

# Islamic Prestige, Piety and Debate in Early Lagosian Newspapers, 1920s–40s

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## Abstract

This article discusses the debates about Islam and Muslim behavior in colonial Lagosian newspapers from the 1920s to the 1940s. It argues that the content of debates about Islam varied depending on the language in which they took place: while Islamic debates in English advocated reforming both Islam and Muslim behavior through practices that reflected British and Christian missionary values and aesthetics, Yoruba-language discourses centered on the moral obligations of the individual to the wider community.

## Keywords

Islam – Muslims – Lagos – education – Nigeria – colonial print culture – translation – Yoruba – vernacular

## 1 Introduction

In recent decades, scholarship on Islam has attended to questions of translation, particularly in geographical regions where Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, is not a local language. In the case of sub-Saharan Africa, much of this literature has indicated that printed translations of Islamic texts into local vernaculars relied upon entrenched practices of exegesis (tafsir) delivered orally by trained religious clerics.<sup>1</sup> Several scholars have examined how

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<sup>1</sup> Andrea Brigaglia, "Tafsir and the Intellectual History of Islam in West Africa: The Nigerian Case," in *Tafsir and Islamic Intellectual History: Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre*, ed.

such vernacular translations—whether oral or written—often incorporated local idioms and vocabularies to make the meaning of the Qur’an and other fundamental Islamic texts accessible even to an uninitiated audience.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, recent scholarship has convincingly argued, these efforts at translation never entail a merely technical process restricted to clerics but rather a *public* process that in turn serves a crucial pedagogic function.<sup>3</sup>

Moments of political upheaval or Islamic sectarian conflict have often generated acts of competing translation—and thus, competing visions of what it means to be Muslim—throughout Islamic sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>4</sup> Less well studied is how the presence of Christian missionaries influenced and inspired

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- Andreas Gorke and Johanna Pink, (Qur’anic Studies Series), London: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 382; Louis Brenner and Murray Last, “The Role of Language in West African Islam,” *Africa* 55, no. 4, 1985, p. 432; Roman Loimeier, “Translating the Qur’an in Sub-Saharan Africa: Dynamics and Disputes,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 35, no. 4, 2005, p. 404; Tal Tamari and Dmitry Bondarev, “Introduction and Annotated Bibliography,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 15, no. 3, October 1, 2013, pp. 3, 8; Isaac A. Ogunbiyi, “Arabic—Yoruba Translation of the Qur’an: A Socio-Linguistic Perspective,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 3, no. 1, April 1, 2001, p. 26; Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu, “The Earliest Yoruba Translation of the Qur’an: Missionary Engagement with Islam in Yorubaland,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 17, no. 3, October 1, 2015, pp. 1, 19.
- 2 Brigaglia, “Tafsīr and the Intellectual History of Islam in West Africa,” 2014, p. 389; Ogunbiyi, “Arabic—Yoruba Translation of the Qur’an,” 2001, p. 26; Solihu, “The Earliest Yoruba Translation of the Qur’an,” 2015, p. 19; Fallou Ngom, *Muslims beyond the Arab World: The Odyssey of ‘uslim and the Murīdiyya*, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 19–20. Lacunza-Balda, J., “The role of Kiswahili in East African Islam,” in *Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Louis Brenner, Hurst & Company, London, 1993, pp. 227–238. Brigaglia brings up the important point that this linguistic influence went both ways, since the translations of the Qur’an often required “the development of a [new] technical lexicon.” And as Ngom details, the use of “Arabic orthography to write African languages” facilitated what he calls the “Ajamization of Islam.”
  - 3 Loimeier, “Translating the Qur’an in Sub-Saharan Africa,” 2005, p. 413; Brigaglia, “Tafsīr and the Intellectual History of Islam in West Africa,” 2014, p. 380. Dell, Jeremy, “Unbraiding the Qur’an: Wolofal and the Tafsir Tradition of Senegambia,” *Islamic Africa*, 2018.
  - 4 Loimeier, “Translating the Qur’an in Sub-Saharan Africa,” 2005, p. 406; Tamari and Bondarev, “Introduction and Annotated Bibliography,” 2013, p. 28; Gerard van de Bruinhorst, “Changing Criticism of Swahili Qur’an Translations: The Three ‘Rods of Moses,’” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 15, no. 3, October 1, 2013, pp. 206, 224; Andrea Brigaglia, “Two Exegetical Works from Twentieth-Century West Africa: Shaykh Abu Bakr Gumi’s Radd Al-Adhḥān and Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse’s Fi Riyāḍ Al-Tafsīr,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 15, no. 3, October 1, 2013, pp. 255.

early translations of Islamic texts.<sup>5</sup> In interwar Lagos,<sup>6</sup> Muslim engagement with the Anglophone and vernacular press at times addressed Christian readers and journalists, who after all had produced some of the first translations of Islamic texts into English and Yoruba.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps even more interesting, the literary genres of Muslim journalism in the Anglophone and vernacular press at times mirrored those already established by their Christian peers that pioneered the medium, such as wedding announcements. Thus, the early bilingual print culture of Lagos provides insight into how mediations of Islam in interfaith spaces often critically address perceived religious competition from Christianity, even while often bearing evidence of its influence.

The Lagos press is a unique record of such mediations. In contrast to the focus on tafsir found in the majority of recent scholarship on translation within Islamic Africa,<sup>8</sup> the Lagos press documents a wider repertoire of pedagogic

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- 5 Tamari and Bondarev, "Introduction and Annotated Bibliography," 2013, p. 22; Shobana Shankar, *Who Shall Enter Paradise?: Christian Origins in Muslim Northern Nigeria, ca. 1890–1975*, New African Histories (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014), xiv, xx, xxiii, 55; Heather J. Sharkey, "Missionary Legacies: Muslim-Christian Encounters in Egypt and Sudan during the Colonial and Postcolonial Periods," in *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa*, ed. Benjamin F. Soares, (Islam in Africa) v. 6, Leiden, Brill, 2006, pp. 71–73. Shankar's research on efforts by missionaries in Northern Nigeria to publish tracts on Islam and Sharkey's research on the use of competing pamphlets by Christians and Muslims in Egypt serve as two important exceptions to this trend. Tamari and Bondarev also mention in their introduction that linguistic borrowing between Muslims and Christians is common throughout Africa.
- 6 Though the Lagos press (and Lagosians) circulated throughout the Yoruba hinterland, and one of the vernacular papers of the 1920s was based in Ibadan, more research is needed before making any conclusive claims about Muslim print culture in Yorubaland as a whole. Additionally, many key figures in the history of Islam during this period in Lagos were Hausa with origins in Northern Nigeria. Thus, while I use source materials in English and Yoruba, these do not encompass the primary language of all Muslims present in Lagos during this time period.
- 7 Solihu, "The Earliest Yoruba Translation of the Qur'an," 2015, pp. 11–12. Translations of Islam i.e. texts and ideas into Yoruba by Christian missionaries suggests—at least, compared to other parts of Islamic Africa—that this production in large part resulted as a critical response to Christian missionaries. Reverend Cole produced the first Yoruba translation of the Qur'an in 1906. Cole's translation targeted Christians and critiqued Islam, and not surprisingly was met with disinterest from Lagos Muslims. A similar logic underpinned a series of Yoruba and Yoruba-Arabic pamphlets produced between 1908–1911 by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), and again several Muslims proactively vocalized their displeasure, particularly those of older generations.
- 8 Brigaglia, "Tafsir and the Intellectual History of Islam in West Africa," 2014; Brenner and Last, "The Role of Language in West African Islam" 1985; Tamari and Bondarev, "Introduction and Annotated Bibliography," 2013.

methods.<sup>9</sup> Lagosian Muslims advanced their competing views of proper Islamic comportment and practice through alternate genres such as op-eds, news articles, funeral and wedding announcements. To reflect this diversity, my concern with translations is not limited to Islamic texts, but also includes sartorial, ritual and cultural mediations. Because in early twentieth-century Lagos, Muslims learned to be Muslims not only through Islamic scholarship, but also through methods of instruction produced by individuals outside established scholarly chains of knowledge transmission. Thus, a development in Africa often anchored in the emergence of new media such as radio, TV, and the Internet, has, at least in the cosmopolitan port city of Lagos, a longer genealogy.<sup>10</sup>

Of course, the Lagosian Muslims who participated in the press had different agendas and backgrounds. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Muslim elite in Lagos consisted of a number of factions that loosely cohered around two main registers of prestige in the interwar period. For heuristic purposes, I define one as vernacular, and the other as reformist. By vernacular, I mean those whose Islamic practice articulated Yoruba cultural practices with the “savanna tradition” of Islam, from which much of the Islamic influence (and Imams) in southern Nigeria came. As John Hanson has recently outlined, this savanna tradition encompassed esoteric practices, followed Maliki law, and had a hierarchical structure based on face-to-face chains of knowledge transmission.<sup>11</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century in Lagos and the Yoruba hinterland, a number of elementary schools facilitated memorization of the Qur’an and instruction on Islamic practice and history. In order to gain a deeper knowledge in grammar, tafsir, hadith, and the ability to translate the Qur’an, several graduates from these schools began to travel to the northern Yoruba city of Ilorin, or even further.<sup>12</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth century, Yoruba Muslims within this tradition formed associations that mixed proselytization with mutual aid and celebrations of Islamic holidays and life-cycle events of their

9 Loimeier, “Translating the Qur’an in Sub-Saharan Africa,” 2005, p. 407. Though Loimeier mainly focuses on Qur’anic translations, he does point to the fact that in the twentieth century African Muslims have used the vernacular to address “non-scholarly audiences” about “the most banal questions of everyday life” and various cultural and political polemics, in addition to tafsir and fundamental concepts of Islam.

10 Ibid., pp. 404–6.

11 John H. Hanson, *The Ahmadiyya in the Gold Coast: Muslim Cosmopolitans in the British Empire*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2017, p. 9; Rudolph Ware, *The Walking Qur’an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa*, University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

12 T.G.O. Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841–1908*, (Ibadan History Series) Harlow, England, Humanities Press, 1978, pp. 36, 99–100.

members.<sup>13</sup> Also during this time, numerous eminent Yoruba Islamic scholars emerged after training in reputable centers of Islamic knowledge.<sup>14</sup> Though well-established, the savanna tradition was very much a “discursive tradition,” open to debate, change, and reform.<sup>15</sup> A dramatic example of this occurred in 1875, when upon arrival in Lagos a Hausa mallam grew alarmed by what he felt were inaccurate interpretations of the Qur’an. In response, he argued that only the Qur’an should be read, rejecting the hadith and scholarly commentaries, and formed a group commonly referred to as the Qur’anic section, or Sakitis.<sup>16</sup> Also in the nineteenth century, the Qadriyya and Tijaniyya Sufi orders arrived in Yorubaland along with their own reforms to Islamic practice, though their impact in the region remained minimal until the 1950s.<sup>17</sup>

The reformist register of prestige presented its own agenda, beginning in the late nineteenth century and gaining prominence by the interwar period. Though individuals and organizations that fell under this register at times disagreed, they generally united in establishing Islamic schools that paired “Western” education with Arabic education, translating Islamic texts and delivering the khutbah—the Friday sermon—in Yoruba rather than Arabic, labeling certain practices as unlawful innovations (*bid’ah*) or impious Yoruba culture in need of reform,<sup>18</sup> and opening up space for women in mosques.

13 Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 1978, p. 53.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 63. This is significant because, according to Gbadamosi, previously “scholarship had been almost exclusively monopolized” by non-Yoruba scholars from outside the region.

15 Talal Asad, “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam,” *Qui Parle* 17, no. 2, 2009: pp. 1–30. Rudiger Seesemann, “African Islam or Islam in Africa?” in *The Global Worlds of the Swahili: Interfaces of Islam, Identity and Space in 19th and 20th-Century East Africa*, eds. Roman Loimeier, Rudiger Seesemann, Lit Verlag, Berlin, 2006, p. 233. It is important to recognize the debate and developments within the vernacular to avoid the “dichotomy of traditional vs. modern,” which as Seesemann points out, often implies a pernicious “linear and teleological path.”

16 Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 1978, pp. 65–66; “The Religious Status of the Mahommedans in Lagos,” *The Times of Nigeria*, November 1, 1920, p. 6; “Jamāt Melo Lo Mbẹ L’Eko,” *Eko Akete*, March 23, 1929, pp. 7–8. As *The Times of Nigeria* article points out, an alternate name for the faction was the Sakiti Party, and the most contentious aspect was their rejection of the popular Jalalain commentary.

17 Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 1978, p. 60; Abner Cohen, *Custom & Politics in Urban Africa; a Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969, pp. 11–12.

18 “Rules and Regulations for the Guidance of the Members of the Ahmadiya Movement in Gold Coast,” 1921, CSO 26/1: 01012: Ahmadiya Movement, Moulvie Abdur-Rahim Personal, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; “From Jibril Martins, General Secretary, Nigeria

Muslim members of the Saro and Aguda elite, returned ex-slaves from Sierra Leone and Brazil, disproportionately instigated these Islamic reform groups, perhaps not surprisingly, given that their “distinctive culture” venerated education and literacy, particularly in English.<sup>19</sup> The Saro and Aguda elite was also predominately Christian, and these new Islamic reform groups at times reflected influence by this Christian missionary ideology.<sup>20</sup> A striking early example of the influence of Christian missionaries was when Muslims held a number of tea parties across Lagos to celebrate the end of Ramadan in 1895.<sup>21</sup>

Younger generations, who were more likely to have enrolled in Christian missionary schools, proved most receptive to these reforms, much of which targeted Islamic education. Muslims continued to rightfully suspect that Christian missionary schools, proved most receptive to these reforms, much of which would attempt to convert their children, and this provided the impetus for a number of Muslim elites, the West Indian intellectual Edward Blyden, and the colonial administration to collaboratively establish three Muslim schools in and around Lagos during the final years of the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Though only a small fraction of Lagosian Muslims enrolled (and some remained suspicious towards Western education), the steady growth of these schools indicated a developing interest in this new model of education.<sup>23</sup>

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Branch of the Ahmadiyya Movement-in-Islam, to All the Malcontents,” February 9, 1922, CSO 26/1: 01012: Ahmadiya Movement, Moulvie Abdur-Rahim Personal, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; “The Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society: Report for the Year 1927,” 1927, CSO 26/2: File No. 18568 Vol I: Young Ansar-ud-Deen Society, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan. Islamic practices that these groups rejected included female seclusion and amulets. Yoruba cultural practices that these groups labeled un-Islamic included tribal marks, prostration to elders, masquerades, and elaborate spending at weddings or funerals.

- 19 Karin Barber, *Print Culture and the First Yoruba Novel: I.B. Thomas's "Life Story of Me, Segilola" and Other Texts*, Brill, 2012, pp. 14–15; Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 1978, pp. 30–32, 167, 172.
- 20 Stefan Reichmuth, “Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims: The Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria,” *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 26, no. 4, 1996, p. 368.
- 21 Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 1978, p. 104.
- 22 Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 1978, pp. 136, 166–177; Nasiru, Wahab Oladejo Adigun, “Islamic Learning Among the Yoruba, 1896–1963,” PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan, 1977, p. 101; Reichmuth, “Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims,” 1996, p. 369; Al Aqiqat, “A Rejoinder to Revd. A W Howells and His Critic,” *The Lagos Weekly Record*, April 7, 1915, p. 3; These schools were founded in Lagos (1896), Epe (1898) and Badagry (1899).
- 23 Gbadamosi, G.O., “The Establishment of Western Education among Muslims in Nigeria,” *Journal of The Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol IV, No. 1, December 1967, p. 104.

This early generation of Muslims educated in government schools came into contact with the Ahmadiyya sect at the turn of the century when one of them, Dr. Oguntola Şapara, returned from London carrying copies of the Ahmadiyya periodical the *Islamic Review*.<sup>24</sup> Şapara shared the literature with his friend, L.B. Augusto, then a principal of a secondary school that combined Western and Islamic education, and who had recently formed the Muslim Literary Society.<sup>25</sup> The scholarly rigor of the material impressed Augusto, and he soon contacted Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, the *Islamic Review*'s founder and an Ahmadi from British India, to request more literature. After some correspondence between the two men, Augusto and twenty-one others signed forms of *baiat*, pledges of allegiance, to the sect in 1916.<sup>26</sup> Like Augusto, several of these original members belonged to the Aguda or Saro elite.<sup>27</sup>

Significantly, by 1914 tensions arising after the death of Mizra Ghulam, the founder of the Ahmadiyya, had split the sect into two factions, Qadiani and Lahore. Whereas the Qadiani continued to believe that Ghulam was a prophet, a doctrine that had earned the Ahmadiyya a *fatwa* of heresy, the splinter Lahore branch rejected this and declared him to be a *mujaddid* (reformer) only, aligning themselves more with mainstream Sunni Islam.<sup>28</sup> Kamal-ud-Din belonged to the Lahore branch, and it was the Lahore branch that Augusto continued to admire while studying law in London. Presumably, when Augusto requested that the Ahmadiyya send a missionary to Nigeria he imagined they would be from the Lahore branch.<sup>29</sup> And it was the Lahore

24 Nasiru, "Islamic Learning Among the Yoruba," 1977, p. 102.

25 "Lagosian on Dits," *The Lagosian Standard*, March 11, 1914, p. 4; Nasiru, "Islamic Learning Among the Yoruba," University of Ibadan, 1977, pp. 102–103.

