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Overview Of Islamic Actors In Northeastern Nigeria

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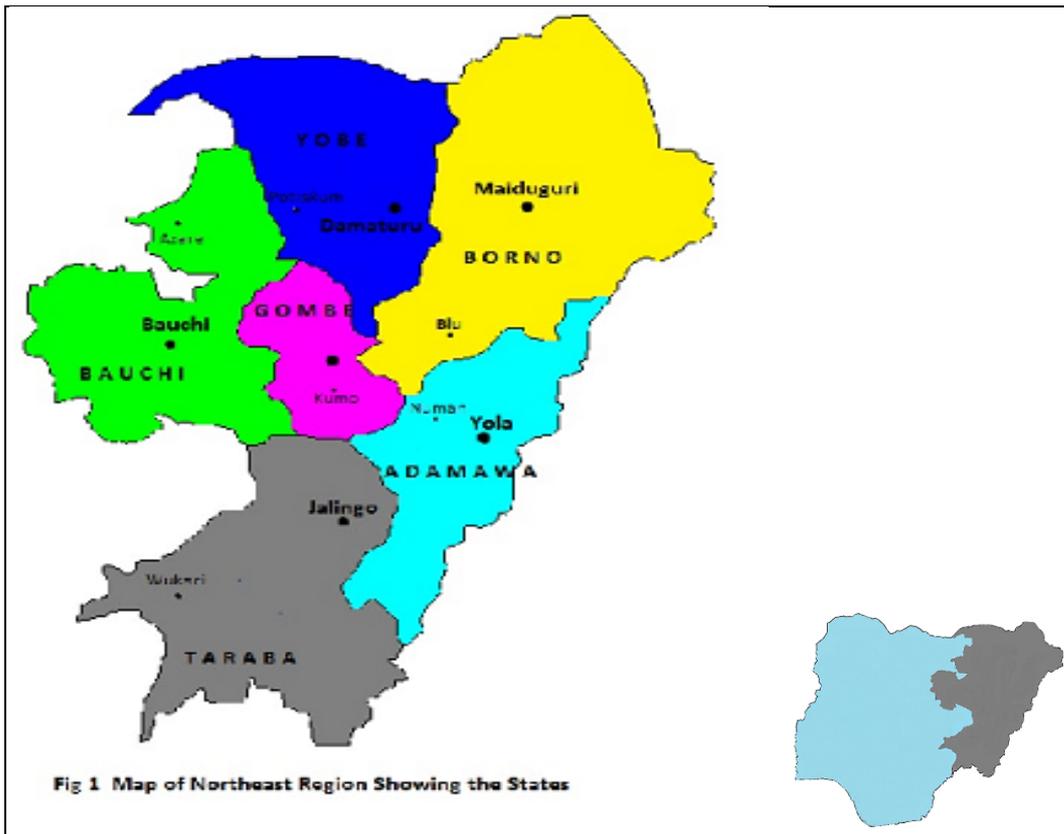
1. Introduction

1.1 Geographical Background

The region we are concerned with in this study lies in the extreme north eastern part of Nigeria, a territory extending from the Lake Chad in the north to the Mambilla Plateau in the south, bordered by the Nigeria – Cameroon boundary in the east. This whole region was at one time the North Eastern State, one of the six states carved out of the old Northern Region in 1967 with a total land area of 277,314 sq kilometers and a population of 18,984,299 peoples. During further state and local government creation exercises, the North Eastern State was divided into six states and 112 local governments. The states are Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa and Taraba (Fig. 1). Each state has an Executive Governor who wields tremendous power and an elected state legislative house. Nigeria's population census (2006) gave the population for each of the states as Adamawa (3,168,101), Bauchi (4,676,465), Borno (4,151,193), Gombe (2,353,879), Taraba (2,300,736), and Yobe (2,321,591). These states correspond to the old provinces into which the Northern Region was sub-divided. Each province was composed of Native Authorities (NAs) created under colonial rule. These NAs were also the remains of the ancient kingdoms of the pre Jihad and post Jihad periods with some dating back to the 7th centuries AD. The northeast region is probably the most heterogenous in the Nigerian Federation in terms of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. For instance, defunct Adamawa Province (now Adamawa and Taraba States) recorded the highest percentage of 'Animists' in 1963 (Ekanem, 1972) and presently Taraba State has about 73 different languages spoken as first language, the highest number of languages in the country (Seibert, 2000). Other states in the region are ethnically diverse as well. The numbers of languages spoken as first language for the other states are as follows: Adamawa (58), Gombe (21), Bauchi (60), Borno (28), and Yobe (9).

1.2 Historical Background

The Lake Chad Basin, which covers most of the Northeast has almost certainly the longest recorded history in Nigerian historiography (dating back to the times of al Yaqubi in 891 AD). It has remained, to date, a meeting point of four major cultures of the world: the indigenous Sudanic culture represented by the Chadic language speakers; the Nilo-Saharan group of the Kanembu-Kanuri and the Shuwa Arabs; the Middle Eastern culture which brought with it the predominant religion of Islam since the seventh century A D; and the latest arrival being the western culture along with Christianity by the missionaries in the 19th century. The fusion and diffusion of these various cultures have produced a unique society united by economic, geographic and socio political factors. Throughout history, there was continuous east-west and north-south migration of peoples in the states of the northeast due partly to the continuous desiccation of the Sahara and wars of territorial expansion between indigenous states. There has been the continuous process of state formation in the region conditioned by other factors. Indeed one of the most significant developments was the coming of Islam through the Kavar Oases in c.667 AD when the Amir Uqba ibn Nafi leading a military expansion in the Maghrib al Aqsa came in contact with the traders and itinerant scholars of Kanem (Alkali, 1978). Thereafter Islam continued to make tremendous impact on the process of state formation in the region culminating in the declaration of Islam as the state religion in Kanem Borno by Sultan Humai Ibn Abduljalil in c.1096.A D (Alkali, 1987).



Thereafter the rulers of Kanem embarked upon an extensive process of the Islamization of their subjects and intensified diplomatic contacts with the Muslim world of the time, going as far as to establish the Maliki Madrasa, an Islamic college in Cairo together with a hostel for Borno scholars. The significance of this development is that as early as the 12th and 13th centuries the kingdom of Kanem had adopted Islam as a state religion under the Mazhab of Imam Malik which is Sunni in orientation. Such orientation continues to the present date in Borno with little or no affiliation to any sectarian movements that subsequently found their way into the area. So committed were the rulers of Borno to the Islamisation mission that through extensive holy wars, they succeeded in the conversion of large number of non Muslims into Islam to the west and south of the region as far as to the Benue Valley and the Jukun territory centuries before the 1804 Jihad of Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio in Hausaland. So strong was Borno's influence on its neighbours that in Hausaland it was believed that mastering the Qur'an was not possible without the learner going to *gabas*⁴ for perfection. Dahiru (2010) demonstrates this view with three distinguished scholars from Hausaland – Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi⁵ (b.1929), Malam Sani Hafizi Katsina (b. 1916), and Malam Muhammadu Rabi'u (1897 – 1959), father of a renowned Kano-based businessman, Alhaji Isiaka Rabi'u who all studied in Borno.

South of Borno from the corridors of the land between Uba-Biu-Garkida axis down to the Upper Benue valley in Adamawa, Muri and the Jukun-Kwararrafa territory, the population is mixed with large concentration of Christians in some areas but also large communities of Muslims, all living together. Christian influence in the south was fairly recent within the

⁴ The term *gabas* means east in Hausa and is so used to refer to Borno due of its location east of Hausaland

⁵ Sheikh Dahiru has stayed for so long in Borno as a student that he still speaks fluent Kanuri. In fact half of the interview was granted in Kanuri language.

context of the history of the region and almost certainly not before the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. But even in this part of the north eastern region Islam came to be established gradually from the scholars of Borno and those from Hausaland as a result of the Jihad of Shehu Usman dan Fodio. Indeed both Muslim and Christian clerics embarked on intensive evangelizing mission particularly among the ‘pagan’ tribes dwelling on the Biu and Mambilla hills, where both religions made tremendous impact by attracting large number of converts. In Adamawa, as well as Muri, the predominant Islamic sect has, for most of the time, been the Tijjaniya, even though the official position was similar to that of Borno - being Sunni Islam of the Mazhab of Imam Malik. This affinity to Malikite Islam was because the greater majority of the Ulama in Adamawa, including Modibbo Adama, the founder of Adamawa, studied the Qur’an in Borno prior to his being chosen as a flag-bearer of the Jihad by Shehu Usman dan Fodio (Song, 1990; Gazali, 2005).

This same trend was repeated in other emirates of the region such as Muri and Gombe. As a result of the mass exodus of Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri Islamic scholars into the south due to wars of territorial expansion, commerce, and migration in the 19th century, the influence of Islam continued to grow rapidly even with the concerted effort of Christian missionaries who came from Europe and elsewhere on evangelical missions. An elaborate description of the contributions of scholars from Borno in Nupe and Yorubaland, who are often recognised by their last name (Al-Barnawy) which signifies their links with Borno, has been conducted by Gazali (2005). In the mixed areas immediately south of Borno proper, and up to the Wukari-Mambila axis, where such hegemonic clerical structure like that of Borno did not exist, the Muslims came together in unison without showing any divisive tendencies. The coming of the Izala (discussed later in this report) in the mid-nineteen seventies dramatically shook the loyalties of many of those in the *Turuk* (sing. *Tarika*, i.e. Sufi Brotherhood) as well as the average Muslim who was not attached to any sectarian movement. The Izala, founded by Sheikh Ismaila Idris in 1976 in Jos and supported by Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi, were aggressive in their preaching and fairly simplistic in their approach to issues relating to Islam. They criticized and even condemned innovations in Islam including ones associated with the five pillars of worship. Those parts of their preaching which appealed to nominal Muslims were related to Sufism, such as excessive devotion (sometimes to the exclusion of worldly pursuits), marriage issues, particularly on the bride price, and death rituals (Aliyu, 1999).

Bearing in mind the dynamism of Islam as described above, it will be interesting to observe current trends in the northeastern geopolitical zone of Nigeria, more so considering the region’s cultural diversity. This study therefore seeks to answer the following research questions: what is the diversity of Islamic actors in the northeast (groups and individuals) in terms of their characteristics? What is the nature of the relationship between Islamic groups / individuals with others and the state? What are the activities of Islamic groups and individuals and how are they organized? An attempt is made in this study to answer these questions with particular reference to major Islamic actors in the northeast.

2. Methodology

2.1 Types of Data

Data collected for this study includes information on major Islamic groups, sects, and orders. It also includes information on their formation and their spread, activities, key

features, and symbols. Also of importance is personal information on, and activities of key players (Islamic scholars) whose views largely shape public opinion either within or outside these groups. For this reason, a qualitative research strategy was used to collect data. Additionally, published and unpublished data sources were also used to support field data.

2.2 Data Collection Procedure

Data on Islamic groups and individuals were collected between 17th February and 1st April 2011. The data collection process involved two stages. First in each state two key informants conversant with the activities of Islamic groups were contacted. Informants were then asked to give a list of Islamic groups and individuals in the state from which the most important, in terms of number of adherents and activity were further identified for interview. The most important spiritual figure in the groups so identified was then contacted for oral interview through a formal letter of introduction from the team leader. Some group leaders particularly the Izala requested for the presence of additional members who were also knowledgeable about the group in case the interviewees could not recall certain vital events or dates. A total of 40 interviews were held in the six states. Annex 1 shows the list of persons interviewed.

In each state visited the team leader made necessary contacts and supervised the fieldwork while the two other members of the research team acted as research assistants. However, additional research assistants were employed due to time constraints and to facilitate contact with ‘hard to reach’ groups and individuals in some states. The Izala in Borno declined to be interviewed and was classified as ‘hard to reach’. A research assistant well known to the group was then used to conduct the interview. So also was the Muhammadiyya located in rural Waringile village of Shani LGA of Borno State. During each session a member of the research team moderated the interview while his partner took notes. A list of research assistants is given in annex 2. Tape recorders were deliberately not used in order to ward off any suspicion. This is in line with Loimeier’s (1997) experience of a similar research in northern Nigeria where he observed

“...I found that my interlocutors were usually more forthcoming in informal talks (without tape recorders) than in formal interviews... An informal atmosphere helped much to overcome the initial reserve or mistrust in this respect. Being a Bature (European) who would after all publish his research findings in faraway Germany was also helpful in this regard. Thus I was not suspected of channeling confidential information to the “other side” ”.

