

**WHEN RELIGION THREATENS A NATION:
ISLAMISATION AGENDA AND THE HIJAB
CRISES IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Religion plays a huge role in conflicts in Africa. One religious issue, which has lately generated many tensions in Nigeria, is the *hijab*—a mandatory veil for female believers of Islam. Its use in certain public institutions has led to discrimination, abuse, and human

rights violations. Against this backdrop, this study examines the contentious issue of the Hijab and the perceived Islamisation agenda in Nigeria, especially in the southern part of the country. Qualitative research methodology was adopted. The study revealed that the rejection of the *hijab* in public institutions and spaces in Christian-populated South is a contemporary issue triggered by suspicions of an Islamic agenda in a secular state.

Keywords: CAN, Sharia, Hijab, Islamisation, Buhari, Missionary Schools, Arabic, Boko Haram

Introduction

Religion continues to be the source of peace, humanitarian concern, and pacifism (2003:180). There appear to be divergent views about the concept of religion from various disciplines. Religious studies cannot agree on a common definition of its subject matter (Bergunder 2014). As Greil (2009) puts it: “It seems safe to assert that no consensus on a definition of religion has been reached and that no consensus is likely to be reached in the foreseeable future” (2009: 136). This study proposes that religion is grounded in the belief in a god or Supreme Being. There are three major religions in Nigeria: Islam, Christianity, and Indigenous/ African Traditional Religion (IR/ATR).¹ The vast majority of the Nigerian population is associated with Islam or Christianity (Falola and Heaton 2008: 4). The palpable sentiment (below) of many Christians in Southern Nigeria is a prime example of adherents of a spiritual concept actively apply their beliefs to political goals, the mixing of religion and political ideology that Rourke (2003: 180) notes is found in many religions:

 The way Muslims support most of the policies and appointments of
1. Indigenous or African Traditional Religion may be used interchangeably in the study.

President Muhammadu Buhari government, and the approval of the use of Hijab in some of our schools are evidences that there are Islamisation and Northernization agendas ongoing. For example, Muslims and Northerners are in charge of every aspect of our nation's security and ministerial appointments. If you allow them a step, they will take a jump.²

Although religion has not been proven as a root cause of conflict on the African Continent, there is no doubt that it plays a huge role in conflict, especially in specific cases in Nigeria and Somalia (Love 2006; Basedau, Strüver, Vüllers, and Wegenast 2011:9). Moller states that:

Even though one might have thought that with modernity and globalization religion would recede into the background as far as politics and conflicts are concerned, we seem to be witnessing the exact opposite (2006:8).

Of course, the prevalence of conflict arising from religion and religious extremism is not new in Africa. Although it has been given adequate attention (Kung 2005; UNDP 2017), little or no space has, however, been devoted to the issue of religious symbol, such as the Hijab—a veil mandatory for female believers of the Islamic faiths.

Lately, the *hijab* has become a source of incessant conflict, especially in Nigeria—a country with a population of more than 190 million people, evenly divided between Muslims and Christians. Muslims in Nigeria include Sufis, Izalas, women's organisations, student organisations, emirate traditions, and ordinary people, as well as Boko Haram extremists. In Nigeria, Christians range from Catholics to mainstream Protestants to Evangelicals to Pentecostals to African syncretists (Paden 2015). This study examines

2. Oral Interview, Mrs Ukoh 55years, Trader, Christian, at Somorin Street, Obantoko, Abeokuta. Ogun State 13 December 2018.

the issue of the Islamisation of the country, which has arisen from government action and inaction; the right to the *hijab*, especially in missionary schools taken over by the government; and how the Nigerian state has responded to these issues.

This study is instructive for the following reasons; first, it exposes nature of the crises. Second, it helps to navigate the issue of religion in Africa in general and Nigeria, a secular and multi-ethnic country in particular. Third, it also helps our understanding of State response to these issues, especially with a leadership, widely believed by most Christians as nursing a Northernisation and Islamist agenda.

Islamisation of Nigeria: History and Growing Suspicion

The birth of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is generally believed to be the early stage of a new religion, which later came to be known as Islam. During the early days of Islam, the prophet was believed to have sent a group of his early followers to Ethiopia when life in Mecca became unbearable as a result of persecution in the hand of Quraysh Oligarchy (Ali 1972 in Bello 2018). The arrival of the refugees marked the earliest contact between nascent Islam and Ethiopia, and this stands as a significant milestone and point of departure for the history of Islam in African continent.

