The Role of Islam in Community-Trade in Coastal Yoruba-land

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Abstract
Religion has historically played an important role in providing socio-economic benefits in many Yoruba-speaking areas. However, the contribution of religion in community trade is insufficiently recognized and mapped. In the same vein, trade had played an important role in the introduction and spread of Islam in Coastal Yoruba-land. This interconnectivity of Islam and trade in the land therefore deserved to be studied, as hardly could one be divorced of the other. The objectives of this paper therefore are: to carry out a systematic assessment of the role of religion in community-trade in coastal Yoruba-speaking area with particular reference to Islam and to examine the community-trade factor in the spread of Islam in the region. Efforts to document and analyze the contribution of religion in community-trade in coastal Yoruba-land are necessary in order to increase the recognition of religion and spirituality in public domain.

Keywords: *Religion, Islam, Coastal, Yoruba-land, Trade*

Introduction

Coastal Yoruba-land lies between latitudes 6º and 6º30'N and longitude 2º3' and 6ºE (Ajetunmobi,p. 289) 2012. It covers Badagry to the West, Lekki lagoon and Niger delta to the East, Lagos Island and few settlements to the South, as well as Ijebu and Egba settlements to the North (Mabogunje, p. 25) 2003. Traditional Yoruba coastal region is situated within the coastal region of the Atlantic Ocean. The region comprises of creeks, lagoons, swamps and islands with some communities having access to freshwater while others share boundaries with the seawater of the Atlantic Ocean. The geographic setting of the region ensures that certain trade such as canoe making, fishing, mat weaving, salt production, basketry, coconut oil production, and farming thrive in the region. Opportunities for games, the security from attack provided by the rivers, swamps, lagoons, creeks, and islands accounted for migration into coastal Yoruba region.

Given that in the 19th century when other Yoruba communities were experiencing incessant wars, coastal Yoruba community was witnessing prosperity in trade - which is not unconnected to the effects of the Atlantic slave trade and the expansionist policy of certain neighbouring regions(Tijani, p. 178) 2005. In the same vein, trade had played an important role in the introduction and spread of Islam in Coastal Yoruba-land. This interconnectivity of Islam and trade in the land, therefore, deserved to be studied, as hardly could one be divorced from the other. Efforts to document and analyze the contribution of religion in community-trade in coastal Yoruba-land are necessary to increase the recognition of religion and spirituality in the public domain and to establish a stronger understanding of religious practices within the communities as they affect the region.

This paper seeks to contribute to the meagre literature on coastal Yoruba-land by providing the role of Islam in community-trade in the area. Coastal Yoruba-land makes an interesting case to explore the role of Islam in community-trade for many reasons. Coastal Yoruba-land was continuously occupied by various sub-ethnic groups even before the British colonization of the area. The increase in the number of population is basically the result of series of migrations from Yoruba hinterland and surrounding West African communities. In the same vein, trade had played an important role in the introduction and spread of Islam in Coastal Yoruba-land. Religion has historically played an important role in providing socio-economic benefits in many Yoruba-speaking areas. However, the contribution of religion in community trade is insufficiently recognized and mapped. There have been a number of studies on Coastal Yoruba-land, most of which have, mainly, focused on history, migration,

and socio-political development of the people in the region (e.g. Ajayi, Ajetunmobi, & Akindele, 1998; Ajetunmobi, 2012; Ajetunmobi, 2003; Tijani, 2005).

1. Introduction and Growth of Islam in Coastal Yoruba Towns

Different studies on Islam in Yoruba-land have not been able to give a specific date of the entry of Islam into the region. However, there is sufficient evidence to believe that Islam spread to Coastal Yoruba-land in the early years of the nineteenth century (Moloney, p. 603) 1890. Embracing another religion in a domain in which the whole people practiced Yoruba traditional religion implied -that the early converts to the new religion were few, and so had to practice Islam in secret. The individuals who converted to Islam in its initial days in Yoruba-land were supposedly travelers who came to the area. In any case, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the religion had spread to the niches and crevices of the territory (Gbadamosi, p. 20) 1978.

