

Emergence of Twelver Shiism and ‘The Islamic Movement’ In Nigeria’s North-Central Geo-Political Zone

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Abstract

The spread of Twelver Shiism across the Muslim world owes its origin to the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran led by Āyatullāh Al-Khumaynī. Shiism pervaded the soil of Nigeria afterwards in the early 1980s through the MSSN campus activism in Northern Nigeria spearheaded by Ibrahim El-Zakzaky. The prominent protagonists who kept the Shiite flag aloft were the Lebanese traders in Kano State accompanied by the Muslim students in Northern Universities in Nigeria, who saw the success of the revolution as a harbinger of practicability of theocratic government in Nigeria. While most writers focused on the Shiite development in North-Western Nigeria, the paper delved into the discourse on diffusion of Shiism across North-Central Nigeria. The research adopted a historical method to analyse the sporadic spread of Twelver Shiism to Nigeria’s North-Central under the umbrella of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria. Despite the fact that the Shiites in North-Central Nigeria upheld the Twelver doctrines, the Shiites in Okene area of Kogi State do not pay homage to El-Zakzaky. The paper concluded that the former’s indifference to the latter’s superintendence was based on political reasons.

Keywords: Twelver Shiism, Al-Khumaynī, El-Zakzaky, North-Central Nigeria.

Introduction

North-Central is one of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. It is heterogeneous in both religious and ethnic groups. It comprises six states, namely Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau, including the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja (Ostien 2012). Out of the six states in Nigeria’s North-Central zone, Kwara is a predominant Yorùbá speaking society. Just like the history of religion in Nigeria is often traced back to idolatry, the African Traditional Religion had preceded Islām in the area (Ostien 2012).

The malady of sectarian intolerance was highly pronounced in the past decades of the Nigeria’s North-Central existence. Today, religious freedom, conscience and association were imbibed by Muslims in the area as promulgated by the Nigeria’s constitution. It is clearer that the persistent preaching of the Muslim clerics in the geo-political zone has been the internal mechanism that enhanced the people’s harmonious interactions (Ostien 2012).

This unusual trait to an extent was responsible for external consensus between the Muslims and non-Muslims as well.

It is irrefutable that Muslims occupied most political offices in North-Central states except in Benue (Ostien 2012). The parlance that Nigeria is a secular state, as Ostien upheld in his work, reveals a shallow perception of the country’s political structure which largely gives priority to religious affiliations. Unlike Jos where Muslims mostly occupy a similar number of political offices as their Christian counterparts, Muslims dominate the Niger and Kwara states government (Ostien 2012).

Moreover, the law of personal statute was, at least, adopted in the local and Sharī‘ah Courts of Appeal across the six states except in Benue. This is simply because the Benue residents are predominantly Christians. In addition, the monarchical system of leadership is virtually present across the six states

except in Benue and Kogi states due to their diverse cultures. According to 1999/2000 Nigeria's constitutional history, Niger state stands out as the only Shari'ah compliant state in North-Central Nigeria (Ostien 2012). The Shari'ah was implemented during the tenure of the late Governor of Niger State Abdul Kadir Kure (1999-2007), though another report establishes that it was later withdrawn due to ethno-religious crises that erupted between the Hausa Muslims and Igbo Christians (IOL 2000).

Sequel to the 2000/2001 Shari'ah implementation programme in which some Nigeria's Northern states were granted permission to operate the Islamic legal system, the Niger state has set up a Shari'ah court that adjudicates criminal cases. The Niger State Government also establishes Shari'ah commission, Zakat and Endowment Boards as well as Advisory Council of 'Ulamā' (Ostien 2012). By and large, the researcher had a personal experience of Shari'ah practices in Niger state capital, Minna during his national service year in 2013/2014, and in fact, the residents confided to him that there was no casino, bar and whorehouse throughout Minna metropolis.

