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An Historical Analysis of Imamship Tussles in Ekiti State Nigeria and Possible Solutions

ABSTRACT: The Muslims “ummah” (communities) today in most of the towns and villages in Ekiti State of Nigeria are divided, torn many Muslim communities apart and in a disarray as a result of many cases of “Imamship” (the position or function of an Imam) in the area. The aims and objectives of this study, therefore, are to analyze the causes and the effects of “Imamship” tussles in the area. And also narrate some of the problems encountered in the selection of Imams in the area and the possible solutions were recommended. This research work is historical and analytical in nature. Narrative method shall be adopted for the study. Data and relevant information for the study were collected through oral and written sources. The paper revealed that, among the causes of the “Imamship” tussles in the area are: appointing one of the contestants to be Acting Imam and biased on the part of “Imamship” Committee. The paper recommended that, any contestant for Imam should not be appointed to be Acting Imam. Since he was a contestant to the position of Imam, he should have not been appointed to be an Acting Imam of the town. Also, “Imamship” Committees were biased, for instance, where some of the Committee members were supporters of one candidate or the other. Or where the result of the interview was known by the candidates and their followers before the announcement of the result before the Committee made official announcement.

KEY WORD: Contradictory; Subjugation; Imamship; Tussles; Committee.

IKHTISAR: “Analisis Historis mengenai Konflik Perebutan Jabatan Imam di Negara Bagian Ekiti, Nigeria, dan Kemungkinan Solusinya”. Saat ini, umat Muslim di sebagian besar kota dan desa di Negara Bagian Ekiti, Nigeria, mengalami perpecahan dan kekacauan akibat berbagai kasus konflik terkait jabatan Imam di wilayah tersebut. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis penyebab dan dampak dari konflik perebutan jabatan Imam di wilayah tersebut, serta menguraikan permasalahan yang muncul dalam proses pemilihan Imam dan merekomendasikan solusi yang mungkin diterapkan. Penelitian ini bersifat historis dan analitis dengan menggunakan metode naratif. Data dan informasi yang relevan dikumpulkan melalui sumber-sumber lisan maupun tertulis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa beberapa penyebab konflik perebutan jabatan Imam di wilayah tersebut antara lain adalah penunjukan salah satu kandidat sebagai Penjabat Imam serta sikap tidak objektif (bias) dari Panitia Pemilihan Imam. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar kandidat calon Imam tidak ditunjuk sebagai Penjabat Imam. Sebab, kalau ia merupakan salah satu kandidat untuk jabatan tersebut, seharusnya ia tidak ditunjuk sebagai Penjabat Imam di kota itu. Selain itu, ditemukan adanya sikap bias pada Panitia Pemilihan Imam, misalnya ketika beberapa anggota Panitia merupakan pendukung salah satu kandidat, atau ketika hasil wawancara sudah diketahui oleh kandidat dan para pendukungnya sebelum Panitia mengeluarkan pengumuman resmi.

KATA KUNCI: Kontradiktif; Penundukan; Jabatan Imam; Konflik; Panitia.

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country that operates three tiers of government. These are the Federal, State, and Local Governments. Ekiti State was created by the late General Sani Abacha's administration on the 1st of October 1996, with other five States. These States are Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Gombe, Nasarawa, and Zamfara (Omotoso, 2009:109).

Ekiti State was carved out from the former Ondo State. It covers the former twelve Local Government Areas that made Ekiti zone of the old Ondo State, Nigeria. The twelve Local Government Areas were restructured to sixteen Local Government Areas for effective take-off, and to make government closer to the people of the State. Ado-Ekiti was made its capital (Omotoso, 2009:109; Oloidi, 2011:1).

Ekiti is a collective name that is used to refer to the land and people of the sub-ethnic group of the Yoruba. According to Isola Olomola (2005), the name was coined and attached to them from the time immemorial. The name sounds topographical in description. Samuel Johnson states, as cited by Isola Olomola (2005), that Ekiti indicates hilly country (Olomola, 2005:1).

Likewise, A.O. Oguntuyi (2007) opines that the term "Ekiti" was derived from "Okiti", which means hilly outcrops. The Okiti later blended to Ekiti (Oguntuyi, 2007:2). Isola Olomola (2005) asserts also that the rugged hills of relative height dominate Ekiti and many other Yoruba communities in the hinterland. He states that the outcrops of these Yoruba hills are very pronounced at Imesi-Ile, Okemesi, Efon Alaaye, Ilawe, Ikere, Ilupeju, and Itapa-Ekiti in Nigeria (Olomola, 2005:1).