2.3 Data Limitations

Data generated through the above procedure were later analyzed separately for each state and for the region based on the major themes of significance. The data were however not without their limitations. First, the tense security situation in the zone posed great difficulty such that some important groups like *Maitatsine* and *Ahlulsunna li da’awati wal Jihad* (Boko Haram) could not be interviewed. Second, individuals contacted for interviews were based on availability rather than importance. This explains why some important individuals like Sheikh Sheriff Ibrahim Saleh –Tijaniyya (Maiduguri) who was indisposed and Sheikh Bala Lau – Izala (Yola) who traveled out at the time of the

fieldwork could not be interviewed. Nevertheless, the data generated sufficiently captures the nature and diversity of Islamic groups in the region.

3. Religious Affiliations in Northeastern Nigeria

3.1 Census Records

Census counts in Nigeria since 1963 have not reflected religious characteristics due to political reasons. For this reason it will be difficult to estimate either the population or proportion of Muslims in the northeast. However, the 1963 count which was highly manipulated in favour of Northern Nigeria (Ekanem, 1972) gave an insight into the religious affiliation of the three provinces of the region at that time which presently make up the Northeast as shown on table 1. All the three provinces have been divided into two states each at present, and so much change has taken place since then for all the religions. Muslims were noted to be highest in Borno Province and least in Adamawa Province. The percentage of Christians and Animists is highest in the latter; this is still relevant in understanding the religious affiliation of Adamawa and Taraba states which were carved out of former Adamawa Province.

Table 1: Religious Affiliation by Province 1963

Province	Major Religion	% Muslims	% Christians	% Animists
Borno	Islam	93.1	2.0	4.9
Bauchi	Islam	80.6	3.2	16.2
Adamawa	Animism	34.1	14.3	51.6

Source: Adapted from Ekanem (1972)

3.2 Religious Affiliations of Current Elected Office Holders

In Nigeria, it is almost an impossible task to arrive at any useful figure on the number of adherents within the sects of a religion, much less that for the followers of the various religions. For this reason, a fair account of the population of Muslims in each of the states was deduced from elections into various political offices in the zone. Despite the problems associated with elections in Nigeria (candidates are either imposed or the elections are manipulated to favour some candidates), there are strong relationships between religious affiliations of political office holders and their electorates especially at the local government level. However, the zoning (rotation) of political offices as currently practiced by some political parties blurs the ideal pattern. Table 2 gives a summary of the current religious affiliations of elected political office holders in the zone. Highest percentage representation by Muslims was recorded in Yobe State (100%) and least in Taraba State (59%). While this analysis is likely to mask the percentage of both religions, it is illuminating in the sense that a lot of similarities could be discerned between this data and the 1963 census figures presented earlier. Adamawa and Taraba states have the highest percentage of Christian representation very much similar to the high percentage of Christians in the defunct Adamawa Province (*cf.* table 1 and table 2). It is likely that the high percentage of animists in table 1 have been converted into Christians and Muslims.

Table 2: Religious Affiliations of Elected Officials in the Northeast

State	Gov	Dep Gov	Senators		Reps		LGA Chairman		Percent Of Elected Politicians	
			Mus	Chr	Mus	Chr	Mus	Chr	Mus	Chr
Adamawa	Mus	Xtian	3/3	0/3	4/8	4/8	14/21	7/21	65	35
Bauchi	Mus	Mus	3/3	0/3	12/12	0/12	19/20	1/20	97	3
Borno	Mus	Mus	3/3	0/3	9/10	1/10	26/27	1/27	97	3
Gombe	Mus	Xtian	2/3	1/3	5/6	1/6	8/11	3/11	73	27
Taraba	Xtian	Mus	2/3	1/3	4/6	2/6	9/16	7/16	59	41
Yobe	Mus	Mus	3/3	0/3	6/6	0/6	17/17	0/17	100	0

Source: Field data, 2011

4. Varieties of Islamic Groups

4.1 Introduction

From the outset it is important to indicate that throughout history, Islam has never been monolithic, its basic feature being dynamism which has created deep rooted diversity among Muslims. In fact, in one of the hadiths reported by Abu Huraira, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) says that Islam will someday be divided into 73 different types (with only one being correct) (Albani, nd). Unlike the views of Gilliat (1997) that the fundamental issue underlying British Muslim youth organizations is religious identity, *aqeeda* (belief) is the driving force behind many Muslim organizations in northeastern Nigeria. From what is presented so far, it is easy to observe the extent to which groups can go to advance their *aqeeda*.

Muslims in the northeastern Nigeria, as in many other parts of the world are varied in their practice of Islam. In this report they are classified as Sunni, Shiites, and 'others' who may not conveniently fit in into either of these. Sunni Islam was in turn divided into Sufi and non Sufi.

4.2 The Sufi Orders

4.2.1 Tijaniyya

Traditionally, Islamic practice in northeastern Nigeria is Sunni. However, as in other parts of Northern Nigeria, Tijaniyya replaced Qadiriyya as the region's major Sunni sufi order. In the rural hinterland, Imams offer supplication publicly after the prayers are terminated with a request to the congregation to recite *nilfathi*⁶ (Kanuri) or *salatul fathi* (Hausa). Tijaniyya practice is therefore most dominant in the region, having replaced the Qadiriyya, especially in Borno, as disclosed by Imam Shettima Habib. Interestingly, two forms of Tijaniyya practices were discerned that may loosely be described as the old and new. In Borno and Yobe States in particular, a large section of the Muslim population still practices the pre-reform type of Tijaniyya, whose practice is less overt and with a

⁶ Tijanis believe that Salatul Fathi is an important supplication offered by Sheikh Ahmad Tijani, and so its repeated recitation often seen as an act of devotion by them easily distinguishes them from other Muslims.

large self-created distance with the authorities (for fear of being led astray). This group, for instance, believes that the moon must be physically sighted for the Ramadan fast to begin or end and are therefore reluctant to follow declarations and pronouncements on these issues by established religious authorities like the Emirs and the Sultan of Sokoto. Furthermore, they tend to be weary of accepting public funds even if its disbursement to them is clearly legitimate (interview with Imam Shettima Habib, Mustapha Yusuf Modibbo in Potiskum⁷). Generally, scholars in this group do not wear the turban, no matter how high is their level or status, however a scarf may be worn around the neck as practiced sometimes by the reformist Tijaniyya also. An important distinction is given by Olayiwola (2007) to this group, which is the belief that *Qutb*⁸ or *Gawth*, is concealed and not identified by people.

The *fayda*, or reformed Tijaniyya, group as they are being called on the other hand is 'new' comprising those whose Tijaniyya practice is so overt and strange to the average Muslim. This group engages in regular *dhikr*⁹ (sometimes by dancing thus attracting attention), emphasises visitation to important Sheikhs, eulogises Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his family members (sometimes using the microphone), celebrates his birthday (*maulud*) as an important ritual and maintains regular contacts with Senegal, the birth place of Sheikh Ibrahim Nyass whom it reveres as *Qutb*. Sheikh Nyass of Kaolack, Senegal was the person behind the Tijaniyya reforms in West Africa. The *fayda* group is connected by a network of *zawiyas* (residence of important sheikhs and centres of spreading religion). Roman Loimeier (1997) calls this group *Tijanyya Ibrahimiyya*. In the northeast the most prominent *zawiyas* are located in Maiduguri – (Madinatu- Sheikh Abulfathi, Gwange - Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh, and Limanti - Sheikh Abubakar El-Miskin), Bauchi (Sheikh Dahiru Usman Bauchi) and Yola (Modibbo Zailani). These *zawiyas* wield so much influence in the zone due to the numerical strength of their followership. There exist also hundreds of lower order *zawiyas* in the hierarchy, well connected with these prominent ones, their influence being largely determined by the level of scholarship attained and positions held within the Sufi order of the respective ulama concerned.

4.2.2 Qadiriyya

Although Qadiriyya has a long history (being the first Maliki Sufi order to arrive West Africa (Abdulfatah Olayiwola, 2007), its influence in the northeast region is not quite felt, so much so that many Muslims may not even think that they exist. During interviews, Imam Shettima Habib reported that *Khalwatiyya* (a variant of Qadiriyya) was practiced by some *ulama* in Borno's former capital of Ngazargamu, and much later but the practice later waned.

Perhaps because of the similarities in their rituals such as *dhikr*, it is sometimes confused with Tijaniyya. Qadiriyya is present, though insignificant in Borno, Bauchi

⁷ Mustapha Yusuf Modibbo narrated to the researchers how he had represented his late father in a meeting with Fika Local Government Council officials. However, when he presented the token amount of money given to him at the meeting to his father, he was asked not to spend it on the family because it was government (public) money. Laminu (1992) regards this group as the independent ulama in Borno's history. They are locally known as *Goniwa* or *Sayinnawa*.

⁸ A very high position in the Sufi hierarchy

⁹ Regular congregational supplication performed by Sufis in the morning or evening.

and Adamawa states. In Borno Qadiriyya practice is attributed to only one Malam Dauda in Gwange ward of Maiduguri.

4.2.3 Muhammadiyya

Of lesser importance, perhaps, was Muhammadiyya as a group, being confined to only Bajoga (Gombe State) and Wiringile-Bajoga a small village of 200-300 people in Shani LGA of Borno State where it first settled in 1986. The selection of this group was to capture diversity, being typically rural in its location, and because of the lack of literature on it, having been relatively unexplored by previous researches. The brotherhood was probably unknown until recently and may be described as a relatively new Sufi movement. Commonly referred to as Bajoga (named after the place from which their followers originated) or sometimes *Aljanna Tabbas*¹⁰ by their host community, the group adheres to the Maliki School of Islamic thought. Although the group prefers to be called Muhammadiyya, it should not be confused with the Muhammadiyyah in Indonesia whose spiritual equivalent in Nigeria is perhaps the Izala, because of its stand of fighting against innovation (*bid'a*) (Hosen, 2004).

Unlike other Sufi brotherhoods in Nigeria today, Bajoga has withdrawn itself into relative seclusion from the wider society since the village in which its members live is entirely homogenous, composed of only its adherents. In this sense it is quite similar to *Darul Qur'an* in Niger State, but the two groups are otherwise unrelated. Like other Sufi brotherhoods, rituals involve great sacrifice and devotion to one's Creator. Hence, members engage in regular supplication or *dhikr* (much more than other Sufi Brotherhoods), spend more time in the mosque, and celebrate the birthday of the Prophet (SAW) with great fanfare. The white colour is unique to the Bajoga. Men and male children are always in white caftan and trousers (whose length, following the tradition of the Prophet (SAW), hardly goes below the ankle) with a white cap or turban. Adults are often well bearded and when this is added to their dressing, the Bajoga may be easily mistaken for members of Boko Haram (before the July 26th 2009 insurgence in Maiduguri). This has no doubt attracted government's apprehension about the group's activities, but this apprehension seems to have fizzled out (interview with Imam Buhari). Women and girls do not belong to this strict dress code and may wear any colour but must as a rule always conform to Islamic rules and be confined at home. When women's outing becomes absolutely necessary, then such business must be finished as quickly as possible and with the maximum avoidance of public attention, particularly the curious eyes of men in the streets. Hence throughout the interviews which lasted nearly an hour, not a single female of whatever age was seen outside the home.

The ethnic composition of the Bajoga reveals that although it mainly comprises of Fulani followership, it has recruits from other ethnic groups like Hausa, Babur/Bura, Kanuri (specifically from Fune LGA of Yobe State) and a handful of followers from across the Nigerian border in Niger and Sudan. The group is peaceful with its neighbours, law abiding and free with people such that intermarriages now take place with their host communities. Since their arrival, the relationship between the Bajoga and the authorities has been very good. They are in constant touch with, and follow instructions from, the Emir of Shani, the District and Ward Head. Strangers are not attended to unless with the express permission from the District Head. Perhaps this is why the group's leader Buhari

¹⁰ Literally meaning 'heaven is certain'

Abubakar also doubles as the Village Head. The group is yearly invited to attend Maulud by the Emir of Shani and partakes in the two Eid festivals (Eid el Kabir and Eid el Fitr). Relationship with Shani LGA is also very good and perhaps this is why the Bajoga requested for the establishment of a primary school, the drilling of a well, and the roofing of their village mosque from the LGA, all of which were granted. At present the school operates under trees. Economically the Bajoga are excellent traders and farmers. Trading is mostly in the area of polythene ropes and *allo*¹¹. Raffia mats and ropes are also made and sold by them.

