

Title-Holding Among Egba Muslims of Ogun State, Nigeria: X-Raying the Nexus Between Islam and Yoruba Culture

Owoyemi, Samuwilu Alade (PhD)
Alade.owoyemi@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

Vol. 5, Issue 2 | July 2022

KEYWORDS

Title-holding, Egba Muslims, Egbaland, Yoruba culture, Yorubaland

ABSTRACT

Title-holding was a cultural practice of Yoruba before the penetration of Islam in Egba land, an area predominantly inhabited by the Yoruba speaking people of Ogun State, Nigeria. The acceptance of Islam by the Egba reformed, to a large extent, the socio-religious and cultural lives of the people. The Yoruba cultural systems of marriage, naming and burial rites were greatly influenced and reformed by Islam. However, a good number of the Egba, who profess Islam, still retain some of their cultural beliefs and traditions. Consequently, there is a nexus of Yoruba culture and Islamic practices and rites such as marriage, naming and funerals. Such connection can also be noticed in title-holding among the people. This paper, therefore, critically appraises the fusion of the Yoruba cultural elements to the Islamic practice of the title-holding among Egba Muslims. The paper adopts the historical approach to establish the institutionalization of title-holding in Islam. It then x-rays the institution of title-holding among the people. The study also examines the similarities between the Muslim titles and the Yoruba traditional titles patterned along the traditional set up in Egba Muslim Community. Realizing the fact that title-holding has become a firmly rooted institution among the Egba Muslims, the paper posits that the practice should be restructured for better administration of the people and development of Islam in Egbaland in particular and Yorubaland in general.

Introduction

Prior to the creation of Ogun State by the Nigerian Military Government in 1976, Islam had reached the four administrative divisions of Remo, Ijebu, Yewa and Egba. The exact dates when Islam entered each of the four zones vary and in some cases, not certain. In other words, there are conflicting historical records of the dates Islam penetrated the areas now known as Ogun State. However, the fact that Ogun State is part of Yorubaland, the history of Islam in Ogun State could be traced back to the 17th century when Islam was reported to have been introduced into Yorubaland by Nupe (Eades, 1980). Of the four political administrative divisions of Ogun State, Egbaland was said to have been the first area to have

come in contact with Islam in early 19th century. Abeokuta, the State capital became refuge area where many of the Owu fled from their towns in 1825 and settled in Abeokuta in 1831. Some of the early settlers among the Owu people were said to be Muslims (Toyyib, 2009).

Islam became pronounced after the settlement of the Egbas in Abeokuta precisely in 1830 when a group of Muslims met the then Egba leader, Sodeke and requested for a piece of land on which a mosque could be erected. In 1841, the Egba Muslims were able to secure a piece of land at Iporo Kobiti in the Egba Alake area, for a building of a *Jumu'ah* (Friday) mosque in the town (Owoyemi, 2004). The large number of the early Muslim settlers in Egbaland was

from Owu people and they formed a preponderant Muslim quarter in the town. Prominent among them were Kasumu and Alfa Oseni of Olusunmade compound in Idi-Ape. In Egba Alake section, notable Muslims who brought Islam from their original settlement (*orile*) to Abeokuta were Saliu, Baale, Buraimo, Yisa Muhammad Etu Kosi, Amodu Mogaji and Oloko (Owoyemi, 2004). Other notable early Muslims from other quarters in Egbaland were Ibrahim Olubowale of Egba Gbagura, Sunmonu Onasoku of Iporo, Aliyu Sopeyin of Iporo, Disu Olugbaje, Ogun of Ilawo and Akeyakan Balogun of Ikija (Adegbenro, 1991).

Gradually, the population of Egba Muslims increased and they decided to form a community. This community which cut across all the four sections in Egbaland was spearheaded by Sunmonu Adelokun who was said to be very energetic. Thereafter, Sunmonu Unspoken was appointed Imam of the Egba Muslim Community. However, with the consent of the Egba Muslim Community, the Imamship post was taken over by Imoru, son of Salu from Oke Aleji (Egba Alake section) who was said to be more learned in Islamic Studies. Imoru, popularly known as Baba Badaru was the first formally acknowledged Chief Imam of Egbaland (Gbadamosi, 1978, Owoyemi, 1992). Apart from the spiritual titles of Imam, *Naibul* Imam (deputy Imam) *Ladhani* (caller to prayer) *Alfa Taosiri* (Qur'an exegete) and *Arowasi* (megaphone of *Alfa Taosiri* or someone who re-echoes what *Alfa Taosiri* utters) conferred on Egba Muslims who were found to be knowledgeable in Islam, honorary titles like *Baba Adinni* (Patron of the Religion, Islam), Balogun *Adinni* (Commander of the Muslim veteran warriors), *Arowosadini*, (Muslim philanthropist) *Iya Sunna* (Mother of the faithful), *Iya Adinni* (Patroness of the Islamic Religion) to mention but few, were conferred on wealthy and influential Egba Muslims of high social status. This was done to source funds to finance Islamic projects like building and renovation of mosques. Other titles include *Sarumi Adinni*, *Jagunmolu Adinni*, *Seriki Musulumi*, and a host of others.