26 Nasiru, *Ibid.* p. 102.

27 Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims," 1996, p. 374.

28 Valentine, S.R., "Prophecy after the Prophet, albeit lesser prophets? The Ahmadiyya Jama'at in Pakistan," *Cont Islam*, vol. 8, 2014, p. 101; Valentine, S.R., *Islam and the Ahmadiyya Jama'at: History, Belief, Practice*, Columbia University Press, NY, 2008, pp. 55–58; Burhani, Ahmad Naji, "Conversion to Ahmadiyya in Indonesia: Winning Hearts through Ethical and Spiritual Appeals," *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2014, pp. 658–660. As Valentine outlines, there were a few reasons for this besides the dispute over Ghulam.

29 Nasiru, "Islamic Learning Among the Yoruba," University of Ibadan, 1977, pp. 102–103; Humphrey J. Fisher, *Ahmadiyyah; a Study in Contemporary Islam on the West African Coast*, Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 97; Aremu Lateef Olasunkanoni, Interview, April 2015; Balogun, I A B, *Islam versus Ahmadiyya in Nigeria*, Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1977, p. 27; "Mr. Augusto," *The Times of Nigeria*, May 3, 1920, p. 4.

branch where one of Augusto's Lagosian contemporaries traveled to further his Islamic studies.<sup>30</sup>

But, as was also the case in Indonesia,<sup>31</sup> though Lagosians came into contact with the Ahmadiyya through the Lahore branch, it was the Qadiani branch that formally took root in Lagos. In 1921 while Augusto was still studying in London, his requests for a missionary came to fruition with the arrival in Lagos of Abdur Rahim Nayyar from the Qadiani headquarters.<sup>32</sup> Evidence suggests that Nayyar downplayed the more controversial parts of the Ahmadiyya doctrine.<sup>33</sup> In any case, the initial tensions caused by Nayyar's arrival were less theological than they were racial and generational, with the youth more receptive to his message of reform (as was also the case in Ghana).<sup>34</sup> When Augusto arrived back from London and realized that Nayyar was a Qadiani, he reportedly tried to convince the Nigerian Ahmadiyya membership to switch allegiance

30 Smith, Abdu Rahim, "An Appreciation," *The Times of Nigeria*, February 7, 1921, p. 5 Though published in 1921, Smith had mailed the letter from Lahore in November 1920. In it, he begins by stating "Khwaja Kamal ud Din as many of us know is one of the most devout Islamic advocates in this age." Along with his letter he included a cutting from the *Islamic Review*, which *The Times of Nigeria* regretted there was not space for publication.

31 Burhani, "Conversion to Ahmadiyya in Indonesia," pp. 660–661.

32 "A Muslim Missionary in Lagos," *The African Messenger*, April 28, 1921 p. 2; "Letter from the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Criminal Investigation Division to the Commissioner of Police, Lagos" December 28, 1925, CSO 26/1: 01012, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan.

33 "Mr. A.R. Nayyar," *The African Messenger*, May 5, 1921, p. 3; "Rules and Regulations for the guidance of the members of the Ahmadiya Movement in Gold Coast." While Nayyar clearly did state some distinctions between the Ahmadiyya doctrine and that of "orthodox Islam," such as its willingness to accept King George as their "temporal King," he placed emphasis on the Ahmadiyya's efforts to reform Islam by combating innovations and prioritizing Islamic education. He also appears to have frequently either downplayed the belief that Ghulam was a prophet, or simply referred to him as the Ahmadiyya's "spiritual Khalifa."

34 "Letter from Henry Carr, Resident, Lagos Colony, to the Secretary of the Southern Provinces, February 28, 1922, CSO 26/1: 01012, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; Humphrey J. Fisher, *Ahmadiyyah*, 1963, pp. 133–134; Antoine, Mikelle. *Practice and Conversion of Asante Market Women to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in the Late 20th Century*, Michigan State University, 2010, p. 81; "Rules and Regulations for the Guidance of the Members of the Ahmadiya Movement in Gold Coast." Even when tensions over religious practice did arise, it was over whether hands should be held at one's sides (as directed by Maliki law, dominant in West Africa) or crossed over one's chest during prayer (as directed by Hanafi law, and practiced by the Ahmadiyya). A key source of generational conflict was due to the Ahmadiyya's discouragement against prostration to any human, a common practice among Yoruba Lagosians (then and today) as a sign of respect for elders. A financial dispute between Nayyar and the Qur'anic section proved another source of early conflict.



to Kamal-ud-Din.<sup>35</sup> These efforts largely failed, as did his efforts to arrange for Kamal-ud-Din to visit Lagos.<sup>36</sup> Instead, he founded the Jama'at-ul-Islamiyya in 1924. Despite its unrelated name, the Jama'at-ul-Islamiyya bore the influence of the Ahmadiyya. A pamphlet printed in 1924 stated that the group's "Aims and Objects" were principally to establish schools, mosques, orphanages and other community facilities, and "to produce and publish Islamic literatures, books, tracts, journals and newspapers" as well as host public lectures and build libraries in order to propagate "the true knowledge of Islam."<sup>37</sup> The Islamiyya's emphasis on community-building and print culture ran parallel to efforts by the Ahmadiyya in Lagos and elsewhere in the Islamic world during the 1920s.<sup>38</sup> And also like the Ahmadiyya in Lagos (though perhaps not elsewhere), the Islamiyya advocated for female attendance in mosques.<sup>39</sup>

In 1923, a number of "gentlemen" including another of the original Ahmadiyya members, Boonyamin Kasumu Gbajabiamila, established the Young Ansar-ud-Deen Society.<sup>40</sup> Similar to the Ahmadiyya and Islamiyya, their primary agenda was to advance Western and Islamic education for Muslim men *and* women in order to provoke a "spiritual awakening" of moral reform.<sup>41</sup>

35 "Letter from the Officer in Charge, Criminal Investigation Department, to the Commissioner of Police, Lagos," May 13, 1925, CSO 26/1: 01012, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; "Letter from the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Criminal Investigation Division to the Commissioner of Police, Lagos" December 28, 1925, CSO 26/1: 01012, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan.

36 "Letter from the Officer in Charge, Criminal Investigation Department, to the Commissioner of Police, Lagos," May 13, 1925.

37 "Nigeria: The Land (Perpetual Succession) Ordinance, 1924," ComCol 3296/C.20, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan.

38 Burhani, "Conversion to Ahmadiyya in Indonesia," pp. 664, 667, 674.

39 "Notes of interview granted by the Resident of the Colony of the 10th February, 1922 to Lemomu Ali, Head Ratibi; Lemomu Musa Atini; Sule Olori Omo Kewu; Sumonu Giwa Balogun; Abu Bakare Ita Faji; Amodu Alufa; Belo Otun," CSO 26/1: 01012, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; Alhaji Muhammed Ademola Mustapha, Interview, April 5, 2015; Burhani, "Conversion to Ahmadiyya in Indonesia," p. 670 While it is not clear why Nigeria is different, the Qadiani community in Indonesia enforced purdah.

40 Nasiru, "Islamic Learning Among the Yoruba," 1977, p. 108; "The Young Ansar-ud-Deen Society – Report on," Chief Detective Inspector, March 23, 1927, Comm Col 1: 312; Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; "Ansar-ud-Deen's Vice President Dies on Even of His Fiftieth Birthday," *Daily Comet*, February 2, 1948 p. 1; Balogun, Dr. Ismail, "The Ahmadiyya Problem in Nigeria," *Sunday Times*, January 20, 1974, p. 10; Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims," 1996, p. 373.

41 "The Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society: Report for 1926," 1926, CSO 26/2: File No. 18568Voll: Young Ansar-ud-Deen Society, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; "The Young Ansar-Ud-Deen

Delivering sermons and public lectures, and publishing texts and translations were all central to their reform efforts.<sup>42</sup> And like the other two reform groups, they argued there was nothing about a European business suit that was antithetical to Islam, and notably often chose this over a Yoruba-style robe when celebrating Eid.<sup>43</sup> This was not their only practice that evidenced the influence of Christianity and British culture. As will be later discussed in terms of marriage practices, the Ansar-ud-Deen (along with the Ahmadiyya and Islamiyya) adopted a “model for reform” that, as John Peel argues, aimed to be “more scriptural and Arabic, but also more attuned to the modern world.”<sup>44</sup>

The relationship that developed between the Ahmadiyya and the reform groups it inspired was generally respectful, even if important differences remained. Besides their rejection of some of the Ahmadiyya’s unorthodox beliefs, another difference was that these splinter reform groups maintained a cordial relationship with those remaining within the savanna tradition, and tolerated some entrenched cultural practices like prostrating to elders, which the Ahmadiyya disparaged as *bid’ah*.<sup>45</sup> Yet despite the fact that many of its earliest members left the Ahmadiyya, the sect continued to play an important role in the Lagosian Muslim community through their involvement in education and print culture. Today, many senior members of the Yoruba Muslim elite remain grateful for the education they received in Ahmadiyya schools, even if they reject the Ahmadiyya on theological grounds.<sup>46</sup> A similar sentiment of respect if not agreement existed throughout the first half of the twentieth

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Society: Report for the Year 1927”; “The Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society: Report for the Year 1928,” 1928, CSO 26/2: File No. 18568 Vol I: Young Ansar-ud-Deen Society, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; “Moslem Women and Education,” *The Lagos Daily Record*, December 8, 1932, p. 4; Giwah, Z M, “Public Examination at Abeokuta,” *The Times of Nigeria*, April 4, 1921, p. 6.

42 “The Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society: Report for the Year 1927”; “Public Examination at Abeokuta,” *The Times of Nigeria*, April 4, 1921, p. 6; Reichmuth, “Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims,” 1996, p. 372.

43 “The Young Ansar-ud-Deen Society: Proposed Muslim School: Turning the First Sod,” *Daily Times*, September 16, 1929, Comm Col 1: 312; Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; Alhaji Chief Imam Bar Sanni abd Rahman, Interview, June 2016. Aremu Lateef Olasunkanoni, Interview, April 2015; Reichmuth, “Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims,” 1996, p. 377.

44 J.D.Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, (African Systems of Thought), Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000, p. 190.

45 Reichmuth, “Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims,” 1996, p. 372; “Rules and Regulations for the Guidance of the Members of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Gold Coast.”; Aremu Lateef Olasunkanoni, Interview, April 2015.

46 Dr. Dawud Noibi, Interview, May 2015; Dr. Barihi Adetunji, Interview, January 2015.

century. The Ahmadiyya were regularly included in major events among other sects of Lagosian Muslims, such as mosque openings, meetings with colonial officials, and religiopolitical forums, and non-Ahmadis regularly attended their programs, even those once in direct conflict with them, such as Agosto.<sup>47</sup> A shared commitment to reforming Islamic education and practice, along with an avid embrace of print culture, ensured that rather than becoming an insulated sect (as occurred elsewhere in the Islamic world),<sup>48</sup> the Ahmadiyya in Lagos continued to interact with and influence other reform groups.<sup>49</sup>

The embrace of Western education by these reform groups was more than additive, indicating a different relationship to Islamic knowledge. Rather than restricting it to a small number of clerics, these groups sought to popularize Islamic scholarship as well as enable Muslims to compete for civil service and professional careers that required English literacy and theretofore had been dominated by Christians. To achieve this goal, reformist groups moved away from Arabic and the mosque as the primary medium and place of instruction.<sup>50</sup> The Ahmadiyya literature Agosto procured in the 1910s was in English, and it was in English (alongside a Yoruba translation provided by a Nigerian)

47 "Kabọ Baba," *Eko Akete*, November 4, 1922, p. 2; "Ipade Awọn Imale Lọdọ Resident," *Eleti-Ofe*, June 23, 1926, pp. 3–4; "Another big Reception for Mr. Jibril Martin," *Elete-Ofe*, December 8, 1926, p. 4; "The Wasinmi Jamiu Mosque," *Nigerian Daily Times*, March 21, 1929, p. 7; "Notes: Mohammedan Parties," July 24, 1929, ComCol 1: 852; Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; "The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam," *The Lagos Daily Record*, January 2, 1930, p. 3; Salame, Mallam Shehu, "2,000 Miles Journey: With the Sultan to the Coast," *Nigerian Daily Times*, July 13, 1933, p. 1; "Chief Imam Asafa Tijani Is Honored," *Daily Comet*, February 9, 1945, p. 2.

48 Burhani, "Conversion to Ahmadiyya in Indonesia," p. 672.

49 "Awọn Egbẹ Amadiya," *Eleti-Ofe*, December 8, 1926, p. 2; "Egbẹ Ahmadiya Gb'arada," *Eleti-Ofe*, April 21, 1926, p. 3. There is also some evidence that the Ahmadiyya sometimes adjusted their programming to be more acceptable to Lagosian Muslims. For example, in 1926 they reportedly took the advice of one of their "elders" to not stage a drama on "The birth of Jesus."

50 "From the Lieutenant Governor of the Southern Provinces to the Chief Secretary's Office, Lagos," March 30, 1922, CSO 26/1: 01012; Ahmadiya Movement, Moulvie Abdur-Rahim Personal, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; "The Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society: Report for 1926"; "The Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society: Report for the Year 1928." Alhaji Chief Imam Bar Sanni abd Rahman, Interview, June 2016; "Rules and Regulations for the Guidance of the Members of the Ahmadiya Movement in Gold Coast." As the annual report for Ansar-Ud-Deen from 1928 indicates, the main objection reformists had to Arabic-only Islamic education was that it promoted "parrot-like learning" rather than comprehension of the Qur'an and other Islamic texts.

that Nayyar gave sermons upon his arrival in Lagos in 1922.<sup>51</sup> The Islamiyya and Ansar-ud-Deen similarly delivered sermons in Yoruba and published English and Yoruba translations of Islamic texts.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, these reformist schools prioritized literacy in English and Yoruba in addition to Arabic,<sup>53</sup> and each group held lectures, receptions, and other activities in spaces not previously associated with Islamic piety, such as family compounds and event halls.<sup>54</sup> Of course, oral translations of Islam into Yoruba by itinerant clerics predated translations by reformists.<sup>55</sup> The difference was that reformist groups promoted the use of Yoruba and English texts and sermons to make Islamic knowledge widespread and accessible to all Muslims. This upended an established hierarchy of knowledge contingent in part on Arabic fluency, and irritated some, particularly among the older generations.<sup>56</sup>

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- 51 "Notes of Interview Granted by the Resident of the Colony of the 10th February, 1922 to Lemomu Ali, Head Ratibi; Lemomu Musa Atini; Sule Olori Omo Kewu; Sumonu Giwa Balogun; Abu Bakare Ita Faji; Amodu Alufa; Belo Otun," February 10, 1922, CSO 26/1: 01012: Ahmadiya Movement, Moulvie Abdur-Rahim Personal, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; "Brewing Another Mohammedan Trouble," *The African Messenger*, March 16, 1922, p. 3; "Rules and Regulations for the Guidance of the Members of the Ahmadiya Movement in Gold Coast"; "From the Secretary for the Southern Provinces to the Chief Secretary's Office, Lagos," January 23, 1922, CSO 26/1: 01012: Ahmadiya Movement, Moulvie Abdur-Rahim Personal, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; Oloye, "Iro-Pipa," *Eko Akete*, September 30, 1922, p. 5; Interview with Mutiu Oladele in Ibadan, Nigeria, Interview, December 2014. Though the "Rules and Regulations" are technically for Ghana, Nayyar distributed them in Lagos. One rule stated that all members should "devote their leisure hours to the study of English and Arabic."
- 52 Aremu Lateef Olanakanoni, Interview, April 2015; "Rules and Regulations for the Guidance of the Members of the Ahmadiya Movement in Gold Coast."
- 53 Z M Giwah, "Public Examination at Abeokuta," *The Times of Nigeria*, April 4, 1921, p. 6.
- 54 "The Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society: Report for the Year 1928," CSO 26/2: File No. 18568 Vol I, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; Olotu-ki-ku-sipo-ika, "The Ahmadiya Literary Society," *Eko Akete*, April 18, 1925, p. 8; "News and Notes: Ahmadiya Literary Society," *Eleti-Ofe*, June 13, 1928, p. 3.
- 55 Ogunbiyi, "Arabic—Yoruba Translation of the Qur'an," 2001, p. 26; Solihu, "The Earliest Yoruba Translation of the Qur'an," 2015, pp. 1, 19.
- 56 "From the Lieutenant Governor of the Southern Provinces to the Chief Secretary's Office, Lagos."; "The Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society: Report for 1926"; "The Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society: Report for the Year 1928." This generational tension was particularly pronounced with the Ahmadiyya, and their delivery of the Friday sermon in Yoruba rather than Arabic, as was the established practice. Ansar-ud-Deen somewhat avoided conflict since, at least at first, they did not operate mosques.

