

ISSUES IN THE IMPACT OF ISLAM ON HAUSA LAND IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Societies emerge and develop at different periods of time. Many factors are responsible for their emergence and development. Factors such as economic, religious, cultural, geographical, political etc. are in the forefront. In Hausa land, religion particularly, Islam was responsible for some important developments in the land. This paper therefore, intends to give the historical background of the coming and spread of Islam in Hausa land and explore some of the significant impact it has on the lives of the populace and the relationship it fashioned between the Hausa people, Hausa land and other people around especially in the 21st century; the era of globalization, democracy and good governance among others.

Introduction

This paper will attempt to define Hausa land, its belief system and how Islam is introduced and its impact on the lives of the people. Hausa land is an area of West Africa consisted of large states of Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Daura, Kabi (Kebbi), Rano and Garun Gabas and some other smaller states situated in the present day Northern Nigeria and Niger Republic. The land is roughly bounded by a line moving from Azben southwards to the North-eastern boundary of Jos High lands, then westwards to the great bend of the River Kaduna and runs North-west to the valley of Gulbin Kabi and then North-eastwards to Azben (Smith 1987). This was the area in which the majority of the people spoke Hausa as their first and only language and the cultural and social traits often associated with the Hausa people predominated. But since the fifteen century, the combined effect of the southward movements of the Hausa people and the coming of the Tuaregs, Fulani and Bare-Bari immigrants caused the development of two marches of Hausa land, the northern and eastern in which though the Hausa language continued to be the commonest language, it was no longer spoken as the first language by the majority of the inhabitants. (Mahdi 1987).

Prior to the introduction of Islam, Hausa people practiced the tropical African religion which involved belief in a high and distant god not actively connected with the everyday life of men, in addition, a great array of supernatural forces directly in touch with mankind and controlling its destiny. The high god of the Hausawa was Ubangiji, the nearer spirits iskoki and the maintenance of correct relations with the latter was the object of ritual. Communion with the spirits was partly achieved by sacrificial procedures carried out by family heads and also by "possessions", spirits in possession of human beings are termed as bori. The bori is carried out by the Bokaye who were specially skilled in mysteries of the spirits and playing an important political role in the Hausa states (smith, 1987).

With the introduction of Islam, it appeared to have taken the form of gradual modification of the old beliefs and practices in which 'Ubangiji' become progressively of greater and greater significance in the affairs of men while 'Iskoki' become progressively relegated to the essentially subordinate and harmless position of 'Jinn'. Politically, the Bokaye come to share power with the Malamai and the Sarki to occupy the uneasy position of leader of both groups (Smith, 1987).

The Coming of Islam in Hausa Land

It is generally believed that, the date of the first appearance of a Muslim is not known. Hausa land seems to have lacked direct contact with North Africa prior to the 15th century A.D. it is indeed most likely that the earliest Islamic influences in Hausa land were of western rather than northern. Thus in both Kano and Katsina the spread of Islam is traditionally associated with the eastward migration into Hausa land of people called the Wangarawa (Smith, 1987).

However, it had been argued that, long before the coming of the Wangarawa Islam was in existence for centuries in Hausa land. A renowned Islamic scholar Sheikh Nasiru Kabara said that

even at the arrival of Malam Abdur-rahman Zaghaita (leader of the Wangarawa) he met with Malam Amadu (Wali mai Geza) who was then teaching the book of Mukhtassar (Ibrahim 1989). Again, Islam was introduced into Hausa land through Bornu. In Bornu Islam was believed to have been introduced since the time of caliph Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz who sent ten learned men to come and teach Tauhid. Furthermore, by 900 AD an Islamic scholar called Malam Wasami by the Barebari visited Njimi which further facilitated the growth of Islam and preached the gospel up to Hausa land. Thus the introduction of Islam in Hausa land pre-dated the coming of the Wangarawa (Mustapha 1982). In the ancient city of Daura for example Islam might have been introduced earlier than the coming of the Wangarawa because according to the Bayajidda legend the people of the city were prevented fetching water from the only well unless on Fridays. Similarly, Friday in Islam is referred as the most sacred day: being a small Id-day (gathering for the Friday congregational prayers), the day Prophet Adam was created and ejected from the paradise; the day the world was created and the last day (Day of Judgment); the day which Prophet Abraham was saved from the fire.

Apart from the activities of the Islamic scholars from North Africa, the merchants through the Trans-saharan Trade also played great roles in the spread of Islam. Trans-sahara trade which now gave way to modern and more sophisticated forms of communication by air, roads and water enable the spread of Islam as globalization enables the spread of western forms of development. The trade routes and the terminus served as channels of spreading and exchange of good and ideas.