However, in selecting recipients, the Egba Muslims adopted the Egba traditional chieftaincy system. Zoning system, a feature of Yoruba cultural title holding, for example was borrowed by the Egba Muslims. The titles, both the spiritual and honourific were zoned unequally to the four major sections of Egbaland namely Egba Alake, Egba Oke-Ona, Egba Gbagura and Egba Owu. The zoning formula, which has been in practice among the Egba since 1830CE, has been causing ripples among the Egba Muslims and the system has consistently been challenged by some Muslims in Egbaland (Owoyemi, 2004). This cultural infiltration of the Egba tradition and culture on the Muslim title-holding in Egbaland is seen as a sharp departure from the teachings of Islam and the practice of the early Muslims. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to examine the nexus

between the Yoruba culture and the Islamic institution of title-holding among the Egba Muslims with a view to identifying the grey areas in the title-holding that are incongruent with Islamic culture and then offers recommendations to sanitize the institution in particular among the Muslims in Egbaland, Ogun State and in Yorubaland as a whole.

Scriptural Basis for Title – Holding in Islam

A meticulous study of the Glorious Qur'an on the lives and missions of some prophets of Allah will reveal what appears like conferment of titles. In this case, title holding can be viewed from two angles. The first one is the titles which Allah conferred on some of His prophets as mentioned in the Qur'an while the second angle is the use of general titles or nicknames as replacement for the names of some personalities mentioned in the Qur'an. Concerning titles conferred on the chosen prophets of Allah, it is done on the account of Allah's disposition, relationship or interactions with those prophets. For instance, Prophet Ibrahim (AS), the father of monotheism was an exemplary of faith and friend of God. Hence, the titles *hanif* (One pure in faith) and *Khalilullah* (a bosom friend of Allah) are frequently used to describe him (i.e. Prophet Ibrahim). The two titles can be found in the Glorious Qur'an where Allah says:

And who can be better in religion than one who submits his face (himself) to Allah and he is a good doer and follows the religion of Ibrahim, *Hanif* (a worshipper of none but Allah) and Allah did take Ibrahim as a *Khalil* (an intimate friend) (Suratul-Nisai, 4:125)

Kalimul-Lah (One with whom Allah spoke directly) is the title given to Prophet Musa. It was as a result of this privilege that Prophet Musa asked Allah for the permission to see Him physically (Q4:143). The title, *Kalimul-Lah*, which was conferred on him, is culled from the Qur'an where it is stated thus:

And Messengers We have mentioned to you before, and messengers We have not mentioned to you and to Musa Allah spoke directly (*wa kallamallahu Musa takliiman*). (Suratul-Nisai, 4:164).

Likewise, Prophet 'Isa (Jesus Christ) is known in the Qur'an with the title, *Ruhullah* (the Spirit of God). This is due to the fact that Angel Jibril was sent to Maryam to conceive without having any sexual intimacy with any man as a result of which she gave birth to 'Isa (Jesus Christ). The title, *Ruhullah* is gotten from Allah's statement in Qur'an 4:171, which goes thus:

...The Messiah 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) was a Messenger of Allah and His Word which He bestowed on Maryam and a spirit from him (*Ruhun minhu*).

Going further into the Glorious Qur'an, it is discovered that Prophet Muhammad, like other prophets mentioned above, also bore some titles. Besides the titles of *An-Nabiyy* (Prophet) and *Rasul* (Messenger) which are frequently used to address Prophet Muhammad and other men of God in the Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad is also conferred specially with the title, *Khatim an-Nabiyy* (the zeal of the prophethood) (Qur'an 33:40). The title, *Ulul'Azm* (great possessors of the determination) is a collective title given to Prophets Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Isa and Muhammad.

Discussing title-holding from the second perspective in the Glorious Qur'an, one will come across some titles such as *khalifah* used to refer to humankind or human being as the vicegerent of God on earth (Q2:30), *wazir* used to describe the deputizing role played by Prophet Harun (Suratul-Taha, 20:29, Suratul-Furqan, 25:35) and *makiin* (one with rank firmly established) used for Prophet Yusuf for the supervisory role he played in Egypt (Suratul Yusuf, 12:54).

Evolution of Islamic titles in Islamic History

The early period of Islam witnessed a number of titles conferred on the *sahabah* (companions of the Prophet Muhammad) and the *tabi'un* (followers of the companions of the Prophet). It was the period when title-holding became an acceptable practice and an institution in Islam. Right from the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad, the Muslim faithful who contributed immensely to the propagation of Islam were honoured with titles. The first companion of the Prophet to receive a title from him was Abu Bakr bn Abu Quhafah. He was given the title, *As-Siddiq* (the most truthful and sincere person). The title was conferred on Abu Bakr because he declared his firm faith in the Prophet's *Mi'raj* (Ascension to Heaven) and for believing him as a prophet of God (Haykal, 1981). It is on record that some Muslims doubted the reality of the Prophet's *Mi'raj* (ascension to heaven) except Abu Bakr. On hearing the news about the Prophet's *Miraj*, Abu Bakr is quoted as saying:

All this is true. Your description is faithful and correct. I believe in every word you have said, for you say nothing but the truth. I testify that you are the Messenger of God and God has placed invisible forces at your disposal. As such there is nothing improbable in your ascension to the heaven (Masud, 1985:16-17).