Muslim engagements with Anglophone and Yoruba print culture differed in terms of their content and addressivity. Though this generation of reformist Muslims dominated Anglophone print culture, a wider range of Muslim voices and opinions surfaced in Yoruba textual productions. Thus, while Muslims literate in Yoruba likely owed this skill to reformist Muslim societies (or Christian missionaries), literacy did not automatically lead to one hegemonic vision of Islam. Significantly, it is when Muslims engaged in Anglophone print culture, not Yoruba, that both the forms of Islamic practice depicted and literary genres used, exposed the influence of the mission Christianity.<sup>57</sup> In return, some Christians lent their support to reformist Islamic groups by attending their events<sup>58</sup> and by praising them in the press.<sup>59</sup> Most publishing houses were based in Lagos and like newspapers, these Islamic reform groups circulated into the Yoruba hinterland. Thus, this research builds on Reichmuth's claim that the growth of Islamic societies dedicated to providing Western education for Muslims, first in Lagos during the 1920s and then throughout Yorubaland, represented an alternate path to prestige than wealth in trade or the system of titled rulers.<sup>60</sup>

To explore how different Lagosian Muslims utilized both English and Yoruba print culture, the article will first examine the earliest examples of Muslim engagement with the Lagos press. It then provides a more in-depth examination of the content and methods Muslims used in the Anglophone press compared to the Yoruba vernacular press in the 1920s–30s. Finally, it considers how Muslim marriage got translated both in practice and between languages in the 1920s–40s.

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57 John A. Chesworth, "Fundamentalism and Outreach Strategies in East Africa: Christian Evangelism and Muslim Da'wa," in *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa*, ed. Benjamin F. Soares, Islam in Africa, v. 6 Leiden, Brill, 2006, p. 185; Sharkey, "Missionary Legacies," 2006, pp. 71–72. As research by Chesworth and Sharkey illustrates, the uptake by Muslims of Christian missionary methods of evangelism, textual and otherwise, can also be observed in East Africa and Egypt, respectively.

58 Makanju, "No More Segregation," *The Times of Nigeria*, June 20, 1921, p. 4; "Awon Ahmadiya Se Ohun Ara," *Eko Akete*, December 16, 1922, p. 2; "Address of Welcome," *Eleti-Ofe*, December 1, 1926, p. 4; "The Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society: Report for 1926"; "The New Ahmadiyya School at Elegbata: Opening Ceremony," *The Nigerian Spectator*, January 14, 1928, p. 4.

59 "Ahmadiya Institution," *The Nigerian Pioneer*, June 23, 1922, p. 9; "Disturbance to the Open Air Preaching of the Ahmadiya Movement," *The Nigerian Pioneer*, November 3, 1922, pp. 7–8.

60 Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims," 1996, p. 366.

## 2 Early Muslim Voices in the Lagos Press

Before examining Muslim translations of Islam into Yoruba and English, a brief overview of pre-1920s print culture in Lagos—and the space Islam occupied within it—will help contextualize what represented a shift in the 1920s. In the mid-nineteenth century Christian missionaries brought printing presses to Nigeria to facilitate their theological labors,<sup>61</sup> and by the 1880s the Lagos press emerged as a formable force.<sup>62</sup> While the first three decades of the press usually only consisted of one or two papers in print, several years in the 1920s boasted over ten active papers.<sup>63</sup> Circulation numbers also increased, thanks to technological advancements and rising literacy rates, largely a result of Christian missionary education. It was by this time that vernacular newspapers blossomed with six weekly papers founded, five based in Lagos and one in Ibadan. As with English, a minority of Nigerians possessed literacy in Yoruba, limiting readership to a relatively elite class, though one that was gradually expanding.<sup>64</sup> But unlike the Anglophone press, a single literate community member could easily read aloud the news in Yoruba to others.<sup>65</sup> As Karin Barber has argued, the expansion of the Yoruba press represented an attempt by elites to engage (and influence) a broader audience.<sup>66</sup>

The majority of scholarship on early print culture in Nigeria understandably focuses on the influence of Christian missionaries. Most of the first

61 Nozomi Sawada, “The Educated Elite and Associational Life in Early Lagos Newspapers: In Search of Unity for the Progress of Society,” University of Birmingham, 2012, p. 31. As Sawada states, “Rev. Henry Townsend (1815–1866), the founder of the CMS Yoruba mission, set up a press at Abeokuta to produce service sheets and hymn pamphlets.” In 1859 he started the first newspaper, *Iwe Irohin*, originally in Yoruba and then shortly after with an English supplement.

62 Sawada, “The Educated Elite and Associational Life in Early Lagos Newspapers,” 2012, p. 28; Increase Coker, *Landmarks of the Nigerian Press: An Outline of the Origins and Development of the Newspaper Press in Nigeria: 1859 to 1965*, 1968, p. 7; Fred I.A. Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880–1937*, (Ibadan History Series), Harlow, England, Humanities Press, 1978, pp. 1, 259–60.

63 Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria*, 1978, pp. 260–61.

64 Sawada, “The Educated Elite and Associational Life in Early Lagos Newspapers,” 2012, pp. 28, 80. As Sawada notes, Christian missionary schools taught Yoruba in primary schools, whereas English was mainly reserved for secondary school. Even if Muslim parents felt comfortable letting their children go to a missionary primary school, they often feared that further education would result in too much Christian influence. Thus, Muslims of this time were more likely to be literate in Yoruba than in English.

65 Barber, *Print Culture and the First Yoruba Novel*, 2012, p. 33.

66 *Ibid.* pp. 27–33.

newspaper editors received a missionary education, and this influenced their editorial agenda.<sup>67</sup> Towards the end of WWI, an explicitly religious press emerged with two Christian newspapers established in 1917.<sup>68</sup> Though before the 1920s Muslims remained at the fringes of this rich print culture, a few elite voices surfaced, particularly among the more reformist-oriented Lagosian Muslims.

When *The Lagos Standard* announced the first column directed at Muslims in 1913, it noted that since the paper began in 1894 only once had a Muslim submitted an article.<sup>69</sup> One Muslim reader, perhaps emboldened by the appearance of the new column, proffered that the reason for this silence “was a belief prevalent that local papers are anti-Muslim and would not publish articles by Mohammedans.”<sup>70</sup> The new columnist, “Babuji,” referred to himself as “a non-African neither a European nor an American”<sup>71</sup> while another journalist labeled him an “Asiatic.”<sup>72</sup> Given migration patterns and his pen-name, Babuji was likely Indian. Besides a five-part series on Ramadan<sup>73</sup> and a defense of polygamy published as an op-ed,<sup>74</sup> the four other columns by Babuji did not reference Islam, and the column only lasted six-months.<sup>75</sup> It would not be until

67 Sawada, “The Educated Elite and Associational Life in Early Lagos Newspapers,” 2012, p. 34.

68 Coker, *Landmarks of the Nigerian Press*, 1968, p. 16.

69 “News, Notes, and Comments,” *The Lagos Standard*, September 10, 1913, p. 6.

70 Adil-Deen, “Untitled Letter to the Editor,” *The Lagos Standard*, September 24, 1913, pp. 5–6. Adil-Deen cites the CMS publication *In Leisure Hours* as being particularly anti-Islam.

71 Babuji, “Social Gathering at Ebute Meta,” *The Lagos Standard*, October 15, 1913, p. 5.

72 E. Jenkins Harrison, “Plain Talks on the Would-Rise Africa: Part I: The Social Side,” *The Lagos Standard*, December 10, 1913, p. 6.

73 Babuji, “The Mohammedan Festival Day in Lagos,” *The Lagos Standard*, September 17, 1913, p. 5; Babuji, “The Mohammedan Festival Day in Lagos,” *The Lagos Standard*, September 24, 1913, pp. 4–5; Babuji, “The Mohammedan Festival Day in Lagos,” *The Lagos Standard*, October 1, 1913, pp. 4–5; Babuji, “The Mohammedan Festival Day in Lagos,” *The Lagos Standard*, October 5, 1913, p. 5; Babuji, “The Mohammedan Festival Day in Lagos,” *The Lagos Standard*, October 15, 1913, p. 5.

74 Babuji, “Untitled Letter to the Editor,” *The Lagos Standard*, October 22, 1913, pp. 4–5.

75 Babuji, “Social Gathering at Ebute Meta,” *The Lagos Standard*, October 15, 1913, p. 5; Babuji, “Facts and Figures: Dress for Nigerian Ladies,” *The Lagos Standard*, March 4, 1914, p. 4; Babuji, “Facts and Figures: Study of Journals and Newspapers,” *The Lagos Standard*, March 18, 1914, p. 5; Babuji, “Facts and Figures: War in Turkey,” *The Lagos Standard*, March 25, 1914, p. 6. It is worth noting that these last three appear to be a different column by Babuji as opposed to his Islam-centric column, but it is not clear. Finally, while it is true that the political situation in Turkey was of concern to Muslims, given Turkey’s control of the

1920 that another Lagos paper began the first column for Muslims by a Nigerian, and like Babuji, the column advocated Islamic reforms.

With the exception of Babuji's 1913 series on Ramadan<sup>76</sup> and a brief explanation of the relationship between Hassan and Hussein printed the same year,<sup>77</sup> the initial motive behind early Muslim engagements in the Lagos press was not to engage their co-religionists on topics of Islamic knowledge and practice, but rather to respond to textual portrayals of Islam by Christians.<sup>78</sup> Adamu Animashaun, an elite Muslim who will figure significantly in terms of Islam's engagement with the press in the 1920s, adopted this tactic in 1913 with an op-ed that critiqued the translations in a Church Missionary Society (CMS) Yoruba-Arabic publication.<sup>79</sup>

### 3 *The Times of Nigeria: An Elite Platform for Islamic Knowledge and Debate*

As other scholars point out, a series of political tussles that deeply implicated the Lagosian Muslim population spurred print culture to flourish in the 1920s.<sup>80</sup> Though the major split of Lagosian Muslims into two politicized parties—the

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Hedjaz (region of modern-day Saudi Arabia containing Mecca and Medina), this topic is not covered in Babuji's article.

- 76 The five-part series by Babuji is notable. He not only provided a detailed theological explanation of Ramadan, but was quite blunt in his criticisms of Lagosian Muslims, primarily for what he saw as their overspending on new clothes for the occasion of Eid, and for what he perceived as a lack of generosity towards beggars by wealthy Muslims. He also claimed that Lagosian Muslims were not focused on saying *takbirs* when going to the prayer ground for Eid-ul-Fitri.
- 77 Adam Animashaun, "Concerning Hassan and Hussein: To the Editor of 'The Nigerian Chronicle,'" *The Nigerian Chronicle*, June 20, 1913, p. 4.
- 78 "Opening of the Mohammedan School at Isale Gangan," *The Lagos Weekly Record*, December 1, 1906, p. 5; Idrisu Animashaun, "The Past, Present, and Future of Islam: Address Delivered on the Occasion of the Opening of the Masjidil—Jumuat," *The Nigerian Chronicle*, July 23, 1913, p. 8; "Opening of the New Muslim Mosque at Victoria Street," *The Lagos Standard*, July 23, 1913, pp. 5–6.
- 79 Adam Animashaun, "On Sura 'Masadi,'" *The Nigerian Chronicle*, February 21, 1913, p. 6.
- 80 Patrick Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos*, (African studies series), Cambridge University Press, London, 1975, p. 156; Coker, "Landmarks of the Nigerian press," 1968, pp. 14, 18, 83; Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria*, 1978 pp. 232–34, 37; Karin Barber, "Translation, Publics, and the Vernacular Press in 1920s Lagos," in *Christianity and Social Change in Africa, Essays in Honor of J.D.Y. Peel*, Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2005, p. 198.



Jamat (oppositional) and the Lemomu (Chief Imam)—had already occurred and represented opposing attitudes towards the colonial government,<sup>81</sup> the Eleko Affair of 1919 amplified the problem. In brief, the crux of the Eleko Affair was this: in the middle of a dispute over the source of authority within the Muslim community,<sup>82</sup> the Jamat Party declared four Central Mosque posts open even though supporters of the Chief Imam currently occupied them, and nominated four of their own members for the posts. The Eleko (titled ruler of Lagos) sanctioned these new nominees, and presided over their turbaning ceremony, an act the colonial government deemed outside of his jurisdiction.<sup>83</sup> The Eleko Affair made all Lagosians aware of this divide within the Muslim community.<sup>84</sup> As Henry Carr, the Resident of Lagos, noted in the thick of the controversy, “the civil administration...and the mohammedan organization...are vaguely regarded as aspects of one and the same organization.”<sup>85</sup>

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- 81 Olakunle Lawal, “Islam and Colonial Rule in Lagos,” *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 12, no. Spring, 1995, pp. 67–68, 72; Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos*, 1975, p. 101; Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria*, 1978, p. 222. Though the above sources are generally in agreement, Lawal is the most meticulous in tracing the roots of the Eleko crisis of 1919 to the beginnings of colonial conquest. According to Lawal, the crisis arose as a result of successive actions by the British that diminished the power of the Eleko title. First, the treaty of 1861 referred to the Eleko as an Oba (king) “only in its ‘African signification.’” Then in 1900, MacGregor, the Governor of Lagos, recognized the new nominated Eleko but declared that he was now only the head of the family with “no ruling function.” Thus, when the Chief Imam of Lagos aligned himself with the government on the issue of the new Water Rate in 1916, debates over who controlled the mosque—the Imam, or the mosque council—closely intersected with broader debates over shifts in authority under colonial rule.
- 82 “Did the Jamat Muslims Secede from the Central Mosque? We Say No.,” *The Times of Nigeria*, May 9, 1921, p. 4; “Brimah the Lemomu,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, October 26, 1923, p. 8. That dispute being mainly whether the authority rested with the Chief Imam or with the Central Mosque Council. As the first article demonstrates, the issue remained active for some time. Disputes continued up until the Chief Imam’s death in 1923.
- 83 Lawal, “Islam and Colonial Rule in Lagos,” 1995, p. 73; Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos*, 1975, pp. 101–3.
- 84 Leo Candid, “Mohammedan Impasse,” *The Times of Nigeria*, April 26, 1920, p. 4; “Sheik Adam I Animashaun: And the Mohammedan Controversy,” *The Times of Nigeria*, July 11, 1921, p. 4. As Leo Candid put it, “Every man in the street knows all about the Mohammedan quarrel.” In the next article, commenting on the continuing split within the Muslim community, the author remarked “To speak the truth there is hardly any respectable Christian family in Lagos today who has not some Mahommedan Family or Friends and the more the quarrel continues the more the estrangement amongst friends and families.”
- 85 Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos*, 1975, pp. 101, footnote 195. Cole’s source for Carr’s quote is MP, IV/30, Car to Lt. Gov., 19 September 1919.

Indeed, traditional rulers and non-Muslim elites had joined one or the other party depending on whether they supported the colonial state (the Lemomu Party) or not (the Jamat Party).<sup>86</sup>

One important, if overlooked, novelty of the Eleko Affair was that it marked the first time that Muslim voices joined a political debate in the press.<sup>87</sup> Though most articles about the Eleko Affair came from a non-Muslim perspective, at least five Muslims published their own commentaries.<sup>88</sup> The ambiguous identity of another author further affirmed the growing importance of a Muslim readership. Writing first under the pen-name “Well-Wisher” and then “Abd-Rhaman” in the unabashedly pro-colonial newspaper *The Nigerian Pioneer*,<sup>89</sup> this author produced a series of articles that supported the colonial government’s anti-Eleko stance, while claiming to possess Islamic knowledge.<sup>90</sup> Yet the switch from “Well-Wisher” to “Abd-Rhaman” did not reveal an actual Muslim identity, but rather was an acknowledgement that “it was held necessary that he should be transformed into a Mohammedan in order that his authority might commend itself to the esteemed respect and acceptance of every

86 Barber, “Translation, Publics, and the Vernacular Press,” 2005, p. 198; Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos*, 1975, p. 101.

87 Barber, “Translation, Publics, and the Vernacular Press,” 2005, p. 198. This contrasts with the Water Rate debate in 1915–16, a political fight that also split the Lagosian Muslim community. I am basing this claim off of looking through letters to the editor that concern the Water Rate for this time periods.

88 Alkhoranic Section of Lagos, “[Untitled Letter to the Editor],” *The Lagos Weekly Record*, October 19–26, 1918, p. 5; Abu Bakare, “The Mohammedan Question: The Pioneer’s Version,” *The Times of Nigeria*, October 27, 1919, p. 4; A Young Muslim, “An Appeal to Lagos Muslims: Wither Are You Going, Muslims of Lagos,” *The Times of Nigeria*, December 1–8, 1919, p. 7; Belo Babatunde Salami, “The Mohammedan Memorial,” *The Times of Nigeria*, December 1–8, 1919, p. 3; Adam I. Animashaun and Kasumu Ayorinde, “Muslim Congress,” *The Times of Nigeria*, December 15–20, 1919, p. 5.

89 Barber, “Translation, Publics, and the Vernacular Press,” 2005, p. 200; Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria*, 1978, pp. 43–50.

90 Well-Wisher, “The Lemomu and the Jamat Muslimin,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, September 19, 1919, p. 6; Abd Rhaman, “The Mohamedan Fiasco,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, October 3, 1919, p. 6b; Abd Rhaman, “The Lagos Muslims and the Eleko,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, October 10, 1919, p. 6b. In the first article, he claimed the Editor of the *Record* “seems to know nothing whatever about Mohammedan Religious Jurisprudence.” In the second, he claims that “no one who is conversant with the rites of Mahomedan purification,” as he presumably considered himself to be, “would dream of calling” the instance where the Lagos Fire Department sprayed the mosque (and many Muslims) during a fracas. In the third, he claimed that “every intelligent Muhammedan knows or ought to know that there can only be one Sarikin Musulmi” and that in this case, that was the Emir of Sokoto.

intelligent Muhammedan in Lagos.”<sup>91</sup> Though this cynical claim comes from a biased source—a competing newspaper—the following week a self-identified Muslim wrote an article that affirmed that Abd-Rhman's claim to Islamic knowledge was false.<sup>92</sup> Regardless of how much or how little “Abd-Rhman” understood Islam, the conscious choice to switch pen-names when addressing a conflict that was both political and religious, testified to the growing significance of Muslims within the Lagos press, as producers and consumers.

