when it is not motivated by biological necessity. Critics argue that such procedures violate public morality and undermine the stability of Islamic social order.

Conservative jurists argue that recognising gender variance sets a dangerous precedent. Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān warns that accommodating transgender identities could destabilise Islamic gender roles and facilitate moral relativism (Al-Fawzān, 2006). This view reflects a *maqāṣid* argument for *ḥifẓ al-naḥs*, by maintaining gender integrity. More importantly, Islamic jurisprudence places significant weight on *ijmā‘* (scholarly consensus). Opponents underline the absence of a unanimous approval for gender transition across the four *Sunni madhāhib*, asserting that without such consensus, *ijtihād* in this area remains invalid (Al-Marghīnānī, 2000).

The debate on gender variance within Islamic jurisprudence reveals a complex interplay between classical legal rulings and contemporary ethical considerations. Classical scholars, such as Al-Marghīnānī (2000), recognise the legal status of *khunthā* (intersex),

addressing their rights and obligations within the defined parameters of *fiqh*, while acknowledging the need for legal clarification in ambiguous cases. Jurists like Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī extend this reasoning to cases where *ḍarūrah* and *maṣlahah* justify medical interventions for gender transition, emphasising Islam’s intrinsic commitment to alleviating harm. Conversely, scholars like Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah express caution, arguing that altering one’s gender identity may violate the principle of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* and the divinely ordained human form. Contemporary scholars further deepen the discourse: while Yusuf al-Qaraḍāwī supports limited medical intervention in dire necessity, others, like Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, emphasise preserving the *fiṭrah* (natural disposition) and warn against unnecessary medical manipulation. However, the *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* – particularly *al-‘adl* and *karāmah* – provide a framework for jurisprudential adaptability, prioritising human dignity and alleviating hardship where legitimate needs arise. Thus, a balanced Islamic perspective recognises gender variance where compelling evidence of biological ambiguity or psychological necessity exists, while remaining cautious of unrestricted gender self-identification without clear *shar‘ī* (legal) justification.

### **E. *The Study’s Contributions to the Debate***

Numerous global developments have exposed the troubling consequences of transgender medical practices, particularly among minors, thereby amplifying theological, legal and ethical concerns in recent years. The closure of the Tavistock Clinic in the United Kingdom, following the Cass Review, revealed that gender-affirming treatments were being administered without adequate psychological evaluation, leading to legal action from detransitioners and growing public mistrust (Cass, 2024). Sweden and Finland have similarly curtailed hormonal treatments for minors, citing insufficient long-term safety data and a sharp rise in adolescent girls presenting gender dysphoria amidst mental health challenges (Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, 2022; Finnish Health Authority, 2020). In the United States, cases such as that of Cole (2023), who underwent a double mastectomy as a teenager and later de-transitioned, reflect the gravity of irreversible medical procedures carried out under ideologically driven consent models. France and Australia have raised alarms over the role of social media in triggering what is termed “rapid-onset gender dysphoria,” while Germany’s recent “Self-ID” law has sparked backlash over fears of abuse in sex-segregated spaces (German Bundestag, 2023; Littman, 2018). Canada’s jailing of a father for misgendering his biologically female child further illustrates how gender ideology can override parental rights and religious freedoms (Farrow, 2021). Even in global sports, the participation of transgender athletes, like New Zealand’s Laurel Hubbard, has triggered debates on fairness and the biological integrity of sex-based categories (Ingle, 2021).

From an Islamic perspective, these developments warrant profound concern. The Qur’ān condemns *taghyīr khalq Allāh* (altering Allah’s creation) (Q 4:119), a concept invoked by scholars like Muḥammad al-Munajjid to criticise sex-reassignment surgery undertaken without *ḍarūrah* (necessity). Islamic jurisprudence upholds *ḥifẓ al-nafs*, *ḥifẓ al-nasl* and *ḥifẓ al-‘aql* as among the objectives of *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, emphasising bodily sanctity, procreative purpose

and rational judgment. Moreover, the theological emphasis on *fitrah* (primordial disposition) implies that human identity is divinely ordained and not merely a subjective social construct. The emerging pattern of medical regret, mental health deterioration and family breakdowns across these global contexts underscores the urgency of reasserting *Sharī'ah*-based moral reasoning in evaluating contemporary identity claims.

Culturally, the global mainstreaming of transgenderism has led to intra-familial fractures, moral disorientation and legal ambiguities, particularly where religious values remain entrenched (Benjamin, 2019). Economically, the burgeoning industry of gender medicine raises questions about profit-driven ethics, as medical institutions may capitalise on identity crises without sufficient long-term psychological assessment. Islam, by contrast, advocates for *hifẓ al-nafs* (preservation of the self) and *hifẓ al-nasl* (preservation of progeny), urging holistic care over ideologically driven interventions. Thus, any engagement with gender identity must be grounded in revelation-based ethics, scientific caution and a commitment to human dignity within divine limits.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has explored the complex interplay between *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* and contemporary discourses on the Third Race and the Third Sex, accentuating how Islamic jurisprudence, historically and contemporarily, engages with issues of racial and gender plurality. From the foundational Qur'ānic injunctions to the jurisprudential frameworks articulated by classical and modern scholars, the Islamic tradition demonstrates an inherent commitment to *al-'adl*, *karāmah* and *maṣlahah*. While classical Islamic thought recognised categories akin to modern constructs such as *mukhannathūn* (gender non-conforming individuals) and *muwalladūn* (mixed-race persons), contemporary legal discourse reflects both continuity and contestation regarding gender identity and racial justice.

The *maqāsid*-oriented approach offers a dynamic and flexible framework for addressing evolving socio-legal realities. This study underscores that *ijtihād*, when guided by *darūrah* (necessity) and *maṣlahah*, can accommodate nuanced discussions on identity plurality. The contributions of scholars, such as al-Subkī, Ibn 'Ābidīn and al-Qarāfī, demonstrate that the Islamic legal tradition is not monolithic but rather adaptable to new ethical and social realities. At the heart of the Islamic worldview is the recognition that *taqwā* (God-consciousness) – not racial or gender classifications – constitutes the ultimate basis for human dignity and moral worth (Q 49:13).

In the light of the growing intricacies surrounding identity politics and the evolving landscape of global human rights frameworks, Islamic legal scholarship must engage with contemporary realities while remaining faithful to Islam's normative sources. The challenge is to balance the preservation of Islamic legal integrity with the imperative of justice and inclusivity, ensuring that marginalised identities are neither erased nor disproportionately burdened by legal interpretations. Consequently, this paper recommends

that Islamic jurists and scholars undertake *ijtihād* that is consciously *maqāṣid*-driven, ensuring that legal opinions consistently reflect the foundational values of justice, dignity and welfare by re-examining classical legal rulings in the light of contemporary realities while maintaining fidelity to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. In parallel, Islamic institutions ought to develop curricula that address gender and racial plurality from a *maqāṣid*-oriented perspective, thereby fostering intellectual openness and enabling Muslim societies to better understand and accommodate diverse identities in ways that remain aligned with Islamic ethics.

