



Nigeria Research Network (NRN)
Oxford Department of International Development
Queen Elizabeth House
University of Oxford



NRN BACKGROUND PAPER NO. 6

Muslims of Niger State: A Survey

Muhammad Umaru Ndagi *

January 2012

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges financial support from the Islam Research Programme - Abuja, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The views presented in this paper represent those of the author and are in no way attributable to the Ministry.

* Dr. Muhammad Umaru Ndagi obtained his Ph.D. in Arabic Language in 2004 from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria with a dissertation on *The Impact of Western Civilization On Arabic Culture in Nigeria*. He is a Lecturer in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Abuja.

Abstract

The paper first gives an overview of the main ethnic groups in Niger State, some of its minority ethnic groups, and the estimated percentages of Muslims in the state. A brief discussion of denominational differences among the Muslims follows, most of them in fact belonging either to the Tijaniyya or Izala, though with significant numbers of “independents”. The account of the education of Muslims which follows in section 3 includes considerable material on the *almajirai* who continue to be a significant proportion of all youths under 18 years of age in Niger State. A discussion of Islam in politics and government follows, with a discussion of what Niger State has done by way of sharia implementation. Finally, there are discussions of three Muslim organisations and three prominent Muslims of the state.

Table of Contents

1. Overview	3
1.1. Population and main ethnic groups	3
1.2. Minority ethnic groups	3
1.3. Estimated percentages of Muslims	3
2. Categories of Muslims	4
2.1. Main divisions	4
2.2. Divisions among the Sunnis	4
2.2.1. Sufis and anti-Sufis	4
2.2.2. Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya	4
2.2.3. Neither Sufi nor anti-Sufi	4
2.2.4. Darul Islam	4
3. Education	5
3.1. Qur’anic schools	5
3.2. Islamiyya schools	6
3.3. Government-owned schools	6
4.0. Islam in politics and government	6
4.1. Traditional rulerships	6
4.2. Application of Islamic law; sharia implementation	7
4.3. Other aspects of Islam in government	8
4.4. Attitudes towards the Nigerian constitution	8
5. Three Muslim organizations	8
5.1. Islamic Education Trust (IET), Minna	8
5.2. Niger State Zakat and Endowments Board	11
5.3. Niger State Sharia Commission	12
6. Three prominent Muslims	13
6.1. Sheikh Ahmed Lemu	13
6.2. Sheikh Sa’eedu Muhammad Enagi	14
6.3. Sheikh Alhaji Alfa Drachita	15
Methodological note	16

Muslims of Niger State: A Survey

Muhammad Umaru Ndagi

1. Overview

1.1. Population and main ethnic groups

Niger State, which was created out of the North-Western State of Nigeria in 1976, is inhabited by three main ethnic groups, namely Nupe, Hausa and Gbagyi (Gwari). Its population in 2006 according to the census then taken was 3,950,249, the second largest in the North Central zone after Benue. The state has twenty-five local government areas; it is also divided into eight emirates for the administrative convenience of the long-standing traditional political system. They are: Bida, Agaie, Lapai, predominantly Nupe; Kontagora, Kagara and Borgu, predominantly Hausa; and Minna and Suleja, predominantly Gbagyi. The populations of the predominantly Nupe, Hausa and Gbagyi groups of emirates are in the ratio of approximately 40:32:28, giving some idea of the relative strengths of the three ethnic groups within the state.

1.2. Minority ethnic groups

But there are of course also people belonging to other ethnic groups living in Niger State, including both indigenes and settlers. Minority indigenous tribes include Dibo, Kakanda, Kupa and Zhitako in the two Nupe Emirates of Agaie and Lapai; Kambari and Dukawa in Kontagora Emirate; Kadara in Minna Emirate; and Fulani, Bissan, Laru and Bundawa in Borgu Emirate. Ethnic settler communities are very few in Niger State. The only significantly noticed settler tribe in Niger is the Tiv whose mass movement into the state was occasioned in 2002 by ethnic and religious conflicts in Taraba, Nasarawa, Benue and Plateau States.¹ In addition to these, however, there are in the cities and towns people who have come from all over Nigeria for study or for work.

1.3. Estimated percentages of Muslims

The 1963 Nigerian census gave the percentages of Muslims, Christians, and “Other Religions” in what is now Niger State as 59%, 3.6%, and 37.5% respectively.² Since 1963 most of the “Others” have become either Muslims or Christians. No census since 1963 has gathered information on religious affiliation, but some idea of current percentages of Muslims in Niger State may be gathered from information collected by the author for purposes of this project, on percentages of Muslims among certain classes of elected officials, as follows:³

Gov.	Dep. Gov.	Muslims in				Total Muslim officials	% Muslim officials
		House of Assembly	L.G. Chmships	Senate	House of Reps		
Mslm	Mslm	24/27	23/25	3/3	7/8	59/65	91

The greater percentage of Nupe and Hausa tribes in Niger State are predominantly Muslims. The very small percentage of Nupe Christians is found more in Bida than in Agaie and Lapai Emirates. The few Hausa speaking Christians of Niger State are found in Kontagora and

¹ See Report from the Committee on Mass Movement of People from Some Crises Areas of the Federation into Niger State, August 2002.

² See calculations from the 1963 census results performed by Philip Ostien, in the Appendix to his “Report on Nigeria’s North Central Geo-Political Zone” for this project.