4.3 Non Sufi Groups

4.3.1 Jama'atu Izalatul Bid'a wa Ikamatu Sunna (JIBWIS or Izala)

The Sufi prominence in the northeast has not remained unchallenged. In the past three decades, the activities of *Jama'atu Izalatul Bid'a wa Ikamatu Sunna* (JIBWIS, or Izala) (Association for the elimination of innovation and the restoration of Sunna) has brought great challenges to the practices of the Sufi Brotherhoods like in other parts of Northern Nigeria. Practices that are not reported in the Qur'an and Sunna of the Prophet (SAW) or *ijma*¹² came to be questioned by the Izala and with this challenge, rivalry between the established sufi orders and the Izala ensued. Izala claims to be the orthodox sunni and hence its usage of the term *ahulul sunna wal jama'a* i.e. brotherhood for the sunna to describe and distinguish itself from the Sufi orders who equally claim orthodoxy. Izala is prominently present in all the states and local governments of the northeast. Since 1990 however, it became divided into two, one faction popularly referred to as "Bush" Izala with its base in Jos led by Sheikh Samaila Idris (1937 – 2000) and the other "Saddam" Izala based in Kaduna under Sheikh Musa Maigandu (? – 2011). Several events led to this division which cannot be discussed here (see Dikko, 2000; Aliyu, 1999 for details) but the Gulf War in 1990 was probably the final incident that divided the two groups¹³ when the 'Bush camp' argued that the war was not a religious one because of its belief that Saddam Hussein did not deserve Muslim sympathy. The reason advanced was that Saddam had earlier on attacked Kuwait, a fellow Muslim country. The 'Saddam' faction, on the other hand, saw the Gulf War as an attack on Muslims by the USA and her allies.

While the Izala were able to make some inroads into states like Bauchi, Gombe and Adamawa, they found it difficult to establish themselves in Borno because of the resistance by the ulama of the caucus¹⁴. The Izala were treated with great suspicion by the ulama of the caucus and the *Turuk*. They were often seen as 'destroying' Islam, and were associated with the alleged conspiracy of Jews to over simplify Islam and reduce its influence in the world.¹⁵ It was noted that Izala preaching was similar to those of

¹¹ A wooden slate for writing passages of the Qur'an mainly used by *tsangaya* pupils.

¹² Consensus opinions of prominent Islamic scholars.

¹³ The 'Bush' faction is named after George W. Bush. While the 'Saddam' faction is named after Saddam Hussein. NB: the two groups have again agreed to come together as one body on 21st December, 2011 with Sheikh Sani Yahaya Jingir ('Bush' faction) as Chairman Council of Ulama and Sheikh Yusuf Sambo Rigachikun ('Saddam' faction) as Deputy.

¹⁴ Ulama of the caucus are Islamic scholars who play advisory roles on religious matters to the traditional rulers. Some of them also belong to the *Turuk*. Their advice are based strictly on the Maliki school of Islamic thought

¹⁵ Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi and Imam Shettima Habib asserted that the Izala were allegedly sponsored by Jews to destroy Islam.

Wahabism which originated from Saudi- Arabia. In fact, the Ulama of the caucus and the Tariqattul-Tijjaniya even went further to assert that those militant movements of the eighties such as *Maitatsine* and lately *Yusufiyya* (Boko Haram) were spiritual off shoots of the Izala, given the similarities in their militancy, aggressive preaching styles, and over simplified ritual practices.

4.3.2 The Neutral Muslims

An important group that needs emphasis in this research is a group of individual Muslims who choose to practice the religion without aligning themselves to either of the main Islamic groups described above (interview with Imam Ibrahim Ahmad). Because the rituals performed are based on the Maliki tradition, the neutrals are considered Sunni Muslims in this research. No strict rituals of either the *Turuk* like congregational *dhikr* or the Izala who oppose such are practiced by this group. They may however observe certain *bid'a*¹⁶ practices such as gathering for naming ceremonies, and the performance of third and seventh day prayers for the deceased, practiced also by the *Turuk*, but shunned by the Izala as innovation. For many neutral Muslims, these practices are at one's discretion rather than a strict ritual code that must be practiced or avoided and in fact these practices are currently on the decline not only because of the influence of the Izala but also for reasons of economic adversity as well. Neutral Muslims are found all over the northeast in all the states, and like the *Turuk* (plural) they are also critical of the Izala practices especially their mode of preaching. Unlike other groups, they are not formally structured or even registered; rather, most of their activities are centred around certain ulama who command tremendous respect from the public but have no relationships with any of the sects or the rulers. Estimating the percentage of neutral Muslims is difficult but may simply be guessed at 8% (Borno), 4% (Yobe) and 3% (Adamawa). The remaining three states of Gombe, Bauchi and Taraba may be estimated at 2% each.

4.3.3 The Shiites

Shiite Muslims are non Sufi who traced the origin and loyalty of their followership to the last of the *Khulafaul Rashidun* after the death of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), Ali ibn Abu Talib, to whom they attributed the Imamate and the leadership of the Muslim Umma. Extensive debate and disagreements (not gone into here) followed which led primarily to the split of the Umma into Sunni Muslims and the Shiite, the latter being the supporters of Ali ibn Abu Talib while the rest remained under the orthodox Sunni Islam. Suffices to mention that Shiites are followers of the 12 descendants of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) i.e. who descended from the union between Fatima his daughter and Ali ibn Abu Talib, his cousin.

Despite being treated as religious outcasts in the northeast, the Shiites have become noticeable players on the region's religious, and indeed social, terrain. Two groups of Shiites were observed. Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) led by Sheikh Ibrahim El Zakzaky operates throughout the region with strong presence in Yobe (Potiskum in particular) and Bauchi, just as Rasulul A'azam Foundation (RAAF) under the leadership of Sheikh Muhammad Nura Dass is strongest in Gombe and Bauchi. The two groups existed and operated as one Shiite movement until 1992 when it split into two because

¹⁶ Acts of innovation in Islam

some members could no longer bear the alleged confrontational nature of Sheikh Ibrahim El Zakzaky's attitude towards the government; an attitude they believed was only inspired by the Iranian Revolution. On the contrary, RAAF prides itself as the only orthodox Shiite organization in Nigeria based on the teachings of Imam Ja'afar, hence their type of Shiism (*Ja'afariyya*) is as practiced in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon¹⁷ (. It is non-confrontational in its practice, and concerned more with Shiite doctrine and rituals than with confrontational politics. Thus, while IMN sees nothing good in the Nigerian State due to its secular nature and the injustices perpetrated by its leaders, RAAF not only recognizes the state as legitimate, but also argues that it must be obeyed. Institutions of higher learning constitute the most important pool from which both IMN and RAAF membership are recruited.

IMN coordinates its activities through its various committees. Due to incessant clashes with the authorities it has learnt to fortify itself with its *harisawa* body guards in anticipation of any attacks during its activities. This protection was borne out of necessity because of the constant harassment by security operatives during their activities. One interesting feature of IMN is its capacity for quick mobilization of the youths. The 20th February 2011 Maulud celebration held in Zaria had an estimated two million youths in attendance which was peacefully conducted but could however be turned into a protest if the need arose¹⁸. It is this capacity for mass mobilization that perhaps informed Yavari-Isalou's (1995) conclusion of a study of four national uprisings in Iran between 1891 and 1979 that strong links exist between protest movements and Shiism which led to the eventual overthrow of the Shah in 1979.

IMN is well coordinated in its approach. For instance, the Islamic Movement Medical Association, ISMMA takes care of medical needs, *Iftahadu shuara* sing praise songs for the Prophet, Resource Forum organizes seminars, Academic Forum acts as a think tank for IMN, and Youth Forum takes care of youth activities while the *Shuada* Foundation was set up for the welfare of the families of deceased members who died in the cause of their struggle. Some prominent Shiite rituals include commemorating the 9th day of the Islamic lunar month (*Ashura*), 12th day of Rabiul Awwal (*Maulud*) i.e. the Prophet's birthday, and 18th day of Dhul Hajj i.e. 18th day of the 12th month of the Islamic year (*Ghadir Khoum*) to commemorate the leadership of Ahlul Bait. Also celebrated is Women's Day to commemorate the birth of Fatima, the Prophet's daughter.

4.4 Other groups

Present in the northeast are other groups that are difficult to classify using the conventional Islamic group classification. These groups have taken extreme positions on certain Islamic issues either pertaining to their understanding of the practice of Islam and its rituals. The groups are:

¹⁷ interview with Badamasi Adamu.

¹⁸ This was disclosed by Mustapha Lawan Nasidi, the Ameer of IMN in Yobe State. Although the two million youths in attendance may represent an over estimate, the fact that there was a continuous stretch of youths for about two Kilometers along the roads leading to the square is revealing.

4.4.1 **Maitatsine** (*‘Yantatsine*; plural)

These are followers of Muhammad Marwa (Maitatsine) whose Islamic practice is based on his interpretation of Islam. Marwa proclaimed himself prophet among his followers and considered those who oppose his prophet-hood as infidels who deserve to be killed (Olayiwola, 2007). The name Maitatsine is used interchangeably with *kala kato*¹⁹ by some people. The group was responsible for the first ever religious crisis witnessed in the zone in Maiduguri, and subsequently in other parts. It is still believed to be present not only in the states where Maitatsine disturbances were recorded but also in other states of the zone. In practice they differ from other Muslims in rituals such as ablution and *salat*²⁰ (performing only those aspects mentioned in the Qur’an, ignoring the *sunna*; they also neither allow anyone to lead in prayer nor accept to be led by other Muslims. ‘Yantatsine therefore regard only the Qur’an as a source of guidance, and so other sources of guidance in Islam like *hadith*²¹ and *sunna* (the Prophet’s practices) considered compulsory by orthodox Islamic groups are jettisoned. This makes the group to belong to the Quraniyyun or believers of only the Qur’an. Other aspects of their practice include the proclamation as pagan anyone who says *Allahu Akbar*²² in prayers, rides on a bicycle/motorcycle or reads a book other than the Qur’an (Imam, 2004). Whether or not these practices have changed now is not clear.

At the present time, the Maitastine group appears to be self disciplined, seldom chat or engage in talk with others and when they do, such is strictly on business. Despite these attributes quite a number of people are still apprehensive of their type of Islamic practice and memories of their past is still fresh in the minds of people who witnessed their previous conflict in the zone. However, It is important to point here that in 2004, a violent clash was recorded between a group suspected to be ‘Yantatsine from Zabarmari (a predominantly Hausa settlement in the suburb of Maiduguri) and their host Kanuri, which resulted in the killing of one person and several others injured. The clash was precipitated by *Maitatsine* attempt to hold the Eid el Kabir prayer marking the end of the Ramadan fasting in front of the Shehu of Borno’s palace three days after the officially declared day by the Sultan of Sokoto. The group claimed that their action was because authorities had denied them permission to hold the prayer in Zabarmari. Apart from the ‘Yantatsine, many other Muslims still believe in physically sighting the moon first before commencing or ending the Ramadan fast, but no Eid prayers are held by such groups. Being mostly immigrants, ‘Yantasine engage themselves in trades usually considered menial by the local community such as selling of bread in carts, mobile tailoring, and *yankan farce*²³ for which the group has competitive advantage.

4.4.2 **Quraniyyun**

This group was reported only in Borno State. It is a small group of western educated youths confined to a small neighbourhood in the Government Reservation Area

¹⁹ Kala kato literally means ‘the ordinary man said’. This name is attributed to Yantatsine in reference to their objection of hadith because they regard Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as an ordinary man.

²⁰ Acts of worship performed by the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

²¹ Sayings of Prophet Muhammad SAW.

²² Allah is Great

²³ A Hausa word for manicure, also often taken as a form of livelihood by some people [in Northern Nigeria].

(G.R.A.) of Maiduguri. Believed to have originated from Tucson, Arizona (USA) and brought to Borno State by one Alhaji Mohammed Alabe, Quraniyyun or the Submitters as the group calls itself was popularized in Maiduguri by late Justice Isa Othman, a high court judge (Abdulfatah Olayiwola, 2007). The group which may be described as elitist in composition (its followers are mostly western educated) has its own version of Qur'an different from the one used by other Muslims. Most Muslims allege that it is America's attempt to destroy Islam by distorting the content of the Qur'an. Though believed to be still present, little is known of the group since the death of its benefactor, Justice Othman nearly two years ago. Apart from Borno no presence of the group was reported in any of the states of the northeast.

