

# The Role of Muslims' 'Mujtama' And FOMWAN in the Propagation of Islam in Ebiraland.

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## Abstract

The propagation of Islam in Ebiraland is both by some individuals and religious organisations. The two major promoters of Islam among others in the land are the Muslims' Mujtama' and FOMWAN. The objective of this paper is to examine the efforts of the propagators, the challenges and how they were surmounted. History and survey methods were adopted in order to gather real and authentic information for the study. One of the major findings of the study is Islamic brotherhood and the determination of this group to stop the people from embracing and propagating the deep-rooted culture (Eku) and also enlighten the Muslim women their duties as mothers as well as their roles as Allah mention both men and women in the Qur'an as believers in the struggle.

## Introduction

The Muslim 'Mujtamah' and FOMWAN are two major Muslim organisations that has contributed greatly to the spread and consolidation of Islam in the land. The Muslim 'Mujtama' happens to be the

first Muslim youth organisation in the land as early as 1970s.

FOMWAN on the other hand happen to be introduced in 1980s. It is a Muslim women organisation having its branches at Local Government level down from State and National level. Both the 'Mujtama' and FOMWAN shall be discussed to see the extent of their relevance and propagation in the land till the present time.

## The Muslims' Mujtama'

The Muslims' Mujtama' is the first Muslim youth organization in Ebiraland, and was founded on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, 1979. The organization was formally registered with the government in 1982. The few Islamically conscious youth of this early period thought it wise to come up with a forum that will enlighten the people especially the youth who will in turn carry on together the great mission of spreading Islamic awareness in the land. At this early period, the organization was at the beginning named YMM-young Muslims' Mujtama'. It is

therefore the mother of all Muslim organization in Ebiraland.

### **The Mujtama' Founding Members**

The very founding members of Muslims' Mujtama' in the late 70s are as follows:

\*Engr. Abdulmumin Yusuf – Now a retired civil servant and a Board member of al-Hilal group of schools. He is based in Abuja.

\*Dr. Sadiq Chatta (Late) – Was based in Udil-Kano

\*Tijani Basha (Late) – Retired teacher – Okene

\*Yaro Danqugiq – A retired civil servant based in Abuja Al-Hilal Board Member

\*Hassan O. Musa (Late) – Chief Imam Ajaokuta and an administrator Ajaokuta steel Company & Amir Muslims Mujtamiah

\*Salihu Abere – Chief Imam Ebira Central Mosque member Al-Hilal Board of Governors.

\*Yunus Suleiman (Late) – Retired Civil Servants based in Abuja

\*Muhammed Sanni – Retired Civil Servant based in Kano A board member of Al-Hilal

\*Momoh Mazai – Retired Civil Servant based in Abuja

\*Muhammad Ahmad Okatahi – Former Chairman al-Hilal board of governors

\*Hassan Jatto – Retired Civil Servant based in Okene.

\*Hajia Bilqees Badams – The former wife of Alhaji Okatahi Muhammed. She is the proprietor of Galary

group of Schools situated at Agassa GRA. One of the early sisters in the 70s

\*HalimatAdoke – Wife of Alhaji Yahaya resident at opposite FCE Otite main gate. She is a retired Civil Servant.

\*Ayishat Aliyu – From Abere's Compound. She is wife of Mallam Aliyu resident in Suleja Niger state. (Abdulmumin, April, 2022, personal interview).

Some others who join the organization in the early 80s included Mallam Hassan Jatto, mallam AbubkarArigi, mallam Tijani Abdulsalam (the current Amir), mallam Muhammad Oktahi, mallam Adams Abere, mallam Yakubu Abere, mallam Ibrahim Sudan, mallam Shuaib Abdulazeez, mallam Sanusi Abdulsalam, mallam Lukeman Imam, mallam Hammeed Iman, mallam saeed Okino, mallam Musa Ochu, Mallam Ibrahim Ahmad Onimisi, mallam --- Ogaji etc.<sup>3</sup> Among the females in this category were, sister Bilqees Suleiman wife of Abdulazeez Osiva, sister Memunat Umar from InorereOgaminana, Sister Juwa retired Badams wife of Adams Abere Sister Khadijat wife of Angi (Late) Siste Hauwa Zubair Abdulraheems wife. Barikisu from OkengwenKariyetuAjaokuta, Rabiya Aliu Yaro's wife, Sister Bili-Nurse, Sister Halimat Jatto.