The political stakes for Lagosian Muslims had clearly risen by the start of the 1920s, and in February of 1920 Adamu Animashaun gave elite Muslims a new discursive platform when he purchased *The Times of Nigeria*.<sup>93</sup> Though within the first year Animashaun transferred ownership of the paper to the Jamat Muslims, he maintained his job as editor.<sup>94</sup> Animashaun, a member of the Qur’anic section, was well suited to this task since this was not his first use of print to advance Islam.<sup>95</sup> In 1913 he opened a shop specializing in the sale of Arabic books, and in 1914 he founded a Muslim printing press that could print Arabic script.<sup>96</sup> A Muslim with an impressive intellectual pedigree,<sup>97</sup> Animashaun published a *Nigerian Arabic Almanac* that utilized his astrological

91 “The Pioneer’s Abd Rhaman,” *The Times of Nigeria*, October 20, 1919, p. 4.

92 Abu Bakare, “The Mohammedan Question: The Pioneer’s Version,” 1919, p. 4.

93 Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria*, 1978, p. 43; H.O. Danmole, “A Visionary of the Lagos Muslim Community: Mustapha Adamu Animashaun, 1885–1968,” *Lagos Historical Review* 5, July 2005, pp. 29–30; “Change of Hands,” *The Times of Nigeria*, February 23, 1920, p. 3. This is admittedly a different timeline than presented by Omu, who Danmole follows, who claimed that Animashaun purchased the paper in 1918. Omu does not provide any footnote for this particular claim, and the official notice of the sale of the paper appears on February 23, 1920 (see above citation) and so that is the date I use. However, it is true that *The Times* was by October 6, 1919 published at Animashaun’s press (if not earlier—the online database has no earlier copies). Thus, it is possible Animashaun’s influence on *The Times* somewhat predates February 1920.

94 Danmole, “A Visionary of the Lagos Muslim Community,” 2005, p. 30; “Congratulations to Sheik Adam I Animashaun, Editor of the Times of Nigeria,” *The Times of Nigeria*, May 30, 1921, p. 5. Again, my timing differs somewhat with Danmole. I cannot claim to know the exact date when the shift in ownership occurred, but this article states that “the Jamat Muslims who owns the press through their committee rely on Sheikh [Animashaun]” to fight their enemies. This also differs from Danmole in that he claims ownership was given to the Executive Committee of the Central Mosque, not the Jamat Party.

95 Animashaun, “On Sura ‘Masadi,” 1913, p. 6; Nasiru, “Islamic Learning Among the Yoruba,” 1977, p. 101; “Muslim Service of Intercession: Impressive Ceremony at the Prayer Grounds,” *The Times of Nigeria*, March 1, 1920, p. 5.

96 Danmole, “A Visionary of the Lagos Muslim Community,” 2005, p. 27.

97 Ibid. pp. 24–26.

skills to predict the weather, disease, events, etc., and which he would later advertise in *The Times*.<sup>98</sup> Additionally, at the time Animashaun was the General Secretary of the Jamat Muslims.<sup>99</sup> Thus, Animashaun possessed an intellectual, religious, and professional background that helped him become a strong voice within the Lagosian Muslim community.

Though *The Times* folded for financial reasons in 1924, by that time an elite vision for Islamic practice and reform had emerged within its pages.<sup>100</sup> Encapsulating this vision was the column “Islamic News and Comments” authored under the pen-name “The Muezzin.”<sup>101</sup> A number of his columns suggest that he belonged to the Ahmadiyya,<sup>102</sup> perhaps somewhat surprising since Animashaun would be accused and found guilty of violence against the sect in 1922.<sup>103</sup> Regardless, the new column was publicized on April 5th, 1920, less than

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- 98 Danmole, “A Visionary of the Lagos Muslim Community,” 2005, p. 27; “Change of Hands,” 1920, p. 3; A.A. Ipaye, “The Nigerian Moselm Almanack for 1918 to 1919,” *The Lagos Standard*, September 11, 1918, p. 6; a Reporter, “Oyo Notes and News,” *The Times of Nigeria*, February 28, 1921, p. 6; “Always at Hand: Books on Arabic Literature,” *The Times of Nigeria*, April 11, 1921, p. 2. In the announcement of Animashaun’s purchase of *The Times of Nigeria*, he is introduced as “the Arabic Astrologer and author of the Nigerian Arabic Almanack.” In the reported story, readers are directed to find the recent “terrible fire in Alafin of Oyo’s Palace” among Animashaun’s predictions in his “Nigerian Arabic Almanack for the year 1921”. In the advertisement for Animashaun’s bookshop, it mentions the “Arabic Almanack” for sale as well as “Mohammedan Silk, Turbans from Arabia, Oriental scents highly perfumed...Mohammedan caps, prayer beads (Tesbihu).” As the advertisement for A.A. Ipaye’s Almanac demonstrates, Animashaun was not alone in providing such materials for the Lagos Muslim community.
- 99 Danmole, “A Visionary of the Lagos Muslim Community,” 2005, p. 26.
- 100 Danmole, “A Visionary of the Lagos Muslim Community,” 2005, p. 34; Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria*, 1978, p. 253.
- 101 “Muezzin” is the Arabic term for the man who calls Muslims to prayer.
- 102 The Muezzin, “Islamic News and Comments,” May 17, 1920, p. 4; The Muezzin, “Islamic News and Comments,” February 28, 1921, p. 5; The Muezzin, “Islamic News and Comments,” May 10, 1920, p. 2; Khan, *From Sufism to Ahmadiyya: A Muslim Minority Movement in South Asia*, 2005, pp. 2–3; Reichmuth, “Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims,” 1996, p. 371; Fisher, *Ahmadiyyah*, 1963, p. 97; Mustapha, interview, 2015; Oladele, interview, 2015. While an in-depth examination of Ahmadiyya is outside the scope of this article, it is important to note that while reformist, the professed prophethood of the founder (albeit to a lesser degree than Muhammad) has sparked condemnation from the Islamic orthodoxy globally. However at this early stage in Lagos, evidence suggests that the Ahmadi doctrine was not the primary motive for converts, but rather their reformist outlook appealed to some, particularly young men.
- 103 “The Balogun Square Incident and Its Sequel,” *The African Messenger*, November 2, 1922, p. 4; “Adamu Animashaun Again,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, November 17, 1922, p. 9.

two months after Animashaun purchased the paper.<sup>104</sup> The announcement made clear that the column would be aligned with a reformist perspective:

As the Lagos Muslims are realizing (little by little) the necessity of Education and are moving towards their sister religionists (the Christians) on the plane of Education and civilization I think it would be of interest to them to be writing weekly or fortnightly on Islamic News and comments.<sup>105</sup>

The Muezzin went on to make clear that the column aimed to have an edifying value for both Muslims *and* Christians:

I deem it of interest also to at least a small portion of Lagos Christians as I know pretty well that there are a good deal of Christians who really do not know what Islam is and have no intelligent Muslim to explain it. Ninety-nine per cent of Muslim Alfas here are no intelligent sort of people and are on the other hand fanatic...The Muezzin will endeavor to explain some points [about Islam] through the medium of 'The Times of Nigeria.'<sup>106</sup>

In the months to follow the Muezzin, along with other content in *The Times*, approached this task by circulating Islamic knowledge, promoting the union of Islamic and Western education, and counteracting Christian slanders against Islam. Meanwhile, with circulation numbers rising,<sup>107</sup> Muslim elites would use *The Times* as a platform to publicize their doctrine and agenda.

The circulation of Islamic knowledge in *The Times* used two general approaches: first, the presentation of theological information and second, critiques of some current practices by Lagos Muslims. In terms of the former, at times a writer would pick either an Islamic practice or doctrine and then expound in detail on its meaning and importance with the aid of Qur'anic

104 The Muezzin, "Islamic News and Comments," *The Times of Nigeria*, April 5, 1920, p. 4.

105 Ibid.

106 The Muezzin, "Islamic News and Comments," April 5, 1920, p. 4.

107 Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria*, 1978, pp. 259–260. Though circulations returns are unavailable from 1913–1919, they exist for 1920–1924. In the four years that Animashaun owned the paper, weekly circulation numbers went from 230 in 1920 to 1000 in 1921–1922, only dropping slightly to 700 in 1923–1924. To give a sense of comparison, in 1921–1922 its circulation numbers were only beaten by the *African Messenger* by an extra 200 copies per week, though by 1923 it was surpassed or equaled by *Eko Akete*, *Eleti Ofe*, and the *Weekly Record*. Reader demographics are unfortunately unknown.

quotations.<sup>108</sup> At other moments *The Times* offered general overviews on Islam or the different sects in Lagos (perhaps more for its Christian readers), or simply printed English translations of specific Qur'anic verses without explanation.<sup>109</sup> Evidencing that the British Empire enabled global networks of Islamic knowledge and print culture, *The Times* occasionally reprinted articles from the *Islamic Review*, the publication of the Lahore branch of the Ahmadiyya.<sup>110</sup> As for the second approach, the Muezzin's critique of Yoruba Muslim marriage practices, Feyjinni's tirade against the "ignorance" of his co-religionists, and Belo Babatunde Salami's argument that educated Muslims ought to embrace the respectability of the European business suit, serve as three examples of *The Times'* desire to reform Islam along modernist lines.<sup>111</sup> Though it is hard to gauge the overall reception to *The Times'* vision of Islam, at least one Muslim wrote to express appreciation for "the trouble" the Muezzin took to research his column.<sup>112</sup>

The promotion of Muslims pursuing Western education received a significant amount of space within *The Times*, further revealing Animashaun's commitment to the agenda of reformist groups.<sup>113</sup> In the first couple of months of Animashaun's ownership of the paper, it often lamented the fact that few

108 "The Philosophy of Muslim Prayers," *The Times of Nigeria*, March 21, 1921, p. 4; Bashrat Ahmad, "Taqdir (Pre-Measurement) in Islam," *The Times of Nigeria*, October 17, 1921, p. 6.

109 "Koran Chapter VIII, Section 4," *The Times of Nigeria*, March 14, 1921, p. 1; "What Is Islam?," *The Times of Nigeria*, March 14, 1921, p. 1; The Muezzin, "Islamic News and Comments," *The Times of Nigeria*, August 9–16, 1920, p. 4.

110 The Muezzin, "Islamic News and Comments," *The Times of Nigeria*, May 24, 1920, p. 6; Abdu Rahim Alabi Smith, "An Appreciation," *The Times of Nigeria*, February 7, 1921, p. 5; "A Church Within the Mosque," *The Times of Nigeria*, March 21, 1921, p. 4. The Muezzin reprinted an article about Ramadan, which explained the month's historical significance and provided instructions for proper practice. Abdu Smith was a Nigeria who traveled to the Ahmadiyya headquarters in Lahore to further his education, and in this article the Editor remarks that Smith had sent copies of the *Islamic Review* along with his letter. The last article provided more historical than theological knowledge, presenting a detailed overview of the Prophet's life in Medina.

111 The Muezzin, "Islamic News and Comments," May 17, 1920, p. 4; Belo Babatunde Salami, "The Educated Muslims Dress," *The Times of Nigeria*, November 1, 1920, p. 4; Yusoof T. Feyjinni, "Islam on Trial: An Appeal to Lagos Muslims," *The Times of Nigeria*, May 3, 1920, p. 7.

112 B. Ade 'Ramimi, "An Appreciation," *The Times of Nigeria*, October 18, 1920, p. 6.

113 "News, Notes, and Comments," *The Lagos Standard*, March 11, 1914, p. 6. Augusto opened an independent Islamic secondary school for boys and girls in 1914 with the assistance of Adamu Animashaun. According to the above announcement of the school "The curriculum of studies will include Religious Knowledge, Arabic, English, Hausa, Yoruba, Elementary

Lagosian Muslims received Western education, and lauded the few individuals or groups already working to solve this perceived problem.<sup>114</sup> *The Times* additionally promoted this educational agenda by reporting on and praising elite Muslims pursuing advanced professional degrees in the UK.<sup>115</sup> The first prominent example of this was when Augusto departed Lagos for the UK to obtain a law degree in 1920.<sup>116</sup> *The Times* praised this achievement in no uncertain terms, claiming “this historic act on the part of Mr. Augusto will serve to the Muslims as a gateway to the land of civilization and education.”<sup>117</sup> The following week, Animashaun went so far as to postulate that “had Nigeria possessed a qualified Muslim barrister with a knowledge of Muhammadan Law the Jamat Lemomu trouble should now be a thing of the past.”<sup>118</sup> Perhaps inspired by Augusto, within the same issue one Muslim called on “educated Muslims” to start a Literary Society that would be “socially and morally beneficial to your community.”<sup>119</sup> The plea clearly met Animashaun’s approval, since the author remarked that *The Times* “has kindly consented to hear by personal call or otherwise any suggestion from well-wishers and others interested in the early formation of the Club.”<sup>120</sup> Thus, *The Times* framed the intellectual achievements of elite Muslims like Augusto as enabling the ‘moral uplift’ of the Lagos Muslim community, and actively supported this project.

*The Times* also provided a platform for elite Muslims to publicly defend Islam from attacks by Christians. While previously such defenses in the paper were rare, in roughly the first year after Animashaun bought *The Times* the paper published several articles defending Islam. While a few addressed broad

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Mathematics, Classics and Elementary Science.” Thus, it blended religious instruction with the curriculum found in Christian missionary schools.

- 114 Belo Babatunde Salami, “The Future of the Muslims,” *The Times of Nigeria*, March 29, 1920, p. 7; The Muezzin, “Islamic News and Comments,” *The Times of Nigeria*, April 26, 1920, p. 6; Muhammad Ashafa Sanusi, “An Appreciation,” *The Times of Nigeria*, March 22, 1920, p. 7; Abdullah Lawal Kosoko, “The Man’s Glorious Duty,” *The Times of Nigeria*, April 26, 1920, p. 6. The Muezzin starts the above-cited column this way: “That it is only through the medium of Education that the Nigerian Muslims could progress is a fact which is undeniable.”
- 115 The Muezzin, “Islamic News and Comments,” *The Times of Nigeria*, May 3, 1920, p. 7; The Muezzin, “Islamic News and Comments,” May 10, 1920, p. 2; “Congratulation to Mrs. L.B. Augusto,” *The Times of Nigeria*, May 10, 1920, p. 2; Sanusi, “Literary Club: A Desideratum for the Muslims,” *The Times of Nigeria*, May 17, 1920, p. 6; “Nigerian Muslims and Western Culture,” *The Times of Nigeria*, May 17, 1920, p. 5.
- 116 “Nigerian Muslims and Western Culture,” 1920, p. 5.
- 117 “Congratulation to Mrs. L.B. Augusto,” 1920, p. 2.
- 118 “Nigerian Muslims and Western Culture,” 1920, p. 5.
- 119 Sanusi, “Literary Club: A Desideratum for the Muslims,” 1920, p. 6.
- 120 Ibid.

critiques leveled against Islam or the Lagosian Muslim community,<sup>121</sup> the majority of this genre responded to specific textual representations of Islam by Christians, particularly those published by CMS.<sup>122</sup> A notable example is the Muezzin's column from March of 1921, which printed extracts of twelve critical polemics against Islam published by missionaries and Europeans, including two Yoruba pamphlets by CMS.<sup>123</sup> Though the Muezzin did not provide any commentary, the extreme nature of the selected excerpts such as "It is plain in the Qur'an that Mohammed is a Sinner," suggest a desire to inform Muslim readers of the slanderous speech against Islam by Christians in their midst. Significantly, *The Times* focused on misrepresentations of Islam found in elite, mostly Christian spaces, whether in Anglophone print culture or colonial politics.<sup>124</sup>

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- 121 Bisiriyu Mumuney Animashaun, "Islam, the Self-Spreading Religion," *The Times of Nigeria*, March 8, 1920, pp. 4–5; The Muezzin, "Islamic News and Comments," *The Times of Nigeria*, June 7, 1920, p. 5. Part of Animashaun's article is a rebuke of the argument that "Islam was spread through the medium of the sword" which he claimed was "so repeatedly set forth that there is hardly one of the Muslim or non-Muslims who has no knowledge thereof." Meanwhile, the Muezzin, expressing frustration with the constant attacks against the Lagos Muslim community because of the current split, blamed the prolonged nature of the dispute on the interference by local Christians.
- 122 Bisiriyu Mumuney Animashaun, "Mohammedanism v. Christianity," *The Times of Nigeria*, March 29, 1920, p. 5; Muhammad Ashafa Sanusi, "To the Editor, Times of Nigeria," *The Times of Nigeria*, April 5, 1920, p. 7; Muhammad Ashafa Sanusi, "To the Editor, Times of Nigeria," *The Times of Nigeria*, April 26, 1920, p. 6; Belo Babatunde Salami, "Look Before You Leap," *The Times of Nigeria*, April 26, 1920, p. 7; Animashaun, "Islam, the Self-Spreading Religion," pp. 4–5; The Muezzin, "Islamic News and Comments," *The Times of Nigeria*, February 7, 1921, p. 4; The Muezzin, "Islamic News and Comments," *The Times of Nigeria*, March 7, 1921, p. 5; Momodu Adabi, "A Letter from a Mohammedan," *The Nigerian Pioneer*, February 4, 1921, p. 5; The Muezzin, "Islamic News and Comments," *The Times of Nigeria*, February 21, 1921, p. 4. Admittedly the article by Momodu Adabi and the response by the Muezzin may not fit. In this case, the *Nigerian Pioneer*, a paper notoriously pro-British, published an article by Momodu Adabi who claimed to be a Muslim, though the article made several odd statements, such as "Mohammedanism is a religion which for its propagation enjoins and enforces the destruction of infidels by force of arms." He ends his article by thanking the British government at-length for their patience with his co-religionists. The Muezzin's response not only disagreed with several of Adabi's claims, but also questioned the veracity of his Muslim identity.
- 123 The Muezzin, "Islamic News and Comments," March 7, 1921, p. 5. These were: "Yoruba Edition of Tracks for Mohammedans" by CMS published in 1918, and "From the Religion of Christ and that of Mohammed, A Yoruba Pamphlet," published by CMS in 1920.
- 124 Besides critiquing CMS publications or articles penned by Christians, how Muslims were portrayed in reportage of the Eleko Affair and the dispute over the Imamship of the Central Mosque was also often addressed.



