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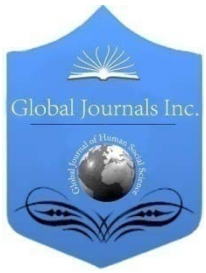

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Interface Between Religion and Culture: A Critical Study of the Infiltration of Yoruba Tradition on the Practice of Title-Holding among Egba Muslims of Ogun State, Nigeria

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Keywords: title-holding, Yoruba land, Egba Muslims, Egba land, Yoruba tradition.

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Interface Between Religion and Culture: A Critical Study of the Infiltration of Yoruba Tradition on the Practice of Title-Holding among Egba Muslims of Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract- Title-holding is an age long practice before the penetration of Islam in Egbaland, an area predominantly inhabited by the Yoruba speaking people of Ogun State, Nigeria. The acceptance of Islam by the Egbas reformed, to a large extent, the socio-religious and cultural lives of the people. The Yoruba traditional systems of marriage, naming and burial rites were, among others, influenced and reformed by Islam. However, a good number of the Egbas, like other Yoruba tribes which profess Islam, still retain some of their cultural beliefs and traditions. Consequently, there was an infiltration of Yoruba tradition and culture on certain Islamic practices and rites such as marriage, naming and funeral rites. Such infiltration can also be noticed in title-holding among the people. This paper, therefore, critically appraises the fusion of the Yoruba traditional elements to the Islamic practice of the title-holding among Egba Muslims. The paper adopts the historical approach establishing the institutionalization of title-holding in Islam. It then x-rays the practice of title-holding among the people. The paper then considers the similarities between the Muslim titles and the traditional titles patterned along the traditional set up among the four sections of the people. Realizing the fact that title-holding has become a firmly rooted institution among the Egba Muslims, the paper offers a number of recommendations for the restructure of the institution for better administration of the people and further development of Islam in Egbaland in particular and Yorubaland in general.

Keywords: title-holding, Yoruba land, Egba Muslims, Egba land, Yoruba tradition.

I. Introduction

At the early stage of Islam, some Muslims who were convinced of the prophethood and mission of Muhammad facilitated the spread of Islam by committing the resources at their disposal to the propagation and consolidation of Islam. Prominent among them was Abu Bakr bn Abu Quhafa who stood by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) for the advancement of Islam in Arabia. He bought a number of slaves who accepted Islam with his money and set them free in addition to other financial assistance he rendered to the Prophet and his new mission. Others who did similar things were 'Umar bn al-Khattab, 'Uthman bn Affan, Ali bn Abu Talib, Khadijat bint Khuwaylid, Aishat bint Abu Bakr and a host of other male and female, young and old *sahabah* (companions) who, with their wealth and blood, championed the propagation of Islam. Due to these outstanding contributions to Islam and other remarkable achievements in the development of the Muslim *Ummah* (community), the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have personally conferred titles on some of them while others were known with different titles associated with their specific contributions after the demise of the Prophet. For instance, Prophet Muhammad, during his lifetime, honoured Abu Bakr with the title *As-Siddiq* meaning "the most truthful and sincere person in faith" for his enormous contributions to the spread of Islam and for his absolute faith in the Prophet's Ascension to Heaven (*Mi'raj*) (Masud, 1985). *Al-Faruq* (the separator of Truth from Falsehood), *Dhu-Nurain* (possessor of two lights) and *Asadullah* (the lion of Allah) were titles conferred on Umar bn al-Khattab, Uthman bn Affan and Ali bn Abu Talib respectively (Khan, n.d). Consequently, this practice of the Prophet and that of his successors established the institution of title-holding in Islam.

In emulation of the practice of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in conferring titles on the early Muslims, the Muslims in Egbaland established mini-Muslim communities within their traditional political set ups and conferred titles on the influential members of their *jama'ah* (congregation) whose activities and contributions they considered similar to those of the *sahabah* (companions of the Prophet) as patrons and patronesses of Islam. Consequently, different titles similar to those of Yoruba traditional titles were created, given religious colouration and conferred on the people. Apart from spiritual titles of *Imam*, *Naibul Imam* (deputy Imam) *Ladhani* (caller to prayer) *Alfa Taosiri (*Qur'an exegetes*) and Arowasi* (megaphone of *Alfa Taosiri* or someone who re-echoes what *Alfa Taosiri* utters) conferred on Yoruba Muslims who were found to be

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knowledgeable in Islam, honorary titles like *Baba Adinni (*Patron of the Religion, Islam*), Balogun Adinni* (Commander of the Muslim veteran warriors*), Arowosadinin,* (Muslim philanthropist) *Iya Sunna (*Mother of the faithful*), Iya Adinni* (Patroness of the Islamic Religion) to mention but few, were conferred on wealthy and influential Muslims of high social status. This was done to source funds to finance Islamic projects like building and renovation of mosques. Other titles include *Sarumi Adinni, Jagunmolu Adinni, Seriki Musulumi,* and a host of others.