Isola states further that if this countryside is named Ekiti, because of hilly environment, the name should have equally applied to most of upper Ogun in Ogun State, Ijesa in Osun State, Kabba in Kogi State, and Akoko in Ondo State, which are studded with hills. One thing that is peculiar to a name is that once an area has adopted it, other areas may not be interested in the name again. If they want to adopt it, it will be with modifications, like the case of Ado and Agbado, Imesi-Ile, and Okemesi, all in Ekiti State, Nigeria (Oguntuyi, 2007:2).

The aims and objectives of this study, therefore, are to analyze the causes and the effects of "Imamship" tussles in the area. And also narrate some of the problems encountered in

the selection of Imams in in the area and the possible solutions were recommended.

This research work is historical and analytical in nature. Narrative method shall be adopted for the study. Data and relevant information for the study were collected through oral and written sources (Currie, 2010; Ntinda, 2018; More, 2023).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Advent of Islam in Ekiti Land. As to the date of arrival of Islam in Ekiti State, there are two contradictory views. The first view by T.G.O. Gbadamosi (1978) and second view by K.O. Sulaiman (2013a), in which they put the penetration of Islam to Ekiti in the 19th century (1840-1908). They stated that there was yet little or no trace of Islamic activities in Ekiti between 1840 and 1860. They attributed the late arrival of Islam to Ekiti and other Eastern parts of Yoruba-land (Ilesa, Ondo, Okitipupa) to the little contact, which these areas had both at the periods of war and peace with the Muslim centres to the West and North (Gbadamosi, 1978:22-23; Sulaiman, 2013a:132-147).

Then, K.O. Sulaiman (2013a) highlights two major factors that were responsible for this little contact. These are: firstly, the areas were self-contained agricultural communities, and they did not have much external trade with the partially Islamized parts of Yoruba-land. Their products, such as kola nut, cocoa, and coffee were carried out of the areas of production whereas the people themselves were less dispersed and the areas had few or no migrants or settlers from the Islamized centres (Sulaiman, 2013a:132-147).

Secondly, Ekiti in particular showed opposition to Islam, because of the incessant raids from the nearby centres of Islam, Ilorin and Bida. Ever since 1840, Ilorin had been the more persistent and serious invader of Ekiti people. The Ekiti people had to resist not only the Ilorin, but also the Ibadan invaders, who had come in the guise of Ekiti helpers. Peace had to be secured not by their acceptance of Islam, but a mixture of effective military check and diplomacy of the later decades. Therefore, opposition to Ilorin in Ekiti was regarded as the rejection of subjugation to Hausa/Fulani authorities of Ilorin and to the religion they professed (Sulaiman, 2013a:132-147).

K.O. Sulaiman & A.A. Oladiti (2015) claim further that the rapid spread and growth of Islam in Ekiti and other Eastern

parts of Yoruba-land actually started towards the end of the nineteenth century (1892-1908). At that period, the series of the Yoruba wars had ended, giving way to peace and further development of trade. Also, a good number of these internal slaves had accepted Islam during their captivity at Epe, Ilorin, Iwo, Ibadan, and similar environments. As they returned home, they proved very useful in spreading Islam in their respective towns and villages (cf [Agbetola, 1988:22](#); [Sulaiman & Oladiti, 2015:131-144](#); [Sulaiman, 2020:45-58](#)).

The second view is from [A.S. Agbetola \(1988\)](#), who says that Islam spread to Ekiti-land in the eighteenth century. His point of reference was Ido-Faboro-Ekiti, where Islam was introduced during the reign of Olojido Okeoro, who ruled at the end of the eighteenth century. He asserts that by 1836, Ekiti had recorded a Muslim ruler at Ado-Ekiti in person of Ali Atewogboye, who reigned between 1836 and 1886. He opines that this king had accepted Islam before his ascension to the throne in 1836 ([Agbetola, 1988](#)).

[M.A. Kareem \(2001\)](#) and [K.O. Sulaiman \(2013a\)](#) state that the acceptance of Islam by this king before his ascension to the throne is an indication that Islam had been known at Ado-Ekiti during the reign of his predecessor, Ewi Owaroloye (1808-1836) or even earlier than that ([Kareem, 2001:7](#); [Sulaiman, 2013a:132-147](#)).

