



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



NRN BACKGROUND PAPER NO. 2

Muslims of Kogi State: A Survey

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January 2012

Acknowledgements

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

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Abstract

The paper begins with an overview of Kogi State and its political and ethnic divisions. It then gives a brief account of the coming of Islam and its prevalence in various parts of the state now. The main denominational categories of Muslims are then surveyed, the chief of them being the Tijaniyya. In the next two sections the educational systems in which Muslims are being educated, right up to Ph.D. level, and the presence of Muslims and Islam in the institutions of government are discussed. Finally, a number of Muslim organisations and notable scholars in the state are described. The paper includes a bibliography.

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1. Overview

Kogi State was created on 27th August, 1991 by the General Ibrahim Babangida administration. The state falls in the North Central geo-political zone. Its capital is the confluence town of Lokoja, a rocky town made the first capital of Northern Nigeria by Lord Lugard's administration.

Located between longitudes 50 18 E and 70 94 E; and latitudes 60 30' N and 80 42' N, Kogi State has a land area of approximately 28,044 square kilometres. It is surrounded by ten other states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) as follows: Niger State and FCT to the north; Nasarawa State to the northeast; Benue State to the east; Enugu State to the southeast; Anambra State to the south; Edo, Ondo and Ekiti States to the south and southwest; and Kwara State to the northwest. Olagboye (2010) gives a great deal of information about the state.

The state is made up of three senatorial districts, namely Kogi Central, Kogi East and Kogi West, which are further divided into 21 Local Government Areas (LGAs), as follows:

Senatorial district	LGAs	Headquarters
Kogi Central	Adavi Ajaokuta Okehi Okene Ogori-Magongo	Ogaminana Adogo Obangede Okene Akpa
Kogi East	Ankpa Bassa Dekina Ibaji Idah Igalamela/Odolu Ofu Olamoboro Omala	Ankpa Oguma Dekina Onyedega Idah Ajaka Ugwolawo Okpo Abejukolo
Kogi West	Ijumu Kabba/Bunu Lokoja Kogi Mopamuro Yagba East Yagba West	Iyara Kabba Lokoja Kotonkarfe Mopa Isanlu Odo-Ere

Each of the three senatorial districts is occupied by a majority ethnic group and a number of minority ethnic groups as illustrated in the following table:

Senatorial District	Ethnic Groups	
	Majority	Minorities
Kogi Central	Ebira Tao	Ogori-Magongo Igala
Kogi East	Igala	Bassa Komo Bassa Nge Egbura Mozum Ibaji

Kogi West	Okun/Yoruba (including Oworo)	Bassa Nge/Komo/Nupe Egbura Koto Gwari Kakanda
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From the above, one would observe that the three senatorial districts are created along the lines of the major ethnic groups in the state i.e. Ebira, Igala and Okun. The population of the state, according to the 2006 national census, was then 3,278,487.¹ The major religions practiced in the state are Islam and Christianity. Thus, for the purpose of this research, our discussions shall be based on the three major ethnic groups, and Lokoja, the state capital.

Kogi State is abundantly endowed with natural mineral resources, most of which have not been properly explored. Three gigantic industries, which are germane to the growth of the national economy, are located in the state. They are the Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Complex, National Iron Ore Mining Company at Itakpe and the Obajana Cement Company.

The following individuals were interviewed for the purposes of this research paper:

1. Hamzah Iliyasu, (55years) Bank officers and active member of Okun Muslim Youths Council living in Ilorin, Kwara State, interviewed on telephone on 2 March 2011.
2. Salih Jumuah Alaso (51years) lecturer, Federal College of Education, Okene, interviewed in his office on 6 March 2011.
3. Badmos Abdulkareem, (58 years) lecturer at Federal College of Education, Okene. interviewed in his office on 6 March 2011.
4. Abdulganiyu Musa, (33 years) a teacher at Al-Uswah Islamic Academy, Anyigba and M.A Arabic Student of Kogi State University, Anyigba, interviewed at his school on 5 March, 2011
5. Malam Tanko Talle, (54 years) Secondary School Principal, interviewed at his school on 5 March, 2011
6. Malam Suleiman Salih, (40 years) lecturer at Kogi State University, Anyigba, interviewed in his office on 7 March 2011
7. Malam Salisu Abubakar Abdullahi, (41 years) lecturer at Kogi State University, Anyigba and doctoral student, interviewed in his office on 8 March, 2011
8. Alfa Salisu (31 years) lecturer at Kogi State University, Anyigba and doctoral student, interviewed in his office on 8 March, 2011
9. Jamiu Abdullah, (37 years) lecturer at Kogi State University, Anyigba and doctoral student, interviewed in his office on 9 March, 2011

These interviewees were carefully selected among the academics who are critically minded and whose sense of reasoning could not be beclouded by emotions or personal sentiments. With regards to the selection of the organizations, I have intentionally selected the active ones with a view to trying to establish ethnic, age and gender balance among the various associations in the State.