However, in selecting recipients and turbaning them, the Egba Muslims adopted the Egba Traditional Chieftaincy Institutional system. Zoning system, a feature of Yoruba traditional title holding, for example was borrowed by the Egba Muslims. The titles, both the spiritual and honorific were zoned unequally to the four major sections of Egbaland namely Egba Alake, Egba Oke-Ona, Egba Gbagura and Egba Owu. The zoning formula, which has been in practice among the Egbas since 1830CE, is now causing ripples among the Egba Muslims and the system has consistently been challenged by some Muslims in Egbaland (Owoyemi, 2004). This cultural infiltration of the Egba tradition and culture on the Muslim title-holding in Egbaland is seen as a sharp departure from the teachings of Islam and the practice of the early Muslims. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to examine the extent of infiltration of the Yoruba tradition and culture on the Islamic institution of title-holding among the Egba Muslims with a view to identifying the grey areas in the title-holding that are incongruent with Islamic tradition and then offers recommendations to sanitize the institution in particular among the Muslims in Egbaland and in Yorubaland as a whole.

a) Scriptural Basis for Title-Holding in Islam

A meticulous study of the Glorious Qur'an on the lives and missions of some prophets of Allah will reveal what appears like conferment of titles. In this case, title holding can be viewed from two angles. The first one is the titles which Allah conferred on some of His prophets as mentioned in the Qur'an while the second angle is the use of general titles as replacement for the names of some personalities mentioned in the Qur'an. Concerning titles conferred on the chosen prophets of Allah, it is done on the account of Allah's disposition, relationship or interactions with those prophets. For instance, Prophet Ibrahim (AS), the father of monotheism was an exemplary of faith and friend of God. Hence, the titles *hanif* (One pure in faith) and *Khalilullah* (a bosom friend of Allah) are frequently used to describe him (i.e. Prophet Ibrahim). The two titles can be found in the Glorious Qur'an where Allah says:

> And who can be better in religion than one who submits his face (himself) to Allah and he is a good doer and follows the religion of Ibrahim, *Hanif* (a worshipper of none but Allah) and Allah did take Ibrahim as a *Khalil* (an intimate friend) (Suratul-Nisai, 4:125)

Kalimul-Lah (One with whom Allah spoke directly) is the title given to Prophet Musa. It was as a result of this priviledge that Prophet Musa asked Allah for the permission to see Him physically (Q4:143). The title, *Kalimul-Lah*, which was conferred on him, is culled from the Qur'an where it is stated thus:

> And Messengers We have mentioned to you before, and messengers We have not mentioned to you and to Musa Allah spoke directly (*wa kallamalLahu Musa takliiman*). (Suratul-Nisai, 4:164).

Likewise, Prophet 'Isa (Jesus Christ) is known in the Qur'an with the title, *Ruhullah* (the Spirit of God). This is due to the fact that Angel Jibril was sent to Maryam to conceive without having any sexual intimacy with any man as a result of which she gave birth to 'Isa (Jesus Christ). The title, *RuhulLah* is gotten from Allah's statement in Qur'an 4:171, which goes thus:

> …The Messiah 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) was a Messenger of Allah and His Word which He bestowed on Maryam and a spirit from him (*Ruhun minhu*).

Going further into the Glorious Qur'an, it is discovered that Prophet Muhammad, like other prophets mentioned above, also bore some titles. Besides the titles of *An-Nabiyy* (Prophet) and *Rasul* (Messenger) which are frequently used to address Prophet Muhammad and other men of God in the Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad is also conferred specially with the title, *Khatim an-Nabiyy* (the zeal of the prophethood) (Qur'an 33:40). The title, *Ulul'Azm* (great possessors of the determination*)* is a collective title given to Prophets Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Isa and Muhammad.