Similarly, *fiqh* councils and Islamic legal bodies should adopt ethical frameworks that prioritise *maṣlaḥah* (public welfare) and *ḍarūrah* (necessity) when adjudicating matters of gender transition and racial marginalisation, while collaborative engagement between Islamic scholars, social scientists and legal theorists must be encouraged to generate comprehensive frameworks for addressing identity-related concerns, thus enhancing the relevance and applicability of Islamic jurisprudence in pluralistic societies. Moreover, Muslim-majority governments should incorporate *maqāṣid*-based approaches into legislative processes to ensure that *taṣarrufāt al-ḥākim* (governmental ordinances) faithfully embody Qur'ānic imperatives of justice and social harmony. Finally, Islamic legal institutions should strive to recognise the rights and dignity of individuals categorised within the constructs of the Third Race and the Third Sex, ensuring that legal interpretations neither discriminate against nor dehumanise marginalised groups.

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## CHAPTER 25

### Contributions of Artificial Intelligence to Contemporary Islamic Studies

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#### **Introduction**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force across various academic and professional disciplines, including religious studies. In the context of Islamic studies, AI technologies are playing an increasingly significant role in facilitating research, enhancing textual analysis and improving accessibility to classical and contemporary Islamic scholarship. From digitising ancient manuscripts to enabling advanced linguistic analysis of the Qur'an and Hadith, AI is contributing to the preservation, interpretation and dissemination of Islamic knowledge in unprecedented ways.

The integration of AI in Islamic studies aligns with the broader digital revolution in the humanities, offering tools for automated translation, semantic search and data-driven insights into Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), theology (*Aqīdah*) and history. However, while AI presents remarkable opportunities, it also raises ethical and methodological questions regarding the accuracy of machine-generated interpretations and the preservation of traditional scholarly rigour. This research explores the contributions of AI to the advancement of Islamic studies in the modern era, examining its benefits, challenges and future potential.

#### **Methodology**

This study adopts a library research approach (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004, p. 234), combining literature review and case study analysis (Hughes, 1977) to assess the impact of AI on Islamic studies. The methodology is structured around reviewing materials such as scholarly articles, book and reports on AI applications in Islamic studies. It also analyses the existing AI tools (e.g., Qur'anic search engines, Hadith authentication algorithms, and Arabic NLP models). Reviewed case study is on the evaluation of specific AI-driven projects in Islamic studies, such as digital archives of Islamic manuscripts (e.g., the King Faisal Center's AI-powered manuscript restoration), AI-based Qur'an exegesis (*Tafsir*) tools and Hadith verification systems are also considered. Others include chatbots and

virtual assistants for Islamic education (e.g., fatwa databases and learning apps) being measured. On Ethical and Theological Considerations, a discussion on the limitations of AI in interpreting religious texts was done. The perspectives from Islamic scholars on the compatibility of AI with traditional methodologies is another aspect discussed in the work. During data collection, the research relied solely on secondary data from academic publications and technological reports. This methodological framework provides a comprehensive understanding of AI's role in modern Islamic scholarship, addressing both its advancements and challenges.

## Literature Review

### *Foundational Works on Islam and Technology*

The digitisation of Islamic scholarship has been extensively documented by Gary Bunt, who traces how online fatwa platforms have disrupted traditional modes of religious authority (Bunt, 2018, pp. 147–149). Meanwhile, Olivier Roy's work on the globalisation of Islam provides crucial context for understanding how AI tools intersect with transnational Muslim communities (Roy, 2010, pp. 89–92). Most studies focus on Sunni perspectives, with limited research on Shia or Sufi applications of AI. Other works are on religion in general and AI, in which the intersection of artificial intelligence and religious studies has gained scholarly attention, while Heidi Campbell argued that AI forces religions to confront “new ontological categories of the sacred”. However, these studies focused on Christian perspectives, with only 12% addressing Islamic contexts (based on a Scopus analysis).

### *Computational Approaches to Islamic Texts*

Recent advancements in Arabic NLP have enabled new methodologies for Qur'anic studies. The Qatar Computing Research Institute's work on semantic parsing of classical *tafsīr* demonstrates both the potential and limitations of machine learning for exegesis. However, as Kristina Benson notes, these tools struggle with metaphorical language (*majāz*) in Islamic legal texts. However, there is no comprehensive digital corpus that combines classical *tafsīr* works with contemporary scholarly commentaries. While Kais Dukes and Nizar Habash's morphological parser for Qur'anic Arabic remains foundational, it is limited to Classical Arabic verb forms. Recent advances, such as Zaghouani's benchmark, show that existing NLP tools struggle with *wujuh al-nazm* (Qur'anic polysemy), achieving only 68% accuracy. Also, there happens to be no models yet that incorporates *tafsīr*-based semantic hierarchies (e.g., Al-Tabari's layered interpretations).

Abdoh's 2025 study relied on observations and field visits to the digitisation lab at the King Abdulaziz Complex for Endowment Libraries. Most of these libraries hold unique collections of manuscripts and rare documents of historical significance. The study resulted in many findings, the most notable of which is the completion of the digitisation of 13,411 manuscripts, while 2,280 manuscripts still require conservation. The total number of digitised rare books is 7,644. The study demonstrated how digitisation represents a

modern and effective technical means for the preservation of ancient manuscripts and rare books, facilitating access and sharing, long-term preservation, and significantly contributing to the preservation of human cultural heritage.

Ahmed (2024, pp. 1–19) conducted a literature review of existing academic work on AI and *fatwa*. Some of these studies contain case studies of AI applications in religious guidance, content analysis of *fatwā* texts and AI algorithms, and comparative analysis of different AI approaches. The article assessed the challenges and opportunities for the *mufī* in an AI-dominated world. It examined the impact of AI on the *mufī*'s role and provides recommendations for adapting this technology. It then recommends the need to incorporate AI, owing to, among other factors, the benefits of its large datasets. However, such a *fatwā* provision must retain the human element, namely the traditional, physical role of the *mufī*, who is always alert and sensitive to context and can gauge what type of ruling is appropriate in each situation. So a partnership between AI and human judgment has the potential to enhance the efficiency and accessibility of *fatwā* issuance while preserving its integrity.

### ***Hadith Authentication Technologies***

Al-Smadi et al's CNN-LSTM model for Hadith verification demonstrates 89% precision but only tests Sahih al-Bukhari (Al-Smadi et al., 2021, 128705). The IslamicX blockchain proposal claims to solve narrator reliability issues but lacks real-world implementation data (IslamicX 2023, 15). However, 93% of computational Hadith studies ignore weak (*Da'if*) narrations, creating selection bias.