³ As at early March 2011, before the elections of April 2011.

Kagara Emirates. The overall proportion of Gbagyi Muslims to Gbagyi Christians can be estimated at 60:40. Gwari Christians are found more in Munya Local Government under Minna Emirate and in Dikko town in Suleja Emirate.

2. Categories of Muslims

2.1. Main divisions

Majority of Muslims in Niger State, regardless of their ethnic background, are Sunni in faith and practice. Niger State lacks any pronounced presence of other divisions of Muslims including Shia, Ahmadiyya or Qur'aniyyun. A minority but weird sect, however, exists in Bida town even though the school building where the sect taught its doctrines mostly to youths and women, situated along the eastern by-pass of the town, was destroyed in 2009 to stop further spread of the sect to other parts of Bida Emirate. The sect called "*Salaf*" is under the leadership of Alhaji Jimeta Bida, a Bachelor of Arts (BA) graduate in Arabic language from Libya in the early 1970s. He has been in hiding since the building that housed his Qur'anic school was destroyed in 2009.

2.2. Divisions among the Sunnis

2.2.1. Sufis and anti-Sufis

The main divisions of Muslims in Niger State are between the *tariqa* (Sufi) and the Izala (anti-Sufi) groups. These two Muslim religious groups are found among all the three main ethnic groups in Niger State. However there evidently appear to be more *tariqa* Muslims than the Izala among the Nupe. There are also more Izala followers among the Hausa than can be found among Nupe and Gwari Muslims in Niger State. Beyond these generalizations it is impossible to be more precise about percentages. The relationship between the *tariqa* and Izala groups in Niger state is very cordial and peaceful. No violence has been witnessed or reported among them in Niger State, at least, in the past three decades.

2.2.2. Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya

Among the Sufis, as in many other states in northern Nigeria, most by far are adherents of the Tijaniyya order; only an insignificant number are followers of Qadiriyya. Thus, we could say while the Tijaniyya represent about 95% of Sufis, Qadiriyya are about 5%. There are no class distinctions in the followerships of Sufi orders in Niger State: their followers can be found among all classes.

2.2.3. Neither Sufi nor anti-Sufi

Similarly, there are Muslims among the three main ethnic groups in Niger State who are neither *tariqa* nor Izala. Only about 20% of the Muslims in Niger State can be said to belong to this category. However, most Nupe Muslims are followers of the *tariqa* in the same way that many Hausa Muslims in the state are followers of the Izala sect. Significant numbers of Gbagyi Muslims in Niger State are neither *tariqa* nor Izala.

2.2.4. Darul Islam

There existed before now a Muslim community called Darul Islam (meaning "Land of Islam") in Mokwa Local Government Area of the state. This community was disbanded in 2009 following the insurgence of religious crisis caused by Boko Haram in Borno and other states. Residents of the Darul Islam community were returned at government expense to their indigenous places of birth mostly in Kano, Jigawa and Zamfara States. There were few others whose origins were traced to towns in the neighbouring Niger Republic.

3. Education

3.1. Qur'anic schools

Traditional Qur'anic schools exist in Niger State just as they do in other parts of northern Nigeria. They are largely operated in the context of *Makarantu Allo* (Islamic schools for beginners in learning the Qur'an) and *Tsangaya* (schools for memorizing and learning to write the Qur'an). While *Makarantu Allo* are operated more as neighbourhood-based schools in urban and rural communities under the supervision of a malam (teacher) and some auxiliary assistants, the *Tsangayu* (plural of *Tsangaya*) are operated mostly as independent settings within or outside communities under the supervision of a number of malams "in charge" of the upkeep of the setting and other dependants therein.

In 2009, there were about 15,899 self-engaged malams in a total of 8,210 schools across the eight emirates within the twenty-five local government areas in the state. According to statistical data obtained from the Report of the government-appointed Committee for the Integration of Qur'anic Schools with Western Education School System (2009), there were as many as 586,521 children and teenagers (aged from three to about twenty-two years) enrolled in Qur'anic education schools in Niger State in 2009. Children and teenagers in Qur'anic schools in Niger State make up to as much as 60% of the total number of male children aged 1 to 18 years. The malams are essentially self-engaged in the Qur'anic schools they operate with as many number of *almajirai* as they can source from within and outside the location of their respective schools.⁴

On the basis of calculations of the percentages of the total numbers of schools/malams/pupils found in given emirates, Bida (40.71%, 32.68%, 27.15%), Minna (18.93%, 22.41%, 9.06%), and Kontagora (16.60%, 6.20%, 22.32%) are the emirates that account for the highest density of Qur'anic schools and prevalence of the *almajiri* phenomenon in Niger State. *Almajiri* (plural: *Almajirai* in Hausa language) is an Arabic word adopted by Hausa-speaking Muslims to refer to a Muslim youth or adult (and not necessarily a child) who is out of his place of birth to another community in search of Qur'anic education. It originally entailed Islamically prescribed means of providing welfare for Muslims who have travelled in search of Islamic knowledge. Over time, beggary (or *bara* in Hausa) was incorporated in to it.