In a further research, [M.A. Kareem \(2008\)](#) and before him, [J.V. Vegbareva \(1934\)](#), opined that the fact that the presence of Islam had been felt in Yoruba-land in the 17th century and that there had been trade contact between the people of the North Africa and those of Yoruba-land of which Ekiti is inclusive, is an indication that Islam might have probably got to Ekiti in the 17th century ([Vegbareva, 1934:78](#); [Kareem, 2008:83](#)).

[M.A. Kareem \(2008\)](#) buttresses his point with the fact that Otun-Ekiti has been known as an ancient commercial centre since 1578. Up to date, people of Kwara State, especially from nearby towns and villages are still patronizing the Otun market held after every five days. Otun has been and is still a place where some Muslims from far and near purchase rams and goats for Muslim festivals and ceremonies ([Kareem, 2008](#)).

The Imamship Tussles in Ekiti State. Ever since the inception of Islam in Ekiti, there had been the selection and installation of one Imam or the other. Many of the earlier Imams were non-natives. For example, the first Imam in Ikere-

Ekiti, Alfa Abdul-Qadiri Tapa, was a native of Bida, Niger State, Nigeria (ZHOS Nigeria, 1988:7-8; Sulaiman, 2015).

He was unanimously selected by the Muslims of the town. In Ikole-Ekiti, Sheikh Shidi who was the first Imam, was a native of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. He too was appointed without any problem or schism among the Muslims of the town (Sulaiman, 2011:55-56).

The same thing was applicable to Ayinla in Iworoko-Ekiti. He was a native of Ilorin in Kwara State, Nigeria, but was commissioned to be leading the Muslims in prayer before a substantive Imam, Akerele was installed (Balogun, 2009:25).

The Imamship tussles began in recent time. For example, there was Imamship tussle in Ansar-Dd-Deen Society, Ikere-Ekiti, Nigeria. Upon the death of Imam Abdus Salam in 1984, Alhaji Adam Kolawole Ibrahim became Acting Imam till July 16, 1986. By July 1986, Imamship Tussle started in the town. The two contestants to the position were the Acting Imam, Alhaji Adam Kolawole Ibrahim and Alhaji Abdul Ganiyy Olowoniga. Eventually, the Acting Imam was appointed as the substantive Imam of the town in July 17, 1986. The supporters of the appointed Imam claimed that their Imam was more qualified, because he had both Islamic and Western education. He was a Grade II Certificate holder, while Alhaji Abdul Ganiyy Olowoniga only had Islamic education. He had equally under gone a leadership Training Coursed under the national body of Ansar-Dd-Deen Society in Lagos, Nigeria. Hence, he was the most fitted to the position (Balogun, 2009:25).

The League of Imams and Alfas in the former Ondo State, Nigeria, under the Grand Imam of Sheu Yayi Akorede intervened and their resolution was that the Acting Imam, Alhaji Adam Kolawole Ibrahim should continue as the substantive Imam of the town of Ansar-Dd-Deen Society (Balogun, 2007:64-66).

The supporters of Alhaji Abdul Ganiyy Olowoniga were dissatisfied with the appointment of Alhaji Adam Kolawole Ibrahim and they, therefore, broke away and named their Muslim denomination as Oyo Peju Muslim Community, which later transformed to Nawair-Dd-Deen Society, Ikere-Ekiti, Nigeria, on 17th March 1987 (Sulaiman, 2013b:89-109).

In Igbemo-Ekiti, Nigeria, upon the death of Imam Abdullah Junaid Ikudanikansi in 2004, Alhaji Bakare Abiola Maliki became the Acting Imam of the town till 2007. An Imamship

Committee was set up in 2006 to select the Imam of the town. The inaugural meeting of the committee took place on the 7th April 2006.¹

The three major contestants were Alhaji Kareem Oluwasola Balogun, Alhaji Ibrahim Yusuf Ogunmilade, and Alhaji Abdullahi Kolawole Jamiu. The Committee invited three learned men in terms of Islam to conduct the interview. The interviewers were Professor M.A. Abudu-Raheem from the Department of Religious Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti; Alhaji A.B. Abdussam from the Department of Arabic, College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti; and Alhaji Abbas Abubakr Muhammad, the Chief Imam of Ikere-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. The positions of the contestants in the interview conducted were in the order of listing their names.²

Initially, Alhaji Abdullahi Kolawole Jamiu did not participate in the interview on the ground that he was the consensus candidate of the Odo-Igbemo quarters, where the Imams of the town were being selected since 1840s (Balogun & Balogun, 2012:140).