The Spread of Islam in Hausa Land

By the second half of the 15th Century, the spread of Islam in Hausa land recorded an overwhelming success. This was the period when leaders or kings started accepting the faith and championed its spread, this was facilitated by the influx of the Wangarawa immigrants into Hausa land between 1431-32 who were forced to migrate due to the uncompromised stance between Sheikh Al-maghili which he had taken against the connivance of the rulers of Tuwat, the most important trading terminus in southern Algeria linking Bilad al-Sudan with the Magrib and the Jewish merchant class, who were accused of manipulating the commercial activities in the area to the detriment of the Muslim people there (Kani 1997). By this period a new dynasty came to power in Katsina founded by Muhammadu Korau 1445-1495, the first ruler whom tradition claims as a Muslim who employed the services of the Wangarawa migrants as Qadis in courts and Imams in the mosques. His association with the Muslim clerics is said to have consolidated his political base and allowed to exercise a considerable control over his domain. The other two leaders that followed him Ibrahim Sura (1495-9) and Ali (1498-1524) continued on the same way of propagating Islam in the state. Sarki Ibrahim in particular ordered construction of mosques in all the villages under his domain. The clearly Islamic character of the new Katsina was again demonstrated by the visit of the celebrated North-African scholar Sheikh Muhammad Al-Maghili in the mid 1490s, by the settlement of the Qadi Aida Ahmad of Tazakht (1529-30) in the city after a long study tour of Mecca and Cairo and the visit of Makhliif al-Balbali (1533-4) (Ajayi and Crowther, 1978).

Similarly, Kano at this time became under the rulership of Muhammadu Rumfa (1463-99) under whom the effective Islamisation of Kano took place. However, according to the Kano Chronicle the Islamic impulses in Kano is attributed to the reign of Sarki Ali Yaji Dan Tsamiya (1349-85). Moreso, the migration of Wangarawa intensified the spread of Islam during the reign of Muhammadu Rumfa. The immigration of Wangarawa under charismatic leadership of Abdur-rahman Zaghaita began from 1431 (Ajayi and Crowder 1978). Between 1491 -2 Almaghili was in correspondence with Muhammadu Rumfa and shortly afterwards visited Kano and wrote a small treatise on government for him (the obligation of the princes). At some times between 1504-1518 Abdur-rahman Suqqain and Makhliif al-Balbali (who taught in Katsina) taught in Kano. The teaching activities of these scholars mark the emergence of Kano as a Muslim city; its "conversion" is symbolized by the cutting down of the sacred tree, an event which both Kano Chronicle and Wangarawa sources attributed to the reign of Muhammad Rumfa, (Ajayi and Crowder 1978). Similarly, Sarki Kisoki did not play a role in the spread of Islam in Kano. During his time a lot of books on Islamic education, literature, Hadith, jurisprudence, Islamic history were brought to Kano.

Another figure that contributed immensely to the spread of Islam in Hausa land was Muhammad Rabo (1503-30) of Zaria. He accepted the religion and spread it in the state. The Islamic

immigrants were also seen in Zaria teaching people Islamic religion. Zaria became a stronghold and centre of Islamic learning.

The Impact of Islam in Hausa Land

Since its introduction into Hausa land, Islam has left permanent legacies on the lives of the Hausa people and Hausa land in general. As it has been stated by professor Mahdi Adamu that the "Hausa ethnic unit has shown itself as an assimilating ethnic entity and the Hausa language a colonizing one...." (Mahdi, 1978). This has really been the case, the Hausa people have accepted and assimilated Islam and have restructured their way of life along the Islamic lines and at the same time imposing it on other ethnic groups. The Hausas are now identified with Islamic religion and Hausa land as the land of Islam by most Nigerian ethnic groups.

The early impact of Islam on the Hausa land especially in Katsina, Kano and Zazzau had resulted in the gradual transformation of the socio-political and to some extent, the economic condition of the people of Hausa land. As can be argued to be a replica of what is happening in the 21st century i.e globalization which is shaping the ways of life of the population world wide by bringing the distant world closer to the peoples through the communication gadgets; satellite T.V. stations, G.S.M, Internet, Radio e.t.c. The tendency of imbibing or learning new religious beliefs through the Trans-saharan Trade is replicated in the modern democracy and good governance. This democracy formed the bedrock of globalization. Thus the centuries old belief in the 'Iskoki' religious system, the dominant belief system in Hausa land by them began to give way for a more universal belief system i.e Islam, which was later over the next centuries to not only replace the old belief system in Hausa land, but also radically alter the political system and institutions in Hausa land, so as to conform with the Shari'a (Kani, 1997).