4.4.3 Yoruba Islamic Groups

Three Islamic groups – Ahmadiyya, Ansarudeen and Nawairudeen operate in the zone along ethnic lines, being predominantly Yoruba. Ahmadiyya was introduced into Nigeria by a group of Nigerian Muslim youths in the 1920s who felt there was need to modernize Islam. It is believed that its founder, Ghulam Ahmad (in Pakistan) declared himself a prophet whose message is contained in the book *Kitabul Mobin* that seeks to replace the Qur'an (Abdulfatah Olayiwola, 2007). For this reason, they are not considered Muslims by other Muslims, not only in the northeast zone of Nigeria but also in most parts of the world. This brotherhood is present only in Bauchi. It also goes by the name Anwarul – Islam Movement of Nigeria (Abdulfatah Olayiwola, 2007).

Ahmadiyya is however not the only Yoruba Islamic group. Similar Islamic groups comprising mostly of the Yoruba faithful include Ansarudeen Society and Nawairudeen society all present in small numbers in the northeast and accepted as Islamic groups by their host communities. Despite this acceptance, it should be emphasized that most Muslims native to the Northeast consider these groups as Yoruba Islamic groups rather than simply Islamic groups. For instance, Ansarudeen Juma'at mosque located in Hausari quarters of Maiduguri, established nearly 50 years ago is popularly called *masallacin yarabawa*²⁴. Indeed, most of its worshippers are Yoruba migrants who have settled in the town for long. Yet the local community prefers to perform the Juma'at prayer in either Goni Mukhtar mosque (for *Tarika*) or Duriya mosque (for Izala), both almost equidistantly located approximately 100 metres away from *masallacin yarabawa* in opposite directions. Ansarudeen remains the most important of the Yoruba Islamic groups, probably because of its achievements in education. The Ansarudeen primary and secondary schools are popular in Maiduguri, where it is most prominent in the zone. Unlike *masallacin yarabawa*, Ansarudeen College and Primary Schools are very much patronized by its host community.

4.4.4 Jama'atu Ahlul Sunna li Da'awati wal Jihad

Popularly called *Boko Haram* (BH) or *Yusufiyya*, this group was until 2001 (when it clashed with police in Kanamma village of Yobe State) unknown in the zone. It is perhaps the latest arrival on the religious landscape of the northeast, but certainly the most adventurous. Based in Borno (Maiduguri), but also prominent in Bauchi and Yobe states (through records of conflicts attributed to them), the group is vocal in questioning a secular

²⁴ Mosque belonging to the Yoruba

Nigerian state in favour of full sharia implementation, against secular education and government work. Other beliefs practiced by the group according to Ibrahim (2009) include (i) anyone who votes in a democratic election is an unbeliever, and (ii) people who consume products such as food seasonings like Maggi²⁵, dairy products like Peak milk, and toothpaste such as Macleans are unbelievers. Based on these beliefs, it is reasonable to link BH to the Egyptian group Khawarij that also goes by the name *Jama'atut Takfir wal Hijrah* founded in 1964 by Shukri Mustafa while in prison (Ibrahim, 2009). Specifically with respect to western education, Boko Haram finds it unlawful that secular subjects like Geography²⁶ are included in the curriculum of [secular] schools where students are taught that the solar system consists of nine planets as opposed to the seven heavens and earth described in the Qur'an. Such interpretation of the Qur'an has been described as misconception (Aji, 2010).

Membership of this group is mostly recruited from the large pool of youths who are of diverse backgrounds including civil servants and traders. As with most associations, wives of members are almost certainly automatic members and in case of 'martyrdom', new marriages are contracted strictly between members. Boko Haram is now on a vengeance mission over the extra judicial killing of its leader and founder Ustaz Muhammad Yusuf and some prominent members by the authorities. Perhaps due to Yusuf's past association with the Izala, some Sufi scholars classify the movement as a transformation of the latter. It is worth noting however, that Izala scholars have remained the most vocal critics of Yusufiyya ideology from its inception and throughout its 'pre - jihad' period (before 26th July 2009), for which reason many of them have become targets of the recent killings in the zone. Other targets include security agents and their offices, politicians and all those who openly condemn or report their presence to the security agents, including the traditional rulers.²⁷ Since the crackdown on its activities in July 2009, members have spread to other towns in northern Nigeria and beyond. Efforts made by the Borno State government and the Federal Government recently for dialogue with the group is yet to yield the desired outcome²⁸.

5. Religious Conflict in the Northeast

5.1 Brief History

Historically, holy wars which formed the basis of state creation and Islamisation have been fought in the region. It should be emphasized that in post-independence Nigeria, Islam and Christianity existed side by side in the zone without any acrimony or conflict until

²⁵ Maggi, Peak and Macleans are popular brand names of food seasoning, milk and toothpaste respectively in Nigeria. These products, though manufactured in Nigeria are all under license of their parent companies abroad.

²⁶ A video debate between Ustaz Muhammad Yusuf and Malam Ibrahim Pantami is in circulation during the early days of Boko Haram. In the debate, Yusuf tries to oppose western education among other things because some aspects of geography as taught in Nigerian schools are contrary to the group's understanding of Islam.

²⁷ Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for many atrocities since 2009, including the killing of many politicians, security officials, traditional and religious leaders, the suicide attack on police Force Headquarters on June 16, 2011, the United Nations' building bombing in Abuja on August 26, 2011, and the Christmas Day 2011 bombing of St. Teresa Catholic Church, Madalla, near Abuja.

²⁸ Both Borno State and the Federal Governments have set up high powered committees to examine the crisis.

recently. In fact, prior to the emergence of religious sectarian groups, particularly the Izala and later Maitatsine only the two *turuk* - Tijjaniya and Qadiriyya - made some strong inroads into the entire region. The leaders of these sectarian movements preached Sufism and piety as they learnt from the founders of the sects such as Sheikh Abdul Qadir Zailani and Sheikh Ahmad Tijjani. Both *turuk* were peaceful in the practice of their rituals and we have no evidence of their confrontation with other Muslims or even government establishments in the region. For this reason, they were tolerated and were able to attract large number of followers from various communities.

There has been no account of inter faith conflict in the zone either, not even during Sir Ahmadu Bello's policy of Northernisation of the early 1960s which was also partly pursued along with Islamic proselytisation amongst the pagan tribes in the region. In spite of the fact that Christian missionaries were also engaged in similar activities, the Northeast was devoid of religious violence. Religious conflict in the zone was therefore recorded much later. An idea of the number of clashes in Northern Nigeria was given by Sani (cited in Adesoji, 2009) where 104 out of 178 were classified as religious, many of which were also recorded in the Northeast zone. A detailed chronology of religious unrest in the zone has yet to be documented but probably the earliest was the Maitatsine disturbance in Bulumkuttu ward of Maiduguri (1982), which later spread to Yola (1984) and Gombe (1985). Imam (2005) has described the other religious crises as 'non Maitatsine'. These include Tafawa Balewa crisis in Bauchi State (1991, 2006, 2010), Potiskum disturbances (1994) and Maiduguri in 1996 and 2008 as a result of lunar eclipse, 2006 in reaction to a Danish newspaper cartoon of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), and the 2009 Boko Haram crisis. Nearly all of these conflicts were triggered and executed by youths²⁹. Indeed there were also many other localized religious conflicts such as those that occurred in public educational institutions in the zone. It should be emphasized here that while Maitatsine disturbance was between the group and other Muslims, many of the religious clashes that occurred later were between Muslims and Christians, except Boko Haram which is between the group and the state, although both Muslims and Christians were affected. More recently, Boko Haram has turned its attention on Christian churches in an effort to instigate wider religious conflict. In fact, many of the pre-Boko Haram conflicts between Muslims and Christians were as a result of Muslim/Christian conflicts emanating from the North Western zone of Nigeria particularly from the cities of Kaduna and Kano. It is worthy of note also that since 1999 Bauchi, Tafawa Balewa, Potiskum and Maiduguri have become the flashpoints of religious crisis in the zone, instead of merely reacting to conflicts starting from elsewhere.

5.2 Predisposing Factors of Religious Conflicts

Several factors have been identified to explain the religious crises mentioned above. These include inequalities in educational, economic and political opportunities, corruption and misuse of the nation's resources (Adesoji, 2009; Hill, 2010). The region's poor development indices are particularly disturbing and may serve to explain the occurrence of these conflicts. A recent survey (NPC/RTI International, 2011) suggests that that northeast is educationally the most backward region in Nigeria. The survey puts the literacy rate of sampled children at 16.8 percent while that of parents at 33.8 percent, the lowest in

²⁹ Up to the year 2008 many Muslim youths in Maiduguri have gone on rampage during lunar eclipses, blaming the phenomenon on evil doers. A lot of brothels and beer parlours were attacked and in the process properties mostly belonging to Christians were looted, Ibo traders being the worst affected.

Nigeria. More disturbing is the finding that 48.5 percent of children have never attended school and 34.8 percent of Muslim youth aged 4-16 neither attend western nor Quranic school, the highest figures in the country. These factors, especially the latter are likely to make Muslim youths vulnerable to negative societal influences including violence. Another overriding factor is the level of poverty in the zone. Empirical evidence also suggests that the Northeast is the poorest of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Soludo (2007) gave the prevalence of poverty in the zone in 2004 as 72 %. The corresponding figure for the South-South was 35%, Southeast (27%), Southwest (43%), North Central (67%), and Northwest (71%). More importantly, this has been further exacerbated by environmental deterioration of the zone as a result of a combination of drought and desertification linked to climate change which is largely responsible for the drying up of Lake Chad, one of the region's most important natural resources. Of the estimated 20 million people that directly benefit from Lake Chad in 2003, about 11.7 million live in Northeastern Nigeria, more than half the region's population (Onuoha, 2008).

6. Major Islamic Faith Based Organisations and their Activities

6.1 Fityanul Islam of Nigeria

In order to make *Tarikatu* Tijaniyya acceptable especially in the light of the reforms discussed earlier, an organization was required. As an important conduit for the spread of *Tijaniyya Ibrahimiyya* and partly to partake in community service, Fityanul Islam of Nigeria (FIN) was founded in 1962. Till date, FIN has remained an active player in the region with large variation between the states in terms of their scale of activity. In Adamawa State, for instance, it has engaged itself mostly in the establishment of schools, owning well over 300 schools mainly funded through donations and investments. Health programmes have also been carried out influencing Muslims' decision making by adopting testing for HIV before marriage in many LGAs. Ironically, not up to one-tenth of this feat was achieved in Borno which has produced the national president since 1995 (interview with Musa Imam). Perhaps the oft-cited Sokoto – Borno debate on Islam in Nigeria might have been at work when FIN broke into two in 1995 to give rise to Munazamatu Fityanul Islam in Nigeria (MFIN) which is equally found in all the states of the region, engaged in similar activities. However, MFIN's activities were not as outstanding as FIN's which probably explains why it was not mentioned by our key informants during the interviews.

6.2 Jama'atu Izalatul Bid'a wa Ikamatu Sunna (JIBWIS)

Despite the division of JIBWIS reported earlier, the two factions in the northeast are united in their purpose and have made significant impact on the region's religious landscape. This impact appears to decline in an easterly direction within the region such that JIBWIS' activity has a steeper gradient in Gombe, Bauchi and Taraba States compared with Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states. Two reasons may be given here. First, Izala faces no opposition in areas with non-Muslim rulers as represented by Taraba and Gombe, while an ethnic factor, i.e the Izala being mostly propagated by the Hausa who are more at home in these areas than in Borno, Yobe and to some extent Adamawa. Activities performed by JIBWIS in the region by far surpass those of any other single group both in terms of scale and organization being mostly in the area of education and health. Probably aware of the numerical strength of their Sufi rivals much energy is channeled in this regard, in some cases even competing with government and to bring many Muslims (and non-Muslims

alike) into its fold. For instance the Izala (“Bush”) in Gombe runs about 640 Islamiyya schools, five science secondary schools, fourteen Higher Islamic Colleges, a College of Education and one Sunna Institute affiliated to the University of Maiduguri that offers diploma courses. When this is added to its fully fledged Sunna Hospital and two other clinics JIBWIS’ impact is more far reaching on the community than that of any other group. This gives it a loud voice in its advocacy on issues that directly bear on the Muslims such as the Child Rights Act, political mis-governance and introduction of Sex Education in schools within the region.

