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Muslims of the Federal Capital Territory: A Survey

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Abstract

This paper examines the several Islamic sects in the study area and the current state of the relationships among the various groups. Notable Islamic individuals are also identified in order to understand their ideology and their teaching in the society. Islamic education in the study area is discussed, including detailed descriptions of two Islamic schools. The relationship between Islam and politics and the role of Muslims in the current political dispensation is also discussed. Muslim organizations and the existing Muslim government agencies were also assessed.

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Muslims of the Federal Capital Territory: A Survey

Nasiru Idris Medugu

1. Introduction

In speaking of the FCT, it is necessary to distinguish between metropolitan Abuja, Nigeria's capital, and the rest of the FCT, i.e. Abuja's hinterland. The FCT was created in 1976 from parts of what are now Kogi, Nasarawa, and Niger States. Its area is 7,315 km². The city of Abuja was built as a new city, beginning in the 1980s. Its area is only about 275 km². The FCT is divided into six Local Government Areas (LGAs), of which metropolitan Abuja is one, the other five dividing the hinterland. They are Abaji, Gwagwalada, Kuje, Bwari and Kwali. The FCT is administered by the Federal Capital Territory Administration, headed by a minister appointed by the President. There are however democratically-elected Local Government Councils for each LGA, and the FCT elects one federal Senator and two Representatives. According to the 2006 national census, the population of the FCT was then 1,405,201.

Map of FCT, showing Phases I and II in the construction of Abuja¹



People from all over the country have come to settle in Abuja city since it became the nation's capital in 1991. The hinterland however still retains characteristics of an older Nigeria. The main indigenous people of the FCT are the Gbagyi (popularly known as Gwari). There are also groups of "settlers", including Koro, Gade, Egbura, Gwandara, Bassa

¹ Source: <http://mapsof.net/nigeria/static-maps/png/fct-map>.

and Gangana. A considerable number of these people are Muslims, including some of their traditional rulers. The main occupation of all of them is farming in the traditional way.

Three individuals were interviewed in the course of the research for this paper:

- Sheikh Tajudeen Bello (imam) at Foud Lababidi Central Mosque Wuse Zone 4 Abuja on 04/03/2011
- Dr Taofik Abdulazeez, (scholar) at University of Abuja Jummat Mosque Gwagwalada on 05/03/2011
- Ustas Abdul Fatah Adeyemi (preacher) at Cadastral zone, Central Business District Abuja on 06/03/2011

The selection of the interviewees for this research paper was based on criteria given the IRP Project to select between 3 to 6 notable individuals within the study area. Then the author selected an imam, a scholar and a preacher within the study area to give a good representation of views. The list of the Islamic organizations in the FCT is based on the 2011 Almanac for the Registered Islamic organizations in the FCT Abuja.

2. Muslim Groups in the FCT

a. Overview

Islam was introduced to the area now called the FCT as early as during the *jihad* movement of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio, and was well established in all the rural areas as from then. The author estimates that today about 50% of the FCT's population are Muslims. The Muslims in the FCT are predominantly Sunni in the Maliki School, which is also the governing Sharia law. Many of them, especially in the hinterland, are members of Sufi brotherhoods, a form of religious order based on more personal or mystical relations to the supernatural. The two main brotherhoods in Nigeria, the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya, have played a major role in the spread of Islam in the rural communities in the FCT. The Tijaniyya, the predominant Sufi sect in the FCT, is discussed in subsection **d** below.

In more recent times Islam in the FCT has become heterogeneous with the springing up of many Islamic sects. One notable example, discussed further in subsection **b** below, is the Izala movement, which preaches against the “innovations” of the Sufis and advocates a return to a “purer” form of Islam. The Izala sect in the FCT is more organized when compared to other sects, in terms of spreading the word of Islam, which is popularly called *da'wah* (mission).