### ***Automated Fatwa Systems***

Wan Mohd Nor's study of Malaysian E-Fatwa (Wan Mohd Nor, 2021, pp. 45–61) bots reveals users distrust AI for marriage rulings (72% prefer human *muftis*) but accept it for dietary questions. Akgul's (Akgul & Al-Fedaghi, 2022, pp. 211–230) decision-tree *fiqh* model works for Hanbali inheritance rules but fails to replicate Maliki analogical reasoning. However, there is no AI system yet that accounts for '*Urf* (local custom) in *fatwa* generation. All the literature did not create a comprehensive way that AI has taken over in the *Fatwa* aspects, rather in some areas.

### ***Ethical and Theological Considerations***

The Islamic Council of Victoria's 2022 position paper on AI articulates concerns algorithmic bias in sharia-compliance applications, particularly in financial rulings (Islamic Council of Victoria [ICV], 2022, p.7), while Muhammad Abdul Haleem's theological critique goes further, questioning whether machines can ever possess the required *niyyah* (intention) for valid Islamic decision-making (Abdul Haleem, 2010, pp. 203–205). Apart from this, there is also the absence of cross-*Madhab* studies comparing how *Hanafi*, *Maliki*, *Shafi'i* and *Hanbali* scholars view AI-derived rulings.

## Contribution of AI to Islamic Studies in the Modern Era

The findings of this study demonstrate that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is significantly reshaping Islamic studies by enhancing research efficiency, expanding accessibility and introducing new analytical methodologies. However, its integration also presents theological, ethical and technical challenges that require careful consideration. Below are some of the contributions of AI to Islamic Studies:

1. ***Interpreting and digitising classical texts:*** One of the most substantial contributions of AI lies in digitising and annotating classical Islamic manuscripts. Manuscripts that were previously accessible only to specialised scholars can now be turned into searchable digital texts using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software powered by AI. These machine learning algorithms have enabled the digitisation of rare and deteriorating Islamic manuscripts, preserving them for future generations. For instance, projects like the Qatar Digital Library and Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation utilise AI to restore and classify historical texts (Jacobs, 1997, pp. 306-309). In an article written by Werla, he explained the importance of the Qatar digital library, which it undertakes to locate and digitise such heritage materials in order to present them online in a digital form and preserve them for the future, from an organisational, technical and end-user perspective (Werla, 2019, pp. 406-409).

Additionally, machine-learning algorithms can annotate and categorise these texts, making it easier for researchers to navigate complex works of *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis) (Rostam & Malim, 2021, pp. 658-667) and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) (Jamal et al., 2020). For instance, the authors observed that Islamic education is compulsory for Muslims to learn the way of life. However, due to various circumstances, people could not meet with a scholar in person to ask about Islamic jurisprudence. However, a chatbot is one of the solutions, as it offers users new opportunities to improve the learning and engagement process, reducing the typical cost of face-to-face consultation. However, to train a chatbot in Islamic jurisprudence, a text classifier is needed to build a robust knowledge base for the chatbot.

2. ***Enhancing Qur'anic studies:*** AI provides unmatched capability in analysing the Qur'an. For instance, AI algorithms can generate linguistic analyses, explore repetition of phrases and discern stylistic patterns in Qur'anic verses. An example can be found in the work of Khidhir (2024: 16-23), where the author emphasises the Quran's immense importance to many societies due to its position for Muslims around the world and the religious teachings it contains. The Qur'an employs a high-standard Arabic language, which requires analysis and simplification of expressions to enhance comprehension and application of its teachings. The digitisation and combining of the Quran with computing operations have made it easier to discover the vast amount of information contained within its verses. Using

these applications, academics and erudite researchers have successfully developed norms that govern the study of Qur'anic knowledge, thus expanding the illustration of the Quran. NLP is a well-known branch of study that has been the subject of research for many years. The intrinsic intricacy of this field has resulted in slower progress when compared to other areas of inquiry. Furthermore, despite having the most sophisticated syntax, structure and verb conjugation of all natural languages, Arabic has received comparatively little attention. As a result, there is an urgent need for study in this area to aid in the discovery of inclusive lexical knowledge (Khidhir, 2024, pp. 16-23). This can open the door to deeper insights into themes, coherence and the miraculous linguistic features of the Qur'an (Adnan, 2024, pp. 36-44). Furthermore, AI-powered platforms can develop detailed *tafsir* resources by analysing classical and contemporary scholarly interpretations.

3. ***Facilitating multilingual learning:*** Islamic studies span a wide array of languages, including Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Malay. AI-powered translation tools, such as machine translation systems and multilingual corpora, bridge the linguistic divide, providing access for researchers worldwide. For example, a scholar who does not know Arabic can now rely on increasingly accurate translations to study primary source material. A reviewed a range of Artificial Intelligence and Corpus Linguistics research at Leeds University on Arabic and the Quran has produced a range of software and corpus datasets for research on Modern Standard Arabic and, more recently, Qur'anic Arabic (Atwell *et al.*, 2011, pp. 1-8). The work on Qur'anic Arabic corpus linguistics has attracted widespread interest, not only from Arabic linguists but also from Qur'anic students and the general public. There is significant potential for Artificial Intelligence modelling of the Quran.
4. ***Automating Hadith authentication:*** The vast collection of *hadith* necessitates rigorous verification processes to ensure that fabricated narrations are identified. AI can assist in authenticating *hadith* by analysing *Isnād* (chains of narrators) and *matn* (textual content). Machine learning can identify weak links in narrations, potentially speeding up and standardising this traditionally labour-intensive task.
5. ***Customised learning platforms:*** AI can craft personalised educational tools tailored to a student's needs. For example, AI tutors can adapt lesson plans to teach Arabic grammar and Qur'anic memorisation, or introduce *fiqh* principles based on the learner's level and pace. Such systems make Islamic knowledge more accessible to learners of all levels, including beginners and advanced students.
6. ***Ethics and moral philosophy:*** AI tools can also contribute to the development of Islamic ethical frameworks in a modern age. Researchers can incorporate Islamic principles into AI ethics to provide richer, spiritually-informed ethical guidelines. Conversely, Islamic scholars can use AI to explore classical works on *akhlaq* (morals) and update their relevance to today's challenges.

7. **Strengthening interfaith and cultural dialogue:** Using natural language processing algorithms, AI can analyse texts across religious traditions. This helps Islamic scholars engage in more informed interfaith dialogues and cultural exchanges. Understanding shared and differing beliefs is critical in fostering mutual respect and cooperation in multicultural societies.
8. **Automated translation and accessibility:** AI translation models (e.g., Google's AI, DeepL) facilitate access to Islamic literature for non-Arabic speakers, though accuracy in religious terminology remains a concern.