Responding to Abu Bakr's statement, Prophet Muhammad is reported to have addressed him thus:

Verily, Abu Bakr, you are *as-Siddiq*. You have a penetrating vision and you can discern the truth, which an ordinary man finds difficult to understand... (Masud, 1985:16-17).

'Umar bn al-Khattab was a prominent companion who received a title from the Prophet. He was conferred with

the title *al-Faruq*, meaning the one who makes distinction between the right and the wrong. The title was given to 'Umar because of his boldness and courage towards the unbelievers who usually molested and persecuted the few Muslims in Makkah. Umar bn al-Khattab always led a number of Muslims to the Ka'bah where they offered their *Salat* (canonical prayer) in congregation (Khan, n.d.). The last of *al-khulafaa ar-Rashidun* (the rightly guided caliphs), Ali bn Abu Talib was given the title, *Asadullah* (the lion of Allah) by Prophet Muhammad. According to Khan (n.d), Ali was given the title because of his bravery, audacity and shrewdness in the war of conquest. He showed a great courage in all the battles he fought and earned fame. He was counted among the great warriors of Arabia (Hitti, 1970). Arimiyah (2014) states that Ali was given the title, "the Lion of God" because of his bravery which he demonstrated on a number of occasions in support of the mission of Prophet Muhammad.

With the passing away of the era of the Prophet (632CE) and the four rightly guided caliphs (632-661CE), Islamic titles became more pronounced and proliferated especially during the periods of Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs (661-1258CE). Muawiyya ibn Abi Sufyan adopted the title, *Malik*, meaning the King. Thus, the first self-styled *Malik* (i.e. king) started from Muawiyya and all his successors bore this title (Rahim, 1981). The Umayyad dynasty, after nine decades of rule, was overthrown by Abu Abbas, the founder of the Abbasid dynasty in 750CE. After a landslide victory of Abu Abbas over the Umayyad family, he was nick-named *As-Saffah* meaning the blood thirsty, the title with which he became well known in Islamic history. Thereafter, his successor, Abu Ja'far gave himself the title *Al-Mansur* meaning he that was helped. Following *Al-Mansur's* reign, his successors were conferred with series of titles. Among the titles were *Mutaqqi*, *Al-Qahir*, and *Al-Mustakfi* which were conferred on caliphs Abu Ishaq, Abu Mansur Ahmad and Kasim Abdullahi respectively (Masudul Hassan, 2001). According to Baksh and Margoliouth (1979), Caliph al-Qaim conferred three titles, *Rais al-Ru'asa* (Chief of chiefs), *Sharf al-Wuzara* (Honour of the Wazirs) and *Jamal al-wara* (Beauty of creation) on his Wazir. In 429/1037CE, the Chief Qadi Mawardi received the title of *Aqda'i Qudat* (Highest Judge). Baksh and Margoliouth (1979) also contend that conferment of titles became so rampant during the Abbasid period to the extent that the Abbasid threw open the gates of honour and surnames that they conferred titles on a man whom their ancestors would not have made the door keeper of their lavatory.

Structure of Title-Holding in the History of Egbaland

Egbaland is a land occupied by the Egbas. The term *Egba* is said to have been derived from *Egbalugbo* meaning wanderers towards the forest. The term *Egba* connotes openhandedness, generosity, accommodating and hospitable (Biobaku, 1991). Historically, the *Egba* are the Yoruba speaking people who came to occupy *Egba* forest known as Ago-Oja in the present Oyo State, Nigeria. They were said to have lived as three independent groups of people in the *Egba* forest and

migrated to Abeokuta (now capital of Ogun State) in 1830CE after the destruction of their towns by the enemies. They formed a loose federation with the *Alake* as its acknowledged paramount ruler while the *Osile* and the *Agura* were rulers of their respective sections (Biobaku, 1991). The *Owu* people later migrated to Abeokuta in 1831 and became the fourth section at Abeokuta as *Egba Owu* (Owoyemi, 2004).

Before the settlement of the *Egba* people in Abeokuta in 1830CE, there had been functional political machinery in each of the federating towns in the *Egba* forest. Political powers were vested in the hands of the titleholders such as the *Ogboni* (fraternities), the *Olorogun/jagunjagun* (veteran warriors), the *Parakoyi* (market administrators), the *Odes* (hunters) and the *Egans* (Sotunde, 2002). The first set of the *Olorogun* chiefs in *Egba* history emerged in the 1770s in the era of Lisabi and the *Egbe Aro* which was organized to counter the high handedness of the agents of *Oloyo*, the paramount ruler of Yorubaland to whom the *Egbas* were subservient. The very first *Egba* ward lords in Abeokuta had their titles about 1833CE. It was during that period that Apati and Anoba became the first *Bashorun* and *Aaare Ona Kankanfo* respectively (Sotunde, 2002). It is important to state that the origin of each of the many *Ogboni* (fraternities) and *Olorogun* (veteran warriors) titles is still unclear because the historical records about them remain obscure.