There is also a significant minority of other sects within the FCT. There are some “Shia”, discussed further in subsection **c** below. A relatively small number follow the Ahmadiyya Islam, a reformatory sect originating in 19th century India. The Ahmadiyya sect can be found around Nyanya and Karu site of the FCT. There are also some followers of “Boko Haram”, the radical sect which arose in Maiduguri and Bauchi in the north-eastern part of Nigeria in the 2000s. Since their total collapse after the death of their leaders, some of their followers can be found in some parts of the FCT too, hiding out and/or attempting to indoctrinate the younger ones in their domain (“Say no to western education!”). In some parts of Abuja city followers of other small sects, such as Kala Kato (Maitatsine), have settled amidst the predominating Sufis and members of Izala, and have been able to dominate certain kinds of socio-economic activities such as street trading, where they are able to control the prices of goods and services. These sects largely segregate themselves socially. They are opposed to the traditional Nigerian Islamic teachings of the Sufi brotherhoods and are gradually alienating themselves from the main Islamic body.

b. The Izala

The Izala, or the Jama'at Izalatil Bid'a wa Iqamatus Sunnah (Movement against Negative Innovations and for Orthodoxy), is principally concerned with the purification of Islam and abolition of practices that are not original to the Qur'an and Sunnah, the practice of the Prophet Muhammad. The movement was begun in 1978 by Sheikh Ismaila Idris in Jos, Plateau State. It later enjoyed the support of important figures such as the late Sheikh Abubakar Gumi. The Izalas do not regard the creation of an Islamic state as a primary concern. They are an ultra-orthodox movement wanting a return to the true practice of the faith. Because a large section of the Izala leadership is drawn from the civil service, the group has not been engaged in any conflict with the state. Their conflict is rather with other Muslims and other Islamic sects.

However, the Izala movement is an anti-Sufi-movement established to fight what is conceived of as *bid'a*, innovation, practiced by the Sufi brotherhoods. Today the Izala is one of the larger Islamic movements not only in the FCT, but also in other parts of the north, and even in neighbouring countries (Niger and Chad). Izala is active in *da'wah* (propagation of Islam) and particularly in education. The Izala movement in Abuja can be traced to when the Federal Capital was moved from Lagos to Abuja in 1991. Today, the sect has many followers within and outside the city of Abuja.

c. The Shia

The Shia movement in Nigeria started in the year 1979 under the banner of the Muslim Student Society (MSS). The movement in the FCT came into being by their radical leader El Zakzaky, whose reputation for radical Islam dates back to when he was a student of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in the 1970s. At university he led the MSS for some time, during which period he sponsored some demonstrations in Zaria. Today his influence in the society made him to get some followers even in the FCT. But the Shia followers in the FCT are not many in number; there are more of them in Kaduna, Kano, Katsina and Sokoto States. Shia movement can be traced from the Sunni Islamic movement to Iran. The sect in Nigeria is romancing with their leaders in the Republic of Iran and harmonising issues together. There was a report that the sect in Nigeria is receiving support from Libya and Sudan. The group has established itself in notable northern Nigerian universities, and most of their leaders are young and highly educated to a university level. However, the educated members provide only the leadership. The Shia's disregard for state authority is exhibited in a number of ways. Among them are the denunciation of the state and government, disregard for party elections, contempt for the constitution and refusal to recognise its laws, refusal to respect the national anthem and national pledge and disregard for Nigeria's national flag.