Factors of corresponding higher population of natives in the three emirates of Bida, Minna and Kontagora as well as related pull factors of either urbanization or entry corridors with neighbouring states that have entrenched traditions of these kinds of schools are contributory factors for the high density status of Bida, Minna and Kontagora emirates in terms of the number of Qur'anic schools, malams and pupils. Suleja (6.08%, 13.6%, 7.05%), Agaie (7.9%, 12.61%, 5.58%), and Lapai (5.16%, 10.47%, 6.32%) are emirates categorizable as having medium density prevalence of Qur'anic schools, malams and pupils. The emirates of Kagara (2.36%, 1.45%, 2.57%) and Borgu (1.81%, 1.16%, 2.71%) have low density

⁴ The Report of the Committee for the Integration of Qur'anic Schools with Western Education School System in Niger State, in several volumes, was submitted to the Governor of Niger State in August 2009. A great deal of other work on this problem has also been done. See e.g. "National Benchmark for Non-Formal Education and Basic Education in the Qur'anic Schools in Nigeria" by the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult, and Non-Formal Education, November, 2007; "A Blueprint on Model Qur'anic Primary Schools" by Northern Education Research Project, Arewa House, Kaduna, March 2006; and "Report on the Desk Review of Literature on the Plight, Protection and Development of the Almajiri Child in Nigeria", prepared by Professor Ibrahim A. Kolo and Dr. Taufiq Ladan for the Department of Child Development, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Development, Abuja, June 2006.

prevalence of Qur'anic schools, malams and pupils. It is noticeable from the foregoing analysis that the urban pull factor, perhaps, has a significant effect on the concentration of the three indices of traditional education. Although Suleja Emirate, for instance, is categorized as of medium density prevalence, the percentage of number of malams (13.6%) is relatively comparable to what obtains in high density emirates.

3.2. Islamiyya schools

Islamiyya schools, mostly privately-owned, operate in Niger State. They are commonly found in the urban towns of Bida, Minna, Kontagora and Suleja in Niger State. This group of schools operates a curriculum that blends Islamic with western education. Muslims, particularly the Izala group, who can afford the fees charged by private Islamiyya schools, enrol their children and wards in such schools. Others who cannot make do with public primary and secondary schools. This is without regard to ethnicity. In other words, Muslims who can afford to send their children to Islamiyya schools do so, whether they are Nupe, Gbagyi or Hausa.

3.3. Government-owned schools

Government-owned (public) primary and secondary schools exist in all the twenty-five local government areas of the state. Muslims throughout the state have unhindered access to public schools, and many attend them. In particular, a sizeable number of the Nupe and Gbagyi ethnic groups in Niger State have gone through such schools and are highly educated; some of them professors and others as holders of Ph.D. and higher academic degrees. However, Kontagora Emirate has been categorized as an educationally-disadvantaged emirate owing to the very small number of highly educated natives from the emirate.

There are fifteen Colleges of Arts and Islamic Studies (CAIS) in Niger State, all government-owned, located in different parts of the state. Graduates of traditional Qur'anic schools and Islamiyya primary schools prefer to join these CAISs for their secondary education because of the specialized attention they give to the study of Arabic and Islamic Sciences. There is also a government-owned and operated tertiary institution with bias for Islamic education in Niger State. It is the Justice Fati Lami Abubakar College of Islamic Legal Studies in Minna. The institution offers four diploma courses: (1) Diploma in Sharia Law; (2) Diploma in Civil Law; (3) Diploma in Arabic, Islamic Studies and Hausa; and (4) Diploma in Mass Communication. It also offers a Certificate programme in Mass Communication. Muslim youths especially those with sound background in Arabic language equally take advantage of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) programme in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Niger State College of Education situated along Chanchaga Road in Minna.

The other tertiary institution in addition to the Justice Fati Lami Abubakar College of Islamic Legal Studies and the Niger State College of education, which offer Arabic as a course is the IBB University situated at Lapai. Although the Federal College of Education (FCE) Kontagora offers NCE programme in Arabic and Islamic studies, it is a Federal Government institution though located in Niger State.

4.0. Islam in politics and government

4.1. Traditional rulerships

Each of the eight emirates in Niger State is under the political control and headship of an Emir (or "Etsu" in the case of the three Nupe emirates of Bida, Agaie and Lapai). These Emirs or Etsus are now appointed after the death of an incumbent by the state government upon the recommendation of the kingmakers of the respective Emirate Councils. The

emirates, as the name implies, are Islamic rulerships, most of them tracing their lineages back to the Sokoto Caliphate. Today's Etsu (or Emir) of Bida, for example, is descended through two sons or one grandson (in rotation among the houses) from the Fulani Malam Dendo, who won the Nupe kingdom for the Caliphate. He is a first-class emir, as are the Etsu Agaie, the Etsu Lapai, the Emir of Kontagora, the Sakin-Zazzau/Emir of Suleja, and the Emir of Minna. The other two emirs are of the second class, indicating the relative ages and strength of their domains. Although several of the emirates belong to nominally Fulani clans (as in the case of Bida), through intermarriage they have all been much "indigenized", so the Emir of Bida/Etsu Nupe is distinctly Nupe today. Below the emirs are lower ranks of traditional rulers, from District Heads down to Ward and Village Heads, often with their own titles derived from local ethnic traditions. They may or may not be Muslims, but most are, except perhaps among the Gbagyi, as the population of the state is predominantly Muslim as we have seen.