The spread of Islam in Yoruba-land has been sufficiently researched by scholars. However, it is important in this study to examine the fast pace of the advancement of Islam in the territory with a view to understanding the level of interaction that exists between Islam and Yoruba religion. Islam spread to the Yoruba through the northern part of Nigeria as a result of extensive trading contacts with the Hausa Muslim traders and vagrant Islamic preachers from Hausa-land. Some of these traders and preachers were said to have remained behind in Yoruba-land with the sole point of converting the Yoruba to Islam. Aside from that, Islam flourished in the Coastal regions of Yoruba-land, for example, Lagos, Epe, and Badagry, and in addition through trade connections with other regions in West Africa. Apparently, before the end of the eighteenth century, Yoruba Muslims had ended up harbingers of the religion to different zones past the fringes of present-day southwestern Nigeria (Parrinder, p. 25) 1967.

Furthermore, given an account of Islam in the Coastal Yoruba-land, Moloney (1890: 599) notes that:

> The Niger has been and continues to be the high road from the north and east of Mohammedanism (sic), and its active pioneers towards the western coast of Africa have been the Fulanis or Fulatahs, and the Kambaris who have in the past overrun much of the country, and have succeeded in contracting the area of Yoruba-land. Among Lagos Mohammedans (sic), for whom I entertain a great respect, there is found the usual sympathy for their co-religionists, which extends with a reverential affection to Ilorin which they view as their local Mecca, and with which they have constant communication, either via Abeokuta, Isehin, Oyo, and Ogbomoso, or by Atijere, Ode-Ondo, Ilesa, and Ila.

Moloney (1890) further observed that Islam was brought into Lagos around 1816, during the reign of Oshiloku, who was the eighth Oba of Lagos; there were then numerous *sheikhs* found among the Muslim community. Around 1836, when civil war broke out, the Muslims fled under one Idris Daha to the town of Ibi, where they stayed until they were welcomed back to Lagos by King Akintoye in 1840. From that point forward, Islam spread quickly and Muslims were regarded as an organized, scholarly, and respectable class of citizens. Quite a number of them were also from the tribes of Yoruba, however, the prominent men among them were the Hausa and Bornu people groups. In addition, Moloney placed the number of Muslims at that time at around 15,000. This shows a remarkable improvement in the number of the Muslim population in the region based on the fact that Moloney quoted Burton's (1863) work which put the Muslim population at around 700 to 800.

Sanni (1995) describes how Islam in the coastal Yoruba region by the end of the thirteenth/nineteenth century, could speak of indigenous Islamic scholars who are well versed in Arabic. Also, among the chieftains in the region who had accepted Islam, some of them urged their children to go to the Arab world for studies. A good example is that of 'Isa ShittaBey who came back from al-Azhar, Cairo, in 1915. Sanni also notes that some Arab scholars, some of whom were merchants by occupation, for instance, Sharif 'Abdal-Karim al-Muradi (d. 1926) from Lebanon voyaged around the west Coast of Africa and was in Lagos, the heartland of Yoruba-land, around 1890. Many locals studied under him. It has been observed that travels of the Arab nationals

led to the circulation of printed Arabic materials. Shaykh Ali bn Muhammad al-Mekkawi who was from Morocco and had been to Makkah had earlier visited Lagos in 1860 to preach Islam in the area and its suburbs. Moreover, Sharif aided in the arrangement of various Islamic societies which later took up the challenge of advancing Islamic culture among the coastal Muslims who at that time have started experiencing challenges posed by Christian evangelism that accompanied colonization.

Another Lebanese, Muhammad Mustafa al-Shami, not just established an Arabic school for the locals at Lagos in 1904, he likewise, wrote an Introductory Arabic-reading material, *Miftah al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah*(Reichmuth, p. 15) 1996. The wonderful dissemination of Islamic sciences and consequently of Arabic dialect among the Yoruba made the Arabic language a status symbol of the learned and the most widely used language of the scholarly, and basically the only means of communication among the ethnic West African people group, including the Yoruba (Murray, p. 18) 1967;(Sanni, p. 434) 1995.