Discussing title-holding from the second perspective in the Glorious Qur'an, one will come across some titles such as *khalifah* used to refer to humankind or human being as the vicegerent of God on earth (Q2:30), *wazir* used to describe the deputizing role played by Prophet Harun (Suratul-Taha, 20:29, Suratul-Furqan, 25:35) and *makiin* (one with rank firmly established) used for Prophet Yusuf for the supervisory role he played in Egypt (Suratul Yusuf, 12:54).

b) Evolution and Proliferation of Islamic titles in Islamic History

The early period of Islam witnessed a number of titles conferred on the *sahabah* (companions of the Prophet Muhammad) and the *tabi'un* (followers of the companions of the Prophet). It was the period when title-holding became an acceptable practice and an institution in Islam. Right from the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad, the Muslim faithful who contributed immensely to the propagation of Islam were honoured with titles. The first companion of the Prophet to receive a title from him was Abu Bakr bn Abu Quhafah. He was given the title, *As-Siddiq* (the most truthful and sincere

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person. The title was conferred on Abu Bakr because he declared his firm faith in the Prophet's *Mi'raj* (Ascension to Heaven) and for believing him as a prophet of God (Haykal, 1981). It is on record that some Muslims doubted the reality of the Prophet's *Mi'raj* (ascension to heaven) except Abu Bakr. On hearing the news about the Prophet's *Miraj*, Abu Bakr is quoted as saying:

> All this is true. Your description is faithful and correct. I believe in every word you have said, for you say nothing but the truth. I testify that you are the Messenger of God and God has placed invisible forces at your disposal. As such there is nothing improbable in your ascension to the heaven (Masud, 1985:16-17).

Responding to Abu Bakr's statement, Prophet Muhammad is reported to have addressed him thus:

> Verily, Abu Bakr, you are *as-Siddiq*. You have a penetrating vision and you can discern the truth, which an ordinary man finds difficult to understand… (Masud, 1985:16-17).

'Umar bn al-Khattab was a prominent companion who received a title from the Prophet. He was conferred with the title *al-Faruq*, meaning the one who makes distinction between the right and the wrong. The title was given to 'Umar because of his boldness and courage towards the unbelievers who usually molested and persecuted the few Muslims in Makkah. Umar bn al-Khattab always led a number of Muslims to the Ka'bah where they offered their *Salat* (canonical prayer) in congregation (Khan, n.d.). 'Uthman bn Affan got the title, *Dhun-Nurayn* meaning the man with two lights because he had the priviledge of getting married to Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthum, daughters of the Prophet one after the other. Ruqayyah was the first wife of 'Uthman but died after the Battle of Badr. Then, the Prophet married his next daughter, Umm Kulthum to Uthman and conferred the title *Dhun-Nurain* on Uthman bn Affan (Khan, n.d.). The title is significant in the sense that Uthman was twice married in the Prophet's family, a rare opportunity which no other companion enjoyed in the lifetimes of the Prophet (Arimiyau, 2014).

The last of *al-khulafaau ar-Rashidun* (the rightly guided caliphs), Ali bn Abu Talib was given the title, *Asadullah* (the lion of Allah) by Prophet Muhammad. According to Khan (n.d), Ali was given the title because of his bravery, audacity and shrewdness in the war of conquest. He showed a great courage in all the battles he fought and earned fame. He was counted among the great warriors of Arabia (Hitti, 1970). Arimiyah (2014) states that Ali was given the title, "the Lion of God" because of his bravery which he demonstrated on a number of occasions in support of the mission of Prophet Muhammad.

With the passing away of the era of the Prophet (632CE) and the four rightly guided caliphs (632-661CE), Islamic titles became more pronounced and proliferated especially during the periods of Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs (661-1258CE). Muawiyya ibn Abi Sufyan adopted the title, *Malik*, meaning the King. Thus, the first self-styled *Malik* (i.e. king) started from Muawiyya and all his successors bore this title (Rahim, 1981). The Umayyad dynasty, after nine decades of rule, was overthrown by Abu Abbas, the founder of the Abbasid dynasty in 750CE. After a landslide victory of Abu Abbas over the Umayyad family, he was nick-named *As-Saffah* meaning the blood thirsty, the title with which he became well known in Islamic history. Thereafter, his successor, Abu Ja'far gave himself the title *Al-Mansur* meaning he that was helped. Following *Al-Mansur's* reign, his successors were conferred with series of titles. Among the titles were *Mutaqqi*, *Al-Qahir*, and *Al-Mustakfi* which were conferred on caliphs Abu Ishaq, Abu Mansur Ahmad and Kasim Abdullahi respectively (Masudul Hassan, 2001). According to Baksh and Margoliouth (1979), Caliph al-Qaim conferred three titles, *Rais al-Ru'asa* (Chief of chiefs), *Sharf al-Wuzara* (Honour of the Wazirs) and *Jamal al-wara* (Beauty of creation) on his Wazir. In 429/1037CE, the Chief Qadi Mawardi received the title of *Aqda'i Qudat* (Highest Judge). Baksh and Margoliouth (1979) also contend that conferment of titles became so rampant during the Abbasid period to the extent that the Abbasid threw open the gates of honour and surnames that they conferred titles on a man whom their ancestors would not have made the door keeper of their lavatory.