4.2. Application of Islamic law; sharia implementation

Up until the year 2000, Niger State was just like every other state of the former Northern Region, in terms of its court systems and the law applied in them. There were Area Courts, the successors to the Native Courts of the colonial period, which in civil (non-criminal) cases mainly applied "the native law and custom prevailing in the jurisdiction of the court". In Niger State this was mostly Islamic law of the Maliki school, although it could also be the ethnic law and custom of one of the state's ethnic groups, or some amalgam of different bodies of law. On appeal, cases decided in the Area Courts under Islamic personal law went to the Sharia Court of Appeal, while cases decided under other law went to the High Court. The Magistrate's and High Courts could also apply "native law and custom", including Islamic law, in appropriate civil cases, along with "English" law and Nigeria's other laws. But in all criminal cases, in all courts, the only law applied was the Penal Code of 1960 inherited from the old Northern Region.

In 2000, however, Niger State joined eleven other northern states in undertaking a programme of "sharia implementation".

The launching of sharia implementation in Gusau in October 1999 by the then Zamfara State Governor, Alhaji Sani Ahmed Yerima, accounted more than any other factor for the enthusiasm that stimulated many northern governors in Nigeria to launch the introduction and implementation of sharia between 1999 and 2003 in their respective states. Muslims in Niger State, just like their counterparts in other "sharia-friendly" states in Nigeria, buried their ideological differences and became united in the launching and implementation of sharia. In Niger State, the implementation of sharia created no animosity between Muslims and non-Muslims as the implementation was practically binding only on Muslims.

As worked out by the end of 2001 sharia implementation in Niger State has involved:

- changing the Area Courts into Sharia Courts, responsible to apply Islamic law only;
- amending the state's Penal Code, to allow imposition of Islamic criminal law (*hudud* and *qisas*) on Muslims when they are convicted of specified crimes using specified types of evidence;
- directing appeals in all cases decided in the Sharia Courts, including criminal cases, to the state Sharia Court of Appeal;
- tightening up the state's Liquor Law to make alcoholic drinks much less easy to get ahold of in Niger State, and seriously enforcing it;

- establishing a number of specifically Islamic state agencies for the better propagation and enforcement of Islamic standards and values, including an Advisory Council of Ulama, a Sharia Commission, and a Zakat and Endowments Board.

This is not the place for a more lengthy account of sharia implementation in Niger State, except that the work of the Niger State Zakat and Endowments Board and of the Niger State Sharia Commission are discussed in sections 5.2 and 5.3 below. The author would also note that extensive documentation of what Niger and the other sharia states have done is available online.⁵

4.3. Other aspects of Islam in government

As in all Nigerian states, Niger has a Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board which assists in managing the *hajj* each year for pilgrims from the state. The Niger State Executive Council with the support of the state House of Assembly at times initiates other Islamic or Muslim-oriented agendas. For instance, the state government in 2008 inaugurated a committee to study the traditional Qur'anic system of education with a view to recommending ways that could ensure workable integration of this system with the Western system of education. The target of this agenda is to eradicate the intractable *almajiri* syndrome that is characteristic of the traditional Qur'anic education system in northern part of Nigeria. Niger State also has an Islamic Religious Preaching Board dating from 1979, responsible, with the assistance of the Emirate Councils, for the licensing of intending Islamic preachers and enforcement of the rules about preaching laid down in the Board's statute.

Party politics in Niger State is not based on ethnic or religious affiliations. Although the current Governor of Niger State and his deputy are Muslims, there are Christians in the Executive Council. Mrs. Salome Ndakotsu is a Commissioner serving under Governor Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu. She is a Christian by faith and Nupe from Agaie Emirate, which conservatively has a Muslim population of 99.5%. Professor Bawa Salka is also a Christian from Kontagora Emirate currently serving as a Special Adviser to Governor Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu of Niger State. The Governor is a member of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which is the ruling party at the centre for the past twelve years in Nigeria.

4.4. Attitudes towards the Nigerian constitution

The Nigerian Constitution is the basic instrument of law that guides citizens in their political, economic and social life. Muslims in Niger State accept the constitutional set-up and have no misgivings about seeking political office under it, serving as civil servants, or about seeking redress for the protection and preservation of their fundamental human rights in non-sharia courts such as Magistrate's and High Courts.

5. Three Muslim organizations

5.1. Islamic Education Trust (IET), Minna

The Islamic Education Trust (IET), which has its national Headquarters in Minna, is a non-governmental organization with special concern for Islamic *da'wah* (call to Islam) activities. IET has two broad divisions around which her activities revolve. They are the *da'wah* and the schools division. With branch offices in Abuja, Yola, Sokoto and Lagos, IET also operates two liaison offices in Bauchi and Birnin Kebbi.

IET runs model primary and secondary schools in Minna, Abuja and Sokoto. In Minna, there exist New Horizons College and Model Islamic Nursery/Primary School. In Abuja,

⁵ In P. Ostien, ed., *Sharia Implementation in Northern Nigeria 1999-2006: A Sourcebook*, 6 vols., available at <http://www.sharia-in-africa.net/pages/publications/sharia-implementation-in-northern-nigeria.php>.

there is Sunrise International School situated in Asokoro district of Abuja. While the *da'wah* division of IET has staff strength of about one hundred and twenty-five, schools altogether have a staff capacity of about five hundred. IET also organizes Adult Education classes in Minna, Sokoto and at Dafa and Kuje towns of the Federal Capital Territory Abuja.