2. Islam among the main ethnic groups in the state and in Lokoja

a. Igalaland

Igalaland is bordered on the north by the River Benue, on the South by Nsukka and Onisha, to the East by Idomaland and to the West by the River Niger. The Igala people have a long history believed to date back to late early 16th century (Okwoli 1973). They form the majority ethnic group in a state with a population of about 1,484,345 according to the 2006

¹ This and other 2006 census information given in following sections is taken from Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Official Gazette*, No. 24, Vol. 94, 2007, p.B190.

national census. As has been seen Igalaland occupies nine LGAs in the Kogi East senatorial district. The major occupation of the Igala people is farming, aided by the fertile nature of their soil, which is endowed with crop trees such as oil palm, cashew, wild rubber and food crops such as yams and cassava.

The exact date of the filtering of Islam into Igalaland cannot be precisely established. However, two major factors are known to be responsible for the advancement and spread of Islam in the area; these are commercial links and political activities.

One tradition has it that the Igala people first came in contact with Islam through Hausa Muslim traders who came all the way from Kano and Gobir to trade in the markets around the Niger/Benue confluence, which brought together Hausa, Borno/Arab, Yoruba, Nupe, Idoma and Igala traders (Mohammed 1984: 73). Since the traders coming down from Hausaland, Borno and Nupe to the confluence were mostly Muslims, it is clear that the people of the confluence including Ebira of Panda, Koton Karfi and the Igala were in contact with Islam some two centuries before the *jihad* of Uthman Dan Fodio.

On the political dimension, it has been argued that Ayegba Om'Idoko, the then Attah or top ruler of Igalaland, in his bid to fight for independence of his people from the Jukuns, invited some malams or *almajirai* (Qur'anic scholars/students) from Bebeji in Kano, to prepare *asiri* (charms) which could assist him in the wars against the apparently militarily superior Jukun forces. The malams were believed to have helped the Attah's forces to defeat the Jukuns and after the wars, Attah Ayegba requested the malams to settle at Idah and gave them some Igala women to marry (Mohammed 1984: 78). Thereafter, Islam began to spread across Igalaland through the activities of Attah Ayegba and later the Sokoto *jihad* (Okwoli 1973: 112).

b. Ebiraland

Before 1900, the Ebira settled mainly on the hill tops for defence purposes, but with the development of colonialism and the peace it brought, they gradually moved down to settle in the valley plains stretching for about 14 kilometres from Ihima in the extreme west to Okene in the east (Mohammed 1984: 2).

Today, the Ebira people occupy a hilly stretch of land south-west of the Niger-Benue confluence sharing common boundaries with the Yoruba speaking people of Akoko, Owe, Ijumu, Oworo to the west and northwest; the various Akoko-Edo peoples to the south and southwest; the Hausa, Nupe and Ebira groups at Lokoja to the north and River Niger to the west. The population of Ebiraland, according to the 2006 census, stood at 844,774. Ebiraland proper consists of five LGAs in the Kogi Central senatorial district, namely Adavi, Ajaokuta, Okehi, Okene and Ogori-Magongo.

The major occupations of the Ebira people are farming, trading and weaving. However, the hilly nature of their land which restricts both agricultural and housing expansion led to the emigration of the Ebira to both Afenmai area of present Edo State and Yorubaland for farming activities. The inadequate plainland for settlement was also responsible for the convergence of over 90 percent of the Ebira population within a 15 kilometre radius (Mohammed 1984: 6-7).

The strategic location of Ebiraland which makes it a gateway for travellers to Okunland, Edo State, Igalaland and Lokoja serves as an economic booster for the area and its people.

The introduction of Islam into Ebiraland coincided with the inception of colonialism in the area. The reputed malam to have been the first to introduce Islam and Islamic education in Ebiraland was Alfa Abd as-Salam (popularly known as Alkali Abd as-Salam) who came

from Agbaji quarters in Ilorin about 1903 as an itinerant malam (Mohammed 1984: 117). Alfa Abd as-Salam opened the first Qur'anic school in Ebiraland at Okene-Eba, which was the first headquarters of the new colonial administration in the area during the first two decades of the 20th century.