Interestingly, it is recorded in Islamic history that women also bore titles. Khadija bint Khuwaylid, the first wife of the Prophet bore the title, *Tahirah* meaning the Purified, Aisha bint Abu Bakr, another Prophet's wife, bore the title *Umml-Mumini* meaning the Mother of the faithful. She is also called *Siddiqah* (the Truthful). Fatima, daughter of the Prophet is known with the title *Zahra* (Saeed, 1340H).

c) *Historical Antecedents of Title-Holding in Egbaland*

Egbaland is a land occupied by the *Egbas*. The term *Egba* is said to have been derived from *Egbalugbo* meaning wanderers towards the forest. The term *Egba* connotes openhandedness, generosity, accommodating and hospitable (Biobaku, 1991). Historically, the *Egbas* are the Yoruba speaking people who came to occupy *Egba* forest known as Ago-Oja in the present Oyo State, Nigeria. They were said to have lived as three independent groups of people in the *Egba* forest and migrated to Abeokuta (now capital of Ogun State) in 1830CE after the destruction of their towns by the enemies. They formed a loose federation with the *Alake* as its acknowledged paramount ruler while the *Osile* and the *Agura* were rulers of their respective sections (Biobaku, 1991). The *Owu* people later migrated to Abeokuta in 1831 and became the fourth section at Abeokuta as *Egba Owu* (Owoyemi, 2004).

Before the settlement of the *Egba* people in Abeokuta in 1830CE, there had been functional political machinery in each of the federating towns in the Egba

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forest. Political powers were vested in the hands of the titleholders such as the *Ogboni* (fraternities), the *Olorogun/Jagunjagun* (veteran warriors), the *Parakoyi (*market administrators*)*, the *Odes* (hunters) and the *Egans* (Sotunde, 2002). The first set of the *Olorogun* chiefs in Egba history emerged in the 1770s in the era of Lisabi and the *Egbe Aro* which was organized to counter the high handedness of the agents of *Oloyo*, the paramount ruler of Yorubaland to whom the Egbas were subservient. The very first *Egba* ward lords in Abeokuta had their titles about 1833CE. It was during that period that Apati and Anoba became the first *Bashorun* and *Aaare Ona Kankanfo* respectively (Sotunde, 2002). It is important to state that the origin of each of the many *Ogboni* (fraternities) and *Olorogun* (veteran warriors) titles is still unclear because the historical records about them remain obscure.

d) An Over View of the Structure of the Yoruba Traditional Titles in Egbaland

Egbaland is a Yoruba Community which covers the present six local government areas namely Abeokuta North, Abeokuta South, Ewekoro, Ifo, Obafemi/Owode and Odeda local government areas of Ogun State, Nigeria. Egbaland is principally divided into four major sections namely Egba Alake, Egba Oke-Ona, Egba Gbagura and Egba Owu. Egba Alake is said to be larger and more populous than the remaining three sections. The numerical strength of Egba Alake is attributed to a claim that Egba Alake is the product of the merger of Egba Eku, Egba Aarin and Egba Agbeyin. According to Blair (1937), Egba Alake has forty-five (45) townships, Egba Gbagura has seventeen (17), Egba Oke-Ona has seven (17) while Egba Owu has four (4) townships. This is the basis for sharing assets among the *Egbas*.

There are traditional, Christian and Muslim titles all over Egbaland. Each of the sections, townships and districts in Egbaland also confers titles on the Egba people. Notable social clubs and religious societies similarly confer titles on their members. It is worthy of note to state that an Egba man could hold more than one title at different times. There are some influential and wealthy Egba people who are conferred titles by the central, section, district, club and religious societies in Egbaland. For instance, an Egba Muslim could be conferred *Balogun Adinni* of Ido (a township title), *Seriki of Gbagura Muslims* (a sectional title) and *Baba Adinni* of Nawair-ud-Deen Society (a societal title). This implies that an *Egba* Muslim could be conferred with more than three or four titles at different times.

The structure of the chieftaincy traditional institution in Egbaland remains the same since the *Egba* emerged as a distinct group of the Yoruba race. The structure is hierarchical with the Oba (traditional ruler) at the apex. Next to him are the general titleholders whose constituency is the whole of the Egba nation. Then, next to them are the township chiefs whose areas of jurisdiction are the individual townships. The *Baales* (village/district heads) come at the base of the hierarchy (Sotunde, 2002). The traditional mainstream titles in Egbaland comprise the *Ologboni* (the statesmen) and their titles are *Oluwo*, (king in occult), *Apena* (convener of meeting/secretary), *Baala, Baajito, Asipa* (the messenger), *Odofin, Lisa, Baase, Agbusi, Sagbua, Adila, Losi, Olori Erelu, Lika, Iyalode, Ajiroba, Ajigbeda* etc (Sotunde, 2002). The traditional titles belonging to the *Olorogun* include *Akogun, Balogun, Bashorun, Seriki, Bada* and *Sarumi* (commanders of the veteran warriors). The *Parakoyi* (council of the chamber of commerce) titles include *Babalaje, Iyalode, Iyaloja* and *Iyalaje*. The *Odes* (hunters) are those in charge of the security. Titles belonging to *Odes* are *Lerin, Aro, Lisa* and *Ajade* (Owoyemi, 2004). While explaining the prominent role occupied by the titleholders before Islam in Yorubaland, Doi (1984) describes the title of *Balogun* thus:

Balogun used to be a title of a chief warrior during the inter-tribal war and as the war chiefs first accepted Islam, then their followers like Balogun Kuku in Ijebu Ode (a prominent town in Ogun State), the same title is used for community organization after the spread of Islam (Doi, 1984:201).

e) The Emergence and Development of Honorific Titles among Muslims in Egbaland

Islam became pronounced among the *Egba* Muslims after their settlement in Abeokuta in 1830CE. When it became obvious that the number of Muslims became appreciable in size, the Muslim leaders of the period, notably, Sunmonu Adelokun, Sunmonu Onasoku, Aliu Sopeyin and Disu Oligbaje felt that there should be a place where *Jumu'ah* (Friday prayer) should be observed. They approached Sodeke, the then *Balogun* of Egbaland, to give them a piece of land to build a mosque. Sodeke yielded to the request of the Egba Muslims and a mosque was built at Iporo Kemta Kobiti, Abeokuta. Imoru, son of Salu Bale from Itoku quarters was appointed and turbaned as the first acknowledged chief Imam of Egbaland (Adegbenro, 1991).

Having appointed Imoru ('Umar) as the Imam of Egbaland, the members of the Muslim Community felt the need to have a *Balogun* (Commander of the veteran warriors) as it existed among the Egba traditionalists. Thereafter, Sunmonu Adelokun, from the Egba section, was conferred the title *Balogun*, while Sofo Oyegebi of Igbore quarters was given the title of *Noibi* (Deputy Imam), Alfa Fulani became the *Mufassir* of Egbaland, Disu Oligbaje, Abdullah Olubowale and Oseni Olusumade were appointed the first Imams of Oke-Ona, Gbagura and Owu Muslims communities respectively (Owoyemi, 2004).

In Egba Muslim Community, titles are of two categories. These are spiritual/missionary and

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honourific/socio-civic titles. The spiritual titles are those conferred on mosque functionaries or the Muslim scholars. The spiritual titles recognized among the Egba Muslims include Imam the Islamic leader), *Olori Ratibi* (Head of all quarter Imams), *Olori Omokewu* (Leader of the Muslim scholars), *Alfa Taosiri* (Chief Missionary), *Ajanasi* (lieutenant to Alfa *Taosiri*), *Arowasi* (the megaphone or someone who re-echoes what Imam says) and *Ladani* (the caller to prayer) (Owoyemi, 2004).

As earlier mentioned, honourific titles are those created and conferred on affluent and influential Muslims in order to secure their financial support in executing Islamic projects. Most of these honourific titles are replica of the traditional titles but are given religious colouration. Thus, some of the Muslim titles in Egbaland are suffixed with terms like "*Adinni", Musulumi*" and "*Sunnah*". As the Egba Muslim Community grew up, the *Otun*, *Osi* and *Ekerin* titles of the *Balogun* (i.e. the second, third and fourth in rank to the *Balogun* respectively) were created and conferred on influential Muslims. In order to assist the Imam in his missionary work, titles such as *Noibi* (Deputy Imam), Alfa *Taosir* (*Mufassir* -Qur'an exegesis), *Ajanasi, Arowasi* and *Ladani* (*Mu'adhdhin* (caller to prayer) were also conferred on the knowledgeable Egba Muslims. Titles such as *Oba Imale* (King of Muslims) later became *Baba Adinni* (Father or patron of Islam), *Seriki* (Officer next in rank to *Otun Balogun*), *Bada, Sarunmi* (ranks below *Seriki*) were borrowed from the traditional setting in order to honour some influential Egba Muslims and secure their support for the community development and Islamic propagation in particular (Owoyemi, 2004).

The honorific titles are many and their number is in exhaustive. Owoyemi (2004) identifies sixty-one honourific Muslim titles in Egbaland. Most of these titles are only held ceremoniously with no specific roles or functions to perform for the better practice of Islam or the betterment/welfare of the Muslims by their holders. However, it is noted that not all the honourific titles are borrowed from Egba traditional set-up. A fact worthy of mentioning is that some Muslim honourific titles depict the socio-economic status of the holders. Such titles include *Irawo Adinni, Osupa Adinni, Olowolagba Adinni, Okanlomo Adinni* and *Borokini Adinni* (Owoyemi, 2004). In Egba Muslim Community, the spiritual/missionary and honorific/socio-civic titles earlier enumerated are grouped into Council of Imams and Alfas and Council of the *Ologuns* respectively.