By AD640 after the settlement of the Prophet and his followers in Ethiopia, the next nation to be conquered was Egypt (Bello 2018: 27). It is instructive to note that while Ethiopia accepted Islam through pacification, a violent strategy was adopted in Egypt. Indeed, Bello defines Islamisation as the process by which the people of North Africa were converted to Islam and became Muslims (2018: 27). Indeed, the Islamic religion has spread to regions throughout Africa where it is now predominant in places such

as Niger, Mali, Guinea, Senegal, Nigeria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Chad, and Somalia, and to other areas where there exist sizable minority populations such as Kenya, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Ivory Coast, and Ghana (Hunwick 2005 in Clarke 2005: 6-7).

Islam was the first imported religion in Nigeria. It is widely claimed to have been brought into the country during the trans-Sahara trade in the seventh and eighth centuries. During this trade, the Berbers maintained trading routes used for this trade until later when the Arabs subsequently joined. Other ethnic groups such as the Fulani pastoralists, who had along the way, adopted Islam, also joined. With the influx of these foreigners into West Africa and Northern Nigeria, they mixed with the indigenous groups mainly dominated by the Hausas. However, by the nineteenth century, there was a jihad, spearheaded by Uthman Dan Fodio in 1804. It was dominated by the Fulbe, an originally pastoral people that had converted to Islam a long time before. Since that period, Islam became not just a State religion (Santen), but also a cultural ideology and movement. Dan Fodio is generally believed to have spread the Islamic religion and doctrines through violence. From Sokoto, Islam was spread down south. This proselytisation, though violently instilled, is generally understood as the origin of the Islamisation agenda.

This suspicion of an Islamic agenda is as old as the era of nationalism. During this era, the regional leaders, who fought against British colonialism were suspicious of one another because of their fear of domination. For instance, during one of the campaigns of the Action Group (AG) of Obafemi Awolowo in 1959, Awolowo accused the Sardauna of Sokoto, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, of not allowing his party, the AG, to gain access to the Northern Region for fear that he would win over the hearts of his people

(Awolowo, 1987:1-8) Such suspicions continued till after independence when the first coup occurred, a coup that was generally perceived by the Northern *elite* as an Ibo coup. This act has continued to divide the polity to the extent that any policy that is perceived as possessing some religious fragment is usually understood as that of another group brewing a religious agenda. Although suspicions of religious agendas have been arisen over the years, the election of President Muhammadu Buhari resurrected and heightened such suspicions. It is instructive to note that these sorts of beliefs are palpable because of President Buhari's antecedent, who is widely believed in the south to have affinity and preference for Islamist and an inclination towards a Northern agenda over the years.³

Asemota (2016) argues that Islamism is different from Islam. He observes that while Islam is a religion that is practiced by the majority in the North and some in the South West, Islamism is not just a religion but also a political ideology that demands that only Islamists and not any other religious affiliates should partake in the political space. He submits that “Islamism comes with discrimination on the basis of religion, intolerance of non-Islamists (including Muslims that are not Islamists), destruction of lives and properties and gross violation of human rights”. As Asemota points out, Islamism, no doubt, has fueled the prevalence of religious conflicts in Africa.

Religious Conflicts and Hijab Identity Crises in Africa

Conflict is a struggle between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals. It connotes the incompatibility of subject positions (Diez, Stetter, & Albert 2006: 565). Some scholars regard conflict from an economic perspective. For instance, Coser (1998) views conflict as a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power,

3. The appointment of his cabinet ministers and security details has been widely condemned as favouring the North. In fact, when the recent Inspector general of Police retired, Easterners thought he would pick an Ibo officer.

and resources in which the aim of the conflicting parties are to injure or eliminate their rivals. Conflicts can be internal or external; they can also take on political, economic, social, ethnic, religious, and even ideological views. While ethnic and resource conflicts seem to be prevalent, religiosity or religion also plays vital roles in most conflicts on the continent.

Religion, therefore, is a double edged sword. It is not surprising that McBride and Richardson (2011) note that religion engenders conflict and cooperation. Basedau in an interview granted to Gwendolin Hilse also observes that although conflicts that have a religious dimension are becoming common worldwide and sub-Saharan Africa is no exception, but there is no conflict based purely on religion (Made of Minds 2017). Other scholars are of the view that armed conflict with religious and ethnic differences have proliferated in the sub-Saharan region (Kung 2005: 253; UNDP 2017:44-53).