Abdullah (1999: 19) has it that Ebara people first came in contact with Islam through the wars of *jihad* that Ilorin waged on them in 1856. Abdullah (1999), quoting from Sheikh Ahmad Omoikokoro's *Ta'lif Akhbar al-Qurun*, reported that the third Emir of Ilorin, Shittu, was said to have sent an army to sack the Ebiraland with the support of Ibadan and Bida armies, but was met with strong resistance. However, some people were captured and taken to Agege in Lagos and Ilorin where they embraced Islam and were later on set free. Upon their return home, they started practicing Islam and from then, the religion started to spread across the land (ibid.).

While the report of the 2006 national census is silent on the percentage of Muslims and Christians, local sources put the Muslim population of Ebiraland at about 70%, Christians at about 25% percent and others at 5%.²

c. Okunland

The Okun people are a sub-ethnic group of the Yoruba, who claim a common ancestor, Oduduwa. There are five Okun groups namely, the Bunus, Ijumas, Owes, Oworos and Yagbas. The zone is made up of five LGAs namely; Ijumu, Kabba/Bunu, Mopamuro, Yagba East and Yagba West. They, together with Lokoja and Kogi LGAs, constitute the Kogi West Senatorial District. The population of Okun people as at the 2006 census was 598,585. The main occupation of the Okun people is farming.

One single feature that distinguishes them from other tribes in the state is their high literacy level on which Olagboye writes:

Today, Okun people can boast of the highest literacy level of any...in the old Northern Nigeria. It (Okunland) is a land of professors, all types of engineers, lawyers, architects, medical doctors, academic dons... (Olagboye 2010: 105)

Islam diffused into Okunland probably through the Nupe invasions of the area between 1806 and 1897, when forces of the Royal Niger Company finally subdued the Nupe. During the period, thousands of Okun indigenes were killed and many captured. It was the war captives who returned from Nupeland that first practiced Islam in Okunland.

Today, Okunland is overwhelming Christian. Only a few towns scattered across the land are predominantly Muslim. Such towns include Ayegunle-Gbedde and Iyamoye in Ijumuland, Ife-Olukotun, Alu, Igbagun and Oranre in Yagba West LGA. Muslims can be said to constitute about 25% of the total inhabitants of Okunland.³ Muslims in Okunland can be evenly divided into three categories namely Tijaniyyas, Ahmadiyyas and neutral Muslims who are neither Tijaniyya nor Ahmadiyya.

Another common feature of the Okun community is the inter-marriage of Muslims and Christians. This practice is so common that one could hardly find a single family that is totally mono-religious. Thus, the adherents of the two religions have peacefully co-existed throughout the ages to the extent that religious festivities as well as social and political activities are jointly carried out, except on few occasions.

² Per interviews on 6 March 2011 with Salih Jumuah Alaso and Badmos Abdulkareem, both lecturers at Federal College of Education, Okene.

³ Per interview on 9 March 2011 with Jamiu Abdullah, a lecturer at Kogi State University, Anyigba.

d. Lokoja

The present Lokoja is situated at the confluence of the rivers Niger and Benue and nestles at the foot of Mount Patti. It was said to have been founded in 1860 by Dr. William Baikie who made up his mind to found a settlement at the site of the land between the confluence and the mountain when he took a clear view of the area during his Benue expedition of 1854 (Ocheja 2010: 9).

Lokoja was the first British settlement in the northern part of Nigeria and it rapidly developed in the 1860s as a result of the European economic activities and later, political activities, especially at the turn of the century. The town started as a cosmopolitan settlement which attracted people from various parts of what is now Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Europe (Mohammed 1984: 50).

The tribes that settled in Lokoja before the arrival of the white men included the Igala, the Bassa Nge, the Kakanda, the Oworo and the Yoruba, but owing to some unforeseen circumstances they migrated *en masse*. Most of the emigrants later returned, after the arrival of the white men. These tribes and the Hausas who joined them at that time are the main ethnic groups that lay claim to indigeneship of the town today.

The significance of the town is not only due to its geographical location as the confluence of Rivers Niger and Benue, but also to the historical fact that it was the first colonial administration capital of Northern Nigeria with rich tourist attractions. Today, Lokoja is the capital of Kogi State with a population of about 195,261, according to the 2006 national census. It is one of the seven LGAs in Kogi West Senatorial District. The major occupations of the people are farming, fishing and trading.