6.3 Muslim Councils

While the Tijaniyya and Izala appear to be in opposition to one another (at least in their teachings) they are quite conscious of their common Islamic heritage and the contemporary challenges both face. This awareness has now given birth to a new category of organization with a much stronger voice than any single Muslim organization in the region. The Muslim Council (MC) as it is called is at present identified to be strong in the three states of Adamawa, Taraba and Bauchi (called *Shura* or Muslim Parliament) while that of Borno (Borno Muslim Forum) is dormant. The Council acts as an umbrella body for all Muslim organisations (all being represented) to defend Muslim interests and as a platform for unity at least for the observance of certain Islamic rites such as the commencement and ending of the Ramadan fast, while at the same time, maintaining their distinct ideologies. Muslim Councils have wielded so much influence that in some places like Bauchi, they might decide the political fate of candidates (sometimes in collaboration with the Christian Association of Nigeria).. Beyond this, probably the most important utility of MC lies in its ability to avert inter-religious conflict as it did in Numan, Adamawa State in 2003 where it influenced Muslims to accept the relocation of the mosque that had precipitated an earlier crisis. The mosque was located in front of the residence of the Hamma Bachama, the Chief of Numan’s house. The Hamma Bachama is a Christian and this mosque had for long brought controversy between Christians and Muslims in Numan. Despite the fact that the mosque had been there for long, the Chief wanted it relocated from the predominantly Christian area, an idea resisted by the Muslims. Many Muslim worshippers who dared to attend the early morning prayers in the mosque were subsequently maimed by unknown assailants, thus precipitating the conflict in 2002. It was after intense lobbying of the Muslim community in Numan by the MC that the mosque was later relocated to a more acceptable location. The Chief who sparked off the crisis was later deposed and a new Hamma Bachama appointed. This conflict resolution approach, when added to various public awareness campaigns and preaching to win more converts makes MC an important player in the northeast region.

It is worthy of note that the Shiites and members of Ahmadiyya are not admitted into the MC. This is because Shiite teachings are not in conformity with generally accepted Khulafau Rashidun (the caliphs or successors of the Prophet) and the four schools of Islamic thought while Ahmadiyya’s belief in the prophecy of Ghulam Khan violates the basic Islamic teaching of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as the last of the prophets.

6.4 Islamic Movement and Rasul A’azam Foundation

Both Islamic Movement of Nigeria and Rasul A’azam Foundation like other Islamic Faith Based Organizations also engage in social provisioning activities, though on a limited

scale when compared to other groups. The main thrust of their activities is educational. While Shiite groups are shunned by most Islamic groups this is less so when it comes to educational pursuit of children. IMN's Madarasu Fudiya in Potiskum which started operating in a shop premises to cater for the education needs of members' children is now a fully-fledged secondary school and caters for the needs of not only members' children, but the public as a whole. A similar school is managed by IMN in Gombe. Although RAAF also engages in the running of schools, the number of schools it runs is not as many compared with those of IMN. In Potiskum, IMN's medical wing - Islamic Movement Medical Association of Nigeria (IMMAN) - engages in voluntary service in hospitals during strikes by civil servants. It also takes part in environmental sanitation. In spite of the fact that *da'awa*³⁰ is the primary activity carried out by most Islamic groups, it is interesting to observe that not a single Friday mosque³¹ is owned either by IMN or RAAF in the zone. This might be due to the hostility of the established Islamic groups of the Sunni persuasion.

6.5 Jama'atu Nasril Islam

Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) may be seen as a quasi official actor being largely controlled by the traditional rulers. To a large extent JNI (which operates only in Northern Nigeria) had played the role of Muslims' mouthpiece in the 1960s and 1970s. This could not be sustained in later years, due to the proliferation of so many Islamic organisations. Yet, to some extent, the JNI is still active in some areas of the zone. Some of its objectives include (i) propagating the principles of Islam to win adherents, (ii) reviving and maintaining Islamic moralities among Muslims and encouraging intellectual religious activities, (iii) promoting good relationships among Nigerian Muslims and Muslims worldwide, and (iv), establishing and running schools to propagate Islam and the Arabic language.

JNI branches, though found in all the states of the northeast, were observed to be different in terms of their performance because it was only mentioned as very active in Adamawa and to some extent Gombe State. In the latter, it was found to be acting more as a unifying platform for Islamic Civil Society Organizations whenever a joint activity was required (interview with Sheikh Taliyawa) than an independent organization. In Adamawa State where JNI is strongest, it has preachers in 342 mosques and has established 236 Islamiyya schools and eight Junior Secondary Schools. It also provides relief materials to disaster victims and holds regular consultation with Islamic and Christian organizations to avert crisis. Interestingly, JNI was not identified as a strong organization in Borno State despite the fact that the Shehu of Borno is the Association's national Vice President and the northeast regional office is situated in the state. Perhaps the most important advocacy carried out by JNI in Adamawa is in the area of conflict management and making health programmes acceptable to Muslims especially with respect to HIV test before marriage and child immunisation.

6.6 Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs

Like JNI, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA) is also a quasi official organization. However, unlike the JNI which operates only in the Northern states, SCIA operates in all states of Nigeria. It has recently devolved its activities to all the states

³⁰ To preach or call people to the path of righteousness

³¹ A mosque where Muslims gather to say the congregational noon prayers on Friday

under the most senior Muslim traditional ruler. Ideally, it was meant to provide a forum for a single voice for Nigerian Muslims in matters affecting them. In many respects therefore, it is similar to *Majelis Ulama* in Indonesia that gives *fatwas*³² to both government and the public on issues of concern to Muslims. However, the SCIA is certainly weaker than its Indonesian equivalent. The role played by SCIA in the northeast appears to be duplicating that already being played by the Muslim Councils discussed earlier, so attempts were made in some states like Taraba to merge the two organizations but without any success. The reason is not far-fetched. The merger was perceived to result in undue interference by the traditional rulers in Muslim affairs with a likely effect of undermining the Muslim Council (interview with Chindo Muhammad Bose).

SCIA was however identified as being very active only in Taraba State which was perhaps because of the personal effort of the Emir of Muri, its sole financier. It has similar objectives with those of Muslim Council but differs in the sense that SCIA has an important additional objective, i.e. the economic empowerment of Muslims. This includes efforts like giving loans to small scale farmers (50% of the amount required) and assistance to orphans (N15, 000 or US\$100) and widows (N7, 000 or US\$47) or sometimes based on the extent of their need. Orphans may be assisted in their schooling so that the money is converted to fund a recipient's education. It was perhaps because of the lack of formal structure that even the government of Taraba State is more comfortable with the MC than with SCIA (interview with Habibu Al-Makki).

6.7 Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC)

Nigeria Inter Religious Council (NIREC) is not a fully Islamic organization. It a federal government sponsored organization consisting of both Muslim and Christian groups charged with the responsibility of identifying and averting likely sources of religious conflict between Christians and Muslims. For this reason both Muslims and Christians have equal representation of 25 members each in the Council and is co-chaired by the Sultan of Sokoto and President of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). With respect to the Muslims, NIREC at the state level is like JNI and SCIA under the purview of the traditional institution. Though supposedly present in all the states in the zone, its presence in terms of activities performed was mentioned only in Adamawa and Taraba states. It is important to note that these states have the largest proportion of Christians in the zone.

6.8 Muslim Youth Groups

Islamic activities in most parts of the world are youth driven. Youth groups play vital role in Islamic propagation and hence the emergence of notable groups such as the National Council of Muslim Youth Organisations (NACOMYO) and Muslim Youth Association of Nigeria (MUYAN). Only the latter was identified as active in the region being operational in Adamawa State and spatially present in only five LGAs. Some of MUYAN's objectives are to (i) inculcate the spirit of Godliness in the youths, (ii) strive towards the unity and welfare of Muslims, (iii) reformation of Muslims morally, intellectually and spiritually. To achieve these objectives in Adamawa, it has two Islamiyya schools, pays visitations to hospitals and has held several seminars. Perhaps

³² A verdict or an opinion of an Islamic scholar or authority.

one important activity that directly borders on the youth is MUYAN's rehabilitation of drug addicts. These activities are only modest and do not match those of some organizations presented earlier but the fact that MUYAN has a very strong presence, currently serving as Secretary in the Muslim Council of Adamawa State probably points to its relevance in Adamawa State's Muslim affairs. The lack of interest by the state in MUYAN's activities is instructive as it has led to a weak relationship between the two.

Muslim Students Association (MSS) also conveniently falls into the category of Muslim Youth groups, its membership being students in secondary and tertiary institutions. The activities of MSS are largely confined to the campuses. In Adamawa, Bauchi and Taraba states, it is an important member of the Muslim Councils. A similar case is constituted by the Muslim Corpers Association of Nigeria (MCAN) whose members are Muslims serving in Nigeria's National Youth Service Corps scheme. This group engages in outreach *da'awa* and charitable activities from resources generated during the service year. Like MSS, they are conspicuous in all the states and are admitted into the Muslim Councils.

6.9 Women in Islam

Women's overt involvement in Islamic matters was for a long time criticised by the ulama in the region. For example, although Maira Aisa Kəmangərmaram was thought to have ruled the pre-colonial Borno Empire for seven years (Laminu, 1992), her reign was seen as aberration hence it was not even mentioned in the *diwan*³³ compiled Sayfawa scholars. There have been no outspoken women scholars probably because of the Islamic teachings that restrict women to teaching only fellow women. In the past two decades, however, the relevance of women as groups and individuals in Islamic work has become prominent. State branches of the Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) were noted throughout the northeast. FOMWAN acts as an umbrella association to over 30 Muslim women's organisations in Nigeria. Its formation was traced by Loimeier (1997) to the views of some 'non aligned' Muslim's who argued in the late 1970s for Islam to re-position itself to face modern challenges. Consequently, there are now groups like 'Women in Da'awa', a strong affiliate of FOMWAN throughout the zone solely in charge of preaching to women both in public forums and the media. FOMWAN was identified in all the states but it is most active in Borno, Adamawa and Bauchi States.

The association engages in a wide range of activities ranging from education, health, visitations, advocacy, poverty alleviation and assistance to victims of conflicts and pilgrims during Hajj operations. In Bauchi, it established the first model Islamic School in 1990. At present it has two nursery schools, ten primary schools and two secondary schools. In the area of health, it has a well-equipped clinic located in Bauchi town. The excellent accountability of the association with her collaborating partners has informed this good working relationship and appears to be its strength. FOMWAN has been unusually supported by state governments due to its excellent accountability record and the sacrifice of its members and executives. This has informed its continued and good working relationship with not only governmental but also non-governmental associations, including foreign aid agencies like Pathfinder International and USAID. In addition, visible achievements by FOMWAN from membership contribution to carry out

³³ A chronicle of the Sayfawa rulers of Borno

visitations, workshops, feeding of pilgrims/provision of toiletries during Hajj operations have impacted positively on the association's working relationship with collaborating partners.

FOMWAN's strength in advocacy is perhaps unmatched. It has advocated for voluntary confidential counseling and testing (VCCT) of Muslim couples for HIV/AIDS before marriage with great achievements in some LGAs of Borno State especially Kwayakusar, Biu, Damboa, and Chibok where it is now compulsory and accepted by the *ulama*. The association also has advocated for the improvement of facilities in girls' schools with great success. It lobbied for the sinking of a borehole in Government Girls Secondary School Biu, and provision of furniture in Government Girls Arabic College Mafa in Borno State.

The contribution of a few individual Muslim women in the zone is worthy of note. Hajja (Dr) Maryam Bukar Abba Ibrahim runs an NGO - Yetim Care Foundation that provides free education from primary to secondary to orphans in Borno and Yobe states. Currently, nearly 300 hundred students are beneficiaries in the two states. In Borno State, the efforts of Hajiya Hadiza Umar and Maryam Abdullahi in holding regular Islamic preaching on radio have been quite outstanding. Sayyida Hindu Abdullahi, Asmau Abdulkarim (both daughters of Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi) and Hajiya Amina Ibrahim are by all standards scholars and opinion leaders in their own right in Adamawa State.

6.10 Islamic Centres

Islamic Centres have been observed in some states of the northeast whose activities, though elitist, are effective in shaping public opinion. These centres greatly contributed to the agitation of sharia and indeed tried propagating its benefits to both Muslims and non-Muslims. The Centre for Islamic Thought (CIT) and Islamic Development Centre (IDC) all based in Yola (Adamawa State) and Ali Bn Talib Islamic Centre, Potiskum, and Yobe Islamic Centre (YIC) in Damaturu (Yobe State) are good examples. Imam Malik Islamic Centre (IMIC) and Islamic Research Centre in Maiduguri are other examples. CIT sets to achieve the objectives of Islamic propagation through modern ways, uniting of Muslims, winning of converts and establishing databanks on issues that affect Muslims. Principally, its members are former active members of Muslim Students Society (MSS) from various institutions of higher learning who saw it as necessary to continue being engaged in a brotherhood even after schooling has been completed. Membership of CIT is statewide but activities are mostly concentrated in the state capital, Yola. Being largely elitist in its approach the association focuses on organizing seminars and workshops to sensitize Muslims, holding *tafseer* (translation of the Qur'an) in the state media, and running a model school. CIT's impressive performance in these activities perhaps facilitated its subsidy of three million Naira from the Adamawa State Action Committee on AIDS. The money was used to fund AIDS-related programmes in different communities, including schools. It also collaborates well with other NGOs, especially Community Reach and Poverty Eradication Centre which it helped to establish.