Egbaland is a Yoruba Community which covers the present six local government areas namely Abeokuta North, Abeokuta South, Ewekoro, Ifo, Obafemi/Owode and Odeda local government areas of Ogun State, Nigeria. Egbaland is principally divided into four major sections namely *Egba Alake*, *Egba Oke-Ona*, *Egba Gbagura* and *Egba Owu*. *Egba Alake* is said to be larger and more populous than the remaining three sections. The numerical strength of *Egba Alake* is attributed to a claim that *Egba Alake* is the product of the merger of *Egba Eku*, *Egba Aarin* and *Egba Agbeyin*. According to Blair (1937), *Egba Alake* has forty-five (45) townships, *Egba Gbagura* has seventeen (17), *Egba Oke-Ona* has seven (7) while *Egba Owu* has four (4) townships. This is the basis for sharing assets among the *Egbas*.

There are traditional, Christian and Muslim titles all over Egbaland. Each of the sections, townships and districts in Egbaland also confers titles on the *Egba* people. Notable social clubs and religious societies similarly confer titles on their members. It is worthy of note to state that an *Egba* man could hold more than one title at different times. There are some influential and wealthy *Egba* people who are conferred titles by the central, section, district, club and religious societies in Egbaland. For instance, an *Egba* Muslim could be conferred *Balogun Adinni* of Ido (a township title), *Seriki of Gbagura Muslims* (a sectional title) and *Baba Adinni* of Nawair-ud-Deen Society (a societal title). This implies that an *Egba* Muslim could be conferred with more than three or four titles at different times.

The structure of the chieftaincy traditional institution in Egbaland remains the same since the *Egba* emerged as a distinct group of the Yoruba race. The structure is hierarchical with the *Oba* (traditional ruler) at the apex.

Next to him are the general titleholders whose constituency is the whole of the *Egba* nation. Then, next to them are the township chiefs whose areas of jurisdiction are the individual townships. The *Baales* (village/district heads) come at the base of the hierarchy (Sotunde, 2002). The traditional mainstream titles in Egbaland comprise the *Ologboni* (the statesmen) and their titles are *Oluwo*, (king in occult), *Apena* (convener of meeting/secretary), *Baala*, *Baajito*, *Asipa* (the messenger), *Odofin*, *Lisa*, *Baase*, *Agbusi*, *Sagbua*, *Adila*, *Losi*, *Olori Erelu*, *Lika*, *Iyalode*, *Ajiroba*, *Ajigbeda* etc (Sotunde, 2002). The traditional titles belonging to the *Olorogun* include *Akogun*, *Balogun*, *Bashorun*, *Seriki*, *Bada* and *Sarumi* (commanders of the veteran warriors). The *Parakoyi* (council of the chamber of commerce) titles include *Babalaje*, *Iyalode*, *Iyalaja* and *Iyalaje*. The *Odes* (hunters) are those in charge of the security. Titles belonging to *Odes* are *Lerin*, *Aro*, *Lisa* and *Ajade* (Owoyemi, 2004). While explaining the prominent role occupied by the titleholders before Islam in Yorubaland, Doi (1984) describes the title of *Balogun* thus:

Balogun used to be a title of a chief warrior during the inter-tribal war and as the war chiefs first accepted Islam, then their followers like *Balogun Kuku* in *Ijebu Ode* (a prominent town in Ogun State), the same title is used for community organization after the spread of Islam (Doi, 1984:201).

Growth and Development of Religious and Honourific Titles among *Egba* Muslims

Islam became pronounced among the *Egba* Muslims after their settlement in Abeokuta in 1830CE. When it became obvious that the number of Muslims became appreciable in size, the Muslim leaders of the period, notably, Sunmonu Adelokun, Sunmonu Onasoku, Aliu Sopeyin and Disu Oligbaje felt that there should be a place where *Jumu'ah* (Friday prayer) should be observed. They approached Sodeke, the then *Balogun* of Egbaland, to give them a piece of land to build a mosque. Sodeke yielded to the request of the *Egba* Muslims and a mosque was built at *Iporo Kemta Kobiti*, Abeokuta. *Imoru*, son of *Salu Bale* from *Itoku* quarters was appointed and turbaned as the first acknowledged chief Imam of Egbaland (Adegbenro, 1991).

Having appointed *Imoru* ('Umar) as the Imam of Egbaland, the members of the Muslim Community felt the need to have a *Balogun* (Commander of the veteran warriors) as it existed among the *Egba* traditionalists. Thereafter, Sunmonu Adelokun, from the *Egba* section, was conferred the title *Balogun*, while *Sofu Oyegebi* of *Igbore* quarters was given the title of *Noibi* (Deputy Imam), *Alfa Fulani* became the *Mufassir* of Egbaland, *Disu Oligbaje*, *Abdullah Olubowale* and *Oseni Olusumade* were appointed the first Imams of *Oke-Ona*, *Gbagura* and *Owu* Muslims communities respectively (Owoyemi, 2004).