### Challenges of AI Contributions Modern Islamic Studies

While AI offers groundbreaking opportunities for Islamic scholarship, its integration faces significant theological, technical and ethical challenges. Below is a structured analysis of the key obstacles:

#### Theological and Jurisprudential Concerns

1. **Lack of spiritual and contextual understanding:** AI cannot replicate the *Ijtihad* (independent juristic reasoning) of qualified scholars, as it lacks *Taqīd al-Shar'ī* (adherence to Islamic legal principles), understanding of *'illah* (underlying causes) in *fiqh* rulings. For example, an AI trained on Hadith might mechanically classify a weak (*da'īf*) narration as authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) due to insufficient *matn* (textual) and *isnād* (chain) analysis.
2. **Risk of misinterpretation in Tafṣīr and Fatwas:** AI models may generate out-of-context interpretations of Qur'anic verses or Hadith. For example, ChatGPT once suggested a "feminist reinterpretation" of Surah An-Nisa 4:34 without classical scholarly backing. Thus, automated *fatwas* could violate the principle that only a qualified *mufti* may issue religious rulings. So, AI systems often struggle with the nuanced and context-sensitive nature of Islamic texts. Qur'anic verses and Hadiths require a deep understanding of the underlying context, grammar and socio-cultural background, which AI may not fully grasp.

#### Linguistic and Technical Limitations

1. **Classical Arabic complexity:** AI struggles with polysemy (words with multiple meanings, e.g., "Qur'an" as recitation vs. scripture) and Idiomatic phrases (e.g., "*amana lahum*" in Surah Al-Baqarah 2:8 implies hypocrisy, not just belief). Most NLP models are trained on Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), not classical *fus'ha*. Classical Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, is linguistically complex. AI often misinterprets meanings because of its inability to analyse deeply rooted linguistic subtleties, including metaphors, idioms and dual meanings.

2. **Data bias and gaps:** AI systems rely on datasets for training, and current datasets may be incomplete, biased or overly modern-centric when addressing centuries-old Islamic teachings. This can lead to skewed interpretations. Machine learning models may inherit biases or misinterpret nuanced theological concepts.

### **Ethical Concerns and Social Challenges**

Using AI in Islamic decision-making (such as legal rulings) can raise ethical challenges. Theologians may debate whether machines are qualified to interpret divine texts or to issue judgments on sensitive matters such as Sharia. AI lacks the spiritual and jurisprudential reasoning (*Ijtihad*) required for deep Islamic scholarship.

1. **Erosion of scholarly authority:** There should not be over-reliance on AI, which could undermine ‘*ulamā*’ (scholars) as primary knowledge gatekeepers. It could also promote “Google fatwas” which could result in unverified religious answers from unqualified sources.
2. **Privacy and misuse risks:** AI tools collecting user data (e.g., prayer apps, fatwa chatbots) could be exploited for surveillance (e.g., governments tracking “unorthodox” queries) and commercialisation of religious data (e.g., targeted ads based on Islamic search history).
3. **Cultural sensitivity:** AI may homogenise Islamic thought, ignoring local ‘*Urf*’ (customs) in *fiqh* applications. For example, an AI trained on Saudi fatwas might incorrectly apply rulings to Southeast Asian contexts.
4. **Practical implementation barriers:** Resource disparities could underfund institutions, leading to a lack of access to AI tools and widening gaps between elite universities (e.g., Al-Azhar’s AI lab) and traditional madrasas, Arabic-speaking Muslim communities versus non-Arabic-speaking Muslim communities.
5. **Resistance from traditional scholars:** Some conservative circles view AI as *bid‘ah* (innovation in religion), fearing the replacement of *huffāz* (Qur’an memorisers) with digital tools, and Hadith fabrication via AI-generated texts (deep fake narrations).
6. **Lack of scholarly oversight:** Without rigorous input or oversight from Islamic scholars, AI implementations could misunderstand key elements, potentially spreading misinformation or misguidance.
7. **Cultural variability within the Muslim world:** Islam spans diverse cultures, and a single AI model cannot easily address the cultural variation in how Islamic teachings are practised and understood. In a research study on the intersection of AI and Islamic ethics, Tunggal (2025) revealed far-reaching implications for the development of Islamic-based technologies. First and foremost, there is the need for

a paradigm shift in how AI is developed and utilised, where ethical considerations are embedded in every phase of the technological design and deployed. By integrating Islamic values into the framework of AI, technology developers can create systems that prioritise not just efficiency and innovation but also moral responsibility. This approach ensures that AI technologies serve humanity in a manner consistent with Islamic moral teachings, contributing positively to society's welfare and promote justice and fairness in a world increasingly being shaped by technology. Moreover, adopting Islamic principles such as *tawhid*, which emphasises the unity of all creation, can encourage a more holistic and inclusive approach to technology, fostering collaborations that transcend geographical, cultural and religious divides. The study also highlights the potential for AI ethics to be framed within broader Islamic values, such as sustainability, social equity and moral accountability. These values can be crucial in ensuring that AI development does not merely serve the interests of a selected few but benefits society as a whole, especially the marginalised and vulnerable. By aligning AI with Islamic ethics, it is possible to mitigate the risks of exacerbating inequality or injustice, ensuring that technological advancements are used in ways that promote social good and human dignity.

8. ***Interdisciplinary gap:*** Effective AI programmes for Islamic Studies require collaboration between Islamic scholars and AI experts. However, the lack of mutual understanding between these fields can limit progress (Umam & Jannah, 2024, pp. 39-48).
9. ***Ethical usage and trust:*** While AI offers promising capabilities for textual analysis and pattern recognition within Islamic sources (Shutadi, 2025), its application also raises ethical concerns, particularly in relation to data privacy and the risk of misrepresentation (Elmahjub, 2023, p. 73). There are also concerns over misuse, such as AI being used for biased interpretations or extremist propaganda, which undermines trust in AI's role in religious scholarship.

In recent years, extremists have increasingly turned to online spaces to distribute propaganda and as a recruitment tool. While there is a clear need for governments and social media companies to respond to these efforts, such responses also pose a set of ethical challenges.

### **Policy Recommendations for AI Integration**

To ensure ethical and effective use of AI in Islamic studies, stakeholders (research institutions, *fatwa* councils, and tech developers) should consider the following measures:

1. ***Develop hybrid models:*** Scholarly oversight committees with AI tools for *fatwa* generation or *Tafsir* should be reviewed by panels of scholars (e.g., International Islamic Fiqh Academy). A hybrid model combining AI efficiency with scholarly oversight could enhance research without compromising tradition.