The emergence of Muslims debating Islam with other Muslims coincided with Animashaun's ownership of *The Times*. Sometimes *The Times* actively generated these debates, such as when it solicited "from our readers" their opinions on "what kind of dress the educated Mahomedan is going to adopt," a call that inspired at least one article, which advised "European dress" paired with "fez caps and turban."<sup>125</sup> One dispute that arose concerned head-coverings in court. In 1921 one Abdul Wakil reported his dismay at learning that the Chief Imam had recently told a judge that Islam did not require Muslims to keep their heads covered in court.<sup>126</sup> Part of his surprise stemmed from a recent article in *The Times* that had reported a Lagosian judge encouraging Adamu Animashaun to keep his fez on while testifying.<sup>127</sup> The next week *The Times* followed up by remarking that while the matter might seem trivial to non-Muslims, "to the true follower of the Islamic faith it is to him of the most vital importance for once any important part of a religious rite is ignored or cast away disintegration sets in and the whole fabric becomes weak."<sup>128</sup> To further support their position *The Times* noted "fez caps are used by all true Mohammedans in Persia, Egypt, Turkey and some parts of India and in Sierra Leone with the turban in sacred and other buildings."<sup>129</sup> Thus, once again *The Times* drew on cosmopolitan knowledge to align itself with reforms and defend Islamic practice.

A final unique aspect of *The Times* in comparison to previous Lagosian newspapers was the fact that elite Muslims used the paper to publicize religious reforms and activities, and to make claims on the colonial government. At times this publicity aimed simply to inform, such as when the Ahmadiyya requested *The Times* publish their recent set of passed resolutions or when the paper published the "Rules and Regulations" for Muslims as dictated by the Chief Imam of Lagos.<sup>130</sup> At other times elites publicized their piety in

125 "The Mohammedans of Lagos," *The Times of Nigeria*, October 25, 1920, p. 4; Salami, "The Educated Muslims Dress," 1920, p. 4. Babatunde Salami wrote that while "native dress" was not "a violation of Islamic Laws" it was "most degrading and unsuitable to the educational and social states of an educated Muslim," thus making "European dress" with "fez caps and turban" preferable. Since the available database ends at November 1, 1920, it is unclear whether any additional responses exist.

126 Abdul Wakil, "That Is the Man, Mark Him Well," *The Times of Nigeria*, March 28, 1921, p. 5.

127 "Our Sheikh in the Witness Box," *The Times of Nigeria*, February 21, 1921, p. 5.

128 "The Case of Wearing of the Fez-Cap," *The Times of Nigeria*, April 4, 1921, p. 5.

129 Ibid.

130 Bisiriyu Mumuney Animashaun, "The Ahmadiyya Movement," *The Times of Nigeria*, December 1, 1919, p. 7; Ibrahima the Lemomu, "Rules and Regulations," *The Times of Nigeria*, March 1, 1920, p. 5. Though the first article technically pre-dates Animashaun's ownership

*The Times* for political reasons. For example, in 1921 the Baba Adini of Lagos, a Muslim title, asked *The Times* to publish a letter he had received from the Jamat Party, which outlined resolutions they recently passed in response to the current conflict over authority in the Central Mosque.<sup>131</sup> The Muslim elite also publicized special events in *The Times*. For example, the “leaders of the Muslim community” announced that they would soon hold a special prayer to avert “a return to Lagos of Influenza or any other pestilence.”<sup>132</sup> Even after it folded, reformist-oriented groups continued using the English press to publicize events that often mirrored those of Christian missionaries, such as public debates, entertainment shows, and athletic competitions.<sup>133</sup> Finally, Muslim elites recognized *The Times* as a tool to publicly make claims on the colonial government. Imam Ligali of the Jamat Party adopted this strategy when he received a letter in Arabic from the Imam of Badagry, asking for assistance in a dispute with the Ado of Ilaro.<sup>134</sup> Imam Ligali passed the letter on to Adamu Animashaun, who translated it into English. Animashaun published his own letter to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Southern Provinces and the Lieutenant-Governor’s promise to investigate in response, perhaps as a means of holding the government accountable.<sup>135</sup>

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of *The Times*, the newspaper was being printed on his press by this point, and given his relationship with Bisiriyu Animashaun it is possible he had some influence here. As for the “Rules and Regulations” published by the Imam, most of these focused on what behaviors and practices were not appropriate for life-cycle events: marriage, funerals, and child-naming.

131 “To the Jamats through the Baba Adini,” *The Times of Nigeria*, March 14, 1921, p. 1. Contrasting themselves to the previous Chief Imam, the Jamat Party members declared “we are true Muslims and we wish to keep the Islam pure and holy.”

132 “Muslims Propose Holding Service of Intercession,” *The Times of Nigeria*, February 23, 1920, p. 4.

133 “The Ahmadiya Literary Society: A Public Debate,” *Nigerian Spectator*, November 3, 1928, p. 1; “The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam,” *The Lagos Daily Record*, January 2, 1930, p. 3; “The United Muslim Club,” *The Lagos Daily Record*, January 31, 1930, p. 2; “Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society,” *The Lagos Daily Record*, January 24, 1930, p. 2; “Muslim Cricket Club,” *The Lagos Daily Record*, December 23, 1932, p. 2; “The Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society,” *The Lagos Daily Record*, December 9, 1932, p. 1.

134 “Translation from Imam of Badagry,” *The Times of Nigeria*, December 5, 1921, p. 4. The specific complaint was, as the letter stated: “That the Ado of Ilaro ordering and compelling all the Muslims of his country to be opening their turbans before entering to his house. We want you to assist us to prevent the actions of this Bale.”

135 [response from Lieutenant-Governor Southern Prov to Animashaun, 29 Nov 1921], *The Times of Nigeria*, December 5, 1921, p. 5.

No Anglophone newspaper in the 1920s offered as much space to Muslim voices as *The Times of Nigeria*, and elsewhere newsprint skewed towards hostility when reporting Islamic affairs and events. One minor exception was the *African Messenger*, which in the early 1920s ran a somewhat regular column on Islam by “Ayiluka,”<sup>136</sup> perhaps inspired by *The Times’* Muezzin. Meanwhile the *Nigerian Pioneer*, known for being cozy with the colonial administration,<sup>137</sup> increased both its coverage and ire towards Islam in the 1920s.<sup>138</sup> Often these critiques targeted holidays. For the month of Ramadan, the use of drums to announce *suhoor*, the meal before dawn, attracted barbed complaints in the *Pioneer*, which also derided the practice of fasting as illogical.<sup>139</sup> Reports on Islamic holidays made an effort to highlight “immoral” behavior, rejoiced when economic depression decreased public jubilation, and an article on alms-giving

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- 136 Ayiluka, “Here and There: A New Muslim School,” *The African Messenger*, July 14, 1921, p. 4; Ayiluka, “Here and There: The Mohammedan Festival,” *The African Messenger*, August 18, 1921, p. 3; Ayiluka, “Here and There: He Is Only Mohammedan,” *The African Messenger*, October 20, 1921, p. 3; Ayiluka, “Here and There: The Slaughtered Rams,” *The African Messenger*, July 26, 1923, p. 7; Ayiluka, “Here and There: Killa! Killa!,” *The African Messenger*, August 16, 1923, p. 9; Ayiluka, “Here and There: The Death of a Chief Imam,” *The African Messenger*, November 1, 1923, p. 9.
- 137 Barber, “Translation, Publics, and the Vernacular press,” 2005, p. 200; Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria*, 1978, pp. 43–50. As Barber details, the *Pioneer* was founded by Kitoyi Ajasa, “the arch-conservative, pro-British Saro lawyer.” Omu provides a detailed overview of the *Pioneer* and its politics.
- 138 Using an available database with OCR [Readex: World Newspaper Archive: African Newspapers, 1800–1922] I searched for the keywords “Muslim,” “Islam,” and “Mohammedan” for the years 1918, 1920, 1921, and 1922 for the *Nigerian Pioneer*. I skipped 1919 as the database only has 23 issues available for this year (The other years all have between 51 and 52 issues available). The combined total of hits for 1918 was 13, compared to 21 for 1920, 18 for 1921, and 35 for 1922. I additionally looked through the entire year of 1923 at the *Nigerian National Archive* at Ibadan, and noticed a continued interest in Islam.
- 139 “Some Peculiarities of the Fasting,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, April 20, 1923, p. 17; “The Yearly Feast of the Mohammedans,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, May 5, 1922, p. 8. The *Pioneer* article describes the announcement of *suhoor* this way: “it is right to remind our Mohammedan friends that it is an inconvenience to the non-Mohammedan members of the community to be awakened every morning by the beating of drums and shouting of urchins belonging to this religion. Also that the blocking of streets for hours on end for purposes of praying or listening to exhortation is far from having consideration for the convenience of the general public.” In terms of fasting, the *Pioneer’s* announcement of Ramadan spent most of its space critiquing what it perceived as an illogical aspect of the month: “It seems difficult to understand why the fasting should put those concerned into such higher expense, as far as food is concerned, than at other times notwithstanding the fact that the stomach has limited capacity!”

during Eid ended by asking “What willful wastes do some people make under the sanctimoniousness of religious fanaticism?”<sup>140</sup> The *Pioneer* excelled at backhanded compliments, such as when it praised the architecture of a new home built by a prominent Muslim trader by remarking, “of course one scarcely expects a Mohammedan to own such a beautiful house.”<sup>141</sup> Even more extreme, the *Pioneer* claimed that night-prayers conducted by Muslims could be linked to robbery and that Muslims were entirely to blame for their underrepresentation in the education system dominated by Christian missionaries.<sup>142</sup> Given the *Pioneer’s* low opinion of local Muslims, it is no wonder that a report on the arrival of a pilgrim from Mecca in 1923 ended this way: “It is hoped that the new arrival will inform his co-religionists of the difference which exist between the Mohamedan of Asia and his co-religionists of Yorubaland.”<sup>143</sup>

Thus, with the exception of *The Times of Nigeria* and to a lesser extent the *African Messenger*, both of which folded in the mid-1920s, the Anglophone press remained at best an indifferent place for Lagosian Muslims. Of course, part of the problem hinged on English literacy rates among Muslims. Writing to *The Lagos Standard* in 1917, one anonymous Muslim, after estimating only ten percent of the Muslim community could read English, concluded that “an Arabic and Yoruba newspaper” would “invariably be patronized by all sects of the Mohammedans.”<sup>144</sup> Though no Yoruba-Arabic serial ever materialized, the vernacular press did blossom in the decade to come, and as this writer predicted, it contained a much wider range of Muslim perspectives.

#### 4 The Vernacular Press: Expanded Audience and Debate

The six<sup>145</sup> vernacular newspapers that began in the 1920s represented an alternate, if overlapping, space to the Anglophone press. As Karin Barber argues,

140 “Boys Will Be Boys,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, August 24, 1923, p. 7; “Celebration of the Beiram Festival,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, August 11, 1922, p. 8; “Rich Pauperism,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, August 11, 1922, p. 8. The last article also claims that most beggars during Eid are rich Muslims merely pretending to be blind or poor.

141 “Opening of Wahabi Shitta’s House,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, June 7, 1922, p. 8.

142 “History Repeating Itself. Concatenation of Ridiculous Events.,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, September 1, 1922, pp. 8a–9; “Annual Report on the Education Department Southern Provinces of the Colony, for 1921,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, October 13, 1922, p. 7.

143 “The Arrival of an Al Haji,” *The Nigerian Pioneer*, October 19, 1923, p. 11.

144 Dogmatist, “Jottings: My Letter Bag,” *The Lagos Standard*, September 12, 1917, p. 5.

145 Admittedly, I have not consulted all six papers. Among those easily available at the Nigerian National Archive in Ibadan, I consulted *Eko Akete* (1922, 1924, 1925, 1928, 1929, 1937),

the proliferation of journalism in the vernacular was tied to a broader shift in power away from the educated elite and towards traditional chiefs and the popular masses.<sup>146</sup> In short, indirect rule, the limited franchise introduced to Lagos in 1922, and the expansion of primary education and Yoruba literacy “provided a potential new public for the Yoruba-English press.”<sup>147</sup> As Barber notes, the vernacular press included panels in English and in Yoruba. Even when a newspaper published the same text in Yoruba and English, the English version often lost the richness of popular sayings and humor found in the Yoruba version.<sup>148</sup> This new populous public included Yoruba Muslims, and thus while the “underlying motives of cultural affirmation and Christian evangelism” remained present in the vernacular press of the 1920s, the appeal to a wider audience enfolded a wider range of Yoruba Muslims in comparison to the English-language press.<sup>149</sup> The split that Barber finds articulated in the Yoruba-English press—that English is “the language of the professional” whereas Yoruba is “the idiom of the artisan”—mainly holds when analyzing Lagosian Muslim engagement with vernacular and Anglophone print culture.<sup>150</sup>

Muslim engagement with the English-language panels of the vernacular press in the 1920s–30s possessed many similarities with their participation in the Anglophone press. The Ahmadiyya was easily the most prominent Muslim group within the English panels of the vernacular press, where it announced its literary events and public prayers much like churches did.<sup>151</sup> Similar to what took place within *The Times*, English-language panels of the vernacular press

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*Eleti Ofẹ* (1924, 1926, 1928, 1947), *Akede Eko* (1929, 1930, 1935), and *The Yoruba News* (1924, 1925, 1926, 1929, 1930, 1932, 1936, 1938, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945).

146 Barber, “Translation, Publics, and the Vernacular press,” 2005, pp. 197–98.

147 *Ibid.*, p. 198.

148 *Ibid.*, p. 205.

149 *Ibid.*, p. 204. Admittedly the presence of Muslim voices in the vernacular press is relatively slight, which is perhaps why it has not received much attention in current historiography.

150 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

151 Olotọ-ki-ku-sipo-ika, “The Ahmadiyya Literary Society,” p. 8; “First Annual Gathering of Ahmadiyya Movement-in-Islam (Nigeria Branch),” *Eleti-Ofẹ*, February 3, 1926, p. 8; “Ahmadiyya Literary Society,” *Eleti-Ofẹ*, August 11, 1926, p. 5; “News and Notes: Ahmadiyya Literary Society,” p. 3; “Maulul-Un-Nabiyi Muhammed or the Birthday of Prophet Mohammed,” *Eleti-Ofẹ*, August 29, 1928, p. 4; “Ahmadiyya Literary Society,” *Eleti-Ofẹ*, October 17, 1928, p. 4; “The Ahmadiyya Community in Port Harcourt,” *Akede Eko*, April 18, 1929, p. 9; “Mr. M.A. Oke and Ahmadiyya Community in Port Harcourt,” *Akede Eko*, June 27, 1929, p. 5; “Look Out: For a New Publication Entitled ‘Are We Progressing? A Handbook for Lagos Muslims’ by B. Ade Mumuney,” *Eko Akete*, February 21, 1925, p. 4; “Are We Progressing?,” *Eko Akete*, March 21, 1925, p. 7. The last two articles cited are a bit different, as they are an advertisement for a pamphlet penned by a member of Ahmadiyya, which according to the review that appears

published articles that honored the educated elite, such as Augusto and Jibril Martins.<sup>152</sup> While the exact relationship between reformist groups and the vernacular press is not known, in 1926 *Eleti-Ofe* thanked the Ahmadiyya for forwarding a copy of their annual report.<sup>153</sup> Thus, it is possible that the Ahmadiyya's prominence in *Eleti-Ofe* resulted from their efforts to court the vernacular press. Regardless, individuals or branches of the sect occasionally addressed the Ahmadiyya elites through open-letters penned in English and submitted to the vernacular press for publication.<sup>154</sup>

Additionally, individual Muslims primarily took to the English-language panels in the vernacular press to defend Islam against misinformation or attacks stemming from texts produced by their Christian peers. One early example addressed an article that had criticized Muslims for amplifying the Eleko Affair and for being “hard-headed” in the crisis over the Imamship of the Lagos Central Mosque. In response, the author claimed that Christians had prolonged these disputes by fanning the debate over them in the press.<sup>155</sup> The author was clearly a Western educated Muslim, for not only did he write in English because he did not have “a good hand in Yoruba writing” but he prefaced his argument with a quote from Shakespeare. Similarly, members of two Muslim societies in the 1930s responded to what they claimed was misinformation published in *Akede Eko* about their groups.<sup>156</sup>

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the following month outlined what the author deemed to be needed reforms to Islamic practice in Lagos.