According to Gbadamọsi (1972), in areas where it is hard to get indigenous and well-recognized individuals to lead the Muslims, certain expedients were depended on. Any outstanding itinerant preacher who had captivated the community was often prevailed upon by the Muslim community to stay and lead the group as an Imam. Another practicality was to achieve some type of working concurrence with a nearby Muslim community which had in some way or another succeeded with regards to getting an Imam. This might take the form of neighboring Muslims coming to have Friday jumat prayers at the town where the Imam is based. This was the approach of a coastal area like Epe where for most of the nineteenth Century, Muslims inside a span of somewhere in the range of 10 miles frequently went for prayers in Epe on Fridays and on celebration days. The approach, according to Gbadamosi may likewise be that the Imam or a prominent Islamic scholar with him would visit and lead the prayers at some fixed times and offer his services as an educator to willing students (Gbadamọsi, p. 231) 1972. These expediences did help the communities in Coastal Yoruba-land to overcome difficult periods in the eighteenth century, but not without some negative effects. Basically, among the negative effects identified are the low level of education for a long period, reliance on other communities, replica of organizations, and Muslim spirit of co-operation. However, it also led some keen Muslims to send their wards or themselves to some nearby well-known centres of Islamic culture and learning e.g. Ilorin, Iwo, Epe, Lagos in order to acquire the necessary religious education of importance to their community. Many were involved all over Yoruba-land which further shows the significant contributions of Coastal Yoruba-land (Gbadamọsi, p. 233) 1972.

In spite of the fact that Islam, was at a point seen in Yoruba communities as a status thing, the reputation of the Muslims was of a different kind as it portends a lifestyle which guaranteed both individual pride and economic welfare and more importantly ensures shared communal life than the Christian missionaries can promise. It is pertinent to state here that the Yoruba Muslims for quite a while did not share the educational and expert interests of the Christians, given the consistent development of Islam in Yoruba-land and the essential role played by Muslim traders and titled chiefs in numerous Yoruba towns. The large Muslim community, for instance, was bit by bit drawn into skirmishes and pressures between the Government, the educated Christian elite, and the native Chiefs (Reichmuth, p. 28) 1996. It was also observed that before other Muslim groups, the Muslims in Lagos began to partake in the competition for business and government jobs. This, however, made them more mindful of their impeded educational disadvantaged position, unlike the Christians who controlled the vast majority of the schools. This awareness, joined with a developing reformist inclination among more youthful educated Muslims, at long last, served as the groundwork for the establishment of associations which were to give Western training to Muslim children. So, right from the 1920s and 1930s, the associations spread among Yoruba Muslims in various parts of the nation, giving them an entirely distinct character (Reichmuth, p. 15) 1996.

Furthermore, Coastal Yoruba-land specifically Lagos served as a main port and trading point which began as an entry port of the slave business and which at the end turned into the colonial capital. Lagos, it has been argued, was

not a usual nineteenth century Yoruba town (Mann, p. 38) 1985. Its concentration on trade and its cosmopolitan can be said to be more grounded than in any other part of Yoruba-land. In addition, the Muslim community in Lagos took an alternate development route when compared to those in the Yoruba hinterland, for it was exposed earlier to international trade than some other Muslim community in Nigeria and to the effect of direct British rule.