The picking of the 2nd position, Alhaji Ibrahim Yusuf Ogunmilade as the appointed Imam by the Mufassir of the town, Alhaji Abdul-Rahman Balogun on the 23rd February 2007, led to resentment by the followers of the other two contestants.³

In an attempt to resolve the problem, two different meetings were held between the Muslims of Igbemo-Ekiti and the representatives of the Mission Board of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council. The first was held at Igbemo-Ekiti on the 2nd March 2007, while the second one took place at the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society Central Mosque, Odo-Otu, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria, on the 25th March 2007. The resolutions reached in the Ado-Ekiti meeting were that:

Nobody should regard himself as the appointed Imam of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Igbemo-Ekiti Branch;

The Acting Imam should continue leading the Muslims of the town in prayers until amicable resolution is reached;

¹See, for example, Interview with Bakare Abiola Maliki, the Acting Imam of Igbemo-Ekiti and the Amiru-l-Muminu of Ekiti State, Aged 89 Years, at No.6, Iyedi Street, Igbemo-Ekiti, Nigeria, on the 30th August 2018.

²See Ansar-Ud-Deen Central Mosque, Igbemo-Ekiti, Nigeria. (2007). "Supplementary Report of the Committee for the Selection of Imam of Igbemo-Ekiti and Other Vacant Chieftaincy Positions". Paper presented to the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council, Nigeria, on the 21st May, pp.2-3.

³See, for example, Interview with Amusa Ayodele, the Seriki Adini and Treasurer, Central Mosque, Igbemo-Ekiti, Aged 69 Years, at No.6, Igboko, Odo-Igbemo, Igbemo-Ekiti, Nigeria, on the 21st December 2021; and Ansar-Ud-Deen Central Mosque, Igbemo-Ekiti. (2007). "Report of the Committee for the Selection of Imam of Igbemo-Ekiti and Other Vacant Chieftaincy Positions". Paper presented to the Committee of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Central Mosque, Igbemo-Ekiti, on Friday, 5th January.

A supplementary interview should be conducted by the Imamship Committee, for the candidate of Odo-Igbemo, Igbemo-Ekiti;

The report of the supplementary interview should be submitted to the Mission Board of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council;

The Mission Board of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council would study the report and choose one of the three candidates, as the Imam of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Igbemo-Ekiti Branch;

It is hoped that whoever of the candidates that is chosen would be acceptable to the Muslims of Igbemo-Ekiti (*Ibidem with footnote 2*).

On the basis of the above resolutions, the Imamship Committee organized an interview for Alhaji Abdullah Kolawole Jamiu on the 29th April 2007, where he came third (*Balogun & Balogun, 2012:140*). The same set of the interviewers were invited to conduct the interview. The Mission Board of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State, thereafter ratified Alhaji Ibrahim Yusuf as the Imam of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Igbemo-Ekiti Branch. Consequently, he delivered his first sermon on Friday, the 28th September 2007. The day also marked the reversion of the followers of Alhaji Kareem Oluwasola Balogun and Alhaji Abdullah Kolawole Jamiu to Central Mosque, Igbemo-Ekiti, under the Acting Imam of Alhaji Bakare Abiola Maliki.⁴

They too observed their own Jumu'at (Friday) service at the Oke-Oja Ratibi Mosque, Igbemo Ekiti before moving to the former Central Mosque at Iro quarters, Igbemo-Ekiti (*Sulaiman, 2013a:132-147*). All attempts to reconcile them by the League of Imams and Alfas of Ekiti State proved abortive (*IMCCM Nigeria, 2009:1*). Alhaji Abdullah Kolawole Jamiu was later appointed as the substantive Imam of the Central Mosque, Igbemo-Ekiti, on the 7th March 2009.⁵

The problem on the Chief Imam of Ikole-Ekiti, Alhaji Dawood Adewale Fajembola, was after his appointment as the Imam of the town. A petition, dated 23rd October 2014, was written against the Imam, to the Chairman, Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council. He was accused of having canal knowledge of one Miss Khadijat Onipede of twelve years of age. The father of the lady, Alfa Kareem Onipede, the Public Relations of Officer of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria,

⁴See also Interview with Bello Ayodele, the Former Secretary and Treasurer of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Igbemo-Ekiti Branch, Aged 84 Years, at No.25, Surulere Street, Odo-Igbemo, Igbemo-Ekiti, Nigeria, on the 22nd January 2022.