There are eight (8) recognized spiritual titles in Egba Muslim Community, four titles namely Chief Imam *Jami'u, Olori Ratibi, Olori Omokewu* and *Baba Adinni* are zoned to Egba Alake, one (1) title i.e. *Alfa Taosiri* (*Mufassir*) is zoned to Egba Oke-Ona, two (2) titles, *Ajanosi* and *Ladani* (*Mu'adhin*) zoned to Egba Gbagura while the fourth section, Egba Owu is given the remaining one title, that is *Arowasi* (the Megaphone). It is important to note that the *Baba Adinni* title which is considered an honorific title is also recognized as a member of the Council of Imams and Alfas because of the popular belief that the title, *Baba Adinni* had replaced the title of *Oba Imale* (King of the Muslims) which had once existed in Egbaland, and that is the reason why *Baba Adinni* of Egbaland is seen as an intermediary between the spiritual and honourary titleholders.

f) Aspects of Yoruba Traditional Influence on Title-Holding among the Egba Muslims

From the current practice, there are three ways by which the conferment of Islamic titles on Egba Muslims is greatly influenced by the Yoruba culture and tradition. First are the titles being conferred on the Egba Muslims. Second is the process of the selection of the titleholders and the third one is the *Iwuye* (turban) ceremony that accompanies the conferment. As Arimiyah (2014) contends some of the Muslim titles in Yorubaland are of Yoruba cultural origin and are quite different from those conferred on the prophets of God and the early Muslims by Prophet Muhammad (SAW). This observation is particularly true about the Egba Muslims if one considers titles such as *Khalilullah, Kalimullah, Ruhullah, as-Siddiq, al-Faruq, Asadullahi*, conferred on the prophets of God and the early Muslims against those conferred on Egba Muslims. The Egba Muslims have departed from the early practice as they now confer titles like *Balogun, Sarumi, Bada, Sagbua, Asipa, Ajiroba, Lukotun, Seriki, Otun, Osi, Ekerin, Basorun, Apagun* etc with the suffix *Adinni or Musulumi or Sunnah* purposely to give them Islamic colouration and outlook in place of those conferred on the early Muslims. These aforementioned titles are adopted and adapted from the Egba traditional setting. According to Sotunde (2002), titles like *Asipa, Sagbua* and *Ajiroba* are *Ogboni* titles in Yoruba traditional set-up and they are for those who enact laws, judge cases, elect and advise the *Oba* (King) in all matters affecting their traditional community.

The Yoruba traditional infiltration is also noticed in the process of appointing the titleholders among the Egba Muslims in Ogun State. According to Owoyemi (2004), Muslim titles are distributed and zoned permanently to the four major sections of Egbaland. The zoning system of distributing the titles, both honourary and the spiritual titles, is patterned along the traditional set up and it is on the basis of the strength of the size, early settlement and influence of each of the four Egba sections. It is argued that Egba Alake takes more than half of the most powerful titles while the other three sections of the Egba share the remaining half (as it is being done in the traditional/cultural set-up) because of the fact that Egba Alake is bigger than the other three sections and that Egba Alake people were the first settlers in their present home, Abeokuta (Owoyemi, 2004).

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According to Owoyemi (2004), more than thirty of the sixty-one Muslim titles recognized in Egba Muslim Community are permanently zoned to Egba Alake, while the remaining half (i.e. thirty-one) are zoned to the other three zones with Egba Oke-Ona taking 11titles, both the Egba Gbagura and Egba Owu having ten (10) titles each. Furthermore, the title, *Imam Jami'u* of Egbaland was permanently zoned to Egba Alake. Leading titles such as *Baba Adinni, Balogun Adinni, Seriki Adinni* and *Aare Adinni* are permanently zoned to Egba Alake section. The zoning method adopted by the Egba Muslim Community is in line with the zoning system of the Egba Traditional Chieftaincy titles. For instance, *Balogun, Seriki, Basorun, Ogboye, and Akogun* are the traditional titles zoned to Egba Alake while the lesser titles are zoned to the other three Egbas. Thus, the distribution of the Muslim titles is patterned on the Egba traditional political administration which recognizes and makes Egba Alake the head of all the Egba sections. The zoning system has been causing ripples among the Egba Muslims. It is due to this permanent zoning system of titles that made Egba Owu Muslims reject titles zoned to them and consequently seceded from the Egba Muslim Community in 2001 though efforts are on to reconcile them with the other sections of Egba Muslims.