In *Egba* Muslim Community, titles are of two categories. These are religious and honourific/socio-civic titles. The

religious titles are those conferred on mosque functionaries or the Islamic scholars. The religious titles recognized among the Egba Muslims include Imam (the Islamic leader), *Olori Ratibi* (Head of all quarter Imams), *Olori Omokewu* (Leader of the Islamic scholars), *Alfa Taosiri* (the Qur'an Exegete), *Ajanasi* (lieutenant to *Alfa Taosiri*), *Arowasi* (the megaphone or someone who re-echoes what Imam says) and *Ladani* (the caller to prayer) (Owoyemi, 2004).

As earlier mentioned, honourific titles are those created and conferred on affluent and influential Muslims in order to secure their financial support in executing Islamic projects. Most of these honourific titles are replica of the traditional titles but are given religious colouration. Thus, some of the Muslim titles in Egbaland are suffixed with terms like "*Adinni*", "*Musulumi*" and "*Sunnah*". As the Egba Muslim Community grew up, the *Otun*, *Osi* and *Ekerin* titles of the *Balogun* (i.e. the second, third and fourth in rank to the *Balogun* respectively) were created and conferred on influential Muslims. In order to assist the Imam in his missionary work, titles such as *Noibi* (Deputy Imam), *Alfa Taosir* (*Mufassir* -Qur'an exegesis), *Ajanasi*, *Arowasi* and *Ladani* (*Mu'adhdhin* (caller to prayer) were also conferred on the knowledgeable Egba Muslims. Titles such as *Oba Imale* (King of Muslims) later became *Baba Adinni* (Father or patron of Islam), *Seriki* (Officer next in rank to *Otun* *Balogun*), *Bada*, *Sarunmi* (ranks below *Seriki*) were borrowed from the traditional setting in order to honour some influential Egba Muslims and secure their support for the community development and Islamic propagation in particular (Owoyemi, 2004).

The honourific titles are many and their number is in exhaustive. Owoyemi (2004) identifies sixty-one honourific Muslim titles in Egbaland. Most of these titles are only held ceremoniously with no specific roles or functions to perform for the better practice of Islam or the welfare of the Muslims by their holders. However, it is noted that not all the honourific titles are borrowed from Egba traditional set-up. A fact worthy of mentioning is that some Muslim honourific titles depict the socio-economic status of the holders. Such titles include *Irawo Adinni*, *Osupa Adinni*, *Olowolagba Adinni*, *Okanlomo Adinni* and *Borokini Adinni* (Owoyemi, 2004). In Egba Muslim Community, the religious/missionary and honorific/socio-civic titles earlier enumerated are grouped into Council of Imams and Alfas and Council of the *Ologuns* respectively.

There are eight (8) recognized religious titles in Egba Muslim Community, four titles namely Chief Imam *Jami'u*, *Olori Ratibi*, *Olori Omokewu* and *Baba Adinni* are zoned to Egba Alake, one (1) title i.e. *Alfa Taosiri* (*Mufassir*) is zoned to Egba Oke-Ona, two (2) titles, *Ajanasi* and *Ladani*(*Mu'adhdhin*) zoned to Egba Gbagura while the fourth section, Egba Owu is given the remaining one title, that is *Arowasi* (the Megaphone). It is important to note that the *Baba Adinni* title which is considered an *honourific* title is also recognized as a member of the Council of Imams and Alfas because of the popular belief that the title, *Baba Adinni* had replaced the title of *Oba Imale* (King of the Muslims) which had once existed in Egbaland, and that is the reason why *Baba Adinni* of Egbaland is seen as an

intermediary between the religious and honourary titleholders.

Yoruba Cultural Influence on Title-Holding among Egba Muslims

From the current practice, there are three ways by which the conferment of Islamic titles on Egba Muslims is greatly influenced by the Yoruba culture and tradition. First are the titles being conferred on the Egba Muslims. Second is the process of the selection of the titleholders and the third one is the *Iwuye* (turban) ceremony that accompanies the conferment. As Arimiyah (2014) contends, some of the Muslim titles in Yorubaland are of Yoruba cultural origin and are quite different from those conferred on the prophets of God and the early Muslims by Prophet Muhammad (SAW). This observation is particularly true about the Egba Muslims if one considers titles such as *Khalilullah*, *Kalimullah*, *Ruhullah*, *as-Siddiq*, *al-Faruq*, *Asadullahi*, conferred on the prophets of God and the early Muslims against those conferred on Egba Muslims. The Egba Muslims have departed from the early practice as they now confer titles like *Balogun*, *Sarumi*, *Bada*, *Sagbua*, *Asipa*, *Ajiroba*, *Lukotun*, *Seriki*, *Otun*, *Osi*, *Ekerin*, *Basorun*, *Apagun* etc with the suffix *Adinni* or *Musulumi* or *Sunnah* purposely to give them Islamic colouration and outlook in place of those conferred on the early Muslims. These aforementioned titles are adopted and adapted from the Egba traditional setting. According to Sotunde (2002), titles like *Asipa*, *Sagbua* and *Ajiroba* are *Ogboni* titles in Yoruba traditional set-up and they are for those who enact laws, judge cases, elect and advise the *Oba* (King) in all matters affecting their traditional community.