The African landscape is replete with some of the most obstinate conflicts, most of which are constructed from differences in religious and ethnic identities (çanci and Odukoya 2016). Aguwa (1997) notes that at the very start of its nationhood, Nigeria, like many other African countries, had to contend with ethnic, regional and religious divisions, offshoots of nation building processes (p. 335). Identity could be divided along markers of class, education, ethnicity, and religion – of which the *hijab* is a common symbol in Islam. In the multi-cultural societies in the West and Africa, the *hijab* in public places is gaining ground, albeit with some resentment from other religious groups, especially Christianity. Such resentment is usually due to its use by Islamist/fundamentalists and extremists in act of terrorism (Noor 2011). Be that as it may, the *hijab*, remains a form of religious or social identity.

Identity, of course, is characterised by several features. such as an ‘emotive tie to a group’, ‘love and belief for a group’, a ‘pledge to a cause’, and ‘commitments and duties to a group’ with which a person identifies (Smyth and Robinson 2001:7–11; çanci and Odukoya 2016:89). Social identities are associated with normative standards for thought and action, profoundly influencing the behavioral choices of individual group members (Hirsh and Kang 2016). When these cohesion or identities are challenged, then, conflict often arises. Most proponents of Islam view resentments towards the *hijab* as a rejection of their social identity and an invasion of their private space. Accordingly, Kulenovic (2012) perceives the *hijab* as an Islamic-shaped identity.

Yet, the issue of Hijab has become a volatile subject in the Western World. This is because while Muslim women claim right to wear the Hijab in accordance with their religious beliefs, most of the Western World views the Hijab as a symbol of oppression, patriarchy and tool for terror (Osman 2014; Janson 2011).

Here it should be noted that the *hijab* is a religious symbol, which has different connotations, especially in multiethnic and secular states like those in Africa. Villalón and Tidjani-Alou (2012), in a study of three Francophone countries, argue that such incorporation of religiosity or religion into academic programmes has encouraged parents and pupils to seek western education. Some have refuted claims that education aims to remove all forms of dependence, either forced or voluntary. For instance, Laborde (2006) submits that the banning of the headscarf or *hijab* in schools on the basis of removing all forms of dependence only creates more problems than it is meant to solve.

The Hijab Crises: Origin and Manifestations in Nigeria

After the Nigerian Civil War, suspicion among the major ethnic groups increased. Suspicion became even more potent between the Hausa and Fulani against the Igbo. It is instructive to note that after the Nigerian Civil War, the rehabilitation and reconstruction of schools that were destroyed as a result of the war fell into the hands of the Federal Military Government (FRN 1972). The issue at hand was basically that of reconstruction and reintegration, hence, issues of religion like the *hijab* were not on the table. However, the issue of the compulsory symbol in public schools, especially in Southern Nigeria, is now contentious. Mahdi (2009) has noted that “Up to 1975, hardly any woman in Northern Nigeria wore the Hijab, while today one could not miss the growing number of women who wear it” (p. 2).

This was also a period when there were disparities between the Christians and Muslims. To ensure that pupils were not denied access to basic education, government revoked the licenses of most of the Missionary Schools. Hence, the military government led by General Olusegun Obasanjo encouraged the state governments to take over schools and hospitals owned by religious organisations in order to reduce inequalities, especially the educational gap between Muslims and Christians (Nolte, Danjibo and Oladeji 2009: 13). With this act, Christian Missionary orientations such as praying only in Christian ways, among other issues, ceased and schools became more secularized. In fact, some schools stopped teaching either Christian Religious Studies or Islamic Religious Studies/ Knowledge,⁴ and while in other converted schools, the two subjects were introduced for the sake of equity. Then, the Western Nigeria government began to take over schools in

4. A good example is Mayflower private school, Ikenne Remo. Even after government took over, the school neither thought IRK nor CRK.

conformity with the Federal Military Government decrees. But before the government began its take-over, Chief T.A Odutola voluntarily gave up his Odutola College to the government, being the first private individual to do so in November 1975.

In September 1976, the Universal Primary Education (UPE) was introduced to provide education for children from six years old to access primary education. Parents who disallowed their wards from attending school were sanctioned, and in 1977, the National Policy on Education recommended free education up to Junior Secondary school. During this time, the wearing of the Hijab in these Missionary schools was not an issue.