The name Mujtamiah was arrived at after passig through some names such as Young Muslim Club as suggested by Ustaz Yoonus Abdullahi, later changed to Young Muslim Movement, then Young Muslim Mujtamiah of Nigeria and finally Muslims Mujtamiah of Nigeria. (Ibrahim, 2022, personal interview)

## The early patrons of the Mujtama’

As an organization who count the elders as front runners with leading roles, made some of the early fathers in Islam as patrons such as Sheikh Ahmad Rufai, Imam Musa Galadima, Ustaz Yoonus Abdullahi (Ibrahim, 2022, personal interview).

The first president of Mujtama’ was Tijani Abdulsalam Basha who led the organization for two years. His appointment according to information was based on the most learned in Arabic and knowledge. His vice was Hajia Bilqees Badams; and the first secretary general was engr. Abdulmumin Yusuf, Alhaji Okatahi Muhammad was the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> PRO of the organization. (Ibid)

## Aims of the Mujtama’

The aims of the organization are all embedded in her constitution mainly for the enlightenment of the local populace towards developing the religion (Islam). The summary of such aims and objectives as reflected in the minutes of the meeting taken by one of the earlier secretary of the Mujtamiah is as follows “Muslim Mujtamiah is an Ummah enjoying or inviting people to good and forbidden them from evils, all our aims and objectives and programmes/activities shall be pursued and executed with this view in mind”. (Ibid).

## Programmes/Activities

### Early mujtama’ activities

**Drama Presentation:** Such is designed to teach some lessons to the local populace from among the stories of past prophets in the Holy Qur’an. Mallam

Muhammad Okatahi, Mualimat Bilqees Badams and Mall. Suleiman Aliyu were recorded to have featured such drama in Ohinoyi’s palace where story of prophet Yusuf was presented. Such drama and choice of prophet Yusuf was attractive and full of lessons. The strategy worked seriously in attracting Ebiras to reason and imbibe morals in the people (Shuaib, 2009).

**Organizing lectures:** such lectures were attended by the elders in the Islamic faith and the early Islamiically conscious among the Ebiras. The elders sometimes give lectures to the youth pointing out the way forward. At this early period, Tijani Basha the 1<sup>st</sup> president make sure the organization is nurtured like a new baby.

**Some other enlightenment activities:** lectures were organized for Mujtamiah members that takes place on Sundays 8-12pm. Within this period after about 2hours lectures and the remaining 2 hours is used for teaching subjects, like Arabic, English, Fiqh, Hadith, Qur’an/Taj’wid. Children programme also went side by side on Saturdays and Sundays from 8-10am

**Zonal Ta’lims:** Ta’lims were also organized on weekly basis in identified zones by the organization. Ta’lim zones such as Idogido, idukokoroIdojiAhogede (Idichata) Egbogogo, Karaworo, Ukpake, Adogoetcwere headed by various ta’lim leaders. All held lectures on Islamic morals for brothers and sisters. (ibid).

**Wearing of Hijab:** The organization recommend Hijab for their members among females for the first time in Ebiraland in 1980s. Such was advocated and

practiced among the sisters who met the strong opposition by the Ebiras as it was alien according to them. Such early sisters that dressed in Hijab were mocked and called Eku (juju) by the nature of dress. The early Mujtamiyah sisters such as sister Bilqees Badams and other early sisters of the organisation were noted for this early Islamic dressing (ibid).

### **Mujtama' past leaders (President/Amirs)**

1. Tijani Basha 1979-1981
2. Doctor Sadiq Chatta 1981-1983
3. Mallam Yaro Danqugiq 1983-1986 (Two tenure)
4. Mallam Hassan Musa 1986 – 2009 (Permanent tenure)
5. Mallam Tijani Abdulsalam 2009 till date.