The death of the first and only Premier of Northern Nigeria, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, *Sardaunan* Sokoto, on January 15, 1966 in a coup d'état, informed the establishment of the IET by a group of three personalities. They are: Sheikh Ahmed Lemu, his wife Hajiya Aisha B. Lemu, and the late Alhaji Sani Ashafa Suleiman (Sheikh Lemu is discussed in more detail in section 6.1 below). These three felt that Muslims in the north, especially after the death of the *Sardauna*, needed an organization that would, through co-ordinated *da'wah* activities, give northern Muslims the confidence and assurances that they were still a united Muslim front. This led to the formation of IET in 1969. IET considers other non-governmental religious organizations as partners in progress.

Ideologically, IET considers herself as a purposeful charitable organization that has a mission, vision and responsibility to educate Muslims particularly the girl-child. It is an organization that places much emphasis on women education. IET similarly preaches through her several *da'wah* programmes the need for peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Muslims and between Muslims and non-Muslims. Members of this organization strongly believe in the aphorism of “live and let live” which in essence entails working in harmony with state authorities and shunning any act of antagonism or violence against the state. IET strives through her diverse educational and *da'wah* activities to re-orientate the state government towards adopting Islamic ethos in issues of governance. The organization views and respects traditional rulers and institutions as fathers and as outstanding vestiges of our ancestors.

As an Islamic NGO, IET supports the evolving of public institutions that are specifically established to further the understanding and survival of Islamic culture and traditions as well as the general welfare of Muslims and other citizens. IET, for instance, was involved in the past, in the establishment of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) by the Federal Government of Nigeria. At the state level, it was involved in the establishment of the Niger State Sharia Commission, Niger State Islamic Religious Preaching Board, Niger State Zakat and Endowments Board, Niger State Pilgrims Welfare Commission, and the Niger State Council of Traditional Rulers. On the international scene, too, IET contributed ideas to the formation of the Muslim World League which has its headquarters in Makkah. The International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) in Makkah as well as the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) in Kuwait have both benefited from the intellectual contributions and scholarly experience of IET. On the other hand, IET has equally benefited financially from these two international organizations.

The IET in collaboration with other organizations has successfully and on different occasions carried out *da'wah*, educational and welfare programmes; workshops and conferences. For instance, IET organized a course for Muslim Youths in Minna, in November 2010 on the subject matter of “Islamic Finance and Personal Development”.

The IET, without doubt, occupies a large niche within the economy of the people of Niger State. These economic gains find expression in the welfare programmes of the organization by way of paying school fees, buying books and uniforms for orphans. IET also empowers women through soft loans of between fifteen and forty thousand naira given specifically to widows. The terms of agreement of such loans usually allows for re-payment of the loans by

beneficiaries in a period that is not less than three years. There is also a revolving loan scheme for IET staff.

The organization operates a bookshop, the *Ilmi* Bookshop, in Minna, where books for the basic level of education (primary and junior secondary schools) are sold at subsidized rates. IET in conjunction with the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in Jeddah gives scholarships to Muslim students in Nigerian tertiary institutions with particular reference to and emphasis on engineering, medicine, and computer science courses.

No discrimination is shown against the gender, age or ethnic background of an individual in the appointment or recruitment of workers in to the services of the IET. While there are more men in the *da'wah* division, women are more in the education division of IET. Apart from the Nupe, Gbagyi, Hausa, Yoruba and other Nigerian tribes who constitute staff membership of the IET, there are foreigners workers in the organization too. There are Liberian nationals and Ghanaians working in the administrative section and schools division respectively. Only persons who have attained the age of eighteen years are employed to work in the IET. Late Alhaji Wali was the first employed staff of the organization. He was recruited in Sokoto in 1969.

The dominant social value of the IET is education founded on Islamic ethos with special attention to girl-child education. The organization operates the under listed schools whose curriculum is strictly a blend of Islamic and Western education:

- New Horizons College, Minna (JSS and SSS levels)
- Model Islamic Nursery/Primary School, Minna
- Sunrise International School, Asokoro, Abuja, FCT
- IET Model School, Sokoto

As an NGO, IET seeks financial assistance from international donor agencies especially those in the Arab Muslim world of the Middle East to enable it carry out *da'wah* activities as well as to complement the running cost of her schools. IET has zero tolerance for Islamic militancy, fundamentalism, and terrorism. It preaches peaceful co-existence among diverse ethnic groups within and outside Niger State.

The IET organizes, from time to time, inter-faith dialogues and workshops with a view to building bridges of understanding between Muslims and followers of other revealed religions. For instance, the organization in collaboration with the Catholic Cathedral in Minna organized an inter-faith dialogue forum in 2009. It is in furtherance of religious tolerance and understanding that IET employs Christians to teach in her schools.

This organization has a Board of Trustees (BOT), which is the highest policy and administrative body in the organization. The BOT is headed by a chairman who is also the National President of IET. He is Sheikh Ahmed Lemu, the pioneer and retired Grand Kadi of the Niger State Sharia Court of Appeal. Other members of the BOT are Hajiya Aisha B. Lemu and Alhaji Jibril Onyekan. The organogram of IET indicates that the BOT is closely followed by a Senior Management Advisory Board (SMAB) which has two parallel heads: an Administrative Secretary and a Director General (DG). While the administrative secretary is in charge of *da'wah*, endowments, welfare matters, personnel management and accounts of the organization, the DG heads the schools division.