⁵See, for example, Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria. (2014). "Ikole-Ekiti Branch, ADS Central Mosque, Ikole: Matters Arising, Being a Petition Written against the Chief Imam of Ikole-Ekiti, Alhaji Dawood Adewale Fajembola, to the Chairman, Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council, on the 23rd October". Unpublished Paper, owned by Author.

Ikole-Ekiti Branch, reported the case to the Executive Committee of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ikole-Ekiti Branch, on the 15th October 2014 (*Ibidem with footnote 5*).

The allegation was made known to the Imam on the 16th October 2015. The Imam denied the allegation and the girl confirmed the allegation.⁶ The medical report on the girl confirmed that she was not a virgin at the time of the allegation. The medical report was used to remove the Imam on the 19th October 2015 by the Executive Committee of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, Ikole-Ekiti Branch.⁷

Aside the alleged canal knowledge of girl, a lot of allegations were made against the Imam in the petition. Some of the allegations are that:

He installed one Alfa Ibrahim Ojokaye, an Ebira man as the Chief Imam of Otunja-Ekiti without the knowledge of anybody. This made the Muslims of the town to be performing their Jumu'at services independent of Ikole-Ekiti Central Mosque;

He packed out of Ikole Ekiti to Ayedun Ekiti without the knowledge of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of the town;

He issued the Society's marriage certificate without the knowledge of the Executive Committee of the Society;

He invited the Chairman of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, Ikole-Ekiti Branch, Alhaji Abdul-Kareem Fafure, to the meeting of the League of Imams and Alfas, Ikole-Ekiti Local Government, where he embarrassed him;

He usurped the chair meant for the State President of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs at the Council's meeting held at Ikole-Ekiti and refused to vacate the seat in spite of all appeals from members;

He took away all the money realized at the remembrance service of late Chief A.T. Lawal without remitting the share of the Society to the Executive Committee. He claimed that the Executive members were not there despite the presence of the Secretary, Public Relations of Officer, Iyasuna and some other members of the Society in the programme;

He lords the League of Imams and Alfas on the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, Ikole-Ekiti, claiming that the Central Mosque belongs to everybody;

He prefers attending other societies' meetings to those of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society;

He reported the Chairman of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society to their quarter head, accusing the Chairman of usurping his duties, particularly, for not allowing him to be a member of the National Executive Committee of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria;

After his suspension, he started coming to the mosque with hired Ebira hoodlums to intimidate the members of the Executive Committee of the Society;

He places a plate number bearing the Chief Imam of Egbeoba kingdom on his vehicle;

⁶Interview with Dawood Adewale Fajembola, the Chief Imam of Ikole-Ekiti and Egbeoba kingdom, Aged 35 Years, at C/O Central Mosque, Ikole-Ekiti, Nigeria, on the 19th January 2022.

⁷See The Ansar-Ud-Deen Society. (2015). "Ekiti State Council, Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council White Paper on the Report of Findings on Allegation of Rape and Consequent Removal from Office of Chief Imam of Ikole, Alhaji Dawood Fajembola by ADS Ikole-Ekiti Central Mosque Branch, Dated March 15". Unpublished Paper, owned by Author.

He reported to the King that he was being witch-hunted by the Chairman of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, Alhaji Abdul-Kareem Fafure, whereas it was Alhaji Abdul-Kareem Fafure that encouraged him to relate well with the King;

He was being molested because he is a member of All Progressives Congress, a political party in the Country, whereas many prominent members of the Society belong to the party (*Ibidem* footnote 6).

On receiving the petition, the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, Ekiti State Council, Nigeria, issued a circular, dated 20th October 2014, to the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, Ikole-Ekiti Branch, stating that:

The Chief Imam was installed by the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, Ekiti State Council, acting on behalf of the National Executive Council of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria. His removal though may be initiated by the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ikole-Ekiti Branch through a written report to the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, but the final approval must be that of the National Executive Council, acting on the advice of the State Council.