With the transition to civilian rule in 1999, the administration of Olusegun Obasanjo, introduced the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, which made primary to junior secondary education compulsory for the Nigerian child on 30 September 1999 (Anaduaka and Okafor 2011:154; Yusuf and Ajere nd). State governments were also instructed to return the converted schools (Missionary or private) to their original owners. This was because most of the state schools were owned by private individuals and Missionaries. On their part, most State governments vacillated because they felt that doing so would strip them off their long time investments in these institutions as well as reduce the total number of government owned schools since most of the state governments did not make attempts to build new schools. The UBE Act passed until in 2004 is defined as:

early childhood care and education, the nine years of formal schooling, adult literacy and non-formal education, skills acquisition programmes and the education special groups such as nomads and migrants, girl-child and

women, almajiri, street children and disabled groups.

The implication of this policy was that Christians and Muslims children should attend public schools without any formalized religious dress codes as part of recommended uniforms. But with the rising propaganda for Muslim girls to be educated, practice their religions, and fulfil the principles of a true Muslim, some people began to advocate, and in fact, started wearing the *hijab* to these schools—most of which had Missionary backgrounds. This clash of two interests crystalised and morphed into the Hijab Crises. Interestingly, the first place of manifestation was Osun State.

In 2004, the government of Olagunsoye Oyinlola, introduced a document, “Guidelines on Administration and Discipline in Osun State Public Schools.” It stated that:

the use of hijab by female Muslim students shall be allowed in Muslim public schools with proviso that it shall not be made compulsory, especially for non-Muslim students in such schools (OSG 2004: Article 8.2 [V]).

Although the document recommended against the wearing of hijab in Christian schools, that recommendation was never enforced by any administration because there were many Christian schools with a majority of Muslims in their student populations. Hence, the wearing of the *hijab* by female Muslim students continued unabated in Muslim and Missionary schools throughout the state.

The emergence of *Ogbeni* Rauf Aregbesola, a Muslim, as the governor of the state was widely celebrated by the people after retrieving his mandate at the Supreme Court in 2010. In order to improve the quality of education of the state, he did a consolidation

programmewherein schools were unified. Unfortunately, the backgrounds and orientations of these schools were not considered during this reclassification exercise. Hence, some members of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Christian leaders, especially the Baptist Mission in the state, protested. Their protest was basically against the wearing of the Hijab and the overwhelming population of the Muslim students who comprised about 70% of the total population of the consolidated schools.

Then, in 2013, a female Muslim student wore her Hijab to the Baptist High School (BHS), Iwo, and when the principal stopped her, some unidentified persons attacked her. The school, however, remained resolute on not allowing the wearing of the *hijab*. Eventually, when it seemed no solution was at hand, a case was instituted to challenge the action of these Missionary schools in *Sheikh Salaudeen & Ors V. The Governor of Osun & Ors in 2013*.⁵ The presiding judge of the Court was convinced that the case contained a human rights issue, which was not to be toyed with in the legal parlance. He further agreed with the applicant’s counsel that the Constitution was superior to any other laws of the land. saying,

It is also declared that acts of molestation, harassment, torture, embarrassment and humiliation which Muslim Female students in Public Primary and Secondary Schools in Osun State are subjected to in the hands of the agents

5. Sheikh Salaudeen Ade Olayiwola; Incorporated Trustees of Osun State Muslim Community; Incorporated Trustees of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria Applicants and Alhaji Sadiq Bola Bello (For and on Behalf of Female Muslim Students in Public Primary and Secondary Schools in Osun State *V.* The Governor Of Osun State; The Attorney General And Commissioner For Justice; Commissioner For Education, Osun State, Mrs. Olagunju (For Herself And On Behalf Of All Principals Of Public Primary And Secondary Schools In Osun State); Alhaja Sadiat Oladapo (For Herself And On Behalf of all other Head Teachers of Public Primary Schools In Osun State); Christian Association Of Nigeria Respondents; Superior Evangelist Aladeseye (Chairman, Christian Association Of Nigeria, Osun State Chapter); Rev. Kunle Adeyemo 1 St Vice Chairman (Christian Association Of Nigeria, Osun State Chapter) and Rev. Father Ajayi Secretary Christian Association Of Nigeria, Osun State Chapter (For Themselves And On Behalf Of All Members, Christian Association Of Nigeria, Osun State Chapter).