The Yoruba traditional infiltration is also noticed in the process of appointing the titleholders among the Egba Muslims in Ogun State. According to Owoyemi (2004), Muslim titles are distributed and zoned permanently to the four major sections of Egbaland. The zoning system of distributing the titles, both honourary and the religious titles, is patterned along the traditional set up and it is on the basis of the strength of the size, early settlement and influence of each of the four Egba sections. It is argued that Egba Alake takes more than half of the most powerful titles while the other three sections of the Egba share the remaining half (as it is being done in the traditional set-up) because of the fact that Egba Alake is bigger than the other three sections and that Egba Alake people were the first settlers in their present home, Abeokuta (Owoyemi, 2004).

According to Owoyemi (2004), more than thirty of the sixty-one Muslim titles recognized in Egba Muslim Community are permanently zoned to Egba Alake, while the remaining half (i.e. thirty-one) are zoned to the other three zones with Egba Oke-Ona taking 11 titles, both of the Egba Gbagura and Egba Owu having ten (10) titles each. Furthermore, the title, *Imam Jami'u* of Egbaland was permanently zoned to Egba Alake. Leading titles such as *Baba Adinni*, *Balogun Adinni*, *Seriki Adinni* and *Aare Adinni* are permanently zoned to Egba Alake section. The zoning method adopted by the Egba Muslim Community is in line with the zoning system of the Egba Traditional Chieftaincy titles. For instance, *Balogun*, *Seriki*, *Basorun*, *Ogboye*, and *Akogun*

are the traditional titles zoned to Egba Alake while the lesser titles are zoned to the other three Egbas. Thus, the distribution of the Muslim titles is patterned on the Egba traditional political administration which recognizes and makes Egba Alake the head of all the Egba sections. The zoning system has been causing ripples among the Egba Muslims. It is due to this permanent zoning system of titles that made Egba Owu Muslims reject titles zoned to them and consequently seceded from the Egba Muslim Community in 2001. However, the Egba Owu Muslims later reconciled with Egba Muslim Community after the dispute was amicably resolved.

The installation ceremony, popularly called *Iwuye* among the Yoruba, which accompanies title-holding among the Egba Muslims is another Yoruba traditional effect on the Muslim practice of title-holding in Egbaland. The ceremony is often characterized by merry making, wining and dining among the people. During such occasion, popular musicians are invited to supply music. The Yoruba people, before Islam, were noted for their love for celebration in their socio-religious engagements. According to Fadipe (1970), every occasion calls for celebration including the death of their aged ones. It is this practice of winning and dining that is introduced into the institution of title-holding among the Egba Muslims.

X-raying the Nexus between Islam and Yoruba Culture on Title-Holding among Egba Muslims of Ogun State

It is worthy of note to state that the process of appointing or selecting the Yoruba king and other traditional chiefs involves some ritual practices that contradict Islamic belief. Hence, adopting such titles for the Muslims gives an impression that those honoured with the titles have the same roles to play in Islam and for the Egba Muslims. It is a common belief among the Yoruba people that the *Ogboni* titleholders use charms, amulets and talisman. Therefore, Muslims holding such *Ogboni* titles pre-suffixed with *Adinni*, *Muslimi* or *Sunnah* may be rightly or wrongly said to be using those things for Islam.

It is pertinent to state that the practice of the Egba Muslims in conferring titles with traditional origin and outlook can be said to be contrary to the practice of the Prophet who conferred titles that associated recipients with Allah or the Islamic faith. The Egba Muslims ought to have emulated the Prophet in the practice of conferring titles on affluent Yoruba Muslims in Egbaland. Describing the Prophet as a role model to be followed, the Glorious Qur'an says

Indeed in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad), you have a good example to follow for him who hopes for (the meeting) with Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much (Suratul-Ahzab 33:21).

In another place, the Qur'an says:

He who obeys the Messenger (Muhammad), has indeed obeyed Allah.... (Suratul-Nisai, 4:80).

Meanwhile, the Egba Muslims may be accused of being traditionalists and the titles they confer as being traditional ones due to the fact that they pattern their practice of title-holding along the traditional set-up. Arimiyah (2014) argues that the attitude of the Yoruba Muslims in conferring titles of traditional origin on the influential Muslims could be justifiable because Islam does not condemn people's cultures as long as those cultures do not contravene any of its teachings. Arimiyah's argument may be tenable if one considers the fact that the creation of human beings into tribes and nations (Yoruba nation inclusive), each having its own distinct culture, is the divine design of Allah as Qur'an posits:

O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that who has *at-Taqwa*, Verily Allah is All-knowing, All-Aware (Suratul-Hujurat, 49:13)

The Qur'an, in another place, says:

And Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the difference of your languages and colour, Verily, in that are indeed signs for men of sound knowledge (Suratul-Rum, 30:22).