Islamic Development Centre (IDC) Yola came into being in 1999. It is essentially an association of Muslim civil servants in Adamawa State formed with the aim of contributing to Islam. Like CIT therefore, it is elitist in its approach to Islamic activities. Its membership is diverse in religious terms, cutting across many Islamic sects. IDC's objectives are similar to those of CIT discussed above but in the last five years IDC has

deemed it necessary to participate in political activities through the sourcing of candidates for good governance in the state. It has also worked with INEC in ensuring credible elections by winning an observer status in the 2011 general elections. The association has carried out advocacy on issues that may be considered sensitive by government. IDC has succeeded in getting the government to settle the examination fees of Adamawa State students with the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO). These fees are often a burden on poor families. Similarly it has solicited for the need to balance the lopsided nature of the employment between Muslims and non-Muslims in the state civil service. Earlier on it had drawn its own blueprint for the development of Adamawa State and submitted it to the state government which was neither acknowledged nor implemented. Probably this 'intrusion' explains why the government is not keen on relating with it and its views are not taken seriously compared with those of other Islamic CSOs in the State.

Aliyu Bn Abi Talib Islamic Centre (ABATIC) Potiskum (Yobe State) was established in the year 2000 with the objective of preaching and running schools. Its activities include education and carrying out humanitarian assistance to orphanages and prisons. The centre now runs about five different programmes for children and adults including women. Though the Centre's *aqeeda* (belief) is Sunni in orientation, its principal actors being former active members of Izala, they have dissociated themselves from the latter and now stand alone without any sectarian leaning. This 'middle course' position ABATIC maintains may partly account for their good rapport with the government, which provided part of the land to build the centre and runs some of its activities in government schools. Funding is mainly generated through donations and school fees. It collaborates with businessmen, politicians and has benefitted from a World Bank poverty alleviation scheme to build classes. Like some of the groups discussed earlier ABATIC does not collaborate with Shiites. The main advocacy messages of the centre border on education, particularly the lack of qualified teachers, and on health with respect to women's health (gynaecological problems). Apart from these Islamic actors in the region, others that may be considered official actors were also identified and need to be examined.

7. Official Islamic Actors

Official Islamic actors are agencies of government whose existence is considered necessary to guide the Muslims in certain aspects of devotion such as the political, economic or social duties required by Islam. They include local or traditional rulers, agencies of government in charge of pilgrimage, zakat, Islamic education, judiciary etc., all of which exist in the states of the region. For the purpose of this research, only two i.e. sharia implementation bodies and schools are considered in some detail.

7.1 Sharia Implementation Agencies

None of the states in the zone was truly a sharia state because the *hudud* or capital punishment were excluded, but all states have Area Courts and Sharia Courts of Appeal that entertain cases pertaining to Islamic personal law. However, three states in the zone - Borno, Bauchi, and Yobe have tried sharia implementation in 2001 and 2002. There are also differences between the states in terms of government agency responsible for its

implementation. Borno and Yobe States have each established a Ministry of Religious Affairs, while in Bauchi has a Sharia Commission.³⁴

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Special Education in Borno was established in 2005 as a consequence of the introduction of sharia law in the state. Consisting of major religious actors from the two main religions in the state (Islam and Christianity) the Ministry essentially supervises religious activities especially the management of tension between the two major religions. Being a civil service organization its Directorates are manned by *ulama* drawn from both Sufi (Tijaniyya) and Izala scholars and to a lesser extent Christian clerics/civil servants. The composition of the *ulama* in the Ministry has been observed to be lopsided and unjust due to the exclusion of Shiites (especially RAAF). It has been argued that RAAF is among the few Muslim organizations in Borno State registered with Corporate Affairs Commission, yet it was deliberately denied representation in the Ministry's work force (interview with Muhammad Al Baqir).

Typical of most governmental organizations in Nigeria, the Ministry's main task of guiding *sharia* implementation in the state, has largely remained ineffective and unachieved due to bureaucratic bottlenecks and lack of political support. Even vital aspects of sharia such as *zakkat* (personal tax) and *waqf*³⁵ have eluded the ministry even where there is evident need for them (interview with Muhammad Abdullahi). Rather, the Ministry appears to be mainly engaged in public education through the medium of Friday mosques, security through Aid Groups of Islamic Civil Societies and occasionally, sundry issues such as the provision of fast breaking meal during the month of Ramadan for those in need as 'Ramadan Kareem'. It has maintained a good relationship with Islamic organisations in the state, often acting as intermediary between them and the government.

The Bauchi State Sharia Commission is better organized in its *sharia* implementation than the Ministries of Religious Affairs in Borno and Yobe States. The commission has *zakkat*, *waqf* and *hisbah* (enforcement) directorates, however, each of these with its peculiar problems. For instance, most wealthy (eligible) individuals avoid giving out *zakkat* hence only a maximum of three million Naira was collected as *zakkat* from a single individual since the Commission was established (interview with Malam Dikko).

On the whole, there appears to be a large gap between public expectations on sharia and what is offered as sharia by the states practicing the legal code in northeastern Nigeria. With the benefit of hindsight, there is now a growing realization on the part of the average Muslim that sharia implementation was stage-managed. Thus, while the masses became more impoverished, public office holders became openly corrupt in the face of an operational legal system that is supposed to check such injustice. Hence sharia implementation in Borno, Bauchi, and Yobe was increasingly regarded as a mockery with the usage of terms like 'political sharia' in these states.

While sharia implementation might be seen to have failed in the region, this may not be so for Islamic education which offered some hope.

³⁴ For more on the court system in Northern Nigeria see Philip Ostien's book *A study of the Court Systems of Northern Nigeria with a Proposal for the Creation of Lower Sharia Courts in some Northern States* (1999).

³⁵ Endowments

7.2 Islamic Education

Children's education (especially Islamic education) is seen as a fundamental duty that must be fulfilled by all groups, and usually commences at an early age. However, there are no public schools at the primary level (except in Borno) solely devoted to that, and religious instruction is considered insufficient by many parents in the public (secular) schools. The few number of public schools devoted to Islamic education may explain the predominance of Islamiyya schools owned by individuals and Islamic organizations in the zone. Dahiru (2010) sees the fewer hours devoted to Islamic studies in public schools as a justification for the proliferation of private Islamiyya schools in Borno but this may also be true for other states in the region. Perhaps as a consequence, Borno State Ministry of Education has established three pilot schools called Qur'anic Model Schools to fill this gap. However, there are a few public secondary and tertiary educational institutions in the northeast that are Islamic oriented. Table 3 shows the type and number of such schools in the zone. All the states have at least one such secondary school, Borno being highest with three, and Taraba the least having only one. However, even in some of these schools there is the greater influence of secular subjects compared to Islamic studies³⁶.

Within the existing secular setting however, there are a number of public institutions teaching both Arabic and Islamic Studies at higher levels. Colleges of Education located at Hong (Adamawa State), Biu, Bama, Maiduguri (Borno State), Jalingo, (Taraba State), Azare (Bauchi State) all offer Islamic Studies at the level of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). Others include the University of Maiduguri (the oldest and largest university in the zone) which offers Arabic and Islamic Studies degrees up to the level of Ph.D, and the Nigeria Arabic Village, Ngala (Borno State), established by the Federal Government of Nigeria to improve the language proficiency of Arabic language students in Nigeria. The latter operates and serves the same function as the Nigeria French Village located in Badagry, a border town near Nigeria's border with the Republic of Benin.

Table 3: List of Public Islamic Institutions by Type in the Northeast Zone

State	Name of Institution	Type of Institution
Borno	Mustapha Umar Arabic College, Maiduguri	Secondary
	Higher Islamic College, Maiduguri	Secondary
	Govt. Girls Arabic College Mafa	Secondary
	Muhammed Goni College of Islamic & Legal Studies	Tertiary
Adamawa	Government Arabic College, Song	Secondary
	Government Arabic College Yola	Secondary
	College of Legal Studies, Yola	Tertiary
Bauchi	Government Arabic College, Jama'are	Secondary
	Government Arabic College, Alkaleri	Secondary
	A.D. Rufai College Islamic & Legal Studies, Misau	Tertiary

³⁶ An example of this can be seen in Mustapha Umar Arabic College, Maiduguri where Arabic and Islamic Studies have only three periods of forty minutes each week compared with English Language or Mathematics with six each.

Gombe	Government Arabic College, Gombe Higher Islamic College, Gombe	Secondary Secondary
Yobe	Higher Islamic College Nguru Higher Islamic College Yunusari Atiku Abubakar College of Islamic and Legal Studies	Secondary Secondary Tertiary
Taraba	Government Arabic College Jalingo	Secondary

Source: Field Data, 2011

A recurrent theme among most groups worthy of note is the pursuit of western education side by side with Islamic education which they deem necessary to reverse Muslims' backwardness in western education, while as well making sure that Islamic culture is retained and imparted on children. Exceptions to this pursuit are Maitatsine and Boko Haram who are opposed to secular education. In fact, the name Boko Haram (secular education is unlawful), though ascribed to the group (Adesoji, 2009) sufficiently symbolises the underlying belief of the group. The demand for modernization of Islamic education by some of the groups was largely motivated by parental preference for an integrated approach for the benefit of their children's moral and cultural training. Kyari (2005) examined how four prominent mosques in Maiduguri have repositioned themselves towards addressing modern challenges by modernizing Islamic education through its vigorous integration with secular education. Umar (n.d. p.27) has similarly noted a proliferation of modern Islamic schools in Northern Nigeria, and observed that "Muslims' preference for combining both Islamic and western types of education constitutes the strongest demand-side factor for the continuing growth of the new Islamic schools". This demand is not different from those observed by Kelly (1999) in Montreal, Canada where parents regard sending children to Muslim schools as a religious duty, such that even pupils from families that did not practice the religion well were confident in sending children to such schools. For such parents the perceived high moral standards of such schools when compared with public schools was the pull factor. Rashid (1992) has questioned the relevance of a 'New World Order' as it relates to Muslim children's education and their political socialization, pointing out a conflict between national ideals and Islamic identity in the curricula of secular education which underscores the relevance of Islamic schools.

Quality of education received by children from many Islamic based schools is seen by parents both in terms of morality and the ability to eloquently recite relevant passages of the Qur'an and *hadiths* at each desired level of study. In this respect quality is seen more from a religious point of view. Hence for majority of parents who are also without western education, educational standards were regarded as high if children could recite the required portions of the Qur'an, even if they did not have the requisite skills in the secular subjects.

7.2.1 Case Study: Higher Islamic College, Maiduguri

To underscore the relevance of such Islamic institutions to the respective communities they serve, the Higher Islamic College in Maiduguri was examined in greater detail. The school was established by government in 1974 to provide an outlet for the progression of pupils from the numerous modern Islamiyya schools in the state whose education would perhaps have otherwise been terminated if a higher level was not available. In 1984 the college was subsumed under Borno College of Legal and Islamic Studies (now

Mohammed Goni College of Legal and Islamic Studies) when the latter was established. The college enjoys special patronage from a sizeable proportion of parents in Borno who resent western-type school particularly for their daughters, and occasionally providing opportunity for victims of early marriage (school dropouts) to continue schooling in cases where the marriage is terminated. It also provides some kind of continuing education through its 'Higher Muslim' section mainly to train the numerous graduates of *tsangaya* schools across the state willing to formalise their education (interview with Alhaji Bunu Muhammad). Examination in the school is conducted by the National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS). Running two shifts – (morning and afternoon) due to its high population of students, the Higher Islamic College with nearly three thousand students has carved a niche for itself in Borno and Yobe States, having produced quite a number of young Islamic scholars, Area Court judges, and Arabic/Islamic studies teachers across the state, many of them having links with the three main *zawiyas* mentioned earlier [i.e. Madinatu (Sheikh Abulfathi's residence), Gwange (Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh's residence) and Limanti (Sheikh El Miskin's residence)]. The college, both in terms of staffing and pupil attendance has remained largely under the influence of the Tijaniyya, thus making it a source of irritation among the Izala (even though many were also its beneficiaries).