of the 1st – 3rd Respondents especially the 4th and 5th Respondents constitute a clear infringement on the fundamental right of the said Muslim female Students to religion, conscience and thought as well as their fundamental right to dignity of human person and right against torture, inhuman and degrading treatment.⁶

Many parents saw this judgement as a victory for their religion. While the Christians and Missionary Schools were not satisfied with the judgement, some female Muslim students started wearing their *hijabs* to school. At an emergency meeting headed by the CAN chairman, Elisha Ogundiya, and heads of Churches in Oshogbo on 7 June 2016, a resolution was reached:

Where the Osun State is inclined to implementing the judgement, Christian students in all public schools founded by Christians with the toil and sweat of our forefathers in the faith will have no choice but to start wearing Christian garments and vestments as part of their school uniform for the propagation of our own faith given the justice Saka Oyejide Falola declared right of Muslim Female Students to do same as what as what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander as well (Oluwole 2016).

By 13 June 2016, about 261 female Muslim students wore their hijabs to school, while 92 Christian students (male and female) wore various robes, including choir outfits, revealing their religious affiliations (Akinnaso 2016).

Fig 1: Students in different Religious attire in Osun School



Source: John Oluwole, “Osun Hijab Crisis: Students attend schools in church garments”

A similar scenario was played out in Lagos State in 2013 when the state government banned the wearing of the *hijab* in public primary and secondary schools (Abdulhamid and Mohammed 2013: 7-26) after a Court in Lagos ruled in favour of the use of the Hijab. The judgement in favor of enforcement on the ban of wearing the Hijab by female students was appealed, and on 21 July, 2016, the panel on the appeal, which was headed by Justice A. B. Gumel⁷, overruled the previous judgment of the Justice Onyeabor’s Lagos High Court on the basis that the lower court erred in law and that the use of the *Hijab* is a religious right, which is enshrined in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Lagos State government went on to appeal the judgement at the Supreme

6. Judgement of 3 June, 2016, 52

7. Other members are Justices M. Fasanmi; A. Jauro; J.S. Ikyegh and I. Jombo Ofor.

Court.

However, the state government in a circular titled, “Re: The Use of Hijab in Lagos State Public Schools”, based on the outcome of a panel constituted by the state on the use of the Hijab, observed that since the case on the use of the *hijab* was still pending in the Supreme Court of Nigeria, the status quo should be maintained in order not to be guilty of contempt of the court. In other words, students were to be allowed to wear their *hijabs* with their school uniforms. However, the *hijab* same must be short, smart, neat and in the same colour with the uniform (skirt). The circular further directed that: “No students should be discriminated against in any form on the basis of religion. All principals and teachers must be sensitized to comply accordingly and... enjoined to adhere strictly to these recommendations” (LAGS 2018).

On 12 December 2017, a law graduate, Firdaus Amasa, was not called to the bar, because she donned the *hijab* at the law school graduating ceremony at Abuja. Although the Council of Legal Education has a prescription of what graduates should wear for the “Call to Bar” Ceremony, the *hijab* was not a part of it. The Council recommended punishment for her disobedience stating that “(i) Offenders shall be escorted out of or refused entry into the Lecture hall/classrooms. In addition, he/she shall be reprimanded. (ii) A second or subsequent offender shall be rusticated” (Part B, Rule 3, p.5). However, Amasa’s act was met with mixed reactions. While some described the action of the body of benchers as unconstitutional and archaic in the twenty-first century, others described the lady’s action as scripted and part of the Islamisation agenda.⁸



Fig 2: Snapshot of the Video by Falz ‘This is Nigeria’ Depicting Girls Dancing in Hijab

video with dancing with the *hijab* on.⁹ The video gathered millions of views on the internet within days of release. However, in June 2018, a group named Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) demanded that Falz should take down the video within seven days or face legal action. Some of the reasons given by the group were that the video was dangerous as it depicted hate; and that it was capable of causing religious crisis of unprecedented dimension, if not taken down. The Group called the video an assault on

9. The video depicts the socio-political and economic lifestyle of the country. Although, some of the messages are being exaggerated. Video can be watched at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UW_xEqCWrm0

Meanwhile, in May 2018, a popular Musician, Folarin Falana [Falz] released a
8. The case was resolved after the intervention of the national Assembly. She has been called to bar.

the self-dignity of every Muslim and freedom of Expression gone haywire, calling the attention of security agencies to the video which it deemed hateful (Ilowolagba 2018).