Muslims in Nigeria's North-Central could be grouped according to their doctrinal divisions. According to a report, the Sunnis were divided into four, viz; the Tijāniyyah and Qādiriyyah Sufi brotherhoods, the Izalah (Sufi anti-heretic movement) and the Dārul-Islām group (Ostien 2012). This categorisation is superficial and unrealistic. It is common knowledge that Muslim theologians have grouped the Sufis under the deviant groups due to their theological dissensions, while the Izalah adherents were considered as Sunnis based on their apparent religious practices. However, each of these groups is not without some religious excesses. A preponderant population of the Nigeria's North-Central Muslims upheld the Mālikī

School of Law except the Shiites, who upheld the Ja'farī School of Jurisprudence.

It is apt to note that the Shiites, whose official name is The Islamic Movement in Nigeria, have a significant population across Nigeria's North-Central except in Benue State. Just like other states in Northern Nigeria, the 1979 Iranian revolution coupled with the constant indoctrination of the Muslim populace made Shiism subsists in North-Central Nigeria (Ostien 2012). Modibbo, who was one of the resource persons in Ostien's work, claimed that the Shiite Amir in Jos asserts:

Most of the Sunnis were hesitant to join the Islamic Movement in Nigeria thinking that, the group was indoctrinating the Muslims with Shiite doctrines. The fact that the movement has chosen Al-Khumāyni's model of *da'wah* should not be a misrepresentation of what the movement stands for (Ostien 2012).

The above assertion is contestable and far-fetched as the movement, aside from abiding by the political doctrines propounded by Imām Al-Khumaynī, also imbibed the doctrines of Twelver Shiism to the letter. The Islamic movement denounced Nigeria's constitution and democratic government, and they used to disrespect the national anthem and national pledge. This is evident when the movement denounced the 1999/2000 Shari'ah implementation programme in twelve Northern states which they felt might not succeed because it was proposed by a non-Islamic government. They, therefore, held the view that the Muslims who supported the bill were infidels (*kuffār*). These doctrinal and political postures have kept them under strict surveillance in the country. Despite the four decades of their *da'wah*, the Shiites remain the Muslim minority in North-Central Nigeria (Ostien 2012).

The report of Ndagi that there was no pronounced presence of Shiites in Niger state is not tenable as the Shiite members across the state normally carry out their annual ‘*Āshūrā*’ processions in Minna. Jimba added that the Kogi Shiites majorly reside in Anyigba area of Igalaland, but they did not receive recognition from the populace (Ostien 2012). Contrary to recent development, the researcher’s sojourn to Kogi state reveals the Shiite stronghold in Okene Local Government area of the state.

Most researchers have written extensively on Shiite evolution and the activities of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria’s North-Western zone, especially Kano and Kaduna respectively. However, the researcher has not stumbled on the history of Shiism in Nigeria’s North-Central. The Shiites had contributed immensely to the doctrinal and political system of the Muslims in the research locale, which are not yet unmasked by researchers. Furthermore, the study aims at clarifying some misconceptions about Ilorin-based ‘The Islamic Movement (TIM)’ as opposed to The Islamic Movement in Nigeria, which is a Shiite group.

The research adopted both library and field-based methods, with an emphasis on the latter. Oral interviews were conducted with luminary Shiite figures in North-Central Nigeria to trace the historical antecedents of the movement. Thus, the study filled the gaps of the previous writers regarding the struggle of The Islamic Movement in Nigeria over four decades in the region towards the spread of Twelver Shiism to the Muslim populace.

Emergence of Shiism *vis-à-vis* The Islamic Movement in Nigeria’s North-Central

Four decades ago, after the emergence of Twelver Shiism in North-Western Nigeria, Shiism got to the Nigeria’s North-Central. The entry of Shiism into this geo-political zone virtually took a similar approach across the six states with

exception of Ilorin, the Kwara State Capital. The entrenchment of Shiism in Ilorin could be traced back to the efforts of Ibrahim El-Zakzaky. Although there had been two notable Shiite scholars before El-Zakzaky’s struggle started, but he was able to gain ground through the University campuses such as Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (ABU) and Bayero University, Kano (BUK), among others.

As the campus in Zaria (ABU) got the opportunity of having El-Zakzaky, the majority of Muslim students from Kogi, Niger and Plateau states and a handful from Kwara and Benue became Shiites (Berende 2021). This narrative traces the maturity stage of Shiism in the area as it revealed that there were some notable Shiite scholars who had embraced and practised Shiism at individual level before El-Zakzaky.