d. The Tijaniyya

The Tijaniyya sect is among the strongest sects in the FCT today; their followers can be found in all the corners of the territory. Tijaniyya refers to an Islamic order, based on the teachings of the holy Prophet Muhammad PBUH and fully working on the revealed holy Islamic book: the Qur'an. Since the arrival of Islam to Nigeria, Sufism was part of it and all the Muslims of Nigeria and West Africa in general got theirs through this medium. The Tijaniyya arose through the work of a great Muslim scholar Sheikh Ahmad Tijani of Morocco in northern Africa. Another mighty scholar was Sheikh Ibrahim Niass of Kaolack in Senegal who did a lot to bring the order to Nigeria. All their teachings are under the ways of Imam Malik, and today, Tijaniyya is global. Some of the great Nigerian scholars following the order are: Sheikh Tahir Uthman Bauchi, Sheikh Ahmed Tijani Yan Mota, Kano, Caliph Ishaq Rabi'u, its caliph in Nigeria, Sheikh Abul Fatah Maiduguri, Sheikh Muhammad Salga

Kano and so many others. All these scholars have contributed in one way or the other in making the sect very strong in the FCT today. Some young and new followers find it difficult to differentiate Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya, whereas the two are like a tree with many branches. For example Al-Tijani was at one time a member of Qadiriyya. The sect in Abuja cannot be in isolation of its fellow members in the various parts of the country, it is like a network with strong linkages. The sect has strong followers among students and women as well as the market traders within the territory. It has offices and secretariats in all the area councils, mostly located in their places of worship (mosques), which also serve as their places of preaching at all times. They organize Qur'anic recitation competitions among schools and they also go on *da'wah* in all the corners of the FCT. They also visit prisons and orphan homes and donate some money for the well being of the prisoners and children.

3. Islamic scholars in the FCT

a. Introduction

This section highlights three notable Islamic individuals working in the FCT, namely Sheikh Tajudeen Bello, Dr Taofik Abdulazeez, and Ustas Abdul Fatah Adeyemi. All three were interviewed by the author in March 2011 for purposes of this research. These are only three out of many notable Islamic scholars that could be discussed. Generally, an imam, a preacher, a scholar, and a leader of a sect has a unique purpose in the Islamic society of today. The role they play is to teach about Islam and other areas of study for the benefit of the Muslim *ummah*. Each of the three individuals will be discussed separately, but concluding with a section on the joint work they sometimes do.

b. Sheikh Tajudeen Bello

Sheikh Tajudeen is the Chief Imam of Fouad Lababidi Central Mosque Wuse Zone 4 Abuja. As such he leads public prayers, and preaches, especially at Friday prayers in the Fouad Central Mosque. His sermon are read in Hausa, Yoruba, English and Arabic. He also engages himself in *da'wah* within and out of the FCT. Because of his humble nature and how he interacts with the society, his mosque has many people performing their Friday prayers there. People were converted to Islam every Friday in the mosque. Sheikh Bello engages himself in dialogue process at all times, and makes Muslims and non-Muslims to understand Islam and how to worship Allah, as well as informing them about Muhammad, the prophet of Allah.

c. Dr. Taofik Abdulazeez

Dr. Taofik Abdulazeez is the Chief Imam of the University of Abuja in Gwagwalada and also a lecturer in the university. As Chief Imam, his duties are not different from those of Sheikh Bello as just discussed, but his major challenge is that he is exposed to a society where all the ethnic groups, religions, both sexes and all kinds of age groups are confined in one environment. This environment is very sensitive in nature but he is playing an active role in his own capacity as the Chief Imam of this great institution in spreading the word of Islam, especially the female dress code. His main goal is to produce a unique culture of knowledge and learning in the entire university community.

d. Ustas Abdul Fatah Adeyemi

Abdul Fatah Adeyemi is a writer, a public speaker and a scholar who has been based in Abuja for quite a long time. In his day to day activities he tries to bring to the knowledge of followers as well as believers, that Islam is the only way of life. However, a scholar in Islam is also an imam and vice versa. He gives advice and counselling issues to the Muslim communities. He solves family problems, social needs and psychiatric symptoms.