The mujtamiyah in its early period has branches in some other states such as Ilorin, Lagos, Kano and some other major towns across the country. These branches functioned among the Mujtamiyah members based in such areas as at then.

### **Mujtama' Educational Institutions**

In her quest to propagate Islam and spread Islamic awareness among the Ebiras. The organization thought it well to establish Islamic institutions where the local populace can enrole their children with a view to countering the Christians who convert the children of the Muslims in Christian schools. Brothers were advised to see teaching generally as a divine service and studying and teaching Islamic and western education as a double advantage for these tasks. Having the above objectives at heart, the mujtamiyah for the first time

in Ebiraland established an Islamic Nursery and primary School in 1991 and Islamic model College in 2005.

The Muslims' Mujtamiyah today has her head office at Etahi via Inike where the Islamic educational institution is located. Weekly programmes every Sunday between the hours of 9-12am is still being held where committed members among brothers and sisters converge to listen to lectures on a chosen topic by the Dawa committee. The Mujtamiyah has through the appointment of various committee facilitated her activities such as in education, Dawah, finance, infrastructure, and business.

### **Mujtama' contributions to Islam in Ebiraland**

- (1) **The organization impacted positively:** on the lives of the populace particularly the youth of those early period majority whom did not see it necessary to serve Allah instead participating in *Eku* cult and cultural revivalism.
- (2) **Islamic awareness was spread across the land and the state:** With the *Dawah* programmes situated in zones across Ebiraland, registered dramatic conversion of people into Islam of many young and elderly.
- (3) **Peaceful propagation:** The mujtama' as a role model taught the youth in the land the ideal, sunnatic and best way of propagating Islam in the land in which Islam entered peacefully is also by peace and not by force. Maulana Sheikh Muhammad Amin Abdullahi is a leading figure in this direction

who instructed the youth to be peaceful in their activities.

- (4) **Tolerance:** In her Islamic propagation, the organization also taught and practice what it means to tolerate the people to whom you seek to convert into Islam. The various negative actions and reactions of some of the Ebiras (some leaders) inclusive were being patiently tolerated by the Muslims Mujtama' members as an example to other youths of the time and in the near future who may want to take to Dawah activities. The various nickname and deadly castigations and persecution were patiently tolerated and in some cases politely avoided with strong hope in Allah. These form the major reasons for her success till today as the leading youth organization in the land admired by others.
- (5) **Revival of some sunnah practices in the land:** Some practices which are sunnah of the prophet (SAW) were revived and some introduced by practical demonstration among members of the organization. Sunnah practices such a wearing of hijab by women, keeping of beard by men, use of turban and observing *Itikaf* in the last ten days of Ramadan were all demonstrated by the brothers who met serious resistance and castigation by *Ekus* cult members. Today 90 percent of the Muslim women in the land put on hijab and others were seriously observed in the land.
- (6) **Non-partisan:** The mujtama' as a non-partisan organization taught the Ebiras populace how to be homogenous in Islamic practices. By this character the organization was able to maintain her objective of uniting the people who were deeply divided along the line of clans and politics. So clannish sentiment was reduced drastically among the elderly and the youths.
- (7) **Establishment of Islamic educational institutions:** These were being done as early as 1991 with nursery and primary school and in 2005 an Islamic model college which graduate students yearly most of whom have come out of the universities across the country. Their brilliant performance were being confirmed by teachers and parents of such students. Some higher institutions will not hesitate to admit Al-Hilal product for admission.
- (8) **Acquisition of knowledge:** Providing well baked Islamic personalities. It is not a matter of self-elevation to say that the mujtama' has produced leading scholars and personalities in the land. Number one without equal and a spiritual leaders is Sheikh Muhammad Amin who graduated in the department of Ulum Al-Khadith in Azhar University in Cairo, late mallam Hassan Musa chief Imam of Ajaokuta (an administrator in the company) Engr. Abdulmumin Yusuf (rtd.) in Abuja, professor Adam Abere in Kaduna Alhaji Salihu Abere, the current chief Imam of

Ebiraland Ahmad Tijani Abdulsalam, Sani Muhammad, Momoh Mazai, Abubakar Arigi, Iisah Muhammad, Sanusi Abdulsalam, Musa Ochu, Suiab Abdulazeez among others, and a host of others that have retired from active service were all product of Muslims Mujtama’.