Perhaps the institution's main appeal for many Maiduguri residents lies in the monthly prayer sessions (in line with Sufi practice) organized by the staff and assisted by students. On a monthly basis the staff members contribute substantial amount of money to engage in Qur'anic recitation for peace and progress of members and cycle participants. This has transcended into the community in recent times with a great deal of outside participation from a large number of Maiduguri residents including politicians and administrators. The strong conviction by participants in the efficacy of college's organized prayer sessions both in terms of members' personal and group accomplishments have no doubt made it a spiritual place of reckon in Borno.

8. Relationships of Islamic Actors

8.1 Islamic Actors and the State

Creed or belief is the most fundamental basis for division of the main Islamic groups in northeastern Nigeria. Each Islamic group has its peculiar understanding of the religion and rituals, leading to division. Perhaps as a symbol of good governance, it is fascinating to observe that most of the *Tarika*, Izala and Shiites interviewed view the 19th century Fulani Jihadist, Othman Danfodio's Hausaland as a model. Little mention was made of Borno's rich Islamic past outside Borno and Yobe states. In fact, the Shiites, especially the IMN, are so ideologically inclined that they appear quite willing to retrace Danfodio's footsteps. Indeed, while interviews with all Izala groups showed recognition and submission to constituted authorities, they are alleged to have little regard for the authorities (Dahiru, 2010). In particular, they are noted for having no regard for the traditional institution whom they accuse of conniving with the *Turuk* to curb the spread of sunna. For instance, Malam Yusuf Sambo, former chairman of JIBWIS in Minna was quoted as publicly advocating the destruction of the traditional institution in Nigeria for taking sides with *mushirikai*³⁷ (Dahiru, 2010 p.158).

³⁷ Polytheists

Nuances exist between the states as to which groups are perceived to be closer to government by their rival groups, especially between Izala and the *Turuk*. In Borno and Adamawa states, appointment of key Izala members into government positions has been perceived as being pro-Izala. For instance, in Borno State, the appointment of more Izala members into the yearly Hajj Committee previously enjoyed by the *Turuk* has been perceived as taking sides with the Izala. Relations were further severed between the state and *Turuk* when the governor in 2008 ordered the arrest of Sheikh Ali Abulfathi for publicly condemning the governor's donation of public funds at a social function in neighbouring Chad Republic while his subjects were living in abject poverty. Similarly, in Adamawa state, the Special Assistant to the governor on election matters is the state secretary of Izala (Kaduna). Furthermore, during disputes between the two groups the governor has been alleged to take sides with the Izala even when the *Turuk* are offended. This happened during the 2009 Ramadan lectures in Yola organized by Izala when one of its guest preachers Sheikh Gero was alleged to have publicly insulted Sheikh Ibrahim Nyass and other prominent Sufi scholars. In Taraba state, Izala's critique of the state government's decision as it affects Muslims has soured the relationship between the group and the state. Dr Ibrahim Jalo has consistently challenged the state government on injustices to Muslims (especially in political appointments) through his weekly Friday sermons, for which reason, a bad relationship exists between Izala and government in Taraba. For instance, out of nearly 30 permanent secretaries in the state, only five are Muslims (interview with Dr Ibrahim Jalo). This kind of thinking is already threatening the proper functioning of Muslim Council in Taraba. The state government's involvement in financing some activities of Taraba MC was making the Izala (Kaduna) uncomfortable and they are threatening to withdraw their membership³⁸. Probably because of such tensions between Izala and the government, Hill (2010) argues that Sufi groups in Northern Nigeria represent the much needed bulwark against radicalization which is necessary for Nigeria's stability and in the long term interest of the United States.

8.2 Divisive and Uniting Forces of Islamic Organisations

8.2.1 Intra Religious Forces

The forces responsible for either division or unity of Muslims are the ulama who are seen as sources of authority by their followers since the interpretation of the Quran and hadith lies with them. The polarization of Muslims into Izala and *Tarika* perhaps is nowhere apparent in Nigeria than in the northeast and this has now taken a political dimension. Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi's 2011 interview with the BBC (Hausa service) was point blank on this issue. The Sheikh remarked that he would rather vote for a Christian than an Izala because the Izala sees him and the *Turuk* as infidels due to their belief in Sufism. Izala also castigates the saints the *Turuk* revere while the Christian sees them as Muslims³⁹. Much earlier, late Sheikh Samaila Idris of Izala was reported in his sermon to have referred to Bauchi Central Mosque as *gidan boka*⁴⁰ and that the prayer any Muslim offers in it will not

³⁸ In Taraba State, where the Governor is a non-Muslim, the state has built a Multi-million Naira office complex for the Muslim Council, just as it did for the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). The Governor has also been generous to the MC, a move that has made some members of the Council a bit suspicious of his motives. The weary members, prominently from Izala, have warned that the Governor may someday dictate the activities of MC.

³⁹ Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi recently voiced out an opinion he has held for long with regard to the relationship between religion and politics aired by the BBC (Hausa service) on March 22nd 2011. Although Sheikh Dahiru maintains that he has for long held this view it was interpreted by some Muslims as giving support to President Jonathan. His earlier opinion was reported by Roman Loimeier (1997).

⁴⁰ UnIslamic shrine

be accepted by God (Dahiru, 2010). This was perhaps in response to the late Chief Imam, Baban Inna's critique of Izala activities in its formative years.

It is interesting to observe the division occurring among the major Islamic actors which may not be relevant outside Nigeria. The Shiites have Islamic Movement of Nigeria and Rasuluh A'azam Foundation, the Izala have *Bushawa* (Bush) and *Yan Saddam* (Saddam) factions, while the Tijaniyya is divided (at least with respect to community development) into Fityanul Islam and Munazamatu Fityanul Islam, each with its ulama as a source of authority. In a way these divisions have brought benefits by increasing the groups' scale of activity in the region with each group retaining its distinctiveness but this has also been viewed as the fundamental problem that has brought confusion into the religion. For instance, Mustapha Yusuf Modibbo, an adherent of pre-reform Tijaniyya, believes that by registering Islamic groups government has institutionalized the division of the religion into many parts which is the root cause of the religious crises in Nigeria today. Apart from the forum created by the Muslim Councils a curious bridge is beginning to be constructed between Shiites and Tijaniyya groups enabled by their celebration of *maulud*. The two groups regularly exchange invitations during the yearly event and the Shiites have made it a policy to regularly pay visits to Tijaniyya Ulama⁴¹. In fact a RAAF document tagged National Action Framework⁴² endorsed by the national president Sheikh Muhammad Nur Dass, specifically mentioned that advocacy visits be paid to all local branches of Islamic groups, governmental and non-governmental, to raise its public awareness. It is not clear why, in implementing this policy, RAAF has chosen to pay visit to *Tarika* scholars rather than Izala scholars.

In many respects Muslims are becoming more aware of the challenges they face in the contemporary world. Challenges of lack of good governance, health (especially HIV/AIDS), poverty etc. are being addressed not only by men but also women's organization as exemplified by FOMWAN. This serves to strengthen intra religious harmony. Findings by Gilliat (1997) have shown a similar shift in a British Muslim organization, Young Muslim which was initially based on the revolutionary ideas of Maulana Mawdidi. With the passage of time, the organisation's focus changed to confronting those challenges of life faced by Muslim youths in Britain and how they could be tackled rather than simply pursuing ideological goals.

Quite a lot could also be learnt from the advocacy messages of the Islamic organizations presented in this study. These groups are united in their advocacy messages despite apparent differences. Despite their differences, the Islamic groups are united by their opposition to the introduction of sex education into school curriculum and recently the Child Rights Act. The groups are of the opinion that these are imported cultures from the west and are therefore incompatible with Islamic teachings. It follows then that there is a lot of common ground on which Muslims feel challenged by the West, no matter their internal differences. Naturally this argument extends to the new phenomenon of Muslim Councils that have become platforms for joint action in at least four of the states visited, providing further evidence that unity is possible in the face of a sufficient challenge.

⁴¹ Muhammad Al-Baqir, RAAF chairman in Borno State had revealed that he has led several visits to Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh in Maiduguri to establish relations which is not possible with the Izala. Similarly, Muhammad Abbari, IMN Chairman in Gombe revealed that many followers of *Tarika* Tijaniyya attend their yearly *Maulud* celebrations.

⁴² ref. no RAAF/HQ/07/00295

Lessons from Taraba point to the fact that great care needs to be taken by governments in dealing with religious associations in a multi religious country like Nigeria. In fact, the evolution of such councils should serve to underscore the need for caution. All the Muslim Councils emerged at different times from different experiences that necessitated joint action. The Muslim Parliament in Bauchi was born from an experience of a religious crisis in the southern part of the state after which Bauchi Muslims alleged that the government took sides with the Christians. In Adamawa, it grew out of the Christian Association of Nigeria's protest at the construction of a mosque within the Government House by a Muslim Governor. Taraba's Muslim Council was the result of its creation out of present Adamawa state while Borno's Muslim Forum was necessitated by the demand for Sharia in the state in 2002.

8.2.2 Inter Religious Forces

Islam is a religion of peace and its teachings are based on this fundamental principle which includes peaceful coexistence with members of other religions. Unfortunately, the Northeast zone of Nigeria has in recent years become the centre of Muslim/Christian conflict (though sometimes tinged with ethnic colouration). All groups claim to adhere strictly to the principle of peace enjoined by Islam but in different ways. RAAF and IMN, for instance, pay visits to churches and their leaders. RAAF in Gombe paid a sympathy visit to a church to commiserate with its members during a flood disaster in 2010. During the visit the pastor was shocked because according to him he never expected any such visits from a Muslim organization. The RAAF document cited earlier also directed local branches to pay regular visits to Christian leaders. The MCs, on their part, collaborate with Christian groups in pursuit of good governance; the Muslim Parliament in Bauchi collaborated with a youth wing of Christian Association of Nigeria to prevent rigging in 2007 elections in the state. These Muslim groups are willing to collaborate with Christian groups when there are signs of apparent conflict between Muslims and Christians. The Sufi groups and the Izala, however, would rather preach peaceful coexistence in their sermons. The latter have never been approached, or on their own accord, approached any Christian organization for joint action on any matter.

9. Islamic Organisations and External Linkages

Many of the Islamic groups are viewed as groups that have linkages with other groups outside Nigeria. Boko Haram's terrorist attacks have now been linked to Al Qaeda network⁴³, and indeed even in its formative years the group has fashioned itself in the image of Al Qaeda. This probably explains the group's withdrawal to the Gwoza hills in south eastern Borno State after it clashed with the police in Kanamma, (Yobe State) believed to be Muhammad Yusuf's hometown. Much later, many of the members of BH resorted to wearing the Al Qaeda regalia preparatory to the holy war waged on Maiduguri in July 2009. The typical dress code of Boko Haram members weeks before the July 2009 crisis in Maiduguri was a long caftan on top of which a waist coat was worn and a pair of boots. Some members also wore black turbans signifying readiness for jihad and carried sticks and daggers. If anything this dress code openly portrayed their militancy.

⁴³ For instance see Daily Trust of 2nd September 2011

There are regular exchanges of international visits also among the *Turuk* and especially between those in Nigeria and Senegal not least for *maulud* celebrations. Thousands of Tijanis from Nigeria attend the yearly Maulud celebration of Sheikh Ibrahim Nyass at Kaulack in Senegal. Also, scores of Senegalese Tijanis visit Nigeria to celebrate the *maulud* of important scholars every year. Some scholars have also suggested that Izala as well as the Shiites are being funded by Saudi Arabia and Iran respectively (Johnson, 2006; Loimeier, 1997). Johnson's remarks are very specific.

... the Saudi governments are responsible for funding such Islamic organizations such as the Izala of Nigeria and Al-Falah of Senegal. These funds provided by the Saudi government put these groups at an advantage in fostering their Islamic programs... The significance of these associations are to promote Islamic ideology and significantly to recruit new members for Islam (p.7).

Whether or not funding actually comes from external sources was difficult to ascertain during our fieldwork. However, throughout the interviews with Islamic groups, funding of organizations was claimed to be sourced mostly through internal means such as donations, levies, and investments, and rarely from other bodies. Interestingly, no association claimed to have any funding from abroad.