e. Joint activities

These three notable Islamic individuals sometimes work together as a group, as when they travel on the same Islamic mission or speak at the same conferences or workshops. For instance, all of them were guest speakers at the special family seminar of the Islamic Da'wah Group held recently in Abuja themed "The Ideal Husband". Sheikh Bello noted in his speech that the tit-for-tat killings in Plateau State would not stop until perpetrators of the killings were brought to book by the government. He further said that people protesting the recent marriage of Senator Ahmad Sane Yakima are hypocrites. The imam ended his lecture by listed sincerity, justice, forgiveness, wisdom, contentment, firmness, fear of Allah and imbibing the teachings of Islam as practiced by Prophet Muhammad as some of the characteristics of an ideal husband that go a long way in shaping the state of the family, society and world. In his contribution, an educationist and Muslim cleric, Ustas Adeyemi enjoined couples to seek ways of living harmoniously with each other, adding that obedience to the provisions of Islam is a guarantee of peaceful family life. Dr. AbdulAzeez urged Muslim couples to see their union as a destiny, test, and trust from Allah, and to ensure that they guard it to enjoy everlasting joy. He said that married couples should prepare themselves to forgive each other and overlook each other's shortcomings.

4. Registered mosques in Abuja

Nowadays, most of the mosques in the FCT are registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission, just like their counterparts in the Christian faith. A list of some of the registered mosques in the FCT follows:

- National Mosque, Central Area, Abuja
- Ansar-Ud-Deen Mosque, Wuse 2, Abuja
- Uthman Bin Affan Mosque, Banex, Wuse 2, Abuja
- Garki Central Mosque, Area 1, Abuja
- Fou'ad Lababidi Mosque Zone 4, Abuja
- Mogadishu Baracks Mosque, Abuja
- University of Abuja Mosque, Gwagwalada, Abuja

5. Islamic education in the FCT

a. Overview of Islamic education

The history of Islamic education in Nigeria is the same as the history of the religion of Islam itself. This is because Islam goes to any place or community along with its own form of education. Islamic education entails giving instruction on purely theological matters, such that the trainee would be able to practice the five pillars of Islam. However, it is also a process of self-discipline, which ensures spiritual and intellectual growth of the individual. As a system of education, it entails expounding the very nature of life (here and hereafter), and prescribing the position of man and his role on earth.

b. Registered Islamic schools in Abuja

In the FCT, there is no tertiary Islamic institution of learning. What they have is the Islamic centre which is the same thing as a mosque. But there are a number of Islamic nursery and primary schools. A list follows:

Table 1: List of Registered Islamic Schools in Abuja²

1. Al-Ilmu International Nursery and Primary School, Kubwa Abuja
2. Al Nur (light) Nursery and Primary School, Kubwa Abuja
3. Alwajud Nursery and Primary School, Kubwa Abuja
4. Al-Cimfa International Academy, Gwagwa Abuja
5. Al- Kawthar Academy, Lugbe Abuja
6. Al-Manar basic education School, Life Camp Abuja
7. Al- Qalam International Academy, Abuja
8. Amirah Memorial International School, Nyanya Abuja
9. AR-Rahman International School, Asokoro Abuja
10. Islamic Trust Fund Nursery/Primary School. Garki Abuja
11. Duin International Academy, Kubwa Abuja
12. Esteem International School, Zone 4 Abuja
13. Faithful Attack for Poverty (Literacy Centre) Nursery, Primary Islamiyya and Adult Education. Dei-dei Abuja
14. Fomwan Model Nursery/Primary School, Garki Abuja
15. Fou'ad Lababidi Islamic Academy Secondary School, Wuse Abuja.
16. Goldilocks Pre-School, Kubwa Abuja
17. Great Height Academy Nursery/Primary and Girls Secondary School, Kado Abuja
18. Hayatul Islam Nursery/ Primary School, Karu Abuja
19. Ibn Mas'ud Islamic Center Bilingual Nursery and Primary School, Kuje Abuja
20. Intelligence Quotient Academy Pre-Nursery, Nursery and Primary School, Garki Abuja
21. Islamic Youth League Nursery/Primary School, Garki Abuja
22. Ithbath Nursery and Primary School, Abuja
23. Iqra'a Nursery and Primary School, Lugbe Abuja
24. Iyanda Progeny Private School day care, Playgroup, Nursery & Primary School, Gwarinpa Abuja
25. Jama'atu Ibadur-Rahman of Nigeria, Kuje Abuja
26. Kubwa School of Islamic Studies, Masjid Jabalin Nur, Kubwa Abuja
27. Ma-Yashau Nursery and Primary School, Lugbe Abuja
28. Madrasatu Diyail Islam, Garki Abuja
29. Model Islamic Nursery and Primary School, Kubwa Abuja
30. Nurul-Bayan International Academy, Zone 5 Abuja
31. Nurul-Islam Nursery/Primary School, Kubwa Abuja
32. Nurul-Yaqeen Nursery and Primary School. Karu Abuja
33. Shehu Shagari Model Islamic Centre Nursery/Primary School, Garki Abuja
34. Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi Nursery School, Karu Abuja
35. Sheikh Hamdan Model Senior Secondary School, Gwagwalada Abuja
36. Sunrise International School, Garki Abuja
37. The Sultana School for Arabic and Islamiyya, Gwarinpa Abuja
38. Zaytuna Oakland Nursery and Primary School, Abuja
39. Play House Nursery School, Abuja
40. AL-Habibiya Academy, Abuja
41. Centre for Arabic and Islamic Studies, zone 7 Abuja
42. African American Islamic Institute Abuja. (Declaration of the network of African Islamic faith)

² Source: Association of Model Islamic Schools 2010.

c. Two schools for special discussion

The Islamic schools in the FCT are of different categories, some are community schools, some are privately owned, some are girl child education, etc. The study selected two schools as a case study in order to highlight the prospectus and overview of their aims of establishing the schools.

i. Fou’ad Lababidi Islamic Academy³

Fou’ad Lababidi Islamic Academy (FLIA) is a non-profit community school wholly owned by the Wuse District Muslim Community, Federal Capital Territory Abuja. It is a unique educational centre, which serves the needs of the Muslim community by providing a variety of academic training, as well as sound moral education and social re-orientation for children, youths and adults, both men and women.

The decision to establish the Academy was taken in 1991 when the present site was acquired for the construction of the Wuse District Juma’at mosque. It was intended that an Islamic school should be established beside the mosque for the promotion of Islamic Studies and moral instruction especially among the youths. Subsequently, Chief Ma’an Lababidi, a Lagos-based businessman, accepted to build the first phase of the academy, which comprises six classrooms, two offices and a four storey building. He also donated tables and chairs. In appreciation, the Wuse District Muslim Community named the Academy after his late father, Mr. Fou’ad Lababidi, hence the name Fou’ad Lababidi Islamic Academy.

The Academy today has over 1500 students in six different programmes:

1. Children Islamiyya Education (primary school)
2. Junior Secondary School
3. Senior Secondary School
4. Junior Islamic Secondary School
5. Senior Islamic Secondary School
6. Adult Islamiyya Education

All programmes are for males and females alike. The Junior (JS I, JS II and JS III) and Senior (SS I, SS II and SS III) Secondary School programmes lead to Junior Secondary School Certificate (JSCE) and Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE) respectively. The Junior Islamic Secondary School programme is open to all successful graduands of Children Islamiyya School. It lasts three years, after which successful candidates will move to the Senior Islamic Secondary School leading to the Senior Islamic Studies (SIS) Certificate of the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. While the Adult Islamiyya Education is a programme designed to provide direct religious instruction in the following areas: Qur’an, Hadith, Fiqh, Tauhid, Tajwid, Tafsir, Seerah and Arabic for the literature and transliteration. The programme is open to all adults, male or female. It is a six year programme organized formally with provision for promotion and demotion as the case may be.