### **1.0 Stand on the side of truth and justice towards eradication of evil acts in the land.**

On the above functions of the Mujtama’ in the land, Habib A.S() captured one of the submissions to the Government by the organization during the dastardly incident of strange killings in the land. Below is the memorandum by the Muslim Mujtamiah according to Angulu:

#### **Voice of the Mujtama’ of Nigerian on Strange Killings**

Many religions interest groups in the area added their voices to the dastardly incident of strange killings. One of them was the Mujtamiah of Nigeria based in the heartland of Ebiraland. The public memorandum it submitted on the matter is reproduced in full as follows:

All praise is due to Allah who has raised the universe high, and has setup a just measure for all things, and then enjoined Mankind to establish Justice on earth, and not to transgress the balance that He has set. Peace and everlasting and countless Blessings of Allah be upon Muhammad who has

established for Mankind an example of perfect justice in the management of human affairs and who moreover, has enjoined upon Muslims the duty to strive for the realization of justice, not only in their society but all over the world.

#### **Preamble:**

Having witnessed what had been happening in Ebiraland for the past years about killings, whether ritual, political or social conflicts considering the lot of release in the dailies and comments made by various people and organizations on Muslims as being suspected to be in connection with the killings, and taking into cognizance that all those who suggested solutions are all 'shadow-chasers' and creating more problems in their myopic recommendations rather than much needed solutions to this obnoxious evil; We have decided to point out some things which may help in clarifying the situation and unveil some hidden facts.

#### **The heart of the matter**

The state government and the security agencies would be doing everybody a lot of good by examining and seriously pondering over the comments and newspaper articles written on the ritual killings in Ebiraland. On our part, we have read with dismay and disappointment such releases by those who consider themselves as the youth of Ebiraland and we found them lacking in originality of thinking and intelligence, sincerity and they do not have the wish for peaceful co-existence in

Ebiraland. They always end up portraying themselves as enemies of the People and society, and problem creating youths who obviously have some personal or group interests to protect. What does it cost the Ebira Cultural Union (ECU) (That made a release in "The Democrat" of 20<sup>th</sup> January, 1989) and Dynamic People's Club (DPC), Okene (that presented an address on 5th February 1989 at Ohinoyi's pavillion) to realistically think and reflect over the report of the Ohinovi of Ebiraland in which he tabulated and dated all the killing in Ebiraland giving reasons behind them and where they took place?

Are we not witnesses to all that have been happening since 1979 or is it too far now to remember correctly that most of them were as a result of cultural vandalism, political upheavals and senseless materialistic pursuits which has made man inhuman and barbaric to man.

#### **An expo for the government:**

We are hereby drawing the attention of the government and especially the security agencies to seriously investigate and examine the activities of some youths organizations in Ebiraland, especially those who have pointed out that they know the people who are behind and carrying out these nefarious and dastardly acts, it would have been only normal that they be apprehended and interrogated (especially their officials ) and be made to point out their "partners in progress"(the killers) since they are so familiar with them.

For instance, according to a release by Ebira Cultural Union which was carried as a news item by

the "Democrat" on Thursday, January 20, 1989 on page 3, their Public Relations Officer, Mr, S.O. Suleiman stated that they carried out a three months intensive study and came out with the following findings

1. That Ohinoyi's report diverted people's attention to their festivals which they so madly love and this pains them a lot.
2. Some religious leaders and those in the corridor of power disallowed the government from knowing the facts about the killings.
3. The time of killing is always between 4.30 to 5.30 am which coincide with the time for Muslims early morning pray (Subhi).
4. The killings were always in Muslim homes or quarters.