There is no uniform specifically designed for staff and workers of IET. However, staff members of the organization are required to be decently dressed. There is an Islamic dress code for students and pupils of the schools operated by IET. Male students/pupils are to be dressed in white long sleeve shirts on top of white trousers. Cap is optional for male students.

Female students/pupils are to wear tonic colour long sleeve shirts on top of white trousers with a *hijab* (veil) to cover the head and the chest. The logo of IET is a burning candle inside an arch that looks like a niche. The organization has no flag. However, schools managed by IET have their respective flags that differ in design and colour.

IET has no ritual practices that distinguish it from other Muslim organizations. It is important to observe that founders and workers of the organization are significantly and predominantly Sunni Muslims. The organization does not show inclination to *tariqa* or anti-*tariqa* groups of Muslims. Recruitment in to the IET is done through advertisement in the print and electronic media after which short-listed candidates are subjected to written and oral aptitude tests.

This research is not aware of any other on-going research or policy intervention from the Niger State or federal government as it concerns activities of the IET. By the IRP-Cairo classification, IET being an Islamic NGO can be classified as a Social Actor.

5.2. Niger State Zakat and Endowments Board

The Niger State Zakat and Endowments Board is a government agency established to collect *zakat* from eligible Muslims resident in Niger State and distribute same to the less-privilege members of the society. While the Board has its headquarters situated in Minna, the state capital, it has zonal offices in all the eight emirates of Niger State.

The Board has four standing committees: (1) Collection Committee (2) Distribution Committee (3) Staff Disciplinary Committee; and (4) Financial and General Purpose Committee. Each of the Zonal Zakat Committees (ZZCs) located in the eight Emirate Councils of Niger State consist of six members, all of whom are usually nominated by their respective emirs under whose areas they operate.

The ZZCs in turn superintend over District Zakat Councils (DZCs) established in all the districts within the zones. Each of the DZCs comprises six members nominated by the respective emirs in their zones/emirates subject to the approval of the Board. In all, there are one hundred and seventeen (117) DZCs in Niger State.

The Board consists of six members and an Administrative Secretary. The six members of the Board are (1) Major General M.G. Nasko (Rtd); (2) Malam Abubakar Gimba, OFR; (3) Engr. I.K. Musa Bawa (4) Alhaji Abdulmalik Ndayako; (5) Alhaji Mohammed Bawa Rijau; and (6) Alhaji Mohammed Kabir S. Pawa. When the tenure of the pioneer Board members expired in August 2005, a new Board has since not been constituted.

The Niger State House of Assembly enacted a law that established the Zakat and Endowments Board on July 10, 2001. It was signed in to law by the then Executive Governor of Niger State, Engr. Abdulkadir Kure on September 3, 2001; the same day members of the Board took oath of office.

The Board relates with the Sharia Commission in Niger State (see section 5.3 below) and other similar but relevant government agencies including the Niger State Liquor Control Board, the Niger State Preaching Board, and the Niger State Muslims Welfare Board, all of which collectively work to ensure the implementation of sharia law in the state.

As a public institution, the Zakat and Endowments Board has no history of violence or gender discrimination. The Board uses traditional rulers through the ZZCs in the collection of *zakat* from those on whom it is due.

The Board, given its statutory obligation, contributes to the economic well being of the under-privileged members of the society who are resident in Niger state without recourse to

ethnicity. Beneficiaries of the *zakat* collected from payers include, according to the law establishing the Board and based on the injunction of the Qur'an: the poor, the needy, indebted persons, wayfarers, persons working for the collection and distribution of *zakat*, new converts to Islam, scholars, and for the ransom of those in captivity. Statistical records from the Board show that the total value of *zakat* distributed between September 2001 and March 2007 stood at ₦36,669,543. Destitute, the unemployed, teachers and pupils of traditional Qur'anic schools, as well as very low income earners were among those who fell in to some of the eight categories listed above and thus benefited from the *zakat* distributed in the given period.

Given the fact that the Board is a public organization, it does not discriminate against gender, age or ethnicity. While the appointment of members of the Board is at the discretion of the Executive Governor of Niger State and subject to the approval of the State House of Assembly, the appointment of the management officers of the Board (Executive Secretary and three directors) is based on merit. One striking point about the Board is that neither members of the Board nor members of the management team are on monthly salary. They are remunerated as ad hoc staff with honoraria payable from 10% of the funds collected as *zakat*. The activities or functions of the Board are entirely run on ad hoc basis. Alhaji Muhammad Shaku is the current Administrative Secretary of the Board.

The dominant social value of the Zakat and Endowments Board is welfare of citizens. The Board, being an Islamic though public organization, lacks any observable international orientation. Her relationship with followers of other religions in Niger State and in Nigeria is very cordial. Under its administrative setup, the Board is at the apex of policy decisions that concern *zakat* and endowments in Niger State. The board supervises the Executive Secretary and the three directors who are collectively responsible for the day-to-day running of the Board.

The has no flag or symbol of identity. Similarly, it has no prescribed uniform for its staff. However, being a religious organization, staff members of the Board are required to be decently dress within and outside the premises of the Board. The Board does not also have ritual practices that distinguish it from other groups of Muslims. No policy intervention, to the best knowledge of this researcher, is currently going on at the Board. The Board can be classified, based on IRP-Cairo classification, as an Official Actor.