The beginning of Islam in Lokoja was traced to 1870 through the efforts of the Hausa and Nupe malams who came to settle in the town when the Etsu of Nupe, Masaba, appointed a chief for the town (ibid: 94). Prior to that time, and as early as 1830s, the villagers around the vicinity had started experiencing raids from the *jihadists* under Masaba, and both Panda and Koton Karfi to the northeast and north of Lokoja respectively had come in contact with Islam (ibid). Since that time, the religion has continued to spread across Lokoja and its environs and the percentage of the Muslims among the indigenes of the area, according to a local source, is put to about 85% of the total population.⁴

3. Categories of Muslims in Kogi State

a. Overview

The Sunni Muslims earlier referred to as the orthodox dominate the religious scene in the state. Other divisions that can be found are the Ahmadiyya and the Shia. The Ahmadiyya are found in major towns in Okunland, such as Ayetoro-Gbedde, Ayegunle-Gbedde, Iyamoye and Ogidi. They account for about 40% of the Muslim population in those areas. Shia is not known to Muslims in the state, except in few areas in Igalaland such as Anyigba where they represent only about 2% of the Muslims. Their secretive posture has made information about them rather inaccessible. By and large, the Sunnis could be said to account for about 95%, the Ahmadiyya for 4.5% and the Shia for .5% of the Muslim population in the state.

b. Sufi orders among the Sunnis in the state

According to B. Martin, between 1500 and 1800, perhaps between 60-80 percent of all Muslims in Egypt, North Africa and the Muslim portions of West Africa and East Africa

⁴ Per interview with Malam Tanko Talle, a secondary school principal, on 5 March 2011.

belonged to some Sufi order (Mohammed 1984: 231). The Muslim communities of Kogi State are not left out of this phenomenon .

The latter refers to the Ibrahim Niass branch of the Tijaniyya order. The two predominant Sufi orders in the state are the Tijaniyya and the Qadiriyya. However, the former outnumbers the latter for reasons given below:

When compared to the Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya presents simplified forms of litanies, prayers and exercise. It lays less emphasis on high intellectual attainment among the initiates. It, therefore, became easier for non-literate Muslims to adopt. This singular factor facilitated its spread among the non-literate Muslims (ibid: 240).

The Tijaniyya Sufi order emerged in some parts of the state in about the beginning of the 20th century. The emergence of Ibrahim Niass branch of the Tijaniyya order of Sufism further popularized the brotherhood in the area (ibid: 235). This led to what was referred to as Traditional Tijani and Reformed Tijani.

Lokoja, according to history, was the first town in the area to come in contact with the Tijaniyya order. Individuals like Malam Jiya, a Nupe from Bida have been identified with the introduction of the Sufi order in Lokoja, but the first Tijaniyya *zawiya* (Sufi centre) in the town was built at Kabawa quarters by Muhammad al-Bashir, the son of al-Hajj Umar, the founder of Tukolor Empire. This was after Al-Bashir was exiled to Lokoja by the British forces from Borno where he fought on the side of the deposed Sultan of Sokoto, Attahiru in 1903 (ibid: 252).

According to local source, Islam appears to have spread into other towns and villages around the confluence area largely through the concerted efforts of malams of the Tijaniyya order who used to visit these areas from Lokoja in order to teach the tenets of Islam and to establish Tijaniyya *zawiyas*.⁵

Today, Tijaniyya flourishes among Muslims in Lokoja and its environs through the efforts of *mukaddams* (supervisors; trustees) and Sufi leaders, most prominent among whom were Sheikh Yusuf Abdullahi (popularly known as Sheikh Yusuf Lokoja) and Sheikh Abubakar Shuaibu Kenchi. Hardly could one find a Muslim community in the environment that is not entrenched in Sufism and without at least a *mukaddam*. About 90% of the Muslims of Lokoja and its environs can be said to be of Tijaniyya order, 2% Qadiriyya, 1% Izala and the remaining 7% are neutral.⁶

The Tijaniyya brotherhood was introduced in Igalaland during the first decade of the 20th century by emigrant scholars most of whom either came from Lokoja or had some connections with the Tijaniyya in Lokoja. The first *mukaddam* of the order to build a *zawiya* at Dekina was Malam Muhammad Bello, a Hausa from Kano. One Malam Abu Keffi was responsible for the introduction of the order at Idah and Ankpa. The first *mukaddam* to establish a *zawiya* at Ankpa in the 1920s was Malam Muhammad Bello (Mohammed 1984: 266-67).

Most of the malam settlers in Igalaland were members of the Tijaniyya and since they were the ones who helped to establish Islam in the land, the Tijaniyya tendency reflected in the activities of followers. Hence in almost every mosque in Igalaland, Tijaniyya litanies are chanted. Though Qadiriyya is known there, it is not popular among them. A handful of

⁵ Interview with Malam Tanko Talle, see previous note.

⁶ Ibid.