The turbaning/installation ceremony, popularly called *Iwuye* among the Yoruba, which accompanies title-holding among the Egba Muslims is another Yoruba traditional effect on the Muslim practice of title-holding in Egbaland. The ceremony is often characterized by merry making, wining and dining among the people. During such occasion, popular musicians are invited to supply music. The Yoruba people, before Islam, were noted for their love for celebration in their socio-religious engagements. According to Fadipe (1970), every occasion calls for celebration including the death of their aged ones. It is this practice of winning and dining that is introduced into the institution of title-holding among the Egba Muslims.

g) Influence of Yoruba Tradition on Title-Holding among Egba Muslims: A Critique

It is worthy of note to state that the process of appointing or selecting the Yoruba king and other traditional chiefs involves some ritual practices that contradict Islamic belief. Hence, adopting such titles for the Muslims gives an impression that those honoured with the titles have the same roles to play in Islam and for the Egba Muslims. It is a common belief among the Yoruba people that the *Ogboni* titleholders use charms, amulets and talisman. Therefore, Muslims holding such *Ogboni* titles pre-suffixed with *Adinni, Muslumi* or *Sunnah* may be rightly or wrongly said to be using those things for Islam.

It is pertinent to state that the practice of the Egba Muslims in conferring titles with traditional origin and outlook can be said to be contrary to the practice of the Prophet who conferred titles that associated recipients with Allah or the Islamic faith. The Egba Muslims ought to have emulated the Prophet in the practice of conferring titles on affluent Yoruba Muslims in Egbaland. Describing the Prophet as a role model to be followed, the Glorious Qur'an says:

> Indeed in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad), you have a good example to follow for him who hopes for (the meeting) with Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much (Suratul-Ahzab 33:21).

In another place, the Qur'an says:

> He who obeys the Messenger (Muhammad), has indeed obeyed Allah…. (Suratul-Nisai, 4:80).

Meanwhile, the Egba Muslims may be accused of being traditionalists and the titles they confer as being traditional ones due to the fact that they pattern their practice of title-holding along the traditional set-up. Arimiyah (2014) argues that the attitude of the Yoruba Muslims in conferring titles of traditional origin on the influential Muslims could be justifiable because Islam does not condemn people's cultures as long as those cultures do not contravene any of its teachings. Arimiyah's argument may be tenable if one considers the fact that the creation of human beings into tribes and nations (Yoruba nation inclusive), each having its own distinct culture, is the divine design of Allah as Qur'an posits:

> O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that who has *at-Taqwa*, Verily Allah is All-knowing, All-Aware (Suratul-Hujurat, 49:13)

The Qur'an, in another place, says:

> And Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the difference of your languages and colour, Verily, in that are indeed signs for men of sound knowledge (Suratul-Rum, 30:22).

From the above Quranic passages, it is understood that it is the will of God that there should be diversity in various communities and tribes of humankind. Hence, there should be no superiority of one nation, tribe or language over another. Therefore, adoption of titles of Yoruba origin will be justifiable as this will only imply that the significance of those titles is depicted in the language, experience and orientation of the people. In the opinion of Arimiyah (2014), what *Asadullah* (the lion of God) will depict to an Arab is what *Balogun Adinni, Jagunmolu Adinni, Akinlagun Adinni* and *Akinrogun Adinni* will depict to the Yoruba Muslims. All these titles, which are given to the Yoruba warriors, are inferred from the title, *Asadullah* conferred on Ali bn Abu Talib who was noted as a great warrior in the battles fought against the unbelievers during the lifetimes of the Prophet. On Islam's recognition of the culture of a people, Al-Qaradawi (2003:8) quotes Ibn Taymiyyah saying:

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> '*Urf* (Local custom) or '*Adah* (tradition or practice) is permissible and even admissible as part of Islamic law as long as it does not conflict with the principles of teaching of the Qur'an and Sunnah

One can also see the Yoruba cultural influence in the zoning system of titles among the Egba Muslims. The reasons that were given for the supremacy of the Egba Alake over and above other sections in terms of sharing of titles are not tenable or justifiable and such zoning system is incompatible with the principle of justice in Islam. Islam only recognizes superiority of a person (tribe or a group of people) on the basis of piety (Q49:14). One of the several implications of the zoning system of titles among the Egba Muslims is deprivation of better candidates to hold some key titles which are not zoned or distributed to their sections. For instance, titles such as Imam, *Baba Adinni, Iya Adinni, Olori Omokewu* and *Olori Ratibi* are zoned permanently to Egba Alake. By implication, no Egba Muslim from Egba Oke-Ona can be conferred any of those titles irrespective of his qualifications or qualities. This does not augur well for a Muslim community. Titles should not only be zoned equally but also the most qualified candidate should be allowed to hold titles apart from the ones zoned to his section. Therefore, the practice of zoning Muslim titles to a particular section of the town is against the principle of unity and justice in Islam. The Qur'an says: "Indeed, this Community of yours is but one." Though the zoning system was adopted from the traditional set up and has been in vogue from time immemorial, it should be discontinued in the spirit of the Glorious Qur'an which says:

> When they commit a *Fahisha* (evil deed), they say: We found our fathers doing it and Allah has commanded it on us. Say Nay, Allah never commands evil deed. Do you say of Allah what you know not? (Suratul Al-Araf, 7:28).

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, it is read thus:

> And when it is said to them: Come to what Allah has revealed unto the Messenger (Muhammad),They say: Enough for us is that which we found our fathers following even though their fathers had no knowledge whatsoever nor guidance (Suratul Maidah, 5:104).

While, it is permissible to eat and drink at *Iwuye* ceremony, one should be mindful of Islamic law that regulates what Muslims eat or drink. The Qur'an, for instance, prohibits dead meat, blood, flesh of swine, animals not killed in Allah's name as well as consumption of intoxicants (Q5:4, 5:93). A situation whereby people drink alcohol at such an occasion because *Iwuye* (installation) ceremony of titleholders among the Egba Muslims often gives room for intermingling of sexes whereby both men and women freely mix and dance competitively to the admiration of musicians and the guests. This practice, no doubt, has serious implications for the practice of title-holding among the Egba Muslims. It could make the practice condemnable if unguided. It is no where found in the Islamic history where such practice occurred when the early Muslims were conferred with titles by the Prophet. Unlawful wining and drinking as well as intermingling of sexes at *Iwuye* ceremony are not only unIslamic but also extravagant. Allah warns in the Qur'an thus:

> ….And Eat and drink and waste not by extravagance, certainly, He (Allah) likes not those who waste by extravagance (Suratul-Al-Araf, 7:31).

II. Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this study to examine the infiltration of Yoruba tradition on title-holding among Yoruba Muslims in Egbaland, Nigeria. The practice of title-holding, which is traceable to the Glorious Qur'an and the practice among early Muslims, has been in existence among the adherents of Islam since its spread to the area in the 18th century. However, the influence of the traditional culture in the titles Muslims created and adopted is so great that it is almost rubbing the practice of its sanctity and sacredness. Hence, the criticism of those aspects that are not in conformity with the Islamic practice. The position of the paper is that if Yoruba traditional elements are separated from the practice of conferring Muslim titles on Egba Muslims, the sacredness of the institution will be maintained as it was practiced by the early Muslims. It is in the light of this that this paper recommends that there is the need to sanitize the practice of title-holding from being dominated by the Yoruba traditional influence in Egbaland. Consequently, some titles which wear traditional outlook such as *Ogboye Adini, Oluwo Adinni, Abese Adinni, Leragun Adini* to mention but few which carry ritualistic roles ought to have been phased out from the list of the Egba Muslim titles. The continuous existence and recognition of those and similar titles may give room for *Takhli*t (syncretism) among the Egba Muslims.

It is also recommended that the age long practice of zoning system of the Muslim titles, an infiltration of the Yoruba tradition and culture should be discontinued in the interest of peace, unity and harmony in Egba Muslim Community. All the Egba sections should be treated equally in sharing of the titles. Alternatively, the zoning system should be replaced by a rotational system. For instance, the titles of *Imam Jami'u* (Chief Imam) of Egbaland can be rotated among the four sections of Egba Alake, Egba Oke-Ona, Egba Gbagura and Egba Owu.

The paper also recommends that the *Iwuye* (installation) ceremony of the Muslim titleholders which is always accompanied with pomp and pageantry among the Egba Muslims should be organized in such a way and manner that gathering of Muslims in such an occasion is in conformity with Islamic gathering. Only things that are permissible to be eaten and drunk in

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Islam should be served on such occasions. The Egba Muslim Community may sanction any Muslim titleholder who serves alcohol or engages in unIslamic practice at his or her installation ceremony. Instead of being extravagant and spendthrift on the occasion of the installation ceremony, the Egba Muslim titleholders should focus their attention on the welfare of the Muslims in Egbaland; the indigent but brilliant students could be given scholarship to further their education. In addition, the sick and the inmates of the prison yards could be assisted financially while the needy Muslims could be empowered economically. Finally, specific roles should be assigned to each of titles that Muslims in Egbaland will confer on those found worthy of holding them for the better practice of Islam among the people as well as improved welfare of the Muslims in the area.

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