Furthermore, even though a majority of students embraced the 1979 Iranian revolution; none of the students was a Shiite adherent until the Iranian government had contact with some University students through her embassy in Lagos. Before 1995, there was a proliferation of the students’ local magazine called *The Bloom Magazine* with head office at Saint Finbarr’s College Road near the University of Lagos, Lagos state, but they later departed with Iran when their mission to propagate Shiism became apparent. The Muslim Students’ Society of Nigeria (MSSN) particularly saw the Iranian revolution as a harbinger of *Sharī‘ah* practicability and theocratic government in Nigeria, and indeed the Iranian revolution had consumed the oldest monarchy in the whole world (Alege 2022). The full-fledged Shiism had not started at this moment, but some MSSN students in North-Central Nigeria were not in isolation of the Iranian experience, especially those who had graduated from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (ABU).

In the early 80s after the success of Iranian revolution, the late ‘Abdul-Ḥakīm

Sani from Ibadan played a pivotal role in the spread of Shiism to the Nigeria's North-Central, especially in Ilorin. He did not initially declare his conversion to Shiism, but he was able to indoctrinate many Muslim youths through his captivating Islamic lectures agitating for the institution of Islamic government. He was thereafter known to be a Shiite before his alleged assassination. Another crucial factor that led to the spread of Shiism to Kwara and Kogi states was the public debate held at the University of Ilorin, Ilorin between Berende and Dr Abu-Bakr Imam Aliagan. Shortly after the debate, a colloquium was held in Kwara state by the Muslim Activists Group (MAG) to curtail the spread of Shiism but to no avail (Berende 2021). This debate could be considered as the first public awareness of Shiite ideology in Ilorin emirate.

A lecturer at the Kogi State College of Education-Technical, Kabba named Husayn added that the pioneer Shiite scholars who consolidated Shiism in Okene area of Kogi State were *Shaykhs* Nagazi, Sambayi and ^ʿAbdur-Rahmān. Thus, they got convinced to adopt Shiism from their understanding of *ḥadīthuth-Thaqalāyn* (Tradition of the Two Weighty Things) in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim which affirms that the knowledge of the Prophet's household outshines that of the entire Muslims. According to him, The Islamic Movement in Nigeria had no specific impact on Shiism propagation in Okene area of Kogi state. The Okene Shiite members established Raṣūlul-Akram Foundation (RAAF) for dispensation of their affairs. They were not loyalists to El-Zakzaky due to some of his activities that were not acceptable to them. He further added that this was the reason why the Okene Shiite members did not participate in the 2019 Abuja protest by El-Zakzaky's followers, however, he emphasised that Shiism has come to stay in a state dominated by Sunni ideologies (Husayn 2022). It is clearly observed here that the Okene Shiite members exhibited

some political postures similar to that of RAAF in Kano metropolis.

Moreover, Gimba asserted that the main factor for the spread of Shiism to the North-Central Nigeria was the activism of the Shiite leaders (*umarā'*) in the area who used to attend a quarterly intensive learning circle with El-Zakzaky in Zaria, and then, taught the knowledge to others after returning to their various destinations. So he said the Shiite Amīr in Minna *Shaykh* Ibrahim Khalil used to conduct weekly *ḥalqah* (Islamic learning circle) for dispensation of his travelogue to others (Gimba 2022). ^ʿUmar also confirmed that *Shaykh* Sulaymān Ishāq, the Shiite leader in Lokoja used to attend El-Zakzaky's learning circle in Zaria (^ʿUmar 2022).

In Plateau state, Shiism was traced to the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN) in at various secondary schools due to their agitation for Islamic governance (Tsoho 2022). Tsoho, who was one of the pioneer Shiite members in ABU Zaria, continued the fast-growing Shiite activism and propagation in Plateau; although he suffered some setbacks in the later years till he passed away in August, 2024.

In Lafia, Ahmad revealed that the Shiites in the metropolis upheld the doctrines of Twelver Shiism and *Ja'fari* School of Law as the era of the Shiite sixth Imām, Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq, represented a watershed in the history of Shiism. Although majority of Muslims in Nasarawa state were *Ṣūfīs*, the Shiites were living harmoniously with them. Ahmad confessed that he started his career as a Sunni before his conversion to Shiism. Shiism got to Lafia through the efforts of El-Zakzaky (Ahmad 2022).