10. Individual Islamic Actors

Individuals Islamic actors also constitute an important source of information because they form the nuclei around which the Islamic groups discussed above were formed. Like the groups themselves, Islamic scholars are networked into observable patterns, the most obvious being linkages on the basis of *aqeeda*. Thus, with the exception of individuals like the Chief Imam of Borno⁴⁴, many scholars see themselves as *Tarika*, Izala, or Shiite who in practical terms relate more within such cycles than outside it. In fact, many scholars do not relate at all due to differences of *aqeeda*. In this category are the exclusionary binaries of Izala/*Tarika*, Izala/Shiite, Boko Haram/others and Maitatsine/others. Affinity between individuals is perhaps most pronounced among the *Tarika* scholars than others. This could be understood from their practice of *fayda*, part of which requirement is regular contact between members of the brotherhood. Such contacts ensure that *zawiyas* are interconnected not only within Nigeria but across the entire West and North Africa as well as the Arabian Peninsula⁴⁵. These *zawiyas* are further strengthened by the exchange of students who are often sourced (but not exclusively) from the immediate family of the head of a *zawiya*. This ensures that qualitative training of the required kind is received by such students for the continuity of Tijaniyya ideology and practice. While most *Tarika* scholars who studied abroad went to either Sudan or Egypt, alumni relationships of some sort is maintained by Izala scholars who graduated from the University of Madina, rated as a centre of excellence in Islamic studies⁴⁶. These alumni networks operate at the state rather than regional level. The point

⁴⁴ Imam Ibrahim Ahmad, the Chief Imam of Borno chooses not to belong to any of the sects. He said he only strongly practices the Maliki School of Islamic law rather than being sectarian. There are many scholars like him in Borno and Yobe states i.e. the Gonis or experts on Quranic recitation who fit into this category.

⁴⁵ For instance, Alhaji Murtala Abulfathi narrated how Madinatu in Maiduguri or the home of late Sheikh Ahmad Abulfathi is linked to the Zawaiya of Modibbo Zailani in Yola, and many others both in Nigeria and outside.

⁴⁶ Dr Hamma Adama Studied in Egypt, while Sheikh Ali Mustapha and Dr Ibrahim Jalo studied in Madina

needs to be emphasized however, that because *Tarika* Islam predates both Izala and Shiism in the region, many Izala and Shiite scholars were previously students of *Tarika* scholars who later became reformist ‘Protestants’⁴⁷.

Apart from Boko Haram and Maitasine scholars who at present operate rather underground, it is difficult to find scholars who will object to being part of a dialogue, whether at the inter faith level or otherwise, when the need for such arises. Rather, it is possible to find scholars who may find it difficult to ‘speak out’ because of the nature of the training they received. For instance, scholars such as Mustapha Yusuf Modibbo, who belongs to the pre-reform Tijaniyya, might not agree to engage in a dialogue even if offended. They deeply hold that belief in the Almighty, piety and righteousness will clear all problems confronting them. To such scholars, prayer is the key to solving all problems. On the other hand, it is easy to get Izala, Shiite and *fayda* scholars to the negotiating table for a dialogue on peace because they are used to publicly voicing out their group’s position in matters affecting Islam. In fact, so outspoken are the Izala scholars that they never mince words whether at the intra or inter faith levels. For instance Izala members under Sheikh Samaila Idris began the 2011 Ramadan fast a day earlier than other Muslims in Nigeria when, according to them, all efforts to convey the news to the Sultan that some of their members have sighted the moon failed. Dr Ibrahim Jalo also alleges that his strong opinions about the government of Taraba State was responsible for denying him a teaching appointment at the state’s College of Education located in Jalingo. A few scholars have experience in handling intra religious conflict in the past, but their relevance in contemporary crises of the region remains to be seen. *Tarika (fayda)* scholars in particular have been officially invited to broker peace outside Nigeria to avert religious crises. For instance, Sheikh Abubakar El-Miskin was invited three times by the governments of Chad and Cameroun to settle religious crises those countries in the 1970s. Shiite scholars like Mustapha Lawan Nasidi have also begun reaching out to Christian and *Tarika* clerics, so that bringing them to interfaith dialogue is not likely to be a difficult task.

In addition to their traditional Islamic education, quite a number of Islamic scholars in the Northeast have also attained sufficient level of secular education to make them appreciate the development challenges of Muslims which they strive to address. Such scholars engage in private development work or partnering with international agencies. This significantly distinguishes them from those scholars who have had no such exposure to western education⁴⁸. Salisu Shehu has a doctoral degree in Educational Psychology, while Muhammad Bala Ahmad has a master’s degree in Business Administration, and Imam Badamasi has a master’s degree in Islamic Studies. Imam Muhyideen is a graduate of Political Science. These scholars are either engaged privately in development work or are partnering with donor agencies to modernize Islamic education. Hassan Abubakar Dikko of the Izala who has also acquired both Islamic and secular education prides himself as being accessible to all Islamic groups in Bauchi State. On the other hand, Mustapha Yusuf Modibo still cherishes the traditional *tsangaya* education. Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh (CON) however stands out tall as a distinguished Islamic scholar who never received secular education but believes and advocates the use of modern approaches. These scholars may represent the best pool for future

⁴⁷ Sheikh Ali Mustapha and Sheikh Abubakar Adam studied under Tarika scholars. Mustapha Yusuf Modibbo also claims that many Izala and Shiites studied under the guidance of his father.

developmental interfaith dialogue. Quite a number of the Islamic scholars are also Qadi's of Sharia Courts of Appeal in their various states. By the positions they occupy as government employees, dialoguing with them as scholars may present some difficulties.

11. Conclusion

The northeastern geopolitical region of Nigeria represents a diverse area of Islamic activity with Sunni Islam dominating the religious and social landscape. The Sufi orders, represented especially by the Tijaniyya *Tarika*, are symptomatic of this Sunni dominance. This is not to understate the influence of the Izala who have made remarkable inroads in many states of the region lately. Viewed from whatever perspective, there is no escaping the fact that there is a great struggle for identity and belonging both among groups, and their scholars as well, during which process intra-faith conflicts have resulted. However, because such conflicts may also involve both inter religious and ethnic elements, the specific pathways through which these occur need to be uncovered by future researches. Notwithstanding these, by far the easiest groups to dialogue with during religious conflicts are the Sufi orders. However, because of the way in which most Islamic groups have become organized under the auspices of the Muslim Councils in most states of the region, dialogue with the Councils could be more meaningful. The emergence of a radical group, Boko Haram from the region lately poses a great security challenge not only within the region but almost certainly the entire Nigerian federation. This is manifested in the series of explosions that have been claimed by the group in such places as Kaduna and Abuja. Perhaps, from a security point of view, an eye also needs to be kept on the 'dormant' Maitatsine sect. Dealing with such groups however requires great caution.

In our opinion, an important lesson to be drawn from this research is that organisations having affiliations with government are less likely to be successful in their activities compared with those without such affiliations. This observation suggests that dialogue with groups that are not affiliated to the government might bear better results. Similarly, while Muslim women's contribution to Islam, whether as scholars or worshippers are enormous, they are most affected in times of religious conflicts. Yet, their contribution towards peace making or even understanding their perceptions of conflicts has been largely ignored in the Northeast. In particular, there is the need to further explore their role in restraining youth involvement in conflicts since youths are the drivers or catalysts of religious violence.

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Annex I

List of Persons Interviewed by State

Adamawa State

Bappari Umar Kem – Deputy secretary and murshid Jama’atu Nasril Islam Adamawa State, 49 years.

Mohammed A. Kawu - Secretary Adamawa Muslim Council and PRO Muslim Youth Association of Nigeria, Adamawa State Branch Malam Musa Salihu Malami - Islamic scholar and Head Teacher, Doubeli Primary School Jimeta, 48 years

Modibbo Abubakar Daware - Islamic scholar and Chairman, Fityanul Islam of Nigeria Adamawa State and disciple of late Modibbo Zailani, 57 years.

Muhammad Sufyanu Mustafa – Chief Imam, Central mosque Jimeta, 47 years.

Malam Musa Salihu Malami – Islamic scholar Headteacher Doubeli Primary School, Jimeta, 46 years.

Alh Usman Ibrahim, Special Adviser on Election Matters to the Governor of Adamawa State, 56 years.

Alhaji Usman Ahmad Dadah, General Manager, Adamawa Television Corporation, and Chairman Centre for Islamic Thought, Yola, 52 years.

Bauchi State

Sheikh Dahiru Usman Bauchi – Islamic scholar, Bauchi, 84 years

Dr. Salisu Shehu - Lecturer, Islamic scholar and Special Assistant to Bauchi State Governor on Education and Societal Reorientation, 45 years.

Hassan Abubakar Dikko - Commissioner in charge of Zakkat, Bauchi State Sharia Commission, 56 years.

Muhammad Gidado Umar – Chairman, JIBWIS (Jos) in Bauchi State, 67 years.

Muhammad Bala Ahmad – Retired civil servant and Chief Imam, Bauchi Central Mosque, 60 years.

Malam Zakari Hassan, Makkah Specialist Eye Hospital, Bauchi, and Member Muslim parliament, Bauchi, 48 years.

Borno State

Imam Ibrahim Ahmed – Retired sharia court judge and Chief Imam of Maiduguri Central Mosque, 80 years.

Dr Amma Khursa – Lecturer, Department of Sharia Law, University of Maiduguri and disciple of Sheikh Sheriff Ibrahim Saleh, 52 years

Alhaji Murtala Abulfathi - Director Humanitarian Aid and Development Centre of Nigeria (HADCON), Maiduguri and son of Sheikh Ahmad Abulfathi, 50 years

Alhaji Musa Imam - Principal, Humanitarian Aid and Development Centre of Nigeria (HADCON) Institute, Maiduguri and National Assistant Secretary, Fityanul Islam of Nigeria, 51 years

Ustaz Shettima El-Miskin - Islamic Scholar and son of Sheikh Abubakar El-Miskin, 36 years

Alhaji Bunu Muahammad - Principal Higher Islamic College Maiduguri, 53 years

Sheikh Ali Mustapha - Chairman Council of Ulama JIBWIS Borno State and Imam 707 Housing Estate Maiduguri, 47 years.

Imam Shettima Habib – Imam of GRA mosque Maiduguri, 49 years.

Alhaji Muhammad Abdullahi – Director, Religious Affairs, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Special Education, Borno State, 55 years.

Malam Buhari - Imam and village head of Waringile village, and leader of Muhammadiyya Movement (Shani LGA, Borno State), 52 years.

Hajiya Adama Ibrahim – Head, Department of Islamic Studies, Kashim Ibrahim College of Education, Maiduguri and Immediate past Ameerah of FOMWAN, Borno State (46 years).

Gombe State

Sheikh Usman Taliyawa – Islamic scholar and Chairman Council of Ulama JIBWIS (Kaduna), Gombe State, 65 years.

Abdullahi Maikano Usman – Qadi, Sharia Court of Appeal Gombe State and acting Chief Imam, Gombe Central mosque, 52 years.

Usman Baba Liman - Qadi, Sharia Court of Appeal Gombe State, 62 years.

Sheikh Hamza Adamu Abdulhamid – Islamic scholar and educationist, heads the Directorate of Education JIBWIS (Jos) in Gombe State, 50.

Badamasi Adamu Ali – Civil servant and PRO Rasulul A'azam Foundation Gombe, 49 years.

Sheikh Magaji Muhammad – Islamic scholar and chairman Fityanul Islam of Nigeria, Gombe State, 69 years.

Taraba State

[Muhammad] Badamasi Aliyu - Imam GRA mosque Jalingo and Islamic studies lecturer, College of Education Jalingo, Taraba State, 43 years.

Malam Chindo Muhammad Bose - Chairman, Taraba Muslim Youth Council, 53 years.

Muhyideen Nuru Muhammad Dinga – Islamic scholar and Chief Imam Central mosque, Jalingo, 40 years.

Dr Ibrahim Jalo – Islamic scholar (JIBWIS) (Kaduna) based in Jalingo, 43 years.

Alhaji Habibu Al Makki – Executive Secretary Taraba State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, and Secretary SCIA Taraba State.

Yobe State

Ustaz Mustapha Lawan Nasidi - Chairman Islamic Movement of Nigeria, Yobe State and student/disciple of Sheikh Ibrahim El Zakzakky, 47 years

Sheikh Abubakar Adam - Islamic scholar and founder Ali Ibn Abi Talib Islamic Centre Potikum, 60 years.

Goni Hassan Goni Ahmad - Islamic scholar and Imam Nahuta Jumaat Mosque, Potiskum, 29 years.

Sheikh Mai Ahmad Khalid – Chairman, JIBWIS Council of Ulama, Potiskum Local Government and member JIBWIS Council of Ulama, Yobe State, 64 years.

Malam Mustapha Yusuf Modibo – Islamic scholar based in Potiskum, Yobe State, 52 years.