Shiites are based in Anyigba Township, they are not active and Muslims are quick to distance themselves from them the moment they realize their dogmatic posture.⁷

Recently, a tiny group of Ahmadiyya (consisting about four people only) appeared in the area and made Ankpa their base from where they carry out their preaching activities at nearby villages such as Ikanekpo and Ogodu. They have not been able to win a single Muslim to their fold.⁸

The Tijaniyya account for about 90% of the Muslims in Igalaland, while Izala accounts for 2%, and neutral Muslims for the remaining 8%.

The Tijaniyya influence also came into Ebiraland through Lokoja. The first Tijaniyya Sheikh that visited Okene was Malam Tsoho from Zaria who during one of his stop-overs some time in the 1920s, was said to have initiated the ruler of the Ebira, Attah Ibrahim, into the order. Two personalities greatly identified with the spread of the Tijaniyya among the Ebira Muslim community were the late Abdulmalik (son of Attah Ibrahim) and Sheikh Ahmadu Rufai. Both of them first got acquainted with the order through the influence of Attah Ibrahim (Mohammed 1984: 271-72). Though there is a relatively large presence of Izala and *tabligh* groups (calling others to Allah) and a pocket size of Shia in Ebiraland, the Sunni Muslims represent about 85% of the entire Muslim populace, 80% of whom are Tijanis.⁹

As we earlier observed, Muslims are a minority group in Okunland, constituting only about 25% of the total population. Out of this percentage, about 60% of them are Sunni Muslims of which about 60% are Tijanis.

c. Relationships among the various Muslim categories

In spite of their differences, these categories of Muslims in the state are peacefully co-existing and the relations between them could best be described as cordial. Even in the most volatile part of the state, Ebiraland, where skirmishes occur on a regular basis between various clans and between political rivals, no clash was reported either between different categories of Muslims or between Muslims and non-Muslims in the recent past.

4. Education

a. Qur'anic schools

The traditional Qur'anic education is a system of education whereby Muslims, especially the young ones, learn the reading of the Qur'an and other basic books on Islam. The system is adopted in the entire Muslim world, Kogi State inclusive, with the view to inculcating Islamic education and values in the Muslim children from the cradle. The system has in recent times undergone several reforms which include allowing the pupils to sit on chairs in place of mats and skin hides and using of copies of the Quran in place of wooden tablets.

The the schools are scattered across the nooks and crannies of the Muslim communities in the state. Thus, while almost every quarter in Ankpa Township (in Igalaland) and Lokoja has

⁷ Per interviews with Abdulganiyu Musa, a teacher at an Islamic private school and M.A Student of Kogi State University, Anyigba, and with Malam Salisu Abubakar Abdullahi, a lecturer at Kogi State University, Anyigba and doctoral student, on 5 March and 8 March, 2011 respectively.

⁸ Per interviews with Alfa Salisu and Malam Suleiman Salih, both lecturers at Kogi State University, Anyigba, both interviewed on 7 March 2011.

⁹ Salih Jumuah Alaso, earlier mention

at least one Qur'anic school, the story is not the same in Kabba or Ogori townships where Christians are in the overwhelming majority.

In other words, the Qur'anic schools are mostly found in the Muslim dominated areas of the state, such as Lokoja and its environs, Igalaland, Ebiraland and the Bassa Nge community.

b. Islamiyya schools

The Islamiyya schools are an advanced level of Islamic educational system. Their emergence in the area under study was as a reaction to the offensives of the Christians whose missionaries dominated the provision of education at primary and secondary levels throughout the colonial period. Through the activities of the missionaries, there was the increasing inroad of Western culture into the people's tradition and beliefs. As a result, many Muslim children were converted to Christianity. In order to protect their religious interests, the Muslims reacted to the situation in various ways including reshaping their traditional approaches to the education of their children and organizing themselves for more effective propagation of Islam (Mohammed 1984: 377).

The first private Islamiyya school in the state was established at Okene in 1959 by an Ebira man, Sheikh Ahmad Rufai who was inspired by what he saw in Lagos in 1952 on his way to Kaolac. During his stop-over in Lagos, he witnessed the educational activities of the Ansarud-Deen society and determined to adopt a similar activity at home. His school was named Nurul Islam school. Some graduates of the school later went to study at the school for Arabic studies, Kano and College of Arts and Arabic studies, Sokoto. The Sheikh, in conjunction with the Muslim communities of Adavi-Odu and Okeneba-Ahache, later founded similar schools for their respective communities (ibid: 381-83).

The Islamiyya schools existed only in Ebiraland until 1963 when Alhaji Yusuf Abdullahi established his Ma'had which was the first in Lokoja zone. The first Islamiyya schools in Igalaland were opened in Idah in 1966. The schools which included Islamic nursery school, Islamiyya primary school and al-ma'had were established through the efforts of a Sudanese teacher, Muhammad Ali Hag El-nur with the financial and moral support of the Igala Muslim community (ibid: 385).