It is apposite from the foregoing that the North-Central Muslims like other places across the Federation had contact with Shiism through the school premises and University campuses as well as El-

Zakzaky's struggle. The Keffi Shiite leader, Adamu corroborated the view of Tsoho that Shiism evolved in Nigeria's North-Central due to the enthusiasm of some MSSN members who were yearning for Islamic government. He said this idea emanated from the 1979 Iranian revolution. He added that the secondary school Islamic Vacation Course (IVC) availed the students the opportunity to learn about Islām through a series of Islamic lectures. Several MSSN members had been imbued with the zeal and zest to propagate Islām in totality as they were optimistic that they could become victorious as Imām al-Khumāynī was (Adamu 2022).

Shiism in Abuja was facilitated through the provision of social amenities for the Abuja Muslim community such as schools and hospitals in strategic places like Maraba and Kuje areas. In addition, El-Zakzaky's Shiite propagating strategies were thriving in Abuja through his followers' voluntary contributions and not by Iranian funding (Bello 2022). Conversely, Salih Muhammad posited that even though some dignitaries might be giving support to El-Zakzaky's programmes, it is undeniable that Iran remains his main source of sponsorship (Muhammad 2022). It is not far-fetched that El-Zakzaky deserves this honour as the spiritual superintendent of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria, who fervently keeps the flag of Iran aloft

Unveiling Misconception About Ilorin-Based The Islamic Movement (TIM)

According to Sarumi, the Muslims in Ilorin had contact with Shiism before Salafism became popular in the emirate (Sarumi 2022). Shiism evolved in Ilorin among some members of Ilorin-Based 'The Islamic Movement (TIM)' formerly known as the Muslim Ummah. It is apt to clarify that this group was a Sunni Pan-Islamic movement as opposed The Islamic Movement in Nigeria, led by El-Zakzaky,

which was purely a Shiite Movement (AbdulRasheed 2021). The pioneer leader of Ilorin-Based The Islamic Movement (TIM) was Architect Sayfullāh Alege, while the pioneer members of the movement were the current national grand Imām of Ansar-ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Imām °Abdur-Raḥmān Aḥmad, late Tājuddīn Raji, Yaro Musa Dan Kuji, late Dr Muḥammad °Ali Olukade and °Abdur-Razzāq Al-Amīn. The last two personalities were members of the movement's *Shūra* committee. However, Al-Amīn, who is the current Amīr of the movement, has *Ṣūfī* inclinations (Al-Amīn 2022).

Ilorin-based The Islamic Movement (TIM) was inspired by the zeal to spread the *Sunnah* and curtail the moral maladies ravaging the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN) who took pleasure in singing and dancing during their religious activities. The MSSN activities were so pronounced in the Northern Nigeria. El-Zakzaky's wife, Zeenah Ibrahim, whose mother hailed from Akeyede's family in Ilorin, was a friend of Al-Amīn's wife. Pertinently, the Ilorin and Zaria MSSN members were initially together before the latter became Shiites. They were both agitating for Islamic revolution to propagate the pristine Islām (Al-Amīn 2022). After the expiration of Alege's tenure, he was succeeded by the late Olukade whose deputy was Yaro Musa Dan Kuji from Sokoto, and next to him were Al-Amīn and Mustafa Berende. Berende was *ab initio* a staunch Sunni preacher under Ilorin-based The Islamic Movement before his conversion to Shiism.

During the tenure of the late Olukade, Shiism erupted among some unsuspected members of the movement. As earlier stated, Ilorin-based The Islamic Movement (TIM) was not a Shiite movement, but some individuals who had secretly embraced Shiism among them were driven away. This later happened when the efforts to reinstate the new Shiite members proved

abortive. The first person who publicly professed Shiism in Ilorin was Zakariyyā Ṣalāḥuddīn Ataragba. He studied at the Qom Seminary in Iran for almost a decade. Upon his arrival in Ilorin, Zakariyyā initiated Berende into Shiism (Al-Amīn 2022). The day when Berende and his cohorts who had embraced Shiism left Ilorin-based The Islamic Movement (TIM) was later tagged as *Yawmul-Furqān* (The Day of Criterion). This day is annually commemorated by the Shiites in Ilorin metropolis.