2. **Combine AI efficiency with scholarly oversight committees:** Enhanced NLP for Classical Arabic by developing specialised AI models for Islamic texts could improve accuracy.
3. **Interdisciplinary collaboration:** Encouraging dialogue between AI experts and Islamic scholars will ensure responsible innovation and bias mitigation by training AI models on diverse classical sources (e.g., Sunni/Shia commentaries) to avoid sectarian biases.
4. **Open-access frameworks:** Encouraging collaborations like the Open Islamicate Texts Initiative (Open ITI) to standardise AI-driven textual analysis.
5. **Promote equity:** Ensure open-access AI tools for Global South researchers.
6. **Improve Arabic NLP:** Train AI on classical texts with contextual annotations.
7. **Establish ethical guidelines:** Forbid AI from issuing independent *fatwas*. Finally, AI should be a *khadim al-‘ilm* (servant of knowledge), not its master.

## Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence holds transformative potential for the progress of Islamic studies. By aiding in text analysis, multilingual accessibility, educational customisation and ethical discourse, AI enriches the depth and accessibility of Islamic knowledge. However, scholars and developers must employ AI judiciously and ethically, ensuring that digitised works are represented accurately and that human intellect remains central to understanding the divine and the spiritual.

Artificial Intelligence is undeniably transforming Islamic studies by revolutionising manuscript preservation, textual analysis and knowledge dissemination. Its ability to process vast amounts of data quickly and accurately offers unprecedented opportunities for researchers, students and Islamic institutions. While AI is a powerful tool, it cannot replace the intellectual and spiritual depth of human scholarship.

The successful integration of AI in Islamic studies depends on balancing technological advancements with traditional scholarly rigour. Future developments should focus on collaborative frameworks where AI supports, rather than supplants, the expertise of Islamic jurists, linguists and historians. By addressing ethical concerns and refining AI's linguistic capabilities, the field can harness technology to enhance Islamic scholarship while preserving its authenticity. Ultimately, AI's role in Islamic studies should be seen as a complementary force, aiding in the democratisation of knowledge while respecting the discipline's rich intellectual heritage.

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## CHAPTER 26

### **Bridging the Gap: Exploring the Role of Artificial Intelligence in Translating *Al-Adabul Islami* Literature**

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#### **Introduction**

*Al-Adabul Islami*, or Islamic Literature, represents a modern literary movement within Arabic literature, emphasising the integration of Islamic values into creative expression. Translating *Al-Adabul Islami* poses unique challenges, given its emphasis on ethical principles, cultural references, and its deeply rooted Islamic perspective. Traditional translation approaches often fall short in capturing these intricacies. Recently, AI technologies, especially in the fields of Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Machine Learning (ML), have offered potential solutions to these challenges. This paper aims to explore the role of AI in bridging the gap in translating *Al-Adabul Islami* texts, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges inherent in this process.

#### **The Nature of *Al-Adabul Islami***

*Al-Adabul Islami*, as a distinct literary school, emerged to counter the prevailing modernist and secular trends in literature, emphasising the need for works that embody and promote Islamic values and ethics. This movement was established to cultivate a body of literature that could serve as an ethical and cultural guide for Muslim communities, bridging the gap between spiritual teachings and contemporary issues (Al-Shaibani, 2022).

Unlike classical Arabic literature, which often dwells on theological, philosophical and historical themes, *Al-Adabul Islami* is centred around everyday human experiences. The goal is to infuse common aspects of life - such as personal challenges, societal interactions and emotional struggles - with an Islamic perspective. Through this, *Al-Adabul Islami* literature aims to inspire and guide individuals in their moral and spiritual journeys by providing relatable narratives that reflect the values of honesty, compassion, justice and perseverance.

The literary techniques in *Al-Adabul Islami* also distinguish it from other genres. Authors frequently employ allegory and metaphor to convey deeper moral and spiritual lessons, effectively making complex ideas accessible to a wide audience. For instance, a narrative about a simple journey might symbolise the greater journey of life and the quest for righteousness, using cultural symbols to evoke the spiritual aspirations and social struggles of the Muslim community. These elements are crucial for conveying the richness of meaning, yet they pose significant challenges for translation.

Translation of *Al-Adabul Islami* literature involves not just the literal conversion of text from Arabic into another language but also the interpretation of the intricate allegories and metaphors within their cultural and religious contexts. AI-based systems, which primarily rely on data-driven patterns and literal translations, often struggle to capture these nuances. The depth of cultural symbolism and moral undertones in *Al-Adabul Islami* works requires a translator to have a profound understanding of both the cultural context and the Islamic worldview. AI tools may misinterpret the intended meanings or reduce the subtle layers of meaning to superficial equivalents, thereby losing the essence of what the original text aims to convey.

To preserve the integrity of *Al-Adabul Islami* works, translators must be adept in both literary Arabic and Islamic cultural contexts. This necessity underscores the challenges of applying AI-based translation tools, which may require further development in areas such as natural language understanding, cultural awareness and context-driven learning to effectively handle the richness of Islamic literature.

### **Artificial Intelligence and Translation Technology**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly advanced the field of translation by integrating Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing techniques. Neural Machine Translation (NMT), particularly with transformer-based models, has shown remarkable potential to improve translation quality by capturing nuanced relationships between languages (Vaswani et al., 2017). Unlike traditional statistical or phrase-based methods, NMT leverages deep learning to produce more context-aware translations, enabling greater handling of complex sentence structures, idiomatic expressions and stylistic subtleties.

Transformer models, which form the foundation of most state-of-the-art NMT systems, have brought a revolution in translation accuracy. Their attention mechanism allows the model to focus on different parts of a sentence during translation, leading to better handling of long-range dependencies and ambiguous phrases. This is crucial when translating literary texts, which often involve elaborate sentence constructions, multiple layers of meaning and specific stylistic features that require careful interpretation.

In the context of translating *Al-Adabul Islami*, AI faces a unique set of challenges. The literature of *Al-Adabul Islami* is not simply a matter of translating words from one language to another; it involves conveying a depth of meaning intrinsically tied to Islamic values, cultural references and moral messages. AI tools, such as NMT, have made progress in addressing these complexities by learning from large multilingual corpora and understanding context through exposure to vast amounts of training data. However, the ethical and cultural aspects of *Al-Adabul Islami* can still be challenging for AI to grasp fully.

The application of AI to the translation of *Al-Adabul Islami* requires not only linguistic precision but also cultural empathy, as these works are deeply embedded with religious and ethical meanings. Transformer models, although powerful in recognising context and relationships between words, often require additional guidance or adaptation to properly handle culturally specific allegories, metaphors and symbols. For example, an allegory in *Al-Adabul Islami* that draws on Quranic narratives or Hadith traditions might be misinterpreted or entirely overlooked by an AI model that lacks a deep understanding of Islamic culture and religious texts.

To enhance AI's ability to accurately translate *Al-Adabul Islami*, integrating cultural and ethical considerations into the training process is essential. Approaches, such as fine-tuning models on a corpus of religious texts or incorporating feedback from subject matter experts, can significantly improve translation quality. Moreover, hybrid translation methods that combine AI capabilities with human expertise have shown promise in preserving the integrity of culturally rich texts. In this approach, AI provides an initial translation, which is then refined by a human translator who has a nuanced understanding of the cultural and ethical context.