From its modest beginning, among Muslim travelers and traders from the north (mostly Hausa, Kanuri, and Nupe) who came as slaves or warriors in the late eighteenth century, the Muslim community was allowed to hold its first Friday prayer in 1841 (Fisher, 1963; Folami, 1982; Gbadamosi, p. 36) 1978. The Muslims had found the support of Oba Kosoko, one of the influential rulers of the town who later became King in 1845. However, despite his battle against the British and his native rivals, Islam under him and his successors won increasing followers so that by 1891, around 44% of the Lagos populace and harbor were Muslims. Islamic scholars and preachers from Ilorin and further north paid regular visits to the Muslims, some staying perpetually as Imams, Mufassirs, or Mu'alim(Reichmuth, p. 26) 1996. Historically speaking, the migration of Oba Kosoko to Epe in 1851 made Islam to flourish in the area. Kosoko was followed by many of his brave warriors and this made the new settlers (Eko-Epe) more powerful than the host community (Ijebu-Epe). By implication, the traditional religious practices of the host community began to dwindle with the settlement of the Eko-Epe in the area. Within a very short period, Epe became a prominent Muslim town that it earns the epithet EpeOnikurani (Epe, the possessor of the Qur'an). In the opinion of Balogun (2011), the spread of Islam in the coastal region was facilitated by the eastern trade route which "ran from Ilorin to Ekiti, and passed Owo, Akure and Ondo and from there to Lagos – also touched Epe, Makun, Ajitere, Ijebu and other places." The consolidation of Islam in Epe was responsible for the spread of Islam to other coastal districts like Odo-Egiri, Ibonwon and OdoRagunsen. It is on record that one BadiruAdebogun sojourned in Epe for many years for the purpose of learning a trade under one SuleFolami of OkeBalogun in Epe. There, he became a Muslim and when he eventually returned home, he started spreading Islam in the district (Balogun, p. 54) 2011.

The growth and development Coastal Yoruba Muslims were also secured by the arrival of freed slaves from Sierra Leone and Brazil who started to settle in Lagos from around 1840 (Gbadamosi, p. 34) 1978; (Mann, p. 40) 1985. The Saro (from Sierra Leone) and the Aguda or Amaro (from Brazil) were for the most part regarded as the descendants of the Yoruba-speaking communities. Both Christian and Muslim converts can be found among them. They contributed significantly as merchants, traders, and artisans in the towns. The Muslim Saro and Aguda built their own mosques in the town. Being less secluded from the town populace than the rising Christian educated elite, they became instrumental to business and educational development of the Muslim communities. Like other Sarotraders, they were able to get through the solid business control of the local chiefs and traders and to build up a direct link to the Yoruba and Nupe hinterland up to the Niger. The most noticeable Muslim Saro trader, Muhammad ('William') Shitta (d. 1895) (Euba, 1971-72; Gbadamosi, 1978), was given the title of a SerikiMusulumi (Head of the Muslims). He became the *de facto* political authority of the Lagos Muslims, displacing the Chief Imams as counselor of the Oba. Shitta was the sole financier in rebuilding the Central Mosque in 1873 and later built his own mosque which was formally opened on the 5th July 1894 with the British Governor as the Honourable Guest. A leading British Muslim, who was based in the Liverpool, William Henry Abdullah Quilliam, led the ceremony. In his capacity, he also represented the Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II and conferred upon Shitta the title of a Bey of the Ottoman Empire (Euba, 1972-74; Gbadamosi, 1978). He likewise urged the Muslims to ensure modem learning for their children. The event stamped both the British and the global Islamic acknowledgment of the Coastal Yoruba-land Muslims, in a time of pressure and battles between the Government and the Yoruba states in the hinterland. Still, around the same time, ShittaBey and other Muslim leaders formally requested for the establishment of an Islamic court in Lagos. In spite of the fact that the Governor declined this demand, he was willing to recognize ShittaBey as a Judge for the Muslims (Euba, 1971-72). The Coastal Yoruba Muslims' position was

further valued with the establishment of the Government Muslim Schools in Lagos (1896), Epe (1898) and Badagry (1899) (Gbadamosi, p. 95) 1967; (Gbadamosi, p. 50) 1978.These schools which taught Western education alongside Islamic subjects were managed by the Muslim communities themselves and received wide acceptance (Reichmuth, p. 23) 1996.

2. Muslims and Community Trade Activities in the Coastal Yoruba-land

Ever before the advent of the colonial master in Yoruba-land, the Hausa communities most of whom were Muslims had engaged in commercial activities with the Yoruba who were mostly farmers. The Hausa traders used to buy kolanut from the Yoruba farmers and before long they started establishing their camps at different locations in Yoruba-land. The spirit of accommodation of the Yoruba, coupled with the fertile land with which they are endowed hastened the settlement of the Hausa who used the opportunity to practice their religion without any hindrance from their hosting communities. The large heart of the Yoruba equally made them to voluntarily accept Islam from the Hausa and Fulani communities living around them. The Yoruba were so accommodating that they allowed their visitors (the Hausa) to farm on their land. According to Tijani (2008), the Hausa had to add farming to their trading activities because Islam attaches much reward to farming as a profession and for them to feed their wives who were mainly in purdah.