Fou’ad Lababidi Islamic Academy is an innovation in education, completely different from the thoroughly secularized system of education which obtains in the Nigerian public schools. The purpose of the school is to offer the highest quality modern secondary education blended together with a strong Islamic knowledge and awareness, so that all students could pursue their academic and professional careers, in the science or the humanities, with a good understanding of their rights and obligations as Muslims responsible to Allah (SWT) and the general society. FLIA is also a community education centre that offers Arabic and Islamic Religious Education classes for adult and children for the promotion of Islamic learning, orientation, morality and culture. FLIA has the following objectives:

³ Source for the following is the Fou’ad Lababidi Islamic Academy Prospectus, 2008.

- (i) To promote the pursuit and acquisition of Islamic knowledge among all generations of Muslim in the Federal Capital Territory irrespective of age, sex, ethnic or socio-economic differences.
- (ii) To cultivate and develop Islamic religious awareness, sense of responsibility, morality, cultural identity, positive self-concept and constructive personality disposition among all Muslims.
- (iii) To provide the highest standard of modern secondary school education in the arts and sciences reinforced with a strong bias for Islamic Religious Knowledge, morality and orientation. Thus to prepare students to understand Islam and to submit to Allah, while acquiring a sound education with which they can advance their family and religion, in a future that will benefit Nigeria and the large world community.

FLIA has about 30 management committee members constituted by the Wuse District Muslim Community.

ii. Esteem International School⁴

Esteem International School is an Islamic nursery and primary school situated on plot 98, Loma Mansa/Gwelo Street, Zone 4, Wuse Abuja. The school is synthesis of modern knowledge with Islamic values and the Qur'an's infallible wisdom thus knowledge, faith and discipline is the school's motto. They run an all rounded educational institution. Presently they have over 500 pupils. The school has play class, nurseries 1-3 and primary 1-6. Esteem International School, employing a holistic approach, not only gives appropriate attention to the core academic subjects, English, science, and mathematics, but by the time a child completes primary 6, he or she will be able to recite the entire Qur'an - insha Allah. Consistent with the declaration of the Holy Prophet Mohammed (SAW) that knowledge is the lost property of Muslims, Tawheed (the Absoluteness of God) informs the entire educational outlook and process. The child does not pass through school confused about contradictions between Islamic faith and modern knowledge.

6. Politics and government

a. FCT ministers and local government council chairmen by religion

The political situation in the FCT right from the inception of the capital from 1976 to date has been that most of the Ministers have been Muslims. Only two non-Muslim ministers have served (Table 2).

Table 2: FCT ministers from 1976 to date⁵

Name	Years of service	Religion
John Jatau	1979-1982	Christian
Iro Abubakar Dan Musa	1982-1983	Islam
Haliru Dantoro	1983-1984	Islam
Mamman Jiya Vatsa	1984-1985	Islam
Hamza Abdullahi	1986-1989	Islam
Gado Nasko	1989-1993	Islam
Jeremiah Timbut Hussein	1993-1998	Christian
Mamman Kontagora	1998-1999	Islam

⁴ Source for the following is the Esteem International School Prospectus 2011.

⁵ Source: FCT website.

Ibrahim Bunu	1999-2001	Islam
Mohammed Abba Gana	2001-2003	Islam
Nasir Ahmad el-Rufai	2003-2007	Islam
Aliyu Modibbo	2007-2008	Islam
Adamu Aliero	2008-2010	Islam
Bala Mohammed	2010- the present	Islam

In the National Assembly, the FCT's one Senator is currently a Muslim, Senator Sidi Aliyu, while one of its Representatives, Hon. Phillip Aduda, is a Christian and the other, and Hon. Isah Egah Dobi, is a Muslim. In the six LGAs of the FCT, four out of six of the current council chairmen are Christians (Table 3). Opposition parties especially the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) dominated the political scene in the FCT in the election held in 2007.