On 12 November 2018, there was palpable tension at the International School, Ibadan (ISI), Oyo State, a school that was established by a German-British man, Kurt Hahn, on the premises of the University of Ibadan in October 1963. The funding for this School comes mainly from United States International Agency for Development and Ford Foundation. Its morning Assembly was suspended following the appearance of some pupils in the *hijab*, backed by the ISI Muslim Parents Forum. The wearing of the *hijab* is contrary to the school's dress code. While pressure was mounted on whether to or not to allow pupils wear the *hijab* in order to avoid further break down of law, the school was temporarily closed down for a week.

The Students Christian Movement of Nigeria, SCM, Osun/Oyo Sector, in a statement by its president, Dr. Adebayo Kolade, condemned the intent and timing of wearing of the *hijab* by some female students of the school. While the Chairman of Board of Governors of ISI, who also doubles as the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), University of Ibadan, Professor Abideen Aderinto, frowned at the act of some of these parents, he maintained that the school stand was not in favour of the *hijab* (Ajayi 2018).

Some parents of the Muslim students sued the school authority for disallowing their children from donning the *hijab* with their school uniforms. However, Justice Laniran Akintola of the Oyo State High Court, Ibadan, advised the parties in the ban of Hijab in school to seek court settlement (*Punch*, 2019). Similarly, another such case also reared its head at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH) International School, Ogbomosho, when about 50 female (Muslim) pupils wore their *hijabs* to school

on 14 January, 2019. Although the pupils were locked outside the school gate and asked to remove their *hijabs* because wearing them did not conform to the prescribed school uniform, no legal suit was recorded (Babalola 2019).¹⁰

The issue of wearing the *hijab* in school also surfaced in Ogun State where a nine-year-old pupil, Aisha AbdulAleem, sued the Ogun State government and the principal of Gateway Junior Secondary School for allegedly violating her fundamental human rights to use the *hijab* in school.

Adoption of Hijab in School: Sufficient Rationale for Suspicion of Islamisation Agenda?

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) is clear on the religious orientation of the State. It states that: "The Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion" (FRN 1999: Chapter 10). It also warns that: "Accordingly, national integration shall be actively encouraged whilst discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited." (*Ibid*, Section 15 (2)). It further stipulates that every citizen shall have equality or rights, obligations and opportunities before the law (*Ibid*: Chapter 17 (2)(a)). And the whole of Chapter IV is dedicated to Fundamental Rights, which is also a condiment of International Human Rights law.

Religion, however, remains a controversial issue in Nigeria's political history. Differences have led to series of conflicts among the Christians/Muslims, Muslims/

10. Although some parents made a request to the School Governing Council to allow Female Muslims wear the Hijab in 2011.

Indigenous and Christian/Indigenous religions.¹¹ The most prevalent are the Muslim/Christian conflicts (Yusuf 2007; Paden 2015). For instance, in the *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad*—‘People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad’ which took the name, Boko haram, western education is forbidden (Thompson and Aduradola 2016:4). Lately, a former president, Goodluck Jonathan, revealed that one of the conditions given by the group to lay down their weapons and embrace peace when he was president was for him to embrace Islam (Jonathan 2018).

The wanton killing of Christian farmers by the suspected Muslim Herdsmen (Ojo 2017; Paden 2015: 8-9) have also increased suspicions about an Islamic agenda. Many people also believe that the Boko Haram group enjoys the patronage of President Buhari and the Nigeria Army. Significantly, therefore, the fear or suspicion of the Christian population has been founded on the silence and the actions (or inaction) of the Federal Government. Christians could be allowed to wear religious symbols in the Northern part of the country or in schools established under Islamic Missions—but on the other hand, such a gesture should not be extended to Muslims in South-western Nigeria where the adoption of such headscarfs by some girls in the schools would distort uniformity.

Conclusively, the study found that the use of the *hijab* is indeed a cultural, social, and human rights issue. However, the way the government have gone about taking over Christian/Missionary schools and imposing new orientation is questionable, and leaves room for suspicion. We suggest that government should make inclusive policies and that the various religions and members should also tolerate one another, respect cultural, religious differences and beliefs of one another so as to foster sustainable peace. Since the

denial or stereotyping of a particular person or persons of their fundamental rights may lead to inferiority complexes and even suicide, schools, be they Christian or Muslim, should make policies that tolerate other religious groups and eschew any form of discrimination on any basis, be it religion, class, ethnicity, or race. Finally, stakeholders on religion in Africa and beyond should promote open, inclusive and equal opportunities for all, not minding whether one is a Muslim, Christian or Traditional Religion worshipper.