As for their last two findings, an unbiased, reasoning and intelligent mind easily understand that some forces are out to reduce the number of Muslims so that during the proposed census, come 1991. We would have been depopulated and become few compared to other religious groups, otherwise, why is it that it is only our women, our children-bearers, who are being eliminated? It also shows that when the Muslim males have gone to the mosque for prayers at dawn, their enemies would clandestinely sneak in and butcher their women left unprotected in their houses.

As if to tell the government that they have found out the dare-devil criminals. They, stated that they are ready with "facts and full account of those women killed, the areas and possibly those *known*

*criminal or strongly suspected persons* related to the strange killings".

The criminals according to their report are:

- i. People associated with those from Lagos and Ibadan using mercury and paper in money making who kill when people try to obstruct their ways.
- ii. Money herbalist who "kill and remove parts of women flesh and blood".
- iii. A religious sect that takes blood, human flesh or any other part of the body and they also kill sometimes without taking any part of the body.

We shall leave number 1 and 2 for individual judgement (although one might wonder, in connection with number 1, how innocent uneducated women can possibly obstruct money makers' way) but we wish to comment briefly on number 3 for clarification. Though religion is said to be the belief in one or more god, God/gods, it also means, in a wider contest, anything that one takes seriously, often as a matter of conscience, for example, traditional or cultural festival. No wonder that many lives are lost and parts of human bodies are maimed in these so called cultural festivals in Ebiraland. The social misfits and vandals (i.e. fanatics of festivals who have turned the festivals into a mayhem or miniature war as ECU want us to believe in the ritual killing. Actually, that is true for if people kill and injure others without genuine cause with delight, and relish in the midst of hundreds of people, it is only logical that such people may engage in their sinister acts under cover

of the night and secrecy in houses in order to achieve their devilish objectives.

Nonetheless, it is a conglomeration of endemic parodies and rascal-lion that call itself Dynamic People's Club (DPC), Okene. Because, in their address delivered by their chairman, Mr Steve Adajinewa it was shown how unintelligent and warped their thinking. They have shown their ignorance and the fact, that they cannot see beyond their noses in an attempt to attack Islam and the Muslims. In the address, Mr. Adejine warred to Ohinoyi as a Muslim leader in as much as we don't want to hold brief for His Highness, we wish to state that Ohinoyi, as a leader of Ebiraland for over 20 years, is in a better position to analyse and recommend solutions to problems in his domain than these mushroom clubs.

The DPC may come out to inform the people when and how does he unjustly and without genuine reasons favour the Muslims or lead Muslims cause.

The chairman of DPC also stated that some Imams request for human blood or write for some supernatural powers according to the confession of some suspects. In this regard, we wish to state that it is a heinous crime to kill in Islam and the Holy Qur'an likens the taking of a single soul to the killing of the whole humanity and in fact whoever kills another human being without just cause deserves death. Also human blood and even that of animals are considered taboo, it being impure and dirty and prohibited for any use among Muslims. So, we challenge the DPC to come out with the real facts and figures for proof of their wild accusations.

We would like to, at least, see a single example of their confessions prosecuted on solid proof from the DPC People, especially ignoramuses of the religion attribute a lot of things to Islam which are actually outside its framework or innovations imputed to it, yet the religion (Islam) remains the best religion the world over. Just as it is characteristic with the Christians, Culturalists who cry wolf where there is none. Mr. Steve raises fire and has seen something wrong with young Muslim boys who turban themselves and preach from house to house; but does Mr Steve Adajinewa see anything wrong with Christians (men and women, young and old who move from door-to-door preaching, armed with black Bibles? Let this single question be answered and the justness of all their accusation shall come to light. We are listening. He also suggests that the Muslims Morning Prayer (Subhi) should be stopped (an expensive joke?). We doubt the motive of the formation of this club? Are there Muslim members, if at all it is an open club which they would like us to believe? These questions need urgent answers.