Other prominent personalities who embraced Twelver Shiism on individual level were Muhibbullah Ali and ‘Abdul-Fattāḥ Ṣalāḥuddīn, an ex-student of Jawāhirul-Islāmiyyah College of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Ogidi area of Ilorin and now the proprietor of Markaz Ihyā’ ‘Ulūmid-Dīn, Oloje, Ilorin as well as Mashood Aremu who was a retired lecturer from the Kwara State Polytechnic and now the proprietor Hamid Model Nursery and Primary School, Adewole, Ilorin. Another renowned scholar who joined Shiism about six years ago was Shaykh Ishāq Salmān Pekan. After the assimilation of Shiism in Ilorin, the pioneer members travelled to the Ahlul-Bayt Islamic Centre (ABIC) in Kano for an enlightenment programme (Ali 2022).

In 1985, there was a religious crisis among MSSN members in Ilorin when a group of students alleged their colleagues of having a fundamentalist approach to religious verdicts after the circulation of the Iranian books and magazines. This case was brought before the late Grand Kadi of the Kwara State Shariah Court of Appeal, Justice Abdul Kadir Orire (d.2021), who rebuked the University academics for not churning out Islamic books that could give rapt attention to voracious readers (Alege 2022). Although the late Grand Kadi had challenged the academics to become prolific writers, his judgement had also paved the way for the students to practise any sect of their choice in Islām. Alege

further added that before El-Zakzaky publicly declared his conversion to Shiism, he used to attend the *ijtimā’*^c (convention) of Ilorin-based The Islamic Movement under the guise of *taqiyyah* (dissimulation). It is unequivocal that the Shiites used to hide their belief even before their fellow Muslims. Hence, El-Zakzaky could have influenced some individuals with Shiite doctrines during one of his journeys to Ilorin emirate.

A former MSSN Amīr of the Kwara State Polytechnic Chapter claimed that Shiism stemmed from the MSSN campus activities after some Muslim brothers had contact with a book entitled *Then I was Guided* written by a former Tunisian Sunni scholar, Muhammad At-Tijani As-Samawi. He asserted that many students got convinced about Shiite ideology by the writer’s presentation of facts and preponderant citations from the Sunni six sound collections of *ḥadīth*, especially while enunciating the *ḥadīthuth-Thaqalāyn*. He further confirmed that several Sunni brothers who had joined Ilorin-based The Islamic Movement were ostracised by their fellow colleagues after they embraced Shiism (Ghali 2022).

Following some individuals’ conversion to Shiism, they were either sacked from their places of work or divorced by their wives. At times they were evicted from their learning resource centres. The most prominent scholars who contributed to the spread of Shiism in Ilorin were Zakariyya Salahuddin Ataragba, Abdullah Mustafa Berende and Muhibbullah Ali. All these scholars left the fold of Ilorin-based The Islamic Movement at the same time, but Salman Pekan, Abdul-Fattah Salahuddin and Shuaib Muhammad joined them later. Ghali espoused the report of Alege that during their stay in Ilorin-based The Islamic Movement, El-Zakzaky once attended their convention that took place at Bovina hotel, Ilorin. So he said the primary objective of the Shiites in Ilorin is to propagate Islām according to

the teachings of the Prophet and his household. Thus, the Ilorin Shiite members embraced the Twelver Shiism which remains the only surviving Shiite faction preached to her adherents in Nigeria's North-Central (Ghali 2022).