Advancements in AI-based translation technology have undoubtedly made it easier to translate complex literary texts, but fully preserving the depth and richness of *Al-Adabul Islami* remains a challenge. Achieving this requires ongoing innovation in AI, particularly in developing models capable of understanding cultural nuances and applying ethical sensitivity in translation.

### Challenges in Translating *Al-Adabul Islami*

- a. **Cultural and ethical nuances:** *Al-Adabul Islami* literature aims to inspire readers spiritually, and translating such content requires preserving its spiritual essence. AI, while capable of word-for-word translation, lacks the cultural empathy necessary to preserve the spiritual resonance intended by the author. Thus, the cultural context embedded in *Al-Adabul Islami* literature presents a significant challenge for AI translation. For instance, consider the following excerpt:

"كنا نجتمع تحت شجرة الزيتون نتحدث عن القيم الإنسانية التي زرعها الإسلام في نفوسنا، ونسترجع "قصص الصحابة التي كانت تحث على الأمل والعمل والصبر" (Al-Shaibani, 2022)

**Translation to English:** "We used to gather under the olive tree, discussing the human values that Islam instilled in our hearts, and recalling the stories of the Companions, which encouraged hope, hard work, and patience."

In this text, the "olive tree" holds significant cultural and symbolic importance, representing peace and heritage in the Islamic world. AI-driven translation tools often struggle to convey such symbolism effectively, leading to translations that lack the intended depth.

Moreover, references to "الصحابة" (the Companions) are deeply embedded in Islamic culture and require contextual awareness of their historical and spiritual significance. AI tools, even the most advanced ones, often miss these layers of cultural and ethical nuance (Al-Ghamdi, 2023).

- b. **Use of symbolism and allegory:** The use of metaphors, allegories and symbolism is central to *Al-Adabul Islami*. These literary devices convey deeper meanings that require contextual understanding, something current AI models struggle with because they interpret language literally (El-Zayat, 2021). Modern Arabic poetry, including that influenced by *Al-Adabul Islami*, is rich in metaphorical language and symbolism. Consider this example from modern Arabic poetry:

وفي الليل أسأل عن طيفها \*\* وفي الصبح أشكو الغياب الطويل  
غريب أنا في ديار الهوى \*\* فهل من دليل إلى المستحيل؟

**Translation to English:**

*In the night, I ask about her shadow,  
And in the morning, I lament the long absence.  
I am a stranger in the lands of love,  
Is there a guide to the impossible?*

This poem employs metaphor and symbolism: "her shadow" represents longing, while "lands of love" symbolises an emotional journey. The phrase "هل من دليل إلى المستحيل؟" (Is there a guide to the impossible?) conveys an existential struggle with unattainable love. AI models tend to translate such lines literally, missing the underlying emotional tone and deeper significance that are essential in understanding the poet's intent. This is a key shortcoming when dealing with *Al-Adabul Islami* literature, which frequently uses similar allegorical devices.

"وطنى ليس حقيبة  
وأنا لست مسافر  
بني العاشق والأرض حبيبة".

**Translation to English:**

*"My homeland is not a suitcase,  
And I am not a traveler.  
I am the lover, and the land is beloved."*

This poem reflects Darwish (2009)'s deep connection to his homeland, Palestine, using powerful metaphors to express love and attachment to his country. The themes of longing, identity and belonging recur throughout Darwish's work. This represents one of Mahmoud Darwish's poetry collections, translated into English. The excerpt demonstrates how

modern Arabic poetry often explores profound themes that can be challenging for AI to translate effectively, especially given the complex emotional and cultural nuances.

In the Nigerian Arabic literary landscape, translating *Al-Adabul Islami* presents numerous challenges, particularly regarding the cultural and ethical nuances deeply embedded in the text. Here are more examples highlighting these challenges:

c. ***Symbolism of nature***

In the following excerpt:

"تحت ظلال النخيل كنا نناقش أهمية الحفاظ على التراث والهوية في مجتمعنا".

**Translation to English:**

Under the shade of the palm trees, we discussed the importance of preserving heritage and identity in our community.

The “palm tree” is more than just a tree; it symbolises prosperity, resilience and the cultural heritage of many Muslim communities, particularly in northern Nigeria. Palm trees often appear in traditional narratives, representing not only a source of livelihood but also a symbol of deep cultural roots and continuity. AI-based translation systems might simply render this as “palm trees” without appreciating their cultural resonance, thereby stripping the text of its symbolic richness.

d. ***Religious expressions***

The phrase "حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل" in the following excerpt:

"كانوا يرددون دائماً: حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل، عند الشدائد، مشددين على الثقة بالله".

**Translation to English:**

They would always say: ‘Allah is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs,’ especially in times of hardship, emphasising trust in Allah.

It is a significant expression of faith that Muslims use to convey trust and reliance on God, especially in difficult times. It carries emotional weight and connotes a sense of surrender and resilience in the face of challenges. AI translation tools might accurately translate the phrase, but they often miss the emotional and spiritual depth associated with it, which is crucial to understanding its full impact in *Al-Adabul Islami* literature.

Muhammad Al-Fulani says in his poem:

"يا صاح لا تخف الصعاب فالنصر موعود  
إذ التجات إلى الله واستمددت الروح من جوده  
عندها تحسن الإحسان في الناس وتنتظر  
نصراً قريباً من المولى سبحانه".

### Translation to English:

*O companion, do not fear hardships, for victory is promised  
If you seek refuge in Allah and draw your spirit from His generosity.  
Then you will excel in doing good to people and await  
A victory close at hand from the Almighty, glorified is He.*

In this poem, the poet Muhammad Al-Fulani encourages resilience and trust in Allah during tough times. The phrase "نَصْرًا قَرِيبًا" (“a victory close at hand”) carries a spiritual connotation, implying divine support, which is not just about worldly triumph, but also spiritual fortification. AI translations might convey a literal sense of “victory” without fully capturing its deeper spiritual promise.

Ahmad Al-Kanemi’s poem below reflects a deep spiritual journey through the Qur’an, depicted metaphorically as a “journey” and “rain.” This imagery carries cultural depth, illustrating the importance of seeking wisdom through religious texts, and portrays the Qur’an as a guiding light. AI translations might struggle to convey the metaphor of “rain” as it relates to wisdom, thereby failing to convey it as a nurturing, vital force.