From the above Quranic passages, it is understood that it is the will of God that there should be diversity in various communities and tribes of humankind. Hence, there should be no superiority of one nation, tribe or language over another. Therefore, adoption of titles of Yoruba origin will be justifiable as this will only imply that the significance of those titles is depicted in the language, experience and orientation of the people. In the opinion of Arimiyah (2014), what *Asadullah* (the lion of God) will depict to an Arab is what Balogun *Adinni*, *Jagunmolu Adinni*, *Akinlagun Adinni* and *Akinrogun Adinni* will depict to the Yoruba Muslims. All these titles, which are given to the Yoruba warriors, are inferred from the title, *Asadullah* conferred on Ali bn Abu Talib who was noted as a great warrior in the battles fought against the unbelievers during the lifetimes of the Prophet. On Islam's recognition of the culture of a people, Al-Qaradawi (2003:8) quotes Ibn Taymiyyah saying:

'Urf (Local custom) or *'Adah* (tradition or practice) is permissible and even admissible as part of Islamic law as long as it does not conflict with the principles of teaching of the Qur'an and Sunnah

One can also see the Yoruba cultural influence in the zoning system of titles among the Egba Muslims. The reasons that were given for the supremacy of the Egba Alake over and above other sections in terms of sharing of titles are not tenable or justifiable and such zoning system is incompatible with the principle of justice in Islam. Islam only recognizes superiority of a person (tribe or a group of people) on the basis of piety (Q49:14). One of the several implications of the zoning

system of titles among the Egba Muslims is deprivation of better candidates to hold some key titles which are not zoned or distributed to their sections. For instance, titles such as Imam, *Baba Adinni*, *Iya Adinni*, *Olori Omokewu* and *Olori Ratibi* are zoned permanently to Egba Alake. By implication, no Egba Muslim from Egba Oke-Ona can be conferred any of those titles irrespective of his qualifications or qualities. This does not augur well for a Muslim community. Titles should not only be zoned equally but also the most qualified candidate should be allowed to hold titles apart from the ones zoned to his section. Therefore, the practice of zoning Muslim titles to a particular section of the town is against the principle of unity and justice in Islam. The Qur'an says: "Indeed, this Community of yours is but one." Though the zoning system was adopted from the traditional set up and has been in vogue from time immemorial, it should be discontinued in the spirit of the Glorious Qur'an which says:

When they commit a *Fahisha* (evil deed), they say: We found our fathers doing it and Allah has commanded it on us. Say Nay, Allah never commands evil deed. Do you say of Allah what you know not? (Suratul Al-Araf, 7:28).

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, it is read thus:

And when it is said to them: Come to what Allah has revealed unto the Messenger (Muhammad), They say: Enough for us is that which we found our fathers following even though their fathers had no knowledge whatsoever nor guidance (Suratul Maidah, 5:104).

While, it is permissible to eat and drink at *Iwuye* (installation ceremony of a Muslim titleholder), one should be mindful of Islamic law that regulates what Muslims eat or drink. The Qur'an, for instance, prohibits dead meat, blood, flesh of swine, animals not killed in Allah's name as well as consumption of intoxicants (Q5:4, 5:93). A situation whereby people drink alcohol at such an occasion because *Iwuye* (installation) ceremony of titleholders among the Egba Muslims often gives room for intermingling of sexes whereby both men and women freely mix and dance competitively to the admiration of musicians and the guests. This practice, no doubt, has serious implications for the practice of title-holding among the Egba Muslims. It could make the practice condemnable if unguided. It is nowhere found in the Islamic history where such practice occurred when the early Muslims were conferred with titles by the Prophet. Unlawful wining and drinking as well as intermingling of sexes at *Iwuye* ceremony are not only unIslamic but also extravagant. Allah warns in the Qur'an thus:

....And eat and drink and waste not by extravagance, certainly, He (Allah) likes not those who waste by extravagance (Suratul-Al-Araf, 7:31).

Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this study to x-ray the nexus of Islam and Yoruba cultural practice on title-

holding among Yoruba Muslims in Egbaland, Ogun State. The practice of title-holding, which is traceable to the Glorious Qur'an and the practice among the early Muslims, has been in existence among the Egba Muslims since its spread to the area in the 19th century. However, the influence of the traditional culture in the titles Yoruba Muslims created and adopted is so great that it is almost rubbing the practice of its sanctity and sacredness. Hence, the criticism of those aspects that are not in conformity with the Islamic practice. The position of the paper is that if Yoruba traditional elements are separated from the practice of conferring Muslim titles on Egba Muslims, the sacredness of the institution will be maintained as it was practised by the early Muslims. It is in the light of this that this paper recommends that there is the need to sanitize the practice of title-holding from being dominated by the Yoruba traditional influence in Egbaland. Consequently, some titles which wear traditional outlook such as *Ogboye Adini*, *Oluwo Adinni*, *Abese Adinni*, *Leragun Adini* to mention but few which carry ritualistic roles ought to have been phased out from the list of the Egba Muslim titles. The continuous existence and recognition of those and similar titles may give room for *Takhlit* (syncretism) among the Egba Muslims.

It is also recommended that the age long practice of zoning system of the Muslim titles, an infiltration of the Yoruba tradition and culture should be discontinued in the interest of peace, unity and harmony in Egba Muslim Community. All the Egba sections should be treated equally in sharing of the titles. Alternatively, the zoning system should be replaced by a rotational system. For instance, the titles of *Imam Jami'u* (Chief Imam) of Egbaland can be rotated among the four sections of Egba Alake, Egba Oke-Ona, Egba Gbagura and Egba Owu.