It needs to be mentioned that the Hausa community in the coastal Yoruba-land first settled in Ota among the Awori people – the Yoruba group which constitutes the bulk of the indigenous population of seventeen out of the twenty Local Government Areas of Lagos State as at the year 2003 (enroutr.ng/art-an-culture/facts-about-the-awori-people). Also, Ago Awusa (Hausa camp) was said to have been located between Epe and Itokun in Lagos State and the place is now being referred to as Alausa in Ikeja, Lagos (Tijani, p. 176) 2008. By its nature, the coastal region also attracted international traders particularly those who combined preaching with trade. One Muhammad ibn Muhammad, a Muslim missionary, was said to have arrived in Lagos from SeidOkuba in Sham (Damascus) and this attracted many other travellers and traders at Kano to visit Lagos (Balogun, p. 60) 2011.

Although the coming of the colonialists adversely affected the spread of Islam in what is now called Nigeria, it was a blessing in disguise on the other hand. With the establishment of colonialism, the colonialists embarked on rapid link of the North and the South through rail. The completion of Ibadan – Kano railway in 1912 facilitated the movement of grains, groundnuts, sheep, goats, cattle and potash by the Hausa and Fulani of the North into Yoruba-land. The Hausa also embarked on transportation of kolanut and the European goods to the North.

Apart from the above, Tijani (2013) observed that there were seasonal migrant traders and labourers who migrated to coastal and other Yoruba towns during the dry season for droning and trading. This led to the multiplicity of the Hausa in Yoruba-land and facilitated the emergence of many Hausa communities in the area. Such Hausa communities consequently started appointing leaders among themselves in line with the teaching of Islam which requests that whenever the Muslims found themselves as a group, they should appoint from themselves a leader. As such, the first SakinGambari (Hausa leader) of Agege was appointed by the Ikeja Native Authority in 1934. The appointment of leaders in the Hausa communities in the Yoruba coastal region was helpful in the stability of commercial activities between the Hausa communities and their hosts. Without signing any documents, the Hausa cattle traders sold on credit to Yoruba butchers, while millions of pounds of kolanut were collected from the Yoruba kolanut farmers and transported to the North through chain of intermediaries. The trade became flourished that many agents and workers emerged and made their livelihood from there. Explaining this, Tijani (2013: 176) writes:

> The kolanut landlords also provide packaging services. They employed skilled workers to pack the nuts in baskets, covered with special leaves and tied with ropes that were either bought from the Hausa rope makers in the Sabo communities in Yoruba-land or bought from the North. The packers were about two shillings paid for each basket they packed. The chief packer gives his assistance (sic) six pence, while the

> landlord pays the measure…. Different Hausa people serve as porters of the nuts to and from the packer houses to the lorry for transportation to the north.

In the recent time, there happens a new development in the community trade activities of the Hausa in Yoruba-land generally and coastal region in particular. In the first instance, many towns in Yoruba-land have commenced operating *kara* markets where the Hausa, Fulani and other tribes from the North trade in cattle bring their cattle to sell every market day. The communities where such *Kara* markets are cited generate huge revenues from the markets, as they collect taxes not only from the cattle brought to the market, but also from the vehicles that brought the cattle and from other shops in the markets. This development marks a deviation from the previous practice of mass importation of cattle to the coastal Yoruba-land by the Hausa and Fulani during the Ileya festival only. In addition, Solaja, Atolagbe and Soyewo (2013), observed the roles of the Hausa in some grocery products like tomato, onions and pepper. It is apposite here to cite the response of a respondent to an interview conducted by the researchers in respect of the impacts of the Hausa traders in some of the Yoruba markets on the development of local grocery markets in Yoruba-land:

> Sincerely, Hausa traders have been very active in this market in terms of the supply chain; they ensure that grocery goods are available at any point in time. Even when it seems that grocery goods are relatively scarce in other markets they still ensure that Mile 12 market have the supply of goods for customers. I would say that without Hausa traders in this market there will be nothing like Mile 12 because, grocery goods that we produce here in Southwest are not adequate enough to feed the seventeen million people in Lagos State alone talk less of other states in Southwest… by so doing, Hausa traders have contributed so much to the growth of local grocery markets in Lagos State and Nigeria at large.