- 152 Adekanbi, “Facts and Figures: West African’s First Mohammedan Barrister: A Phase in Moslem Education,” *Eko Akete*, February 9, 1924, p. 3; “Address of Welcome,” pp. 8–9; “Another Big Reception for Mr. Jibril Martin,” *Eleti-Ofe*, December 8, 1926, p. 4.
- 153 “Acknowledgement: Annual Report of the Ahmadiyya Literary Society,” *Eleti-Ofe*, January 13, 1926, p. 8.
- 154 Ahmadiyya Movement-in-Islam, Nigeria Branch, Division III, Epetedo, “An Open Letter to Jibril Martins,” *Eleti-Ofe*, December 22, 1926, p. 9; A Muslim, “Letter to Augusto and Imam K R Ajose,” *Eko Akete*, May 3, 1924, p. 3.
- 155 Otiṣo-Koro, “Eleti-Ofe and the Mohammedans,” *Eko Akete*, August 26, 1922, p. 4; “Iṣipaya Iwe Si Oriṣiriṣi Enia,” *Akede Eko*, April 11, 1929, pp. 6–7; Atari-Ajanaku, “Eidul-Fitr Tabi Irun Odun Titun,” *Eko Akete*, May 3, 1924, pp. 5–7. His appeal to Christians reads: “you have the papers in your hands; you have the ink, the pen; nay, you know the shortest and best roads leading to the Government House. So you stand a better chance in the whole confusion.” The next two articles provide evidence that perhaps this belief was widely held. In the first article a Christian store owner describes getting in a fight with a Muslim customer, who claimed Christians were to blame for the Eleko Affair and ensuing “Muslim Crisis.” In the second the argument is simply affirmed by the author, who is Muslim.
- 156 A.S.N., “Disclaiming: About the Taaju-Deen Society—Lagos: False Report and Misrepresentation,” *Akede Eko*, March 30, 1935, p. 5; J.A. Ayeni and S.A. Muse, “To the Editor,” *Eko Akete*, April 22, 1937, p. 4.

Finally, colonial policies deemed prejudiced against Islam instigated Muslim ire in the English-language space of the vernacular press. Writing as “a Muslim” one author protested the recent recommendation by the Lagos and Colony School Committee that Muslims should be barred from being headmasters of government schools.<sup>157</sup> Sometimes non-Muslim journalists solicited these defenses from their Muslim readers. In one such instance an author asked “educated Mohammedans,” of whom he assumed that “nearly all of them read most of the Lagos periodicals,” to voice their opinion on a proposed law against young female hawkers.<sup>158</sup> At least one Muslim reader responded, assuring that the Muslim community took the matter seriously, and proposed that their elders should convene to discuss the matter.<sup>159</sup> What these defenses of Islam share in common is that, much like defenses of Islam in the Anglophone press, they were concerned with representations of Islam in elite, Anglophone, and predominately Christian spaces, whether it be the English-language pages of the vernacular press or a governmental committee.

Similar to the Muslim elite’s engagement in the English-language sections of the vernacular press, Muslims defended Islam against Christianity in the Yoruba-language panels. Often Yoruba Muslims addressed all non-Muslim readers en masse. The pen-name “A Truthful Muslim” took time in his article that focused on his co-religionists failings to first make clear to *all* readers that his criticisms of his peers in no way reflected the nature of Islam:

The first thing we want to talk about today is to let **other** people know that the religion of Prophet Muhammad is not a religion that could be belittled...it is required that once in awhile, we talk about it [Islam], **so that others** will understand very well that Prophet Muhammad’s religion beyond doubt is a religion of gentleness and peace.<sup>160</sup> [Emphasis added]

157 “The Religious Status of the Mahommedans in Lagos,” 1920, pp. 4–5. The author claims that news reached him that the Lagos and Colony School Committee decided that the government “should be advised against” placing a new government school “under the management of a school master who is a Mohammedan...on the assumption that the Nigerian Government being a Christian government none but Christian Masters should be placed in charge of government schools catering, *INTER ALIOS*, for Christian children.”

158 Gay, “What Say Ye Mohammedans?,” *Eleti-Ofe*, August 11, 1926, p. 8.

159 “A Nwi Ẹ Dake Ẹ Ẹ Ipo Ti Nyin,” *Eleti-Ofe*, August 25, 1926, p. 6. This is not the Muslim readers response, which I did not access, but an article in Yoruba that discusses Gay’s original article and the responding article that it states was published the week previous.

160 A Truthful Muslim, “Si Awon Imale Tabi Musulumi,” *Eko Akete*, March 30, 1929, p. 4. Original Yoruba: Ohun ti a kọkọ fẹ sọrọ le lori loni wipe lati fihan awon ẹlomiran wipe ẹsin

At other times Yoruba Muslims addressed Christian readers more explicitly. One Yoruba Muslim lashed out against what he considered hypocritical and unjust behavior by his Christian neighbors:

You [Christians] said you do not like Muslims, that you do not do not want your children in the same school with Muslim children, yet most of you are having secret affairs with Muslim girls. In any little tribulation, the first person you run to for solution is a Muslim prophet or Alfa, where you demand for divination and amulets.<sup>161</sup>

Thus, like the educated Muslim elite that published in the English language, Muslims knew that Yoruba newspapers provided them a platform to both defend Islam as well as critique their Christian peers. Yet what the last example demonstrates is that the tone of these defenses in Yoruba often differed from those found in English. The tone in the latter tended to be academic, and countered representations of Islam in elite and predominately Christian spaces with evidence from the Qur'an. However, defenses of Islam and critiques of Christians in Yoruba often came in a more populous if borderline slanderous tone, and focused on moral questions on the level of practice.

The use of newspapers to spread Islamic knowledge by Muslims represents a second partial overlap between their vernacular and English-language engagements with print culture. Like when publishing in English, Muslims writing in Yoruba would often cite relevant Qur'anic verses to build their arguments.<sup>162</sup> Unique to articles in Yoruba was the use of proverbs and idioms to translate the meaning of Qur'anic verses or Islamic concepts. Take, for example part of the Prophet's biography provided by one Muslim published in *Eko Akete*:

Amina gave birth to a child for Abdullahi at Mecca, the child's name is Mohammed. **We could even call the child Babarinsa [father saw me and left]**, this is because the father died a few months after the child was born. Not long after the death of the father, his mother Amina also passed on.

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Anabi Mòmòdu ki ise ẹsin ti a le mọ si yẹpẹrẹ arara...ki o le ye elomiran daradara wipe ẹsin Anabi Mòmòdu lai si tabitabi ẹsin irọra ati ti Alafia lo nse.

161 Atari-Ajanaku, "Eidul-Fitr Tabi Irun Odun Titun," 1924, p. 6. Original Yoruba: Ẹ wipe ẹnyin ko fẹ Imale, ẹ ni ẹ ko fẹ ọmọ wọn ni Ẹkuru pelu ọmọ nyin, sibẹsibẹ ọpọlọpọ nyin lo nfe ọmọ Imale pamọ laşiri, bi idamu kekere kan ba si de ba nyin, Imal ni ẹ ntọ lọ fun hantu ati tira işe Afa.

162 Atari-Ajanaku, "Eidul-Fitr Tabi Irun Odun Titun," 1924, pp. 5–7; Atari-Ajanaku, "Ẹ Ẹ'Asalatu F'Onişẹ Nla," *Eko Akete*, June 27, 1925, p. 7; "A Ki Iso Ẹran Mọ Ẹran Ik'o Kan Ara Wọn Pa," *Akede Eko*, November 1, 1947, p. 2.



From childhood, Mohammed did not have parents, **but just like the cow without a tail, God protected him.** His wisdom and understanding was far above that of his age group then at the town of Mecca.<sup>163</sup> [Emphasis Added]

Thus, in translating the early life of the Prophet into Yoruba, the author gave the Prophet a descriptive Yoruba name and employed a Yoruba proverb to engage his audience, a strategy used by other Muslims publishing in Yoruba.<sup>164</sup> A related strategy was amplifying an Islamic concept by illustrating how it overlapped with a Yoruba cultural taboo. For example, one Muslim author argued that the current split in the Lagos Muslim community was tragic not only because the *‘umma* should not be divided, but also since the two competing Imams were brothers, and siblings ought not to fight since this “create[s] enmity between their families.”<sup>165</sup> What all of these examples demonstrate is that when Lagosian Muslims wrote in Yoruba, they imagined a different audience than those writing in English. This imagined vernacular audience was less formerly educated and perhaps lacked a deep knowledge of Islam and Arabic; textual production in Yoruba hoped to enlighten through vernacular proverbs and idioms.

When *The Times*’ Muezzin and other educated elite Muslims critiqued the Islamic practices of Lagosian Muslims in the English-language press, they addressed the entire Muslim community.<sup>166</sup> In contrast, while the Yoruba panels of the vernacular press contained similar religious instruction,<sup>167</sup> they also contained detailed reports and debates on the morality of *individual* Muslims. Thus, Muslim engagement in Yoruba print culture sought to produce ideal Muslims by highlighting examples of shameful behavior within regional

163 Amina bi ọmọ kan fun Abudulai (Abdallah) ni ilu Mēka, orukọ ọmọ na a si ma jẹ Muhamọdu. A fẹrẹ le pe e ni Babarinsa ọmọ, nitoripe oṣu diẹ lẹhin ti a bi itan ni Abudulai baba rẹ fo ṣanlẹ, ti o ku, ko si pẹ pupọ lẹhinna ni Amina iya rẹ tun fi ilẹ bora ... Lati kekere ni Muhamọdu ko ti ni baba pẹhi iya, ṣugbọn gẹgẹ bi Malu ti ko ni irọ Ọlọrun pese ẹniti o nle eṣinṣin fun u; ogbọn ati lakaye rẹ tayọ ti awọn eḷegbẹ rẹ ni ilu Mēka.

164 “A Ki Iso Ẹran Mọ Ẹran Ik’o Kan Ara Wọn Pa,” 1947, p. 2. In this case, the proverb used was “We don’t tie two goats together or one will kill the other” which was used to introduce “Ibrahim said the lord purified the land and changed the mind of the people from idol worshiping. Qur’an chapter 14, verse 38.”

165 Atari-Ajanaku, “Eidul-Fitr Tabi Irun Odun Titun,” 1924, p. 7. Original Yoruba: ki nwon si da ọta silẹ larin ebi won.

166 Babuji, “The Mohammedan Festival Day in Lagos,” October 1, 1913, pp. 4–5; The Muezzin, “Islamic News and Comments,” May 17, 1920, p. 4.

167 Atari-Ajanaku, “Eidul-Fitr Tabi Irun Odun Titun,” 1924, pp. 5–7.

Muslim communities. One particularly rich example came from a Muslim who started his letter to the editor of *Akede Eko* by asking for space “to say a little of the numerous bad attitudes that some Muslims in my area are exhibiting.”<sup>168</sup> The particular story he wished to relate was a dispute between two Muslim brothers. The younger brother had needed to leave home for some time, and left his wife in the care of his elder brother. Before the younger brother returned, the wife became noticeably pregnant. In response, the community gathered in the mosque, where the wife accused the elder brother, and the shocked congregation collectively determined this “shameless” Muslim’s punishment. The author then ended his letter to the editor:

We will not condone such an attitude because ‘the horse at the back always looks at the horse before him before he takes his own step.’ We do not want a Muslim who is of bad attitude and treacherous.

I thank you very much, you the popular Editor of *Akede Eko* for the opportunity you gave me to be able to reveal these bad attitudes to the whole world.<sup>169</sup>

Though the author condemns the behavior of an individual Muslim, he frames the offence as one not primarily against God but rather the local Muslim community. Based on the final proverb, the behavior is particularly concerning because it violated a Yoruba cultural understanding that elders ought to be models of behavior. Even when Muslims used the Yoruba-language pages of the vernacular press to address general failings in Islamic practice, in contrast to religious instruction given in English they often stressed how poor Islamic practice negatively impacted the community. For example, the problem with Muslims who only prayed in the month of Ramadan was not only that the “purity” of their soul was at stake, but also that such behavior was committed “with intention of deceiving people.”<sup>170</sup>

Muslims also submitted Yoruba articles to the vernacular press that highlighted exemplarily community members. Like in English-language articles,

168 Maje-O-Baje, “Irohin Offa (News from Offa),” *Akede Eko*, December 13, 1930, p. 5. Original Yoruba: lati sọ diẹ ninu oṣoṣo iwa aitọ ti Musulumi kan nhu ni adugbo wa.

169 Ibid. Original Yoruba: Awa ko ni gba irufẹ iwa bayi, nitoripe eṣin iwaju ni t’ẹhin nwo sare-a ko fẹ Musulumi olori pabeku-odale.

Mo dupe pupọ l’owo rẹ iwọ, gbajumo oniwe Irohin Akede Eko fun aye ti iwọ gba mi lati le fi iwa aitọ yi han gbogbo araiye gbọ.

170 A Truthful Muslim, “Si Awọn Imale Tabi Musulumi,” 1929, p. 5. Original Yoruba: gegebi ero won lati fi tan aiye je.

laudatory articles in Yoruba occasionally celebrated the educated Muslim elite for their accomplishments in Western education or within the colonial government.<sup>171</sup> However, the Yoruba-language vernacular press also celebrated Muslims who had gained prestige through demonstrated Islamic knowledge, traditional titles, and wealth in people. Thus, the Yoruba-language panels contained a path to prestige alternative to the reformist version found in English-language articles. One article that exemplified this praised Alhaji Danmegoro from Abeokuta who had recently married.<sup>172</sup> The fathers of Alhaji Danmegoro and his bride possessed chieftaincy titles, and the article praised the bride for her Islamic knowledge. But the article focused on the amount of money Alhaji Danmegoro and his father spent on the wedding and housewarming. Not only did all the *alhajis* (those having completed the pilgrimage to Mecca) in Abeokuta receive an invitation to a lavish feast, but Alhaji Danmegoro organized a second event for his fellow *alhajis* in Lagos, his hometown. The description of the housewarming in Abeokuta is representative of how the article describes the festivities:

All the Alhajis then prayed for the groom. The Alhajis left one after the other, astonished that a single individual could spend so much money and so lavishly too. May the Merciful God protect and bless Alhaji Danmegoro and grant him both male and female children of excellence. Amen. A lot of people also turned up at the party, stuffing themselves with food.<sup>173</sup>

Thus, not only did his guests bestow prayers upon Alhaji Danmegoro as thanks for his generous communal-spending, but the author additionally weaves in a prayer for him. Furthermore, this example illustrates the importance of the communal aspect of prestige to this vernacular hierarchy.

This section has demonstrated that the presence of Muslim voices and their strategies of engagement in the Lagosian press during the 1920s–30s varied along linguistic lines. This variation loosely maps onto two main registers of prestige that existed among Lagosian Muslims by the 1920s. The first, most

171 “Iṣipaya Iwe Si Oriṣiriṣi Enia,” *Akede Eko*, February 22, 1930, p. 10.

172 Atolugbokun, “Alhaji Abudu Salami S. Danmegoro Kudus,” *Eko Akete*, January 19, 1924, pp. 2–3.

173 *Ibid.*, p. 2. Original Yoruba: Awon Alhaji na se opolopo adura fun Oko Iyawo na Olukuluku awon Alhaji na la yo lo de le, fun iyalenu won wipe enia lo se iru inawo nla nla bayi, Oluwa Alanu ko b’asiri Alhaji Danmegoro ko si fun ni opolopo omọ kunrin ati Obinrin anfani. Amin. Oke aimoye awon elomiran tun wa si be ti nwon tun je ajesu onje.

visible within English-language textual production, embraced Islamic reforms and Western education, and critiqued perceived innovations resulting from the influence of Yoruba culture. The second, more prominent within the Yoruba-language panels of the vernacular press, was less likely to view established Yoruba cultural practices as incompatible with Islam, and evaluated prestige in terms of chieftaincy titles, Islamic knowledge, and piety. Finally, it is worth noting that while the latter register appears in urban and more rural settings, the former appeared only in more urban contexts. The final section will now examine how debates and shifts around Yoruba Muslim marriage practice mapped onto different linguistic spaces in Lagosian print culture during the 1920s–40s.<sup>174</sup>

## 5 Translating Muslim Marriage Practice

Kristin Mann richly describes how marriage practices introduced by Christian missionaries helped consolidate the mission-educated Lagosian elite from 1880–1915 by reinforcing exclusivity and keeping wealth within the community.<sup>175</sup> At the same time, Muslim marriage practices underwent dramatic changes driven by Muslim reformists, often driven by Muslim members of the same Saro and Aguda elite that had spearheaded the emergence of Christian marriage in Lagos.<sup>176</sup> In the case of the Ahmadiyya, marriage reforms fit within their broader reconfiguration of gender roles.<sup>177</sup> Theological concerns underpinned some of these reforms.<sup>178</sup> Yet just as Kristin Mann illustrates that Christian marriage provided a set of gender roles and kinship alternate to that

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174 My reason for expanding the chronology is mainly practical. Given that Muslim marriage announcements were fairly rare until the 1940s, widening the chronology allows me to use more source materials. Additionally, secondary source material (mentioned below) confirms that the same debates that start in the 1920s are still alive into the 1950s, which justifies this choice.