### **Our Stand:**

It should be made clear to these youth clubs who want to achieve cheap popularity and score political points that banning the observance of Subhi is simply and plainly out of the question, it being untenable to any single Muslim, and everybody have to understand that we (the Muslims) shall resist any attempt to disturb our fundamental obligation to Allah because of the activities of a few miscreants and saboteurs, or those who want to score tit for tat so that by their wicked and nefarious

manipulations, prayers be stopped in compensation for their banned festivals. Why can't some people carry their fight to where it belongs?

Rather than push ourselves deeper into evil doing, we should all go back to Allah and repent sincerely for our past evils with the hope that our Merciful Creator may forgive us and bestow us with our past glory as a people, so that we may re-order our lives and submit to His will and Commandments. This, is a far better solution than all the rigmaroles going on around us.

The Muslims condemn, in its totality, ritual and other kinds of killings in Ebiraland and elsewhere. We are always ready to co-operate with sincere and trustworthy people to eliminate all evils, be it social, political. Economic or religious from this society, nay all parts of the world. We have sincerely and ceaselessly been conducting prayers (*dua'a*) for long now to implore Allah to boot out these dare-devils for us all. This, we believe, is a better solution and more sincere effort, than all the loud and helpless noises going on around us.

### **To the Youth**

These articles presumably written by what we may call the Epira-Elite-To-be can be pinned down as suffering from mania and bias. Those who constitute these bodies may be suffering from dosages of academic tablets that normally turn the youths not only to irrational shadow chasers, but as mendicants.

We wish to make them realize that in their rush to swing their axe in cutting down those they think are the source of the unrest, They have ignorantly dropped some clangers, They have portrayed themselves as what they are, a part of the source of insanity in Ebiraland .The real problems in Ebiraland are left untouched.

We ask, is Ohinoyi the real cause of clanism? Has politics, the ore of our problems, not also caused lasting problems for Ebira people? Are some of the Ebira academicians not so much ignorant as to be unable to distinguish between culture and festivals? Which is more important-culture or festival. If ECU is sincere and really loves Ebira culture, they would have strove to promote our language, dress, arts and social characteristics of our people rather than be concerned only with festivals as if it is all in itself, while culture actually means the development of human intellect, mind and spirit and his various ways of life. One would therefore advice the ECU to reassess their contribution (or is it confusion) to Ebiraland.

We wish to state boldly and categorically without mincing words that we are not in support of dehumanizing, archaic and vandalized festivals (We do not say culture for we know that some aspects of Ebira culture are human, social and worth emulating and encouraging.

We hope that these youth clubs (cultural and social misfits) are not so much removed from the society that they forget to realize that the traditional festivals for Ebira people have now been drastically

changed. We hope they will realize that there is nothing good in a festival that is dehumanizing to a sub-human status where sticks bigger than the ones used by the Fulanis on their cattle are used to beat a fellow human being without his having done anything wrong. Is there any good in festivals in which enmity and hatred are created and promoted? These youths should come out to tell us if they are at pains because of the ban imposed on festivals during which participants become so wild, ferocious and stupid that one cannot be accused of making an over -statement if one says that they behave as if they have been post-nattily injected with a psychological type of hormone which makes them mischievous and destructive.

We do not think there is any pride in being recognized all over the world as notorious and blood-splashing people who are vandals and trouble –makers, among who strangers fear to live. What is more rudely than this? Which people, in this 20th century would like such a *barbaristic* picture as the above associate with them?

Where is the joy in festivals in which fetishes, charms, Weapons (dangerous ones) and even guns are used these days to either dehumanize, maim or put an end to people's existence? Is the nasty and dirty picture above that of a festival or madness? Festival may foot bad luck! Ritual killings are only part of the outcome of the festival upheavals for if people kill and maim in broad daylight and in the midst of people, it is only logical that such people may engage in the same sinister acts under the cover of night and secrecy of houses. (Abdulazeez, 2002)

The government and the security agencies, especially the police, should seriously be on the lookout for those who want to put innocent and God-fearing souls into suffering. They should not allow some hidden personalities, be they men or women, to use the Ebira youth organizations in causing unrest in Ebiraland. We are a peace-loving people; this has always been our pride since time immemorial.