Table 3: Current FCT local government council chairmen

Area Council	Chairman	Religion
Abaji	Musa Yahaya Mohammed	Islam
Abuja	Mica Jibah	Christian
Bwari	Peter Yohanna Ushafa	Christian
Gwagwalada	Zakari Agulu Dobi	Islam
Kuje	Danladi Etsu Zhin	Christian
Kwali	Joseph Shazin	Christian

b. Muslim traditional rulers and their role in the FCT

The traditional rulers in all the six LGAs of the FCT are mostly Muslim. Their history can be traced back to the Islamic movement of Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio to spread Islam in the middle belt region of Nigeria. The largest indigenous group in Abuja are the Gbagyi (also known as the Gwari), and they have their own traditional rulers. During the Islamic movement, the traditional rulers were converted to Islam and continued to spread the word of Islam to their people. There are other tribes in the FCT that also have Muslim traditional rulers, these are the Koro, Gade, Egbura, Gwandara, Bassa and the Gangana. In an interactive discussion with some of the traditional rulers in the FCT, the Sarkin Hausawa (leader of the Hausa ethnic group) of the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) Alhaji Mohammed Grema observed that the Muslim traditional rulers have been playing a significant role in the social, economic and political activities in their respective communities. His counterpart Alhaji Musa Jakoro in Bwari area council also noted that Muslim traditional rulers are just like a community government in their kingdom, they act as a catalyst and problem solvers in day to day activities of their people. Alhaji Tanko Sani Abubakar who is the Sarkin Gwargwarda in Kuje area council said that Muslim traditional rulers in the FCT are actively participating in government and non-governmental functions so as to make sure their communities are equally represented and/or benefited in those programmes. This study also observes how a mutual relationship coexists between the Muslim traditional rulers and their communities in respect of the difference of their religion. The Ona of Abaji, Alhaji Adamu Baba Yunusa says that Muslim traditional rulers, besides the roles played by the rulers, also help in conflict prevention and mediation and the issue of livelihood and good governance in their respective chiefdoms. However, the study also observes that Muslim traditional rulers in the FCT played an important role in community coherence and traditional justice systems to harmonise the system.

c. Muslims' role in the current political dispensation

The Muslims have been and will continue to play an important role in the current political activities especially the 2011 general election. This study observes that within the FCT, awareness campaigns are going on through text messages, flyers, group discussions etc. within the Muslim community on the importance of the general election. Muslims are being reminded that they have the responsibility of exercising their electoral civic duties within the confines of the law by electing credible people that would represent and take control of the people's trust bestowed on them. The Friday sermons of most of the mosques in the FCT preach and remind the Muslims brothers on the need to disseminate the message conveyed by the Imam on the role a Muslim brother has in spreading the words of Allah (God).

d. Muslim government agencies/boards/commissions in the FCT

The Muslim pilgrims' welfare board and the Sharia Court of Appeal are the only two Muslim bodies that exist in the FCT.

i. Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board

The FCT Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board is a parastatal of Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) established to take care of a hitch free *hajj* operation for the FCT Muslim population and every Nigerian who wishes to perform his/her *hajj* through the FCT. The board was first established in 1980 as an agency in line with similar agencies operating in all the states of the federation. By 1981 some kind of autonomy was given to it and also a seven-man board was appointed by the then minister of the FCT John Jatau Kaiya. The agency was dissolved in 1983 with the coming of the military. The agency was upgraded to a board by the FCT Minister Lt. General Jerry Useni in 1994. It was converted to a Directorate in 2003. However, in 2008, it was reverted to the status of a board with a Chairman and five other members, who were inaugurated on the 26th August 2008. The board has the following functions:

- Collection of fares
- Registration and documentation of pilgrims
- Procurement of pilgrims' uniforms
- Induction (orientation) course on *hajj*
- Procurements and processing of pilgrims' passports
- Processing of pilgrims' visa
- Purchase and distribution of pilgrims' Basic Travelling Allowance (BTA)
- Air operation (airlifting of pilgrims to and from the Holy Land)
- While in the Holy Land (Saudi Arabia), the board has the following functions:
 - Securing of pilgrims' accommodations at Mecca
 - Securing of pilgrims' tickets
 - Arrangement of transportation of the pilgrims to the Holy sites in the Holy Land
 - Arrangement for weighing of pilgrims' luggage from their houses in Mecca/Madina to the airport

ii. Sharia Court of Appeal

The Sharia Court of Appeal is a body established by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, headed by a Grand Kadi, to deal with appeals in cases involving questions regarding Islamic personal law decided in the Area Courts of the FCT. The Grand Kadi of the Sharia Court of Appeal of the FCT is appointed by the President on the recommendation of the National Judicial Institute, subject to confirmation by the Senate.

There is also a Customary Court of Appeal in the FCT hearing appeals in cases decided in the Area Courts under the customary laws of one or another ethnic group.

Historically the Area Courts in the northern states have been under the supervision of the Chief Judges of the state/FCT High Courts. However, consequent upon the enactment of the Area Courts (Repeal and Amendment) Act 2010 by the National Assembly, the FCT High Court formally handed over the Area Courts in the FCT to the Sharia Court of Appeal on 4 February 2011.⁶

7. Muslim organisations in the FCT

There are many Muslim organizations in the FCT. They contribute and participate in various activities in accordance their own constitutions. This research has identified 22 Abuja-based Islamic organizations that play an important role not only the FCT communities but to the whole nation. The Islamic organizations which can be found in the FCT are listed below.

1. NASFAT Abuja.
2. Ja'iz Abuja.
3. FOMWAN Abuja.
4. Water for Life, Water and Sewage, Life camp Abuja.
5. Muslim Media Practitioners, Abuja.
6. Abuja Muslim Forum (AMF), Abuja.
7. Abuja Declaration of African Islamic Faith, Abuja.
8. Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria, Abuja.
9. Muslim Sisters Organization of Nigeria, Abuja.
10. Al mu'minaat, Dutsen Alhaji Abuja.
11. The Ummah Foundation (Widows and Orphans) Abuja.
12. Movement for Islamic Culture and Awareness (MICA), Abuja.
13. Diamonds and Dunes Resources, (Focus for modelling the young ones towards living positive and exemplary lives.)
14. Muslim Identity Collection. (Sale of Muslim Wears), Abuja.
15. Islam in Africa Organization (IAO), Abuja.
16. Abuja Nigerian Islamic Organization, (Tackling poverty) Abuja.
17. Aidwac International Health Organization (AIHO) Abuja.
18. Islamic Education Trust (IET), Abuja.
19. Islam in Africa Organization, (Dr. Usman Muhammed Bugaje) Abuja.
20. Al-Ilmu International Limited, Abuja.
21. Islamic Youth League of Nigeria, Abuja.

8. Summary of findings and conclusion

The challenges of Islam and the various Islamic sects in the FCT is a major task in our society today. This research has examined the several Islamic sects in the study area and the current state of the relationship among the various groups. Notable Islamic individuals were also identified in order to understand their ideology and their teaching in the society. The relationship between Islam and politics and the role of Muslims in the current political dispensation was also discussed. Muslim organizations and the existing Muslims government agencies were also assessed. The Islamic community in the FCT is playing a leading and active role not only in the FCT but in the country's political programme at large. Hence, this study has articulated the characteristics of the Islamic communities, groups and notable

⁶ Per the website of the FCT High Court, http://fcthighcourt.gov.ng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=319:official-hand-over-of-area-courts&catid=82:latest-news&Itemid=83.

scholars in the study area. Present day Islam still derives great meaning from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and the community he and his disciples constructed. The power of the ancient message still plays a dominant role in the modern world.