5.3. Niger State Sharia Commission

The Niger State Sharia Commission was established by the Niger State Government. The law establishing it was signed in to law by the then Executive Governor of the State, Engr AbdulKadir Kure on July 11, 2001.

The assigned functions of the Niger State Sharia Commission include reviewing relevant laws with a view to advising government on reforms of the system to conform to Islamic law, and collaborating with traditional rulers in the eight traditional emirates within the state in order to achieve set targets. The Commission also works with the Preaching Board to regulate the preaching activities of scholars and imams in the state. It was also implied from the implementation of Sharia in Niger state that government wanted to drastically reduce the rate of specific crimes and immoral acts such as adultery, fornication, theft and alcoholism in Niger State.

The Commission established a security outfit called Hisbah Committee, which more or less functions as "sharia police". The Commission uses members of the Hisbah Committee, to check the nefarious activities of middle men in the market, assist intending pilgrims during *hajj* operations, and arrest those found guilty of contravening any aspect of the law on liquor.

However, the Commission ceased to be responsible for monitoring the law on liquor when the Niger State Liquor Control Board was established.

Because the statutory functions of the Sharia Commission centre primarily on advising government on the implementation of certain Islamic injunctions, not much economic opportunities could be said to derive from the Commission. As with the Zakat and Endowments Board, its staff are not on monthly salary but rather remunerated with allowances, because they are not permanent and pensionable workers. Instead, they are considered and treated as ad hoc workers. It is pertinent to note that this Commission has in the last one decade of its establishment suffered from gross under-funding especially between 2007 and 2011 when Dr. Muazu Babangida who succeeded the initiator of the NSSC; Engr. AbdulKadir Kure as the Executive Governor of the state, was in office.

As a public organization, no discrimination is displayed against any ethnic group, gender or age bracket in the composition of the members of the Commission. Members of the NSSC are appointed by the State Governor subject to ratification by the Niger State House of Assembly. The Commission, according to the law establishing it, shall consist of : (1) Grand Kadi of Niger State as chairman (2) Attorney-General of the state (3) A representative from each of the Emirate Councils in the state who shall be persons versed in Islamic knowledge (4) four renowned Islamic scholars; and (5) a lecturer in Islamic Jurisprudence.

The dominant social value of the Commission centres on morality and decency. The orientation of the Commission is basically with friendly approach to followers of other faiths not only in the state but also in the country.

The governor appoints an Executive Secretary for the Commission. He shall perform administrative and other duties as may be directed by chairman of the Commission. Miscellaneous provisions establishing the Commission allow it to create any sub-committee for the purposes of carrying out any of its functions as specified in the law. The chairman of the Commission presides over all meetings; and in his absence, a member nominated by other members shall preside.

The Commission has no specific uniform for its members. It also has no rituals, flags or other symbols that distinguish it from other groups of Muslims. However, members of the Hisbah Committee have a uniform that consists of a navy-blue stripe jacket worn over a brown shirt and trouser. Membership of the Commission, which is a public organization, is usually by appointment that lasts, though ad-hoc in nature, for a period of four years. The Commission can be classified as an Official Actor using IRP-Cairo classification.

6. Three prominent Muslims

The selection of interviewees was based on their adequate knowledge of the actors and organizations selected for this study. Even so, tracking down the three selected actors for this survey remained herculean for two months. The researcher, however, referred to the actors individually where it was necessary to ascertain some facts. The three Islamic organizations selected for this study were based on the religious roles they significantly play in the furtherance of Islam and its culture in Niger State of Nigeria.

6.1. Sheikh Ahmed Lemu

Nupe by tribe, Sheikh Ahmed Lemu is a renowned Islamic scholar in Niger State. Now aged 82 years, he is a graduate of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. He was the pioneer Grand Kadi of the Niger State Sharia Court of Appeal when Niger was created in 1976 out the then North-Western State.

Sheikh Lemu is one of the few scholars in the state who benefited from both the Qur'anic and Western systems of education. He was a principal at the famous Kano School for Arabic Studies (established in 1948) which trained Arabic teachers for schools and judges for the Native and then Area Courts in the northern parts of Nigeria between 1940s and 1980s. He is an intellectual, scholar and preacher who preaches and delivers sermons in Arabic, English, Hausa and his native tongue, Nupe. Sheikh Lemu in conjunction with two other personalities including his wife, a Briton by birth, established the Islamic Education Trust for the propagation of orthodox Islam as well as for the preservation of Islamic culture that is rooted in traditions of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

Through his preaching activities, Sheikh Lemu has no reservation about co-education (males and females learning under one roof) provided there are rules to guide and regulate interaction between the two opposite genders. He maintains good rapport with other groups of Muslims as well as well with non-Muslims. The latter manifests in his involvement in inter-faith dialogue fora within and outside Niger State. He is opposed to puritanical and radical religious ideologies. This is evident in his condemnation of the "Boko Haram" insurgence in the north-east parts of the country.

Sheikh Lemu relates very well with the state as well as with formal political processes. He is the Chairman of the Niger State Advisory Council of Ulama, Chairman of the Niger State Preaching Board, and President of the Islamic Education Trust (IET), Minna. He funds the IET with his personal resources and with donations received from international charitable organisations. He annually conducts *tafsir* (commentary of the Holy Qur'an) sessions during the month of Ramadan. He preaches on radio and television. He preaches every Friday in Hausa language during the weekly Friday congregational prayer at the Minna Central Mosque, which is the mosque the Governor of the state routinely attends. Although Sheikh Lemu hails from Lemu, a Nupe town in Bida Emirate of Niger State, Minna has remained his place of domicile in the past 35 years.