175 Kristin Mann, *Marrying Well: Marriage, Status, and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos*, (African Studies Series) Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 7.

176 Ibid., 17–18. Reichmuth, “Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims,” 1996, p. 374 This was not true of the founding members of Ansar-ud-Deen.

177 Mustapha, interview, 2015.

178 Loimeier, “Translating the Qur’an in Sub-Saharan Africa,” 2005, p. 404; James F. Searing, “The Time of Conversion: Christians and Muslims among the Sereer-Safèn of Senegal, 1914–1950s,” in *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa*, ed. Benjamin F. Soares, *Islam in Africa* v. 6, Leiden, Brill, 2006, pp. 132–35. Elsewhere on the continent, Islamic reform

of a Yoruba marriage, reforms to Muslim marriage offered another arrangement with different advantages for men and women.<sup>179</sup> Unsurprisingly, some of the changes to Muslim marriage practice evidenced the influence of their Christian peers, particularly the aesthetics of prestige. Yoruba Muslims attended marriages of Christian friends,<sup>180</sup> and many elite Yoruba Muslims attended missionary schools in this period<sup>181</sup> and at times their own marriage announcements (and guest lists) referenced this missionary education directly.<sup>182</sup> Thus, this research builds on John Peel's claim that the Yoruba Muslims most able to critique Christianity were those most indirectly influenced by the missionary-derived model of cultural progress or 'civilization'.<sup>183</sup>

Three debates concerning Yoruba Muslim marriage emerged in the 1920s. The first centered on the location of the marriage ceremony. The second focused on the style and mode of wedding celebration. The third concerned whether it was appropriate for the *wolimos*—the celebration of graduation from Qur'anic school—to be paired with weddings. In each case, Muslims used the Lagos press to present and debate two visions of what constituted proper Islamic practice in their community in English and in Yoruba. Once again, a vision of Islamic reform—in this case, marriage ceremonies influenced by Christianity and that viewed the *wolimo* as a spurious cultural 'innovation'—were most visible in Anglophone print culture. In contrast, visible within Yoruba print culture was a vernacular iteration of the savanna tradition of Islam. This protested any changes to marriage that resembled Christian weddings, and retained the *wolimo* as part of an elite Yoruba Muslim wedding. However, the available evidence also shows that this overlapping linguistic and religious divide was rarely neat—in this case, vernacular Islamic practice at times bled into Anglophone spaces.

The debate over the location of the wedding ceremony began when some reformist Yoruba Muslims shifted from holding the wedding ceremony in the family compound to a mosque or event hall. A debate that crossed between

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often targets life-cycle events like marriage, and so the case of Islam in Lagos during the 1920s-40s fits within a larger trend.

179 Mann, *Marrying Well*, 1985, pp. 35, 115. Mann is careful to make clear that these categories are unstable and always changing.

180 "Fashionable Wedding at All Saints Church Ode Ondo," *Akede Eko*, May 24, 1930, p. 7.

181 Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims," 1996.

182 "Big Muslim Wedding: Animashawun—Shitta," *Daily Comet*, March 14, 1942, p. 1; "The Eyiowuawi—Alli-Balogun Wedding: East Meets West: Lagos Christians and Muslims at Ceremony," *The Nigerian Daily Times*, January 10, 1931, p. 3.

183 Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, 2000, p. 214.

Yoruba and English in 1923 suggests that this shift at least roughly coincided with the introduction of the Ahmadiyya, the first sect in Lagos to allow women in the mosque for prayer or their own wedding.<sup>184</sup> In a letter to the editor of the *African Messenger* the author, H. Mog, cites an article that *Eko Akete* published the previous week. The author of this article, Atio-ti, allegedly claimed that it was wrong for the Ahmadiyya, as a religious group, “to celebrate the ceremony [a wedding] at such a place [Empire Hall] where dancing, Entertainments are being held.”<sup>185</sup> Atio-ti’s perspective fits with the established Yoruba Muslim practice that the *nikah*, or formal Islamic marriage ceremony, takes place in the bride’s father’s house.<sup>186</sup> This emphasis on the family compound mirrored so-called ‘traditional’ Yoruba marriage practices prevalent into the twentieth century that emphasized the union of the two families over the individual couple.<sup>187</sup> However H. Mog frames this view as ignorant, and goes on to note that last June at Ilupesi Hall the Chief Imam Brimah of Lagos solemnized a wedding “assisted by several Alhadjis, other prominent Muslims, missionaries, etc. were present at the occasion.”<sup>188</sup> Tellingly, the final piece of evidence H. Mog presents to support his argument against Atio-ti is that Christians often conducted marriage ceremonies in similar venues.

Secondly, and related to the above, reform groups targeted what they perceived as innovations or improper comportment present in Yoruba Muslim marriage practices. Their critique focused on alcohol consumption, dancing, drumming, and a general sense that people wasted money to an immoral degree.<sup>189</sup> Touching on this last point, an official pamphlet on the Ahmadiyya’s “Rules and Regulations” that the Nigerian colonial government obtained in 1921 included the rule that “All unnecessary expenses on marriage and

184 Fisher, *Ahmadiyyah*, 1963, p. 149; Mustapha, interview. Though Fisher writes primarily about the 1960s, he found the practice of holding a marriage outside the family compound to be true of Ahmadiyya adherents throughout West Africa. Alhaji Mustapha recalled that Ahmadiyya brought a few innovations to Lagos, notably that they allowed women in the mosque for prayer that that they allowed the bride and groom to sit together in the mosque during the marriage ceremony.

185 H. Adu Mog, “Letter to the Editor,” *African Messenger*, November 15, 1923, p. 8.

186 A.R.I. Doi, *Islam in Nigeria*, Zairia, Gaskiya Corporation, 1984, p. 142.

187 Mann, *Marrying Well*, 1985, pp. 33–39; Samuel Johnson and O. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, London, G. Routledge & sons, 1921, pp. 113–15.

188 Mog, “Letter to the Editor,” 1923, p. 8.

189 “From the Ahmadiyya Movement-in-Islam, Ibadan Branch, to the District Officer, Ibadan.,” October 16, 1933, OYO PROF 1: 1153/1: Ahmadiya Movement in Islam. Local limitations upon movements of its members., Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan.

death are to be stopped and money thus saved is to be devoted to the Mission work."<sup>190</sup> The Ahmadiyya's emphasis away from costly obligatory social spending fit within a larger trend advocated by the Lagosian elite,<sup>191</sup> and perhaps provides a partial explanation for why it initially found the most success recruiting among younger and unmarried Yoruba Muslims.<sup>192</sup> In 1920 the Muezzin devoted about half a column to bemoaning the improper behavior exhibited at many Yoruba Muslim marriages.<sup>193</sup> Though he admitted that Islam did not discourage "drumming or dancing" per se, the problem was "the evil" which resulted by those who "woefully waste their money" on weddings. He ended the column by asking why "can't these orthodox Muslim hooligans copy their brothers—the members of the Ahmadiya movement?"<sup>194</sup> The Ahmadiyya's global intellectual networks also influenced the debate. One Nigerian member of the Lahorian branch of the Ahmadiyya wrote a letter to *The Times* from British India where he had traveled for religious study in 1919. In it, after arguing that Indian Muslims exhibited greater piety than Nigerian Muslims, he lauded the fact that "Eastern Muslims generally perform their marriage ceremonies quietly and end them with quiet supplications [Emphasis added]."<sup>195</sup>

The Ahmadiyya were not alone in attempts to reform marriage practice. A list of rules and regulations by the Chief Imam of Lagos first published in 1912 and later reprinted in *The Times* in 1920, focused on weddings and *wolimos* as places inappropriate for alcohol, "indecent songs," and slaughtering an animal that cost above one's means.<sup>196</sup> Perhaps indicative of the fact that the educated Muslim elite dominated print culture in both English and Yoruba, no explicit

190 "Ahmadiyya Movement, Moulvie Abdur-Rahim Personal," pp. 17–18.

191 Barber, "Print Culture and the First Yoruba Novel," 2012, p. 19.

192 "Disputes Between Ife and Modakeke Muslims," 1954 1934, 2–3, IFE DIV 1/1: 1751, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; "Ahmadiya Movement in Islam. Local Limitations upon Movements of Its Members," 1935 1923, 2, OYO PROF 1: 1153/1, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan; "Ahmadiyya Movement, Moulvie Abdur-Rahim Personal," 47–54, 57–66, 67–70; A Muslim, "Letter to Augusto and Imam K R Ajose," 3; Fisher, *Ahmadiyyah*, 1963, p. 97. One source of generational conflict spurred by Ahmadiyya outside the scope of this chapter was that they outlawed prostration, a practice that remains important for showing respect especially to elders, chiefs, and clerics.

193 The Muezzin, "Islamic News and Comments," May 17, 1920, p. 4.

194 *Ibid.*, 5.

195 Abdu Rahim Alabi Smith, "Wolimo: An Unfounded Islamic Practice Among the Nigerian Muslims," *The Times of Nigeria*, October 18, 1920, p. 6.

196 Ibrahim the Lemomu, "Rules and Regulations," 1920, p. 5. Thanks to Scott Reese for pointing out that this was in line with larger Sunni discourses of scripturalist reform in this period.

defense of drumming or lavish spending surfaced in the press. However as will shortly be discussed, many wedding announcements reveal that this vernacular register of prestige continued to operate among some Yoruba Muslims.

The third debate concerned the *wolimo*. The term originates from the Arabic word for wedding banquet, *walima*, which entered Yoruba as *wolimo* or *wolima*.<sup>197</sup> The term can refer to any celebratory gathering, but the debate among Yoruba Muslims in the 1920s concerned the practice of Muslim families hosting a Qur'an school graduation celebration the day before their child's wedding, provided that they possessed the required level of knowledge.<sup>198</sup> *Wolimos* could be expensive, and thus if a family hosted a *wolimo* and a wedding they not only advertised the intellectual achievements of the bride or groom, but also their wealth. The first published critique of the *wolimo* originated from the same man who praised the 'quiet' nature of Indian Muslim marriages.<sup>199</sup> The author credited his "sojourn of one year in this side of the world where the orthodox Muslims are the majority" for enlightening him "of the baselessness

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197 Frederick Schön, *Appendix to the Dictionary of the Hausa Language: Hausa-English Part, with Additions of Hausa Literature*, London: Church Missionary House, 1888, p. 2; Gundert H. Harris, *Hausa Stories and Riddles: With Notes on the Language Etc., and a Concise Hausa Dictionary*, Weston-super-Mare: Mendip Press, 1908, p. 163; Charles H. Robinson, *Dictionary of the Hausa Language*, 3d ed. Cambridge, University press, 1913, p. 394; A.W. Banfield, *Dictionary of the Nupe Language*, Shonga, Niger Press, 1914, p. 95; Stefan Reichmuth, "Islamic Learning and Its Interaction with 'Western' Education in Ilorin, Nigeria," in *Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Louis Brenner, Hurst, 1993, p. 182; Dr. K.K. Olosolusi, Interview, June 2017; Dr. Dawud Noibi, Interview, June 2017; Dr. Adedokun, Interview, June 2017; Hussein Adams, Interview, June 2017; Alhaji Abdul Ganiy, Interview, June 2017. Most likely the term entered Yoruba via Hausa, where the term is either *wolima* or *walima*. Several of those interviewed remarked that among Yoruba Muslims, this practice was most common in the Northern Emirate of Ilorin, which further supports the idea that this practice began in Northern Nigerian and filtered southwards. So too does Reichmuth's research, conducted from 1984–89 in Ilorin, where he found the *walima* to still be delayed until the day before the wedding despite the fact that people now started Arabic schooling earlier than they did in the past. Thanks to Elisha Renne for pointing me to the Hausa definitions.

198 "The Mohammedan Crisis: II," *The Lagos Weekly Record*, August 2, 1919, p. 4; "Gbohun-Gbohun: Fiṣe Lo Nfe, Iyawo Di Taba! Reṣe O, Oniyawo, A De O!," *Eko Akete*, January 20, 1923, p. 1; Doi, *Islam in Nigeria*, 140. It is somewhat unclear whether the *wolimo* ceremony was at one point gendered. The article from 1919, admittedly not written by a Muslim, claimed that the *wolimo* was specifically for the bride the day before her wedding. However the article from 1923 describes a *wolimo* performed for the groom the day before his wedding, and Doi presents the *wolimo* for either groom or bride.

199 Smith, "Wolimo," 1920, p. 6.



of the *wolimo* practice” since, he claimed, no verse in the Qur’an mentions it. Enfolded within his critique of the *wolimo* was an ideological comment on the nature of Islamic knowledge itself when he described a typical Nigerian graduate: “magnificently dressed simply for the reason that they like parrots have gone through the Holy Book of God the contents of which they are neither able to pronounce correctly nor give their real meanings in their own language.”<sup>200</sup> Thus, while he complained that the *wolimo* placed many Nigerians in “financial ruin,” particularly Lagosians, his case against the *wolimo* hinged on an opposed evaluation of Islamic knowledge. As mentioned, the Ahmadiyya advocated that the “faithful [should] pray to Allah in his own language,” and were the first in Nigeria to deliver the Friday sermon (*khutuba*) in Yoruba rather than Arabic, a practice also adopted by the Jama’at-ul-Islamiyya and Ansar-ud-Deen.<sup>201</sup> The problem with the *wolimo* for reformers like the Ahmadiyya was not only that it represented a superfluous expenditure linked to improper behavior, but that it rewarded the ‘wrong’ type of Islamic scholarship.

How did these debates around marriage surface in wedding announcements in English and in Yoruba? While more data points are needed, my initial research suggests a few trends. Within the sphere of English-language print culture appear marriage announcements for weddings that took place within the family compound and those that took place in either a mosque or event hall. Announcements for weddings in a mosque or hall always concerned individuals connected to Muslim groups that aimed to reform Islam along modernist lines, mostly either the Ahmadiyya<sup>202</sup> the Jama’at-ul-Islamiyya,<sup>203</sup> the Killa Society,<sup>204</sup>

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200 Ibid.

201 “Ahmadiyya Movement, Moulvie Abdur-Rahim Personal,” pp. 17–18, 67–70.

202 “Mr. Muri Animashawun’s Two Daughters Married,” *The Daily Service*, January 10, 1948, p. 2; “Personal Notes,” *African Messenger*, March 15, 1923, p. 6; “For Your Diary,” *Eleti-Ofe*, November 8, 1947, p. 4.

203 “Muslim Wedding Hits the Modern Note: Bride Gets Electric Iron,” *Daily Comet*, January 7, 1948, p. 2.

204 “Big Muslim Wedding: Animashawun—Shitta,” 1942, p. 1; Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 1978, pp. 104–105, 167–168; Reichmuth, “Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims,” 1996, p. 370; “Opening of the New Muslim Mosque at Victoria Street,” *The Lagos Standard*, July 23, 1913, pp. 5–6; “The ‘Killah’ Society of Ikorodu,” *The Nigerian Chronicle*, October 16, 1914, p. 5; Giwah, Z M, “Public Examination at Abeokuta,” *The Times of Nigeria*, April 4, 1921, p. 6; “Mohammedan Festival,” *The Times of Nigeria*, August 15–22, 1921 p. 5; Ayiluka, “Here and There: Killa, Killa!,” *African Messenger*, August 16, 1923, p. 9; “The Moslem Festival,” *Nigerian Spectator*, March 31, 1928, p. 5 Gbadamosi speculates that the Killa Society, founded in 1892, took their name from ‘Abdallah Quillam, a British convert to Islam who had visited Lagos as the representative of the Sultan of Turkey, and “publicly urged the Lagos Muslims to accept Western

and Ansar-ud-Deen.<sup>205</sup> In contrast, all of the marriage ceremonies that took place within the family compound, whether published in English or Yoruba, do not specify the religious affiliation of the couple.<sup>206</sup> What all but one of this latter group of wedding announcements *do* explicitly mention is the presence of dancing, drumming and song, three modes of celebration that are mainly absent from the wedding announcements for members of reformist groups.<sup>207</sup>

If reformists eschewed drumming and dance, some embraced other signs of prestige for their weddings, particularly in the 1930s–40s. One wedding announcement from 1948 hailed as “one of the grandest Muslim weddings in the New Year” acutely reveals the influence of mission Christianity.<sup>208</sup> From the title of the announcement, “Muslim Wedding Hits the Modern Note: Bride Gets Electric Iron” to the fact that “The bride wore a richly embroidered white satin, carried a bouquet of natural flowers and was attended by bridesmaids,” to the fact that the ceremony took place in Glover Hall with a reception emceed by the manager of the National Bank, makes clear that Islamic reform groups

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education.” Both Gbadamosi and Reichmuth claim the Killa Society aimed to “modernize Islam,” though beyond their fancy dress it is unclear what this entailed. That said, while the Killa Society do not appear to have spearheaded any education initiatives, they did support early efforts by Ansar-ud-Deen to establish schools that paired “Western” education with Islamic education.