Due process has been flouted. The process of removal of any Executive member including Imams is well spelt out in the Article 21 of the Society's Constitution (Ansar-Ud-Deen Constitution: Article 44:32). Your action may therefore expose the Society to endless litigation and ridicule if not carefully handled.

You are directed to stay action and return to the status quo on the issue, pending when a thorough investigation is conducted by the appropriate authority.⁸

Article 44 of the Society's Constitution states that:

Any expulsion or suspension (of a member or members of the Society) for breach of any of the Rules and Regulations or Bye-Law of the Society for the time being in force shall be the act of the National Executive Committee. It is for the Councils and Branches to recommend to the National Executive Committee.⁹

The Council, thereafter, set up a five-man committee to investigate the allegations. The committee composed the following members:

The Chief Imam of Awo Ekiti-Alhaji Abdul-Salam Ayoola Agbaje-Chairman;
The Chief Imam of Ikere Ekiti-Alhaji Ahmad Baba Abdus-Salaam-member;
Alhaja Sidikat Sulaiman from Awo Ekiti-member;
Alhaja Suwebat Sulaiman from Ido Ekiti-member;
Alhaji Makanjuola Hamid, the State Secretary of Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, Ekiti State Council Secretary (*Ibidem* footnote 9).

⁸See, for example, *The Ansar-Ud-Deen Society*. (2014). "Ekiti State Council, Re-Removal of Chief Imam of Ansar-Ud-Deen Central Mosque, Ikole, Being a Circular Addressed to the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ikole-Ekiti Branch, on the 20th October". Unpublished Paper, owned by Author; and again Interview with Dawood Adewale Fajembola, the Chief Imam of Ikole-Ekiti and Egbeoba kingdom, Aged 35 Years, at C/O Central Mosque, Ikole-Ekiti, Nigeria, on the 19th January 2022.

⁹Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria. (n.d.). Constitution: Rules and Regulations, Article 44:32. Nigeria: Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria.

The Committee met with the concerned people and came out with the conclusion that there is no iota of truth to support the claim that the Imam actually committed the allegation of rape. The Committee thereby made the recommendations that:

The Executive of the Mission Board and the State General Purpose Committee of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council, should meet the Elekole of Ikole-Ekiti, Oba Ajibade Fasiku, because he has interest in the case;

The body should invite the branch Chairman of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ikole-Ekiti Branch, Alhaji Abdul-Kareem Fafure, and all the stakeholders within Ogunlayi families, for a dialogue, on the short and long-run implications of their decisions to remove the Imam;

If the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ikole-Ekiti Branch refuses to reinstate the Imam, the General Purpose Council should try all the possible means to formally inaugurate a new branch of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ikole-Ekiti Branch 2 for the Imam, to forestall the enemies of the Society in the State from further expansion and development;

The State Executive Committee should, from time to time, organize seminars for all the Imams and Alfas of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council, to sensitize them on the expectation of the Society on them and thorough interpretation of the Society's Constitution;

Both parties should be invited to the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society's Central Mosque Headquarters, Odo-Otu, Ado-Ekiti, for the final verdict of the National Executive Committee on the matter.¹⁰

On the basis of the recommendations, the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council, came out with this White Paper Report. The Report states that:

The suspension order placed on Imam Dawood Adewale Fajembola by this Council and the decision of the Ikole Branch to remove the Imam from his Office was based on the alleged rape offence of which has not been proved beyond any reasonable doubt. The Council equally came to the conclusion that other alleged offences against the Imam, are mere misdemeanors. Therefore, the decision to suspend and remove him is hereby rescinded;

The Council has decided to request the leadership of Alhaji Abdul-Kareem Fafure led Executive Committee of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ikole-Ekiti Branch, to nominate a suitable candidate for the position of Ikole-Ekiti Branch Imam;

The Council now establishes a new Ansar-Ud-Deen Society Division in Ikole-Ekiti to be known and called the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society Division 2 under Imam Dawood Adewale Fajembola;

The Council implores the new division to forward their Executive Committee members' names to the State Council Secretary immediately;

The Council implores the Ikole-Ekiti Branch and the new Ansar-Ud-Deen Society Division 2, to continue to work together as branches within the Ansar-Ud-Deen family in propagation of Islam;