Thereafter, the Islamiyya schools spread across the state like fire in the bush. Unfortunately however, many of them could not stand the test of time as they folded up one after another due to financial constraints on the part of their proprietors who are either individuals (Muslim scholars) or communities. Following is the list of some Islamiyya schools now existing in the state:

School	Proprietor	Location	Standard ¹⁰
Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies	Sheikh Yusuf Abdullahi	Lokoja	Primary, I'dadiyyah and Thananwiyyah certificates (affiliated to ABU, Zaria)
Al-Iman Arabic College	Ahmad Zabadin	Ofugo	Primary, I'dadiyyah and Thananwiyyah certificates
Collage of Arabic and Islamic Studies	League of Imams and Alfas	Ankpa	Primary, I'dadiyyah and Thananwiyyah certificates
Dar-alarqam al-Ulya Arabic School	Lukman Imam Abdullahi	Okene	I'dadiyyah and Thanawiyah certificates (affiliated to ABU, Zaria)
Midag College of Arabic	Alhaji Ismail	Ayegunle-	Idadiyyah and Thanawiyah

¹⁰ I'dadiyyah and Thananwiyya Certificates are otherwise known as Junior and Senior Islamic Certificates.

and Islamic Studies	Abdullahi Jebe	Gbedde	certificates (affiliated to ABU, Zaria)
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The Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies of Sheikh Yusuf Abdullahi is discussed further in section 6.c below. It is pertinent to note that a good number of graduates of these schools further their studies in tertiary institutions in Nigeria and the Arab world. Some of them later became university dons, lawyers, judges, and accomplished Muslim scholars and preachers. However, only about 20 – 25 percent of students could pursue their education to the university either due to their inability to meet the admission requirements or due to financial constraints.

c. Government primary and secondary schools

In addition to the Islamiyya schools, federal, state and local governments as well as communities build primary and secondary schools across the state to eradicate illiteracy among the citizenry. Basic education is free and compulsory under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy introduced by federal government in 2004. Religious study is mandatory at the basic level while it is optional at secondary level.

Since the creation of Kogi State in 1991, the teaching of Arabic and Islamic studies has not fared well for reasons given below.

- a) Lack of qualified teachers to handle the two subjects effectively. The Arabic language is worst hit. In the case of Islamic studies, the discipline is being thrown to every Tom, Dick and Harry to handle as long as the person is literate and he is a Muslim.
- b) Appropriate textbooks for the teaching and learning of Arabic language are not available.
- c) The curriculum drawn up for Arabic language to be used in the primary and post primary institutions cannot be understood by most of our Arabic and Islamic studies teachers. This is because they are not versed or well-learned in the subject.
- d) Arabic language as a subject has not been made attractive to students to encourage them to continue with the subject up to WAEC level. They do not believe that doing so can guarantee them a safe landing in the Nigeria's job market (Bello: 2010). In addition, the traditional Arabic/Islamic schools now serving as Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Basic Education for Arabic (UBE) are not aided by government grants.

d. Tertiary education and the teaching of Arabic and Islamic Studies

At present, there are seven tertiary institutions in the state, namely:

Institution	Proprietor	Location
Kogi State University	Kogi State Government	Anyigba
Federal Polytechnic	Federal Government	Idah
Federal College of Education	Federal Government	Okene
Kogi State Polytechnic	Kogi State Government	Lokoja
Kogi State College of Education	Kogi State Government	Ankpa
Kogi State College of Education (Technical)	Kogi State Government	Kabba
Al-Hikmah College of Education	Mallam Sani Haroon and others	Ankpa

Of these seven institutions, Arabic and Islamic studies are offered at four, namely Kogi State University, Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa and Al-Hikmah College of Education, Ankpa. Students obtain National Certificate of Education (NCE) at the three Colleges of Education, while they can obtain B.A, M.A and Ph.D. in Arabic or Islamic Studies at the Kogi State University. In recent times, the number of students seeking admission to read the twin-disciplines have increased, and students and lecturers are mainly from Kogi, Kwara and Oyo states.

It is also worthy of note that though Kogi State has a Sharia Court of Appeal, it has no College of Islamic Legal Studies making it one of the few northern states not to have one.

5. Politics and government in Kogi State

a. Traditional rulerships

The traditional rulership is part and parcel of the Nigerian political life. The traditional ruler is appointed by the government who also presents him/her with staff of office. Traditional rulers are paramount rulers in their domains and their reign is terminated either by death or dethronement by government. Though powerful and influential, the laws however place them under their Local Government Chairmen. Traditional rulers are graded, based on the historical significance of their domains. Hence, we have grades one, two and three chiefs in the traditional council.