The impact of the Hausa traders could also be felt in the recent hike in the price of commodities by the time the Boko Haram's activities did not allow traders to transport their goods from the North. Not this alone, the Yoruba had bad experience of tomato scarcity when there was no supply of it from the Hausa traders due to tomato ebola which erupted in the Northern part of the country. This is to say that the Yoruba depend extensively on Hausa products that they find it difficult to feed themselves without farm products from the North. One also wonders why yams are imported from the North to Yoruba-land during the dry season. This gives the impression that the Hausa farmers have developed a means of preserving their farm products which they now sell out to the Yoruba during the dry season. This is to say therefore that community-trade in coastal Yoruba-land has affected farming as a major profession of the people. The region which is supposed to be the food basket of the nation has therefore been reduced to importers of food crops and cannot feed itself any longer. The natural endowment of fertile farmland coupled with abundant rainfall and swamps in the coast which could have been explored to farm all year round, has now been rendered useless in the name of trading with other neighbouring tribes at the expense of agriculture.

3. Islam's Influence on social, economic and traditional life of the coastal Yoruba societies

The increasing number of Muslims in Coastal Yoruba-land which by 1908 was around 60% of the populace prompted a close relationship between the Muslim leaders and the local chiefs. In fact, most of the prominent chiefs became Muslims themselves. However, some of them were said to have stopped practicing the religion as soon as they received the coveted office (Cole, p. 36) 1975;(Gbadamosi,p.55) 1978. Still, the Ilu Committee which performed important community functions such as self-government and social welfare and which included representatives from the communities' mosques turned out to be overwhelmingly Muslims. It was through this advisory committee which served as an intermediary between the local chieftains and the populace that Islam started to play a pivotal part in Coastal Yoruba-land politics. This further snowballed into Muslim leaders becoming members of the Central Native Council which was set up in 1900 (Cole, p. 37) 1975; (Reichmuth, p. 56) 1996.

From a social perspective, extensive Islamic conversion in Coastal Yoruba-land prompted the improvement of neo-traditional musical performed during naming, wedding and burial service functions, Islamic occasions, and ceremonies denoting the arrival of pilgrims from Hajj (Waterman, 1988). Among the prominent genre is *wákà,* distinctively sung by women and often supplemented by beaten *séli* or *pérésékè,* flat tin discs with metal rings appended. *Were* or *ajísáàri* ("waking for the morning supper" or what the Muslims call "*sahur*") was performed amid the early morning hours of the Ramadan fasting period by gatherings of young fellows connected with neighborhood mosques. *Wákà* and *Were* are connected with the development and high status of Islam in traditional Lagos and with the continued relevance of socioeconomic systems connecting the Yoruba to predominantly Muslim communities in the northern hinterland (Waterman, 1988). Likewise, *sákárà* was related by urban Yoruba with Muslim settings, entertainers, and supporters, and regarded as a deep traditional Yorubá musical genre. Components of *sákárà* tune style are also said to be connected with Islamic cantillation i.e. high vocal strain, nasality, microtonal ornamentation, and melisma (Euba, p. 25) 1967; (Thieme, p. 34) 1967.