11. For example, there was a religious crisis in Ikenne Remo, Ogun state involving the Muslims and ATR followers in 2014 when the ATR followers were observing their annual *Isemo* festival, where women are not allowed outside. The Muslims brought in some women for their Ramadan festival from neighbouring village.

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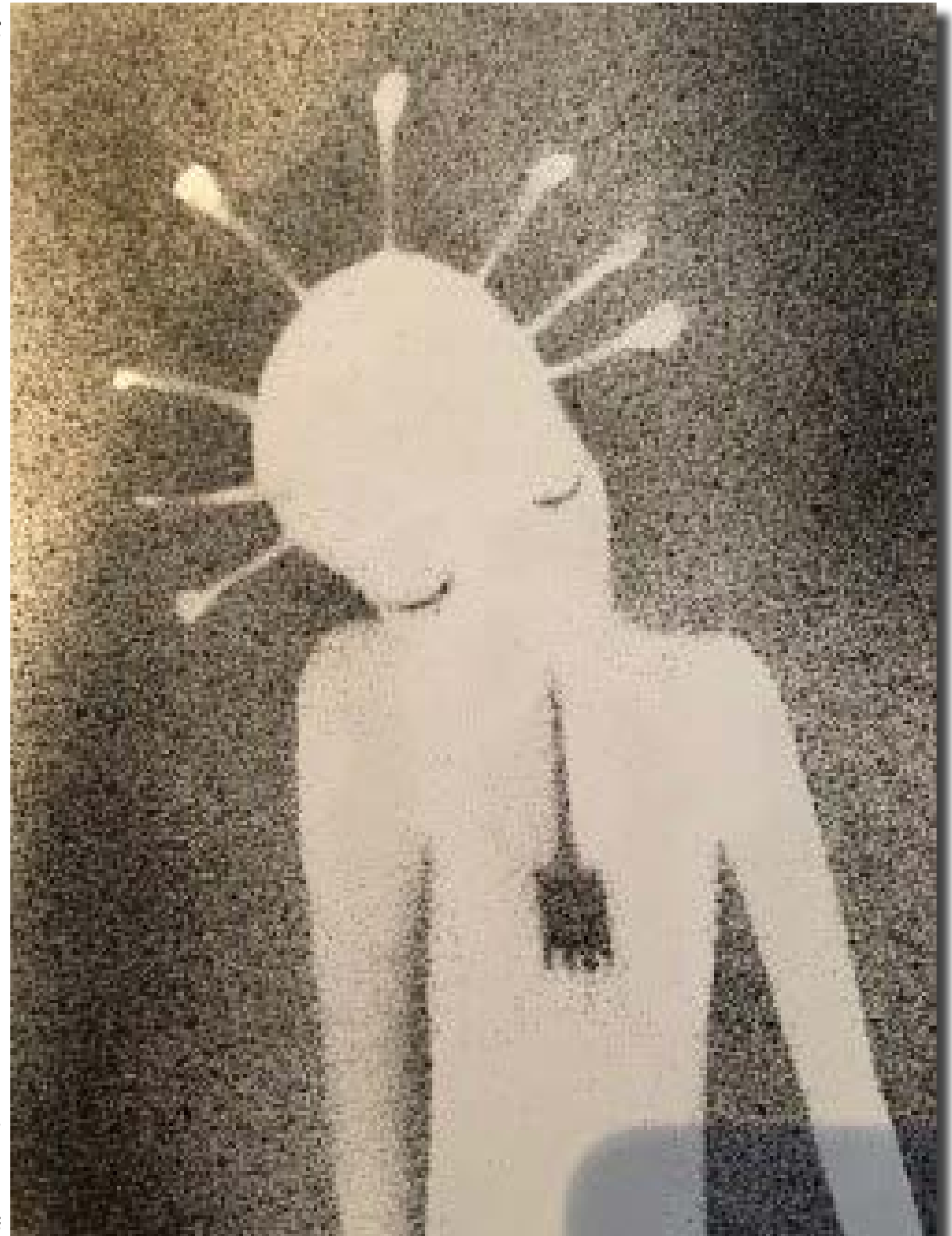
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Africa #6



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