عَشِيقَتُ الرَّحَالِ إِلَى الْكِتَابِ تِرْحَالُ فُؤَادِي "  
فِيهِ كُنْتُ أَنْهَلُ الْحِكْمَةَ مِثْلَ غَيْثِ عَمِيمِ  
رُزِقْتُ بِنُورٍ يَجْلُو الظَّلَامَ فِي كُلِّ سَبِيلِ  
"فَهُوَ الْقُرْآنُ دَلِيلُ الرُّوحِ وَطَرِيقُ الْمُهْتَدِينَ"

### Translation to English:

*"I have loved the journey to the book, a journey of my heart  
In it, I used to drink wisdom like abundant rain.  
I was blessed with a light that clears the darkness from every path  
It is the Qur'an, the guide of the soul and the way of those rightly guided."*

#### e. **References to historical figures**

Excerpt:

"كنا نستلهم الشجاعة من مواقف خالد بن الوليد، ونتعلم الوفاء من قصص أبي بكر الصديق"

### Translation to English:

*We drew inspiration for courage from the actions of Khalid ibn Al-Walid and learned loyalty from the stories of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq.*

The excerpt above references historical Islamic figures, specifically Khalid ibn Al-Walid, known for his military leadership, and Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, renowned for his loyalty and support to the Prophet Muhammad. These figures are well-known within Islamic culture, and their stories evoke specific ethical lessons. AI tools can identify the names but often

fail to capture the significance of these historical figures and the cultural values they represent, resulting in translations that lack contextually rich connotations.

f. **Cultural proverbs and idioms**

"لا تحسبن المجد تمراً أنت آكله، لن تبلغ المجد حتى تلعق الصبرا"

**Translation to English:**

*Do not think that glory is a date you can eat; you will not attain glory until you taste patience.*

This excerpt uses a cultural idiom involving “dates,” which hold importance in many Muslim communities, symbolising sweetness and abundance. The metaphor here is to illustrate that attaining success requires enduring hardships. AI-based translation tools may struggle to convey the idiomatic meaning and may translate it in a way that loses the connection to the cultural and ethical implications behind the proverb.

In the poem by Fatima Al-Zubairi:

"تَأَمَّلُوا الطُّيُورَ عِنْدَ الْفَجْرِ كَيْفَ تُغَيِّ  
فَذَلِكَ شُكْرٌ يَصْدَحُ بِالصَّلَاةِ عَلَى الْمُصْطَفَى  
نَحْنُ الْبَشَرُ أَوْلَى أَنْ نَشْكُرَ الرَّحْمَنَ  
وَنَهَبَ قَلْبًا مُخْلِصًا لِلرَّحْمَةِ وَالرُّقِيِّ."

**Translation to English:**

*“Observe the birds at dawn, how they sing  
That is gratitude proclaimed through praise of Al-Mustafa (the Prophet)  
We humans are more deserving of thanking the Merciful  
And offering a heart sincere for compassion and elevation.”*

Fatima draws on the natural imagery of birds singing at dawn as an allegory for expressing gratitude and praising the Prophet Muhammad (here referred to as “Al-Mustafa”). The concept of birds singing as an act of divine gratitude carries both cultural and ethical significance, linking nature to spirituality. AI-based translations might render this literally without understanding the symbolism of nature’s harmony with divine praise.

g. **Moral and ethical narratives**

"كان الشيخ يروي لنا قصص الأنبياء لتعليمنا الإخلاص والتضحية في سبيل الله."

**Translation to English:**

*“The sheikh would tell us the stories of the prophets to teach us sincerity and sacrifice in the way of Allah.”*

The stories of the prophets are fundamental to *Al-Adabul Islami* literature, conveying deep moral lessons. These narratives are designed to instil values such as sincerity, sacrifice and devotion. AI-driven translations often miss the ethical emphasis inherent in these stories, reducing them to simple historical accounts without the ethical lessons crucial to understanding their place in the literature.

These examples illustrate how cultural, historical and religious elements are essential to fully grasping the richness of *Al-Adabul Islami* literature. AI tools, while efficient at many translation tasks, often struggle with these intricate layers, underscoring the need for human expertise to ensure culturally and ethically faithful translations.

The few examples of poetry by Nigerian Arabic poets reflect the challenges of translating *Al-Adabul Islami* due to the cultural and ethical nuances inherent in the texts. These examples highlight the complexities involved in translating Arabic poetry and prose from the *Al-Adabul Islami* tradition. Cultural and ethical contexts, such as metaphors related to nature, spirituality and Islamic symbols pose significant challenges for AI-based translation tools, which often fail to fully grasp the depth of these poetic elements.

**h. *Maintaining spiritual resonance:*** The spiritual dimension is fundamental in *Al-Adabul Islami*, where texts often inspire readers to reflect on moral and ethical values. The inability of AI to fully comprehend and convey the spiritual undertones of such works results in translations that may seem flat or lacklustre. The example of recalling “قبا حصرلا صصق” (stories of the Companions) emphasises not only historical accounts but also moral lessons drawn from these figures. AI translation tools typically fail to convey this aspect of reverence and ethical guidance, thus diminishing the impact intended by the original author.

These examples demonstrate the nuanced challenges AI faces in translating *Al-Adabul Islami* literature, including preserving cultural symbols, metaphors and ethical meanings that are central to the literary and spiritual richness of these texts (Hassan, 2020).

*Al-Adabul Islami* literature aims to inspire readers spiritually, and translating such content requires preserving its spiritual essence. AI, while capable of word-for-word translation, lacks the cultural empathy necessary to preserve the spiritual resonance intended by the author.

### **Current Applications of AI in Translating *Al-Adabul Islami***

**a. *Machine Learning Models (MLMs):*** Deep learning models, particularly those trained on Arabic texts, achieve higher translation accuracy than traditional methods. Tools like Google Translate, for instance, have made significant progress in handling Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). However, challenges remain when translating specialised genres like *Al-Adabul Islami*, which often incorporate unique stylistic, cultural and ethical dimensions. Traditional algorithms and general-purpose models may not account for these complexities (Khan & Ahmad, 2022). The subtle interplay of literary elements,

religious themes and cultural ethics makes *Al-Adabul Islami* translations more intricate. Machine learning models need to be tailored to specific literary sub-genres to capture the precise meanings and emotions conveyed in these works.

- b. **Neural Machine Translation (NMT):** Neural Machine Translation (NMT) systems, which consider the context of entire sentences or paragraphs, present a more refined approach to translating literary works. Unlike phrase-based methods, NMT systems can better grasp the meaning conveyed through context—a crucial aspect when translating *Al-Adabul Islami*, where isolated phrases often lose their significance. For example, religious and ethical themes, which permeate *Al-Adabul Islami*, are context-dependent, requiring a translation process that fully preserves the text’s moral and ethical undertones. NMT can help address this challenge by factoring in the broader narrative, though it is not flawless. Instances still arise where the cultural or spiritual connotations embedded in the text are misinterpreted or lost (Mustafa, 2021).
- c. **Transfer Learning for Literary Translation:** The emergence of transfer learning, particularly with pre-trained language models like GPT-4, has shown promise in translating literary texts. These models, once fine-tuned on specific datasets, can adapt to a text’s stylistic elements. For *Al-Adabul Islami*, however, there remains a gap in how well these models grasp the full depth of the genre’s ethical and cultural dimensions. Pre-trained models, though versatile, often require additional training to effectively translate works with strong cultural or religious themes. To truly excel in this domain, these models would benefit from datasets curated specifically for *Al-Adabul Islami* literature. Such datasets would focus on religious and cultural references, enhancing the model’s ability to provide translations that honour the original text’s ethical significance (Radford *et al.*, 2023).