Abdul-Fattah categorised the Shiite adherents into three viz; the *Ahlut-tashayyu*^c (sympathisers) such as Imām Nasā'ī who published an independent hagiography for 'Ali bin Abī Ṭālib, the *Mufaddīlah* (exaggerators) who upheld 'Ali's superiority over other companions, and the *Rāfiḍah* (rejectionists) who usually lampoon and castigate the companions ('Īsā 2022). A few Shiite scholars in Ilorin metropolis belonged to the third group due to the sensitivity of the environment and persistent practice of faith dissimulation. Despite the secretive status of Shiism in Ilorin, Muhibbullah 'Ali and Berende used to conduct Radio programmes to enlighten the public about the Twelver doctrines within the Ilorin emirate and its environs (Ali 2022). Few years back, Berende had made a public declaration of his loyalty to El-Zakzaky. He also insisted that he did not receive any financial aid from Iran for embracing Shiism as many people might have conceived (Ali 2022). Hence, Muhibbullah 'Ali could be considered as the practical founder of Shiism in Ilorin, while Berende remains the representative of the Kwara State Chapter of The Islamic Movement in Nigeria.

Main Activities of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria

Since the Islamic Movement in Nigeria remains the national umbrella for Twelvers in Nigeria's North-Central, there exists a symbiotic relationship regarding the dispensation of their religious activities across the geo-political zone. Even though some staunch members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria had denied Shiism propagation out of *taqiyyah* (dissimulation), the testimony of Shiism is

quite obvious in the movement's annual 'āshūrā' procession, Quds day and celebration of the birthdays of the Prophet, the Twelve Imāms as well as Fāṭimah, the Prophet's daughter. El-Zakzaky did not throw in the towel, resonating with his revolutionary slogan of *Islām Kawai* (Islām only) and utilising Al-Khumayni's model of political struggle in Iran (Onapajo 2017). A report has it that the Islamic Movement in Nigeria originally started as a militant group with an office at ABU's Samaru campus which was the base of its pioneer members. In March 1979, the first protest of its members took place on ABU campus against bars and night partying. This was followed by an attack on the Kegite Club members, a gathering of students' social drinkers. This latter attack resulted in the expulsion of eight members of the movement by the University authority. On May 18, 1979, the rest members of the Movement later expressed their grievances by attacking the vice-chancellor's house. However, the issue was amicably resolved by the intervention of the late *Shaykh* Abubakar Gumi (Ibrahim 2022).

The report further articulated that the spread and development of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria had advanced from Zaria to other states through El-Zakzaky's representatives in Kano, Katsina, Jos, Bauchi, Yola, Abuja, Minna, Lokoja and Ilorin respectively (Ibrahim 2022). It is lucid from the foregoing that the inclusion of the states in North-Central Nigeria as active pioneer missionaries of the movement implies its symbiotic relationship with the movement's Zaria headquarters in Kaduna. The operational strategies and organs of the movement are succinctly discussed below:

- (a) **Academic Forum:** This platform consists of staff and students of higher institutions whose motive is to revitalise academic scholarship par excellence among University

students. They used to anchor symposiums in collaboration with the movement sisters' circle on crucial national issues affecting the Muslims and they usually organise the annual Imām's week, i.e., a commemoration of Al-Khumayni's 1979 revolution success. They always release weekly write-ups and conduct tutorials on campuses as well as Islamic vocational courses (IVC).

(b) Resource Forum: This is also known as the *ahlud-Duthūr*. This forum is composed of artisans and dignitaries among bankers, transport workers, merchants, lawyers, pharmacists and contractors. These people usually champion the sponsorship of the movement's programmes aside from the voluntary contribution of every member (Ibrahim 2022). Despite the calibres of people in the movement coupled with their financial contribution to its growth, the Iranian funding contributes immensely to the amelioration of lives of the impoverished youth and aged members of the movement (Onapajo 2017).

(c) Islamic Movement Film Production: This forum of film production was managed by El-Zakzaky; and his wife, Zeenah Ibrahim, was the executive producer and the nationwide Amīrah of the sisters' forum. This office is charged with the production of films that are meant to spread the movement's gospel to the nooks and crannies of the Federation. The movement owns an ongoing cinema in Dambo village

on the outskirts of Zaria. For instance, a film titled *Karbalā'* was launched in Kano and Kaduna respectively.

(d) Islamic Movement Publications:

This sector publishes newspapers called the *Pointer Express* in English and *Al-Mizan* in Hausa. The two papers always cover the movement's events nationwide as well as international news. Other interesting books and pamphlets are published in this sector.