According to Waterman (1988), the blossoming of *sákárà* after 1914 was firmly connected with the improvement of new patterns of urban Muslim social identity. Numerous Lagosians were proselytes to Islam, and the Muslim populace of Lagos was constantly increased by migrants from the Nigerian hinterland, who additionally had a tendency to maintain traditional values and patterns of behavior to a large degree than their Christian counterparts. This led to the 1920s witnessing the beginning of modern Islamic voluntary societies such as Ansar-ud-Din, Nawar-ud-Din. The societies were dedicated to the provision of educational needs of Muslim children. These societies included Western-educated Muslims from the Saro and Brazilian communities and gave an institutional structure for collaboration among African Muslims. In addition, they were a pivotal source of support for *sákárà* specialists, who performed at associations and societies Hajj festivities, Islamic celebrations, naming functions weddings, and funerals (Waterman, 1988). Among the early *sákárà* stars is AbibuOluwa known as oniwáàsi (The Preacher) who was able to build stable support by creating a style that attracted a diverse African Muslim populace (Waterman, p. 235) 1988.

Examining the role of Islam in Coastal Yoruba-land trading, it is indeed striking that throughout the history of Islamic expansion in Coastal Yoruba-land, there were no military or political conversions, conversion to Islam can be said to be primarily voluntary. This is consistent with the view that individuals found it in their interest to convert, most probably in their economic interest to do so. This may be because Islam afforded many institutional advantages for trade. As Cohen (1971) notes that Islam appears to be a blueprint of a politico-economic organization which has overcome the many basic technical problems of the trade. This is why indigenous traders became Muslims in order to partake in the moral community of other traders. Islam in the Coastal Yoruba-land through trade provided a way of making outsiders, insiders. This was done by providing a structure binding upon individuals of different groups with otherwise non-binding institutional structures and also greatly expanded the size of potential trading networks. All these can be regarded as ways of providing an improved institutional structure in which trade could take place (Rodinson, p. 86) 1973;(Udovitch, p. 71) 1970.

Furthermore, the fact that Islam is a religion and not merely a set of secular institutions may have affected trade in Coastal Yoruba-land. This is because Islam has a built-in sanction which contributed to considerable self-enforcement of contracts. A true follower of the religion has a deeper interest in holding to the terms of contracts even if the opportunity to cheat presents itself.

Finally, the coming of Muslim traders to Coastal Yoruba-land marked the emergence of an alternative spiritual healing system. The use of charms and talisman in form of *tira* and *hantu* was used to substitute the traditional healing system, as Muslim clerics were being patronized not only by the Muslims, but non-Muslims as well. Those who had the knowledge of traditional healing but converted to Islam, 'Islamised' the system by incorporating both the traditional and the so-called Islamic healing systems to treat their clients. Thus, the practice of syncretism became imminent in the Islamic

healing system. Illustrating the practice with methods of interpreting dreams by some Muslim clerics, Abubakre (2004) submits that some Muslim clerics adopt the Yoruba system of *ojuwiwe*to interpret the dream of anyone who comes to them for help with interpretations. This takes the form of using traditional methods of grinding and mixing herbs and then applying to incisions on the cheeks and below the eyes. They are also seen making medicinal concoctions to avert the negative effect of the dream narrated to them by their clients.

4. Conclusion

In the study of the role of Islam in Coastal Yoruba-land, three main points emerged. First, we observed the traditional beliefs and practices of Coastal Yoruba and how these affect the social identity of the populace. Secondly, there are important roles played by community-trade in the introduction and spread of Islam in Coastal Yoruba-land. This interconnectivity of Islam and trade in the land, therefore, could hardly be divorced. Thirdly, the close trade relationship of the Hausa Muslims and people of coastal Yorubaland could have been regarded a blessing if not for the fact that it has taken away the potentiality of the land as food basket of the nation.

The above notwithstanding, the study has revealed that the inter-ethnic trade contact of coastal Yoruba and other ethnic groups is a pointer that Nigeria can still remain a single entity with her diverse ethnicity and multi-religiosity, and her people can live together peacefully. Each tribe has its values which could be shared by others for the promotion of the country. Lastly, just as the Yoruba of the coastal region developed large heart by accommodating people of other religion and ethnic background, other tribes should also share the same spirit of accommodation and sincerity in dealing with other tribes in their domain. Rather than making them their target during any clash, they should be protected from attack as they have been hitherto living with them peacefully. A nation or community which does not accommodate visitors could hardly thrive and her development will be as slow as snail pace.

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