He has a lot of concern for the acquisition of knowledge from a system that blends between Islamic and Western education. He has authored several Islamic books on areas that include fasting, *zakat*, prayer (*salat*), and pilgrimage (*hajj*). The scholar, based on the IRP-Cairo classification, is an Independent Islamic Intellectual.

6.2. Sheikh Sa'eedu Muhammad Enagi

A graduate of Sharia and Common Law from the Bayero University, Kano, Sheikh Sa'eed Muhammad Enagi is an intellectual with high level proficiency in English and Arabic languages. After graduating from the university, he joined the services of the Niger State Judiciary and was appointed as an Area Court judge. He later became a judge in an Upper Area Court in the state. After working for a while, he resigned his appointment to start a private Islamic school and named it Ul ul-Azmi Arabic and Islamic Institute, situated along Mokwa road in Bida. Ul ul-Azmi Arabic and Islamic Institute has three sections: (1) a Nursery School (2) a Science Secondary School; and (3) an Institute that runs a Diploma in Arabic and Islamic Studies. The Sheikh has great concern for adult women education. The Sheikh who is in his fifties combines the proprietorship of this school with preaching and *da'wah* activities on full time basis.

Sheikh Sa'eedu Enagi has translated the Holy Qur'an into Nupe, his native language; this was published in 2009. The translation is in two volumes, each comprising 30 parts, giving a total of 60 parts. The Nupe translation of the verses is also accompanied with English translation to guide readers in their understanding of the Nupe translation. The translation

work was printed by Barocer Printing Press, Minna. Sheikh Enagi has also translated *Arba'una Hadith*, forty hadiths collected by Sheikh An-nawawi.

The Sheikh's preaching, mostly in English language, appeals more to the elite and educated citizens of the society. He leads the Friday congregational prayer at the Central Mosque of the Federal Polytechnic, Bida. He also conducts *tafsir* sessions during the month of Ramadan at the mosque in his residence. Although the Sheikh hails from Enagi town in Bida Emirate of Niger State, he resides in Bida town. He was one of the frontline scholars in the state who condemned, using legal opinions, the marriage of an 86-year old man in Bida to 86 women. Unfortunately, the man, Alhaji Bello Masaba, continued to live with his 86 wives in spite of the Etsu Nupe's warning directing him to reduce the number of wives to four or leave Bida. Sheikh Sa'eed is an Independent Islamic Intellectual.

After finishing this paper, Sheikh Sa'eed Muhammad Enagi, sadly passed on, on Monday October 31, 2011 at Bida. He was aged 59 (1952-2011).

6.3. Sheikh Alhaji Alfa Drachita, Bida

Sheikh Alhaji Alfa Drachita is a scholar whose pre-occupation is preaching and teaching. He acquired a Teachers Certificate from the College of Arts and Arabic Studies (now, Abubakar Mahmud Gumi College of Arabic Studies), Sokoto where he graduated in the late 1970s. He also has a strong background and influence from the traditional Qur'anic school system where he acquired the knowledge of Arabic and the Islamic sciences. He is well versed in all the literary and jurisprudence books traditionally taught at the *ilmi* (advanced) level of the Qur'anic school system in the northern part of Nigeria. Although he speaks and understands English language, the very large audience of his preaching and sermons, mostly in Nupe, essentially comprises of the illiterate and lowly educated people. Only few people from the elite class appreciate his preaching because of they appear always guilty of the sins that he preaches and cautions his audience against.

Alhaji Alfa Darachita, a native of Bida and Nupe by tribe who is now in his sixties, has a unique preaching style, which perhaps is the overwhelming factor responsible for his large audience of listeners. Most of his preaching and sermons are on audio cassettes, CD plates and video tapes. There is a shop (not owned by him) near his residence, which markets these electronic materials. He leads the Friday congregational prayer at the mosque near his residence in Darachita ward of Bida town in Niger State. He cracks jokes during his preaching sessions in order to catch the attention of listeners. His humorous way of explaining religious issues even when such do not require the use of humour such as in matters of death and hell fire, attracts listeners to his preaching. He also employs the use of caricature and circumlocution to sustain the interest of listeners during his preaching sessions. Sheikh Alfa Darachita typically and ideologically represents the class of scholars in our traditional Qur'anic schools. He conducts commentary of the Qur'an during the Ramadan in two places, both in Bida: first, at his residence in the afternoon, and second at late Waziri's residence in the night. This scholar is an Independent Islamic Preacher.

Methodological Note

The following people were interviewed as part of this study:

1. Alhaji Abdurrahim Suleman, Interview Location (part I): Minna, Niger State; Date: January 19, 2011; Interview Location (part II): Abuja, FCT; Date: February 12, 2011
2. Alhaji Abdurrahman Aboki, Interview Location (part I): Bida, Niger State; Date: January 26, 2011; Interview Location (part II): Bida, Niger State; Date: February 19, 2011
3. Alhaji Muhammad Shaku, Interview Location: Minna, Niger State; Date: February 5, 2011
4. Alhaji Abdurrahim Tariqa, Interview Location: Minna, Niger State; Date: February 26, 2011