¹⁰See again, for example, *The Ansar-Ud-Deen Society. (2014). "Ekiti State Council, Re-Removal of Chief Imam of Ansar-Ud-Deen Central Mosque, Ikole, Being a Circular Addressed to the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ikole-Ekiti Branch, on the 20th October". Unpublished Paper, owned by Author.*

The Council instructs the Secretary of the Council to formally convey this final decision of the Council, to the National Headquarters of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, for further record purpose.¹¹

In response to the above White Paper Report, the Chief Imam, Alhaji Dawood Adewale Fajembola issued a release where he thanked the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council for vindicating him in the false allegation of rape on the 15th March 2015. He also thanked the Society for proposing the Division 2 of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ikole-Ekiti Branch for him. He informed the Society that his group under the name "Ikole-Ekiti Muslim Community", has established a Central Mosque like other prominent towns in Nigeria like Ado, Akure, Osogbo, Ibadan, Lagos, Abeokuta, Ilorin, Okenne, Abuja and a host of others.¹²

He said that the Muslims that believe in his leadership would join him to start Central Mosque Friday (Jumu'at) service at Iloka Street, Ikole-Ekiti, on the 30th January 2016. He stated that he has dropped the Chief Imam of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ikole-Ekiti Branch, for the Chief Imam of Ikole-Ekiti and Egbeoba Kingdom.¹³

On the role of the League of Imams and Alfas, Ekiti State, on the amicable resolution of the matter, Imam Fajembola stated that the League of Imams and Alfas stepped aside from the case because of the allegation that he wanted to lord the body on the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society in the town (*ibidem* footnote 12).

Findings and Recommendations. The Acting Imam in Ikere-Ekiti, Alhaji Adam Kolawole Ibrahim, was given more than enough time to cement is Imamship. Since he was a contestant to the position, other person should have been appointed to be Acting Imam like the case of Igbemo-Ekiti. Since he had interest, it will be disgraceful to remove him. Probably the Igbemo people learnt from this mistake.

Many of the members of the Imamship Committee set up, especially in Igbemo-Ekiti were biased. Some of the Committee

¹¹See again Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria. (2014). "Ikole-Ekiti Branch, ADS Central Mosque, Ikole: Matters Arising, Being a Petition Written against the Chief Imam of Ikole-Ekiti, Alhaji Dawood Adewale Fajembola, to the Chairman, Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council, on the 23rd October". Unpublished Paper, owned by Author.

¹²See again The Ansar-Ud-Deen Society. (2015). "Ekiti State Council, Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council White Paper on the Report of Findings on Allegation of Rape and Consequent Removal from Office of Chief Imam of Ikole, Alhaji Dawood Fajembola by ADS Ikole-Ekiti Central Mosque Branch, Dated March 15". Unpublished Paper, owned by Author.

¹³See again also Interview with Dawood Adewale Fajembola, the Chief Imam of Ikole-Ekiti and Egbeoba kingdom, Aged 35 Years, at C/O Central Mosque, Ikole-Ekiti, Nigeria, on the 19th January 2022.

members were supporters of one candidate or the other. The result of the interview was known by the candidates and their followers before the announcement of the result.

The unilateral declaration of a person by the Mufassir of Igbemo-Ekiti, Alhaji Abdu-Rahman Balogun is a great mistake on his part. He would have allowed the result to be debated at the Mosque Committee and if possible at the General Committee levels and finalized on the person to be selected before the announcement.

The case of Ikole-Ekiti is after thought. The selected Committee by the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council, made recommendations to the state Council on the Imam. One of their recommendations was too weak. The fact that the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ikole Ekiti Branch should establish a second Mosque called Division two and transfer Imam Dawood Adewale Fajembola as Imam there is a weak recommendation. The new appointed Imam should have been asked to take over the new mosque.

The rejection of the order not to remove Imam Dawood Adewale Fajembola pending the determination of his case by the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ikole Ekiti Branch is a violation of the order of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ekiti State Council. The Branch supposed to be punished for that yet nothing was done.

The confirmation that Imam Dawood Adewale Fajembola was not guilty of the allegations leveled against him is enough evidence not to transfer the Imam to other Mosque.

The series of division of mosques in Ekiti State over who becomes the Imam of a mosque is a danger to the development of Islam in the State. Since there is no punitive measure against the idea, more mosques would emulate them.