Just as the Kwara State Commissioner for Social Development, Youth and Sports, Mr. S.A. Odeyemi, said at the time, the government should not hesitate to take commensurate measures to check the excesses of unpatriotic elements in the state" (Shuaib, 2009)

### **Solutions:**

One can see that suggested solutions by the Ebira youths are sometimes inadequate and even more problem-creating. Asking for dissolution of Ebira Traditional Council and debating on the Suspension of their salaries and suspension of Muslims' morning prayers and cancelling the use of loud speakers, only increase and create new problems.

All these writers have the same aim, viz: stop the curfew and restore the festivals, but there is more to that. We are envisaging clean and God-fearing society and are indeed appealing, therefore, to all those who love Ebira people to join hands together in mass-practice of egalitarianism humanitarianism and unionism so as to attain lofty and concrete aims for our people and society. Let us create a society where brotherhood, of humanity,

peace and harmony reign. To do this, we appeal that:

All clan meetings and contributions should be cancelled towards improving the lot of Ebira people,

Clan should compete in building industries, factories, etc., where the mass unemployed people in Ebiraland could be employed in addition to generating other benefits;

Communal efforts should be undertaken to provide some essential amenities for Ebira people, especially in our villages and rural areas. So let us provide boreholes in each street. Means of communication should be made easy for Ebira people, e.g. transportation;

Let the clans and well-to-do individuals redirect the thousands of Naira they contribute or donate to custodians of masquerades in providing telephone services for Ebira people.

Ebira students suffer sponsorship. The clans and youth clubs should mobilize our rich people to provide means of giving scholarships to deserving students instead of wasting their money and energy in court cases or petitions.

Petition writers should use their talents, energy and time to write about the history of Ebira so that it can be beneficial to the present and future generations.

Very many streets still need street light, let us try to think and work towards providing this social amenity in all streets of Ebiraland.

Let us provide agricultural amenities for those who wish to farm, including modern and improved materials to enhance their productivity.

These and many others should be our strenuous efforts. A lot can be done for Ebira people- positive, there is still time. Let us Create a rapport among the inhabitants of Ebiraland for the enhancement of peaceful co-existence (ibid).

Allah the most high says There is no good in much of their secret conference save (in) him enjoineeth almsgiving and kindness and peace-making among the people, Allah Almighty continued that Who so doth that, seeking the good pleasure of Allah, he shall bestow on him a vast reward.

### **Our Message**

We are youth who believe in Allah and His prophet (Saw). We stand by this come what may. We invite people to what is good for them in this life and hereafter, and what is good for the world at large. We really understand that this may earn us the displeasure of some people (especially when we refuse to be used by anybody as tools of diversion) and lead to persecution and bad names, but the Love of Allah has already veiled the heart and what more do we fear”.

We call on everybody in Ebiraland and elsewhere to join hands with us in purifying our souls and the society: We rely on Allah because He says:

"Lo! They were young men who believed in their Lord, and we increased them in guidance" (Q.8:13)

### **Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria**

The federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) was founded in October 1985 in Mina-Nigeria. The organization was formed as an umbrella body to bring together all other Muslim Women Organization to create mutual understanding and unity of purpose in pursuing matters that affect Muslim women in particular and Islam in general.<sup>32</sup>

FOMWAN was established in Ebiraland in 1989 with the constitution of her own executive members. The five-point agenda of the organisation was seriously pursued in the land with education of women and children taking the most priority (ibid).

### **Historical background of FOMWAN in Nigeria**

The Federation of Muslim Women's Association in Nigeria (FOMWAN) is an organization established in October, 1985 in Minna after it was agreed at the Kano meeting that FONWAN be formed. The main focus of its establishment is to promote the understanding and practice of the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) through.

- (a) Education of Women in the teaching of Islam;
- (b) Encouraging Muslim to establish groups throughout the country for educational and *dawah* purposes.

(c) Establishing a framework for national co-operation and unity among Women's Islamic Association.

(d) Providing a forum for Muslim Women's views to be expressed at National and State levels.

Islamic Study Groups others had organized classes for uneducated women, an established Islamic Nurseries or Primary Schools. Others were interested and wanted to serve Islam but were not in touch with others of like mind.