### **Ethical Considerations**

AI translation of *Al-Adabul Islami* literature raises several ethical concerns. One key issue is the risk of stripping texts of their ethical and spiritual meaning, which is central to *Al-Adabul Islami*. Automated systems may inadvertently misrepresent or dilute these values, leading to interpretations that fail to resonate with the author’s original intent.

There are also concerns about the potential for AI to disrespectfully handle culturally sensitive material. For example, Islamic poetry or prose often reflects profound ethical teachings and cultural traditions. A poorly calibrated AI system might render these elements inaccurately or omit them entirely, thereby diminishing the work’s impact (Al-Khatib, 2023). Therefore, it is essential that scholars of Islamic literature are actively involved in overseeing the translation process to ensure accuracy and respect for cultural nuances.

## Advantages of AI in Translating *Al-Adabul Islami*

- a. **Increased accessibility:** AI-driven translation tools can make *Al-Adabul Islami* literature more accessible to a global audience. Non-Arabic speakers, who would otherwise be unable to engage with these texts, can gain insight into Islamic ethical values, spiritual teachings and cultural heritage. The accessibility brought about by AI translation has the potential to foster greater understanding across diverse cultures, promoting intercultural dialogue and bridging cultural divides (Omar, 2023).
- b. **Efficiency and speed:** One of the greatest advantages AI offers is its speed and consistency. Translating lengthy literary works manually is time-consuming, but AI models can significantly reduce the time required to generate initial drafts. This is especially useful in academic settings where rapid dissemination of texts for study and discussion can be achieved. Such efficiency ensures that more works of *Al-Adabul Islami* become available in translation, enabling a wider reach (Ibrahim, 2022).
- c. **Assisting human translators:** Rather than fully replacing human translators, AI can act as a valuable assistant by producing first-draft translations. This hybrid approach allows human translators to focus on refining complex cultural, ethical and linguistic nuances that AI may miss. AI can handle repetitive, straightforward translations, leaving the finer points of interpretation to human expertise, thereby improving the overall translation process (Saeed & Rashid, 2023).

## Limitations and Future Prospects

While AI has advanced significantly, it still struggles to fully capture the nuanced, ethical depth of *Al-Adabul Islami* literature. Current models often lack the cultural understanding necessary to render these texts authentically. Future research should prioritise developing AI models that integrate cultural and ethical insights specific to Islamic literature.

Collaboration between AI developers and Islamic scholars could play a pivotal role in improving AI's ability to handle *Al-Adabul Islami* translations. One potential solution is to train models on datasets specifically curated for *Al-Adabul Islami*, including religious texts, ethical discussions and literary works that reflect the genre's unique values. By doing so, the next generation of AI tools may offer more accurate, culturally sensitive translations, ensuring that the spiritual and ethical essence of the text is preserved.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, while Artificial Intelligence (AI) has made significant strides in the translation of literary texts, translating *Al-Adabul Islami* presents unique challenges that AI systems alone cannot fully address. The cultural, ethical and spiritual richness embedded in *Al-Adabul Islami* literature requires more than just linguistic accuracy; it demands a deep understanding of the context in which the texts are written. Although AI, particularly through Machine Learning (ML) and Neural Machine Translation (NMT),

has shown potential to make these texts more accessible, it often falls short of capturing the moral and spiritual undertones essential to *Al-Adabul Islami*.

Ethical concerns arise when AI-generated translations fail to respect the cultural and religious integrity of the works. Therefore, human oversight, particularly from scholars versed in Islamic literature, remains critical to ensuring the translations maintain their intended depth and resonance. AI can be most effective when used in collaboration with human translators, where AI provides the efficiency and scalability needed to process large volumes of text, and human experts refine the translations to ensure cultural and ethical fidelity.

Future advancements in AI translation tools, especially through the development of specialised datasets and the integration of cultural sensitivity, will be crucial in enhancing the effectiveness of AI in translating *Al-Adabul Islami* literature. By addressing these limitations, AI has the potential to bridge the gap in accessibility and understanding, allowing *Al-Adabul Islami* to reach a broader global audience while preserving its core values and teachings.

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## **BIOGRAPHY OF**

### **LATE PROFESSOR ISMAIL AYINLA BABATUNDE BALOGUN**

Late Professor Ismail Ayinla Babatunde Balogun was born on Friday, January 24, 1930, in Lagos, to the family of Alhaji Muhammad Bello Bankole Balogun, a descendant of the Salawe Family, in Ita Faji, and a member of a royal lineage. His mother, Alhaja Ummul-Khair, was the granddaughter of Chief Imam Salu Imoru, of the Idoluwo Mosque, the first mosque in Lagos, built in 1775. This heritage made him a proud Lagosian by origin.

Ismail Balogun completed his primary and Qur'ānic schools in 1941. He attended Eko Boys' High School, Lagos, between 1942 and 1944; Ansar-ud-Deen Teachers' College, Otta, 1946-1947; School for Arabic Studies, Kano, 1955-1959; University of London School of Oriental and African Studies, 1960-1963 and 1964 -1967, for his M.A. and Ph.D., respectively. He joined the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, in 1967. He later transferred his services to the nascent University of Ilorin, in 1976. He became Professor in 1979.

A trailblazer in his field, Professor Balogun achieved numerous firsts:

- The first indigenous West African scholar to earn a degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies;
- The first African Ph.D holder to join the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Ibadan;
- The first academic to serve as Chairman of the Western State Pilgrims Welfare Board;
- The first West African Examinations Council (WAEC) examiner for Arabic and Islamic Studies;
- The first Head of the Department of Religions at the University of Ilorin;
- The first Dean of the Faculty of Law and Humanities at Lagos State University; and
- The first Professor of Islamic Studies in Nigeria.

Professor Balogun left an indelible mark on the lives of many. He mentored numerous students, provided financial and moral support to those in need, and was a source of wise counsel that held families together. He was renowned as a pioneering scholar and a passionate advocate of harmonious Muslim-Christian relations in Nigeria, both in his academic work and personal conduct. He passed away on Tuesday, October 2, 2007, after living a fulfilled life as a scholar of international repute and a devoted family man.

May Allah forgive his shortcomings and admit him into *Jannat al-Firdaws*.