(e) The Martyrs' Foundation:

This is also known as *Mu'assasatush-Shuhadā'*. Sequel to the 1992 massacre of some members in Katsina, El-Zakzaky deems it fit to establish an orphanage relief foundation that would cater for the orphans whose parents were killed during the activities of the movement. The first martyr of the Islamic movement was Abubakar Shehu Modomawa in Katsina. The movement's members always convene on every Rajab 17 of the lunar year to remember their martyred brothers. This day is tagged as *yawmush-shuhadā'* (martyrs' day). On this occasion, lectures are usually delivered in memory of the martyrs and donations are made for the orphans.

(f) Sisters' Forum: This forum is headed by El-Zakzaky's wife, Zeenah Ibrahim. El-Zakzaky, who has persistently emphasised the role of women participation in the 1979 Iranian revolution, gave the Hausa women the zeal to strive like their male counterparts in fighting for justice. El-Zakzaky's unprecedented approach to

women's status in public life arouses criticism from conservative Hausa Muslim scholars. The movement's sisters were active in the circles of the medical team, academic and resource forums, vocational training as well as hospital visitation.

(g) Fudiyyah Islamic Schools: These schools were named by the Shiites after ʿUthmān Dan Fodio to immortalise his religious struggle in Hausaland. El-Zakzaky established the first Fudiyyah Islamic School in 2002 at Wusasa junction, Dan Magaji, Zaria. This pioneer Shiite school comprises a classroom, ICT unit and library. Today, the Fudiyyah Islamic School is found across the Nigeria's North-Central under the management of the movement's representatives in each state.

(h) The Poets' Forum: The movement's poets have contributed to the spread of its gospel through their mellifluous music which enlightens the people and praises their leader. The group has produced audio and video cassettes which are played during their festive periods as well as other occasions.

(i) The Guards' Team: These are the movement's members whose duty is to man El-Zakzaky's residence and maintain orderliness in their religious gatherings (Ibrahim 2022).

(j) Political Forum: The Islamic movement has recently established a political forum in 2022. This forum is aimed at nominating the movement's political aspirants who are qualified to represent her political interest at the state and national levels (Hashim

2022). This initiative is contrary to the movement's political ideology that denounces the Nigerian system of democracy and clamours for theocracy. This new development was a turning point after El-Zakzaky's release from his longest jail term in Abuja from December 14, 2015 to July 28, 2021.

(k) Abul-Fadl Foundation: This sector is composed of youths who are saddled with the onus of organising *dawrah ʿilmiyyah* (Islamic educative workshop) for young and adult members of the movement. The foundation also releases *daʿwah* tracts and succinct documentaries on issues affecting the movement, especially on the movement's official website

<http://islamicmovement.org/>

(l) Islamic Medical Association: This forum consists of medical personnel and health workers who are serving the interest of the movement. They used to provide medical treatment and advice to the movement's members either at their religious gatherings or to the public in various communities, especially when the state government hospitals go on strike (Zeenah 2022).

From the foregoing, it is crystal clear that the Islamic Movement in Nigeria is composed of intelligentsia from different walks of life whose motive was to promote the image of the movement and propagate Twelver Shiism through humanitarian services. However, the claim that the movement has zero tolerance for sectarianism is far-fetched and contradictory to her members' public exhibitions during their periodic festivities.

Conclusion

Assimilation of Twelver Shiism in North-Central Nigeria was dated back to the MSSN days in secondary and tertiary institutions as well as the unflinching activism of the elites who were enthralled by the success of the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran through frequent digestion of the Iranian books that were in circulation in Nigeria. The Shiite adherents in North-Central Nigeria virtually pay homage to El-Zakzaky's leadership except for the Shiite Rasūlul-Akram Foundation in Okene area of Kogi State and some self-made Shiite scholars in Ilorin. The Ilorin Shiite Muslims sprang up from TIM, a Sunni Pan-Islamic movement that has zero tolerance for Shiism. The MSSN colloquium that took place at the University of Ilorin, Ilorin permanent site was the main factor for the spread of Shiism to Kogi State.

Despite the antagonism of the movement's adversaries, El-Zakzaky and his followers in Nigeria's North-Central have never relent keeping the flag of theocracy aloft, thereby endorsing democracy under the guise of dissimulation and secrecy.

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