Most of the organized groups operated entirely in isolation, not knowing of each other's existence. Therefore, there was no mutual encouragement and no exchange of ideas, programmes or information. There was therefore need for central focus to link all these groups together and to help establish new groups in areas where there were none.

Another serious need was for a body which could express the views of Muslim Women at National and State levels. Many Women's Societies already existed in the country mostly aiming at social progress for women, and some Muslim Women joined such societies. However in most cases they were dominated by non-Muslim who were not interested in an Islamic approach to social problems and current issues. At national and international level such societies would even claim to be speaking for all Nigeria Women, while what they put forward were often contrary to the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and therefore not acceptable to Muslims. It was therefore felt necessary to establish an independent platform where Muslim women could express the Islamic

view of the problems of women and of the society in general.

Lastly, it was felt that certain problems affecting Muslim Women in particular, such as that of female education and the fulfilment of Women's right as guaranteed under the Sheria, could only be effectively tackled by the initiative of Muslim Women, in co-operation with their male counterparts. With all these needs in mind, the women concerned met in April, 1985 in Kano and agreed to call a conference to establish the organization, which was implemented in October, 1985 in Minna.

### **Aims of FOMWAN**

As stated in FOMWAN's Constitution, the aims of FOMWAN are:

- a. Encouraging and propagating Islam
  - i. To assist Muslim women to live according to the tenets of Islam as found in the original sources for the sharia (that is the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah)
  - ii. To raise the level of consciousness of Muslim women in order to combat undesirable influence (e.g in fashion, literature etc.)
  - ii. To find ways and means of mobilizing Muslim women to find ways and part in the establishment of Islam in this country.
  - iii. To make positive impact on National matters both religious and secular with a view to guarding the interests of Islam.

#### **1. Promoting Unity**

1. To unite Muslim women's organization in Nigeria so as to enable them to speak with one voice, by acting and making decision together.
  2. To serve as a liaison body between Muslim women and the Government (Federal and State).
  3. To do away with sectarian, ethnic and other divisive factors which sometimes keep Muslims apart and of the country.
  4. To represent Nigerian Muslim women at international level.
2. Promoting Educational and Social Development
- (i) To encourage the establishment of classes and institutions for women's Islamic education and literacy.
  - (ii) To provide a forum where social problems of Muslim women can be discussed.
  - (iii) To assist Muslim women in achieving self-fulfillment according to the tenets of Islam.
  - (iv) To enlighten and educate Muslim women in the country on both National and international issues affecting them in particular and the Muslim Ummah in general.
  - (v) To develop Tarbiyya (proper child-up-bringing) of Muslim children in the country.
  - (vi) To encourage charitable activities in compliance with the tenets of Islam.

### **Contribution of FOMWAN to the Promotion of Islam in Ebiraland**

According to Shuiab (2009), Ebiraland has witnessed positive contributions by FOMWA to the development and spread of Islam in Ebiraland. Some areas where their impacts were felt are as follows:

- i. Awards of scholarship to indigenes
- ii. Embarking on Dawah activities
- iii. Establishment of education institutions

On award of scholarship, the Kogi state chapter of FOMWAN awards scholarships to individuals among indigenes of the area. Such gestures were reflected in the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference in the year 2002 and some other subsequent ones many of such students were from the State Poly Lokoja and Federal College of Education Okene (ibid).

In preserving unity among the Muslims women in particular, the members of the organization pay visits to the individual member's and groups to preserve unity among Muslims and members. Islamic Nursery/Primary school for proper upbringing of the Muslim children were established by FOMWA in the land. One of the good example of such is the FOMWAN Islamic Nursery/Primary school located at LGEA Central School premises in Okene.

### **Conclusion**

The 'Mujtamah' has done a lot of good in the land today have something good to learn from the 'Mujtama'. Also FOMWAN continue to act as a principal factor in the Islamization of women nationwide and Ebira Muslim women inclusive.

However, the organisation has to spread its hand to more Local areas with a view to spread its Dawa activities.

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