Lokoja traditional council is headed by the Maigari of Lokoja, Igala traditional council by the Attah of Igala who is based in Idah, the Ebira traditional council by the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland based in Okene and the Okun traditional council by the Obaro of Kabba who is based in Kabba township. The first three councils are traditionally headed by Muslims while the last one; Okun council is traditionally headed by a Christian.

b. Muslims in electoral office

Muslims in the state participate actively in the democratic politics. A good example of this is the fact that the first and the second elected governors of the state, Alhaji Abubakar Audu and Alhaji Ibrahim Idris respectively were Muslims. (Another fact worthy of mention here is that the two governors earlier mentioned are from Igalaland. This is a pointer to the numerical and political strength of the Igala zone.) A review of the current holders of elected offices in the state as at March 2011 (before the April elections) reveals the following:

The Governor is a Muslim, though the Deputy Governor is a Christian;

17 out of 25 of the members of the House of Assembly are Muslims;

6 out of 21 of the Local Government Chairmen are Muslims;

1 out of three of the Senators is a Muslim;

4 out of 9 of the members of the House of Representatives are Muslims.

There is a lot of very active party politics in Kogi State, but party affiliations are not based on ethnic or religious backgrounds – they cut across both.

As I have earlier expressed, the current governor and many other top political office holders are Muslims, but they do not pursue any Muslim agenda in most cases.

c. Muslim-oriented state institutions

There are two official parastatals created exclusively for Muslim affairs, namely the Sharia Court of Appeal which is established mainly to serve the judicial needs of the Muslims in the northern part of Nigeria and the state Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board.

The Sharia Court of Appeal hears appeals from the Area Courts in cases involving Islamic personal law. Appeals from the Area Courts in other cases go either to the Customary Court of Appeal or the High Court. The Sharia Court of Appeal is headed by a Grand Kadi and supported by other Muslim judges appointed by the Governor.

The Pilgrims Board is headed by a Chairman who is assisted by an Executive Secretary and other board members. It coordinates *hajj* matters each year for pilgrims from Kogi State.

6. Muslim non-governmental organizations and personalities in Kogi State

There are a good number of Muslim organizations working for the progress of Islam and spiritual upliftment of Muslims in the state. They cut across sexes and ages; youths, students and women associations spread throughout the state, especially in the Muslim dominated areas. They could be categorized into two i.e. primary organizations and umbrella organizations.

a. Primary organizations

These are created mostly by religiously zealous individuals or groups of youths to propagate the religion and protect and promote the interest of the Muslims.

One of such associations is the Okun Muslim Youths Council based in Tudunwada Kaduna. The Council was formed in 1995 by some youths from the Okun community living outside their state (Kogi) to propagate Islam across the Okun community. The group is funded with donations and contributions made by its members and well-wishers.¹¹

Another one is Al-Adabiyah Society founded by Alhaji Lukman Imam who combines lecturing at Federal College of Education, Okene with *da'wah* activities. He is based in Okene and his *da'wah* is based on anti-Sufism.

b. Umbrella organizations

There are a number of umbrella organizations that are active in the state. Following are some of them:

Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI). JNI was formed in Kaduna in 1947 by the late Sardauna of Sokoto, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello. It was active and influential in all parts of northern Nigeria. However, the society has lost its influence in some parts of the region (Kogi State inclusive) to some upcoming societies.

Ansar-ud Deen Society of Nigeria. This society is active in the Yoruba-speaking areas of the state (Okunland). It is involved in establishing primary and secondary schools.

Egbe Obirin Alasalatu (Okunland). This women association is very active in Okunland. It was first introduced in Ayetoro-Gbede in 1957 by Alhaji Mahmood Ajao Jimba, an Ilorin itinerant scholar. It later spread to the nooks and crannies of Okunland.

National Council of Muslim Youth Organizations (NACOMYO). This national youth association is an effective tool for the unity of the Muslim youths across Nigeria. This very active association organizes seminars and workshops for Muslim youths across the state. The state branch Chairman, Malam Suleiman Dansofo lives in Anyigba.

Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN). FOMWAN is an association that speaks for Muslim women nation-wide. It consists of Muslim women of

¹¹ Per interview with Hamzah Iliyasu, an active member of the council, interviewed in Ilorin on 2 March 2011.

different ranks and classes; the rich and the poor, the influential and the ordinary. The association is very active and influential in the state.

Kogi State Council of Ulama. This association is perhaps the mega-voice of the Muslim scholars in the state. Its membership consists of old and young Muslim scholars, lawyers, judges and government officials. The association is very active and influential and it possesses power to penetrate governments of the state. It is based in the state capital, Lokoja.

Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN). This is an association that is controlled by the Muslim students. It organizes lectures and seminars for its teeming members in secondary schools, tertiary institutions and universities across the country. It is very strong and active in the state.

c. Some notable scholars in the state

The state is blessed with some scholars of note too numerous to count. Because of time constraints, we shall treat only three of them in brief. The selection of scholars is, firstly, based on their prominence & popularity. Secondly, the selection was based to ensure the variety of disciplines, focusing on a Sufi leader, a Grand Khad and a chief imam. Finally, the three individuals also differ along the boundaries of ethnicity and senatorial boundaries, i.e. one Nupe Man and one Ebira man (both from Kogi central) and an Igala man from Kogi North.

Sheikh Yusuf Abdullahi. Sheikh Yusuf, popularly known as Sheikh Yusuf Lokoja, was born in 1916 at Bagana in Igalaland to a family of Nupe extraction (Tahir 2005). At the age of four, his parents moved down to settle at Lokoja and at the age of eight he was enrolled at Sheikh Abubakar Qur'anic School in Lokoja. He committed the whole Qur'an into memory at a tender age at Sheikh Asafa Qur'anic school where he also read some basic books on Islamic studies. He later studied under different scholars and Sufis in Lokoja.

Sheikh Yusuf was initiated into the Tijaniyya order by Sheikh Abdullahi Haruna in Lokoja in 1949. In 1959, he visited Sheikh Niass in Senegal who granted him *ijazah* (permission) to confer *muqaddamship* on his followers. He has travelled extensively in Nigeria, West Africa and the Arab world. He has visited Kaolac in Senegal, Ghana, Mali, Republic of Benin, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Morocco.

Sheikh Yusuf is versed in Arabic and Islamic studies. He is a prolific writer with more than 100 prose and versified works on various aspects of human endeavour especially Sufism. His major achievement is his school, Markaz at-Ta'lim al-Araby wal'Islamy (Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies) which he established in Lokoja in 1963. The College, which is an affiliate of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, offers Senior Islamic Studies Certificate (SIS), an equivalent of WAEC, NECO or GCE. The College is attended by students from various parts of the country especially Kogi, Kwara and Niger States. Most of the graduates of the College later proceeded to university and graduate to become judges, lawyers, university dons, imams and preachers.

Honourable Justice Yunus Abdullahi (Rtd). Sheikh Yunus Abdullahi, popularly known as Ustadh Yunus Abdullahi, was born at Okene in 1941. He attended Qur'anic school in Okene and completed the learning of the Quran at a very tender age. He later attended Ebira Primary School, Okene 1947-1954. Between 1955-1958, he studied at Markaz at-Ta'lim' al-Araby al-Islamy of Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilory in Agege, Lagos. He later on bagged his LL.B. in Sharia Law from Bayero University, Kano (Salisu 2009).

Ustadh Yunus joined the services of the then Kwara State Sharia Court of Appeal where he rose to the rank of Deputy Grand Kadi, a position he held until 1991 when Kogi State was

created. He was immediately appointed the Grand Kadi of the new state, an office he held until he retired from public service in 2006.

Justice Yunus is highly learned in Islamic law and well versed in Arabic and Islamic Studies. He is an outstanding Arabic poet with an unpublished *Diwan* (collection of poems) to his credit. In addition, he has a number of published books on various aspects of Islamic law and public lectures in both Arabic and English languages. The Justice is an orator who has contributed immensely towards the upliftment of Islam through his thought-provoking public lectures.

Sheikh Salman Adam. Sheikh Salman was born at Enabo in 1947. He was brought up under his grandfather, Alhaji Mohammed Adaji until he attained the school age (Yakubu 2008). He studied the Holy Qur'an and the basics of Arabic and Islamic Studies under the tutelage of Malam Ja'faru at Ankpa and later under Malam Mijiyawa at Dekina. He studied at Markaz at-Ta'lim al-Araby wal'Islamy, Lokoja from where he proceeded to the School for Arabic Studies (SAS), Kano and later to Bayero University, Kano where he graduated in 1975. He also studied at the Islamic University, Madina 1980-1984.

Sheikh Salman is highly knowledgeable in the field of Islamic Studies and versed in preaching methodology. He was a civil servant before he resigned his appointment in 1996 when he was appointed the Chief Imam of Ankpa, the most populated Muslim town in Igalaland. He is the proprietor of Islamic Centre and College of Art, Science and Islamic Studies, both in Ankpa. He championed the completion of the Ankpa Central Mosque and *da'wah* activities in Ankpa town and its environs.

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