In the light of our findings during the course of this study, the following recommendations are made:

In order to foster unity among the Muslims in every town in Ekiti State, the Muslims should regard themselves as partners in progress. They should shelve their divisible tendencies so as to pave the way for harmonious relations among them. It is through cordial relationship that they would be able to propagate and uplift Islam in Ekiti State. Allah SWT (Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala/Glorified and Exalted is He) says in the Al-Qur'an, Chapter 3 (Ali 'Imran/Imran Family), Verse 105, that:

Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving Clear Signs: For them is a dreadful penalty (cited in [Ali, 1978](#)).

In one Hadith (corpus of the sayings or traditions of the Prophet Muhammad SAW), may be this is not Hadith, Prophet Muhammad SAW (Salallahu 'Alaihi Wassalam/Peace be Upon Him) says; and also in the Al-Qur'an, Chapter 3 (Ali 'Imran/Imran Family), Verse 103, that:

And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favour on you; for ye were enemies and He join your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of fire, and He saved you from it. Thus, doth Allah make His Signs clear to you: That ye may be guided (cited in [Ali, 1978](#)).

As to the succession problem, Prophet Muhammad SAW (Salallahu 'Alaihi Wassalam/Peace be Upon Him) had already proffered solution to this. If the solution is followed to the letter in every town and Ekiti State, the problem would become a thing of the past soonest. His solution reads thus:

It has been narrated by Abu Musa who said: "Two of my cousins and I entered the apartment of the Holy Prophet (May peace be upon him)".

One of them said: "Messenger of Allah, appoint us rulers of some lands that the Almighty and Glorious God has entrusted to thy care".

The other also said something similar. He said: "We do not appoint to this position one who asks for it nor anyone who is covetous for the same" ([Siddiqui, n.y.:Hadits 1140/1500](#)).

It is the duty of the Shurah Committee or any Committee that is saddled with the responsibility of appointing the Imams to abide by this Prophetic tradition so as to avert further division of Muslims in Ekiti State. If a person knows that he would not be appointed to the position if he asks for it, he will caution himself and his followers and this would sustain peace and harmony within the communities.

The person who is interested in the position of Imam should not be allowed to remain as Acting Imam. A neutral person who is not interested in the position should be permitted to hold the position. In fact, the idea of delaying the selection of an Imam after the death an Imam should be discouraged. If one Imam dies on Thursday or early in the money on Friday, the person to be the Imam should be the one to perform the next Friday Service, this will reduce the contestants to the position.

The idea of setting up a Special Committee for the selection of Imam should be discarded. The leaders of every mosque should constitute themselves to Imamship Committee upon the death of an Imam and select whoever to lead them.

The unilateral declaration of an Imam by anybody should be discouraged. The appointment of an Imam is beyond the capacity of a person. It should be handled by the leaders of the Mosque.

There should be punitive measure for violation of the order of state or national body of any organization or society. If the measure is in existence, it should be put into operation. If a Branch knows that it would be punished for violation of the State or National body, it will not act against the wish of the State or National Body.

There is the need to improve the financial base of the Mosques through investing in profit making ventures, like construction of lock-up shops, events centre, and engaging in agriculture. Every member of each Mosque should be asked to contribute a certain amount of money per year to the purse of the Mosque. This will go a long way in assisting each of the Mosques to record more achievements.

CONCLUSION

The selection of Imams and the leaders of the Muslim organizations is sometimes a problem in Ekiti State. It is true that the League of Imams and Alfas was able to resolve some of these problems. However, there were others the organization could not resolve. The unresolved ones led to the division of the Muslims of the concerned towns into the Central Mosque and Ansar-Ud-Deen Society or the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society and other society.

For example, in 1986, it divided the Muslims in Ikere-Ekiti into the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society and the Nawair-Ud-Deen Society. In 2007, it divided the Muslims in Igbemo-Ekiti into the Central Mosque and the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society. In 2015, it divided the Muslims in Ikole-Ekiti to Ikole-Ekiti Muslim Community and the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society.

Of course, the divisions have their positive effects. Many Muslims have mosques closer to their houses unlike in the past when the whole town had only one mosque. They also encourage healthy competition in building mosques and carrying out many activities to attract members. However, the

disadvantages and the consequences of the divisions are more than the advantages. On this not we advised that our recommendations should be implemented for uplift of Islam in the concerned areas and elsewhere.

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