The paper also recommends that the *Iwuye* (installation) ceremony of the Muslim titleholders which is always accompanied with pomp and pageantry among the Egba Muslims should be organized in such a way and manner that gathering of Muslims in such an occasion is in conformity with Islamic gathering. Only things that are permissible to be eaten and drunk in Islam should be served on such occasions. The Egba Muslim Community may sanction any Muslim titleholder who serves alcohol or engages in unIslamic practice at his or her installation ceremony. Instead of being extravagant and spendthrift on the occasion of the installation ceremony, the Egba Muslim titleholders should focus their attention on the welfare of the Muslims in Egbaland; the indigent but brilliant students could be given scholarship to further their education. In addition, the sick and the inmates of the prison yards could be assisted financially while the needy Muslims could be empowered economically. Finally, specific roles should be assigned to each of titles that Muslims in Egbaland will confer on those found worthy of holding them for the better practice of Islam among the people as well as improved welfare of the Muslims in the area.

References

- Adegbenro, S.K. (1991) *Itan Bi Imale Se wo Ilu Abeokuta*, Abeokuta: Adegbenro Press
- Al-Hilal, M.T. and Khan, M.M (2001) *Translation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language*, Madina: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Qur'an.
- Al-Qaradawi, Y. (2003) *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, London: Al-Birr Foundation.
- Arimiyah, S.O (2014) "A Critique of Islamic Honourary Titles Among Muslims in Yorubaland", Unpublished PhD Thesis, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State.
- Baksh, S.K. and Margoliouth, D.S. (1979) *The Renaissance of Islam*, New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan.
- Biobaku, S.O. (1991) *Egbas and their Neighbours (1842-1872)*, Ibadan: University Press.
- Blair, J.H. (1937) "An Intelligent Report on Abeokuta" Unpublished Report in the National Achieves, Federal Secretariat Office, Oke-Mosan Abeokuta.
- Crowther, J.(ed.) (1995) *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Doi, A.I. (1984) *Islam in Nigeria*, Zaria: Gaskya Corporation.
- Eades, J.S. (1980) *The Yoruba Today*, London: Cambridge University Press
- Fadipe, N.A. (1970) *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, Ibadan: University Press.
- Hitti, P. K. (1970) *History of the Arabs*, Macmillan Education.
- Haykal, M.H. (1982) *The Life of Muhammad*, Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau.
- Khan, M.A. (n.d.) *The Pious Caliphs*, Britain: Diwan Press.
- Masud al-Hassan (2001) *History of Islam: Classical Period, (571-1258CE)*, Vol.1 Sinagar:Alfa Publishers and Distributors.
- Masud, H. (1985) *al-Sidiq l-Akbar Hazrat Abubakr* , Lahore: Ferozsons Ltd.
- Owoyemi, S.A. (2004) "A Critical Study of the Appointments and Roles of Titleholders Among the Muslims in Egbaland", Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Lagos State University, Ojo.
- Rahim, A. (1981) *Islamic History*, Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau.
- Saeed, O.M. (1340H) *Stories of the Women Companions of the Holy Prophet and the ways of their sacred lives*, n.p.
- Sotunde, F.I. (2002) *Egba Chieftaincy Institution*, Ibadan: Ayobami Hasfab Printers.
- Toyyib, B.I. (2009) "An Examination of the Roles of Ratibi Mosques in the Spiritual and Moral Development of the Muslim Youth: A Case Study of Ogun State." unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Department of Religious Studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye.

General Comment

The paper is well written and its paragraphs are well articulated. The topic is also interesting; it is anthropological in nature, it delves into the interplay between religion and culture.

However to improve the quality of the paper I hereby suggest the following:

1. The theoretical framework of the paper is not strong enough, which also affects the quality of the analysis and subsequently the results.
2. The author arguably founded his/her analysis on a proposition that conferment of religious titles has basis in Islam, rooted in the Quran and Hadith. More referenceable Islamic literature need to be reviewed and reported here.
3. All the examples the author gave as evidences to back religious title-holding do not have the social impetus and role as the author argued. Most of the examples are just nicknames, not social titles. For instance, Uthman bin 'Affan is one of the wealthiest companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He spent all his wealth for Islam and Muslims. He was not conferred any title for his generous contributions. He was rather nicknamed "*Dhu-Nurayn*" because of marrying two daughters of the Holy prophet (peace be upon him) one after the other. This title is just like "*Baba Ibeji*" a Yoruba name usually given to someone who gave birth to twins in the Yoruba culture.
4. For the author information, religious title holding began lately in Islam, and among non-Arabs. Names such Nurudeen (light of the religion), Tajud-deen, Taqiyyud-deen, Badrud-deen, Shamsud-deen were topics of hot debate among classical scholars of Islam. In addition, titles such as Shaykhul-Islam, Hujjatul-Islam, Imam, Al-Hafiz are scholarly Islamic titles, and there are rules guiding them.