The development of Islamic education was witnessed in Hausa land was associated with the immigration of Wangarawa scholars. Hausa cities thus became centres of Islamic learning. The immigrants were scattered in most parts of the Hausa land. An example of activities of Wangarawa scholars can clearly be seen in Kano during the reign of Sarkin Kano Rumfa and Kisoki. By this time great Sheikhs arrived Kano with new Islamic books, few among the Sheikhs were Malam Shehu Batunashu who brought the book of Ashafa, Malam Abdus-salam who brought Mudawama, Jamiussagir, Malam Usman Sidi Ahmed a Sheikh of Qadiriyya brotherhood and Malam makhluful ibn Ali al Balbali. This led to the development in Arabic literature and literacy in Ajami as a source of communication among the Hausa people (Muhammadu 1988).

Furthermore, the early Islamic education prepared the ground for the incorporation of Islamic system of education into the modern (western system, which gave the birth of modern Islamic Universities located in Nigeria and Niger Republics). These are the Katsina Islamic University and Islamic University in Niger, Niamey.

The coming of Islam into Hausa land and its development from the 15th century connected the Hausa land with the North African states, Middle East and the Europe. Direct contacts through the Trans-saharan trade routes which connected Kano, Katsina with Tuat (in today's Algeria), Ghadames and Ghat (in today's Libya) across Tripolitania (in Libya) and Egypt to Hijza was established over the years for the purpose of economic, Cultural, diplomatic and intellectual relations between the rulers and the people of Bilad-al-Sudan and their counter parts in other centres of Islamic civilization in Northern Africa and beyond. As a consequence of this relations, books on various types of disciplines, merchandise, technological and scientific cultures started to flow, mainly from Northern direction towards the south (Kani, 1997).

Economically, the introduction of Islam facilitated the movement of the Hausa people in long distant trades to all parts of Western Sudan, Northern Africa and beyond. This was brought about by the teaching of Islamic brotherhood among the traders other than Hausas. The zeal with which the Muslims had on commercial activities and the dangers against indecent commercial activities, a provision clearly outlined by the Qur'an on good and legal or legitimate transaction paved the way for the establishment of Islamic banks and stock exchange such as Jaiz, Habib Bank and an Islamic Bank in Niger Republic.

Politically, the introduction of Islam inspired the kings in Hausa land to embark on the conquest of pagan states. This is because arms were imported from North Africa. An example of this is the expansionist activities of Muhammadu Rumfa in Kano. It also brought about the

awakening of a mixture of western democracy and Islamic form of governance in the implementation of the Shari'a system of administration by some state governments from 1999 with Zamfara, Katsina, Kano and many Northern states a step earlier taken in the early 19th century by Sheikh Usman Danfodio. There are also the establishment of the Hizba (commanding for good deeds and stopping bad deeds) and sheri'a commissions in many Northern States.

The introduction of Islam in Hausa land in particular and West Africa in general has created divisions among historians and social scientists making judgment from some of its impact especially the socio-cultural aspects. This has to do with some recent happenings world wide that involved Muslims. For instance with the reintroduction of Shari'a legal and administrative system in some states of Northern Nigeria from 1999-2007, criticisms, suspicions and protests erupted among the non-Muslims. There were religious crises in Kaduna, Bauchi, and Kano to mention a few. There was also the Jos mayhem, in which a number of people were murdered, an event which took place in 2001, 2004, 2008 and 2010. Again, the recent attempt by Umar Mutallab a Nigerian in the U.S.A to explode a plane was viewed as terrorism which was labeled against Islam and Muslims. However, judgment could only be made if one reads and understands the teachings of Islam which shun against tribalism, terrorism, violence, murder and all sort of atrocities on human beings. This tendency of looking at religion as a source of violence or conflict is what Bala Usman termed as manipulating of religion to attack the basis of the corporate existence of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Usman, 2000). Those who championed this selfish interest goes with the image that is fabricated, that Islam and Christianity have always been antagonistic in Nigeria, to achieve their short-sighted political ends.

Conclusion

The introduction of Islam in Hausa land has greatly impacted on the lives, languages, culture, religion and many other sectors of Hausa land. It has changed the life of the people from superficial beliefs to a more universal belief system. Islam came along with literacy and literature; this made it possible for the Hausa people to become literate for a long time. This Islamic knowledge helped the people in writing their history and the history of other places. A good example of this is in the writings of the Kano chronicle which were written in Arabic. The introduction of Islam into Hausa land also connected the Hausa people with the outside world of the North Africa, Middle East and Europe.

Recommendations

This research having discussed on the issues of the introduction and the impact of Islam in Hausa land in the 21st century, serves as starting point of researches on current issues in Hausa land. It is therefore among other things recommended to:

- ✓ Guide researchers on the geographical position of Hausa land.
- ✓ Assist students and researchers alike in studying the introduction of Islam in Hausa land.
- ✓ To compare the early impact of Islam in Hausa land and relate with contemporary issues.
- ✓ Help researchers on the issue of relationship between Hausa land and other nations.

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