- 205 “Society Wedding at Ansar-Ud-Deen School,” *The West African Express*, August 27, 1948, p. 3; Reichmuth, “Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims,” 1996, p. 376. As Reichmuth explains, Ansar-ud-Deen modernized all key life-cycle events, and created new ceremonies for housewarmings and retirement. In terms of marriage, other changes brought about by Ansar-ud-Deen included formal marriage certificates, rings, and wedding cake.
- 206 “News, Notes and Comments,” *The Lagos Weekly Record*, December 13, 1911, p. 3; “Marriage,” *The Lagos Daily Record*, January 29, 1930, p. 2; “Mr. Julius O. Adebisi Fetes Friends In Honour Of His Marriage,” *Daily Comet*, January 31, 1942, p. 6; “Muslims and Friends Honor Wedding of Mr. Fasisi Salako to Miss Sunmola,” *Daily Comet*, September 24, 1948, p. 4; “Two Muslim Maidens Get Married,” *Daily Comet*, March 5, 1945, p. 2; “Gbohun-Gbohun: Fifẹ Lo Nfẹ, Iyawo Di Taba! Reřẹ O, Oniyawo, A De O!,” 1923, p. 1; “Iyawo Yio Şe Anfani O!,” *Akede Eko*, June 21, 1930, p. 5; “Hadji Usumanu Gbe Iyawo Alarinrin,” *The Yoruba News* September 22, 1952, pp. 1, 4; “Irohin Abeokuta: Iyawo Alarinrin,” *The Yoruba News*, July 1, 1924, pp. 1–2.
- 207 “The Eyiowuawi—Alli-Balogun Wedding: East Meets West,” 1931, p. 3 This represents a slight exception, in that the families of the bride and groom appear to have been in between reformist and vernacular Islam, as suggested by the subheading of the announcement “East meets West.”
- 208 “Muslim Wedding Hits the Modern Note,” 1948, p. 2.

heavily borrowed from Christianity's performance and aesthetic of prestige.<sup>209</sup> Similarly, a wedding in 1931 was described as a "remarkable westernization of Muslim social life" with "Muslim ladies dressed in up-to-date English style" (as was the bridal gown) with "cake and wine a la mode Christian marriage."<sup>210</sup> And in the 1940s, Ansar-ud-Deen began to include a special Arabic prayer curiously called "The Society's Gloria" to be delivered by an "Officiating Minister," at each wedding, a ritual which, as Reichmuth argues, had clear Christian undertones.<sup>211</sup> Even the timing of these "society" weddings mirrored that of Christian marriages, since by the 1920s, similar to Yoruba Christian weddings, many Yoruba Muslims chose to get married during the "festive period" around Christian holidays such as Christmas, Easter or Whitsuntide.<sup>212</sup> And at least by 1920, some elite Yoruba Muslims began to time their weddings in accordance to Islamic holidays as well, particularly in the weeks before Ramadan.<sup>213</sup>

As this discussion so far evidences, these two rough groupings of marriage practices—one reformist, one vernacular—reflected two different registers of prestige. While the brides and bridegrooms of reformist groups could boast of petit bourgeois status through links to occupations in the Nigerian Railway,<sup>214</sup> as salesmen to European stores,<sup>215</sup> as lawyers or as government officials,<sup>216</sup> the second set of couples mainly noted elite connections based on Islamic knowledge, such as family connections to *alhajis*,<sup>217</sup> *Alfas*,<sup>218</sup> or Imams.<sup>219</sup>

209 Fisher, *Ahmadiyyah*, 1963, p. 150. Field Notes, May 9, 2015. The tendency of elite Yoruba Muslims to conduct marriage ceremonies akin to the form and style of mission Christianity was also observed by Fisher (specially the use of wedding rings) and I observed the parallels between elite Yoruba Muslim weddings with Christian weddings during my dissertation fieldwork.

210 "The Eyiowuawi—Alli-Balogun Wedding: East Meets West," 1931, p. 3.

211 Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations among Yoruba Muslims," 1996, p. 376–77.

212 "Let Us Beware," *West African Pilot*, March 28, 1940, p. 4; "The Favourite Month for Wedding," *The Lagos Daily Record*, February 17, 1930, p. 3; "Wedding and Native Dances in Galore," *The Nigerian Pioneer*, April 28, 1922, p. 8.

213 "Marriage Ceremonies," *The Lagos Daily Record*, January 14, 1930, p. 2; "Mohammedan Marriages," *The Lagos Daily Record*, January 17, 1930, p. 2; The Muezzin, "Islamic News and Comments," May 17, 1920, p. 4. And as the later two sources indicate, this trend continued into the 1930s.

214 "Muslim Wedding Hits the Modern Note: Bride Gets Electric Iron," 1948, p. 2.

215 *Ibid.*

216 "Society Wedding at Ansar-Ud-Deen School," 1948, p. 3.

217 "Animashawun—Fahm," *The Lagos Daily Record*, January 17, 1930, p. 2.

218 "Animashawun—Fahm," 1930, p. 2; "Marriage," 1930, p. 2.

219 "Muslims and Friends Honor Wedding of Mr. Fasisi Salako to Miss Sunmola," 1948, p. 4.

At times, those clinging to traditions appeared defensive towards recent Islamic reforms. The only three marriage announcements, whether in English or Yoruba, that specified that they were conducted “according to Muslim rites,”<sup>220</sup> were for weddings that took place in family compounds with drums, dance, and song. During his fieldwork in Ibadan from 1949–51, several informants lamented to Geoffrey Parrinder that Islamically a Muslim marriage *should* be in the bride’s father’s house but that now “many educated Muslims prefer to hold weddings in the mosque or a hall, with religious rites, in imitation of Christian customs.”<sup>221</sup> Thus, the fact that announcements printed in English for ceremonies in the bride’s father’s house declared that they went according to Muslim rites, was perhaps a defense of tradition directed at readers engaged in reforms.

The wedding announcements that graced the Yoruba pages of the vernacular press once again addressed a somewhat different reading public than those published in English. In all cases these marriages were conducted within the family compound, included traditional forms of celebration, and referenced elite connections outside of the logic of mission Christianity.<sup>222</sup> In this sense, they resemble the wedding announcements for ‘vernacular’ Yoruba Muslim marriages published in English. Yet the announcements published in Yoruba differ in a few key ways. First, there are slightly more wedding announcements published in Yoruba that mention an accompanying *wolimo* ceremony.<sup>223</sup>

220 “Muslims and Friends Honor Wedding of Mr. Fasisi Salako to Miss Sunmola,” 1948, p. 4; “Animashawun—Fahm,” 1930, p. 2; “Mr. Julius O. Adebiyi Fetes Friends In Honour Of His Marriage,” 1942, p. 6.

221 I observed this distinction still in place in 2015, particularly one weekend when a Yoruba Muslim husband and wife took me along to two weddings. The first wedding held the religious ceremony and social event within a large rented hall, and was described by my one informant as a “real society wedding” whereas the same informant described the next wedding we attended, where religious ceremony and after-party took place within the bride’s father’s family compound as a “low class wedding.” Though I did not observe any theological tension as a result from these socioeconomic differences in marriage practice, as Parrinder did during his fieldwork. Geoffrey Parrinder, *Religion in an African City*, London, Oxford University Press, 1953, p. 74. Field notes, May 9, 2015. Quoted speech by Idris A. Adeniran.

222 Specifically, it mentions twelve alhajis, the father of the bride is a Chief, and the groom is a esteemed elder in the community. “Iyawo Yio Şe Anfani O!,” 1930, p. 5; “Gbohun-Gbohun: Fifẹ Lo Nfẹ, Iyawo Di Taba! Rẹrẹ O, Oniyawo, A De O!,” 1930, p. 1; Atolugbokun, “Alhaji Abudu Salami S. Danmegoro Kudus,” 1924, pp. 2–3; “Irohin Abeokuta: Iyawo Alarinrin,” 1924, pp. 1–2; “Hadji Usumanu Gbe Iyawo Alarinrin,” 1952, pp. 1, 4.

223 “Gbohun-Gbohun: Fifẹ Lo Nfẹ, Iyawo Di Taba! Rẹrẹ O, Oniyawo, A De O!,” 1930, p. 1; “Irohin Abeokuta: Iyawo Alarinrin,” 1924, pp. 1–2; “Wolimo Ati Igbeyawo to Larinrin,” *Eko Akete*, February 16, 1929, p. 1; “Muslim Wolimat and Wedding Ceremonies,” *The Nigerian Daily*

Second, they provide much more emphasis and detail on the level of spending and celebration compared to those published in English. Take for example a previously mentioned article that detailed the wedding and *wolimo* ceremonies of one family. The article constantly mentions money, often with colorful descriptions such as how the guests at the Abeokuta housewarming “expressed surprise that a single individual could spend so much money and so lavishly too” or how at the wedding the groom’s “father spread money like rainfall.”<sup>224</sup> Though slightly outside the chronological focus of this article, another rich example comes from a wedding announcement from 1952:

once the beautiful lady [the bride] got to Hadji Sumonu Oladipupo’s home, things continued becoming more exciting. The first three days before the arrival of Moriamo [the bride], Hadji Sumonu had been enjoying great music with important personalities while they had tasty meals.

But when the bride arrived at her husband’s, his spending was bewildering. He pleased all the guests with enough food and hospitality. The husband looked resplendent while the bride appeared in different clothes on that day. You had to be there yourself to understand what happened. Usumamu lived up to expectation on the day. No unmarried man at the party would not have been inspired to go get married.<sup>225</sup>

Thus, while one journalist in 1912 lamented that “the acquisition of individual wealth” had started to chip away at the importance of the family in marriage,<sup>226</sup> the marriage announcements published in Yoruba stress a continued importance on lavish spending not only on the part of the couple but also by the family. A final feature unique to marriage announcements published in the

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*Times*, January 3, 1930, p. 4; “Wolimot Ceremony: Notable Muslim Wedding,” *The Nigerian Daily Times*, December 17, 1931, p. 10.

224 Atolugbokun, “Alhaji Abudu Salami S. Danmegoro Kudus,” 1924, pp. 2–3.

225 “Hadji Usumanu Gbe Iyawo Alarinrin,” 1952, pp. 1, 4. Original Yoruba: Gbara ti Omidan arẹwa na de ọdọ Hadji Sunmọnu Ọladipipọ ni gbogbo rẹ ti bẹrẹ si ndun yungba-yungba si iwaju. Fun ojo męta ki Mọriamo Akọnkę to de ni Hadji Sunmọnu sin fi erọ akọrin nşere pelu awọn enia pataki-pataki, ti nwon si nje orişirişi onje adidun.

Şugbọn nigbati Iyawo na de ọdọ okọ rẹ inawo ti okọ na şe koşe rohin, Gbo-gbo awọn alabaşeyę ni o fi itje ati oyaya telọrun. Okọ Iyawo dun loş nging ati Iyawo paapa aparọ aşo orişirişi ni ni ojo na. Irohin koto amojuba ni, Hadji Usumanu fọmọyo ni ojo na, kosi eniti o wa sibę ti ko ba iti gbo-iyawo, ti ori rẹ ke ni şai wu lati gbe Iyawo.

226 “Judgement,” *The Lagos Weekly Record*, February 14, 1912, pp. 5–6.

Yoruba language is that they included prayers for the couple's marriage, which often explicitly addressed fertility.<sup>227</sup>

To sum up, marriage announcements for Lagosian Muslims published in English and Yoruba addressed two different, albeit overlapping reading publics. Changes to Muslim marriage practice influenced by reformist Islamic groups and elite Christian marriages featured prominently in the Anglophone press. It was also the Anglophone press where individual reformist Muslims argued that their version of marriage was more Islamically proper. In contrast, Muslim marriages that maintained more traditional vernacular practices were published in English and in Yoruba, though their content differed; it was mainly those published in Yoruba that stressed the spending of the family, the *wolimo*, or the inclusion of prayers for the couple.

## 6 Conclusion

This article has made a few interrelated claims about prestige and shame among Lagosian Muslims in the early twentieth century. The first is historiographical—because the development of print culture in Nigeria was intertwined with Christian missionaries, scholars often overlook early Muslim engagement with print culture. Though Yoruba Muslim textual production in this time period pales in comparison with their Christian peers, it is nonetheless a rich source of information on the debates that divided Lagosian Muslims. Additionally, both English-language and Yoruba print culture recorded early attempts by Lagosian Muslims to provide theological and practical instruction to their co-religionists. Print culture in Lagos allowed this instruction, and ensuing debates, to occur on a regional scale for the first time.

Second, this article claims that English-language publications by Muslims addressed a different, albeit overlapping, reading public than those printed in Yoruba. Muslim reformists adopted Western education and favored the English-language when disseminating knowledge, though even they occasionally praised vernacular knowledge.<sup>228</sup> Meanwhile those retaining vernacular

227 "Gbohun-Gbohun: Fifẹ Lo Nfẹ, Iyawo Di Taba! Rẹrẹ O, Oniyawo, A De O!," 1930, p. 1; Ato-lugbokun, "Alhaji Abudu Salami S. Danmegoro Kudus," 1924, pp. 2–3; "Iyawo Yio Şe Anfani O!," 1930, p. 5; "Hadji Usumanu Gbe Iyawo Alarinrin," 1952, pp. 1, 4.

228 Makanju, "Bebajai the Famous Singer of Lagos," *The Times of Nigeria*, July 18, 1921, p. 4; Makanju, "Dear Mr. Editor," *The Times of Nigeria*, November 21, 1921, p. 4. The author, Makanju, contributed several articles to *The Times* that commented on Islam, though his exact identity is unclear. Upon the death of Bakare Bebjai a Lagosian Muslim singer, Makanju praised him for the "morals" of his songs and eventually provided the following lyrics in Yoruba and English for readers to appreciate:

modes of Islamic scholarship occasionally responded in English to their reformist peers, but more often took to the Yoruba pages of the vernacular press, where they drew on cultural vocabularies and Yoruba proverbs to translate Islamic knowledge to a broader public. This linguistic divide should not be overstated—occasionally reformist Muslim voices, particularly the Ahmadiyya, published articles in the vernacular as well, perhaps in hopes of recruitment. And when they did, they too adjusted their language to meet a different imagined public, relying on Yoruba proverbs and idioms.<sup>229</sup> Another difference between these two reading publics concerns their scale of reference. Though reformists often cited knowledge gleaned from books or individuals from the Middle East, these global references are less visible within the vernacular.<sup>230</sup> Thus, not only did there exist two different vocal Muslim elites in the interwar period, but one of these appears less concerned with the concept of a global *‘umma* than with local and regional Islamic practice.

Finally, this material illustrates the need to place tensions between what might be termed vernacular vs. reformist Islam in their broad religious and political framework. In the 1920s–30s, these two registers of prestige were aware of one another, and at times overlapped. Moreover, the tension between these two cannot be separated from the impact Christian missionaries and British colonialism had on Lagosian Muslims. In reference to the above discussion on marriage, a comparative example illustrates how both the vernacular and reformism are contingent on each other *and* broader political economies. In his study of Islam in Koko, Cote d’Ivoire, Robert Launay describes a similar change to Muslim marriage ceremonies in the 1970s.<sup>231</sup> At the time most Muslims felt

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“Tani le soto s Olorun/ Afe ni ma wa baje fun ra re/ B Enia nfi nu seka bo mode soto bo pe/ Olorun Obani mu n won/ B’Enia mo Tira bo se Buruku/ Iyen a ke bose iya ko to fi ‘le saso bora/ Bo lowo bo to olokun/ Bo fi sote soba oga ogo/ Ile aiye loti jiya do run.

English is: Whoever defy the rage of Allah,/ Is looking for some sure troubles/ For bad within and bad without—For-long/ Allah shall destroy you all/ Your boast of certain knowledge the end of which is bad/ You will regret when the end is near/ Be you as wealthy as the goddess of the seas./ To use it in challenging the fury of the Almighty Allah/ You will regret from this to the world beyond/ You will hear from us again.”

229 Oloye, “Iro-Pipa,” 1922, p. 5. Though it is somewhat unclear whether this Muslim author was an Ahmadiyya member or not, he lends the group support in this article by chastising its critics for being unfair, and he lends support to the claim that Islam in Lagos needs reform. To give a sense of his different approach, towards the end of the article he says, “At the end (in the evening) of a person’s life, if we do not find anything worthy in their deeds, it is a great waste. Let us get ourselves ready, people of Lagos, and remodel our lifestyle.”

230 Smith, “Wolimo,” 1920, p. 6; “The Case of Wearing of the Fez-Cap,” 1921, p. 5.

231 Robert Launay, *Beyond the Stream: Islam and Society in a West African Town*, (Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies) Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992, pp. 136–42. Thanks to Rudolph Ware for directing me to this parallel example.

pressure from two fronts: secularism and Wahhabism.<sup>232</sup> Like marriage ceremonies celebrated by reformist Yoruba Muslims in the 1920s, the new ritual in Koko focused attention away from families and onto the couple with a sermon and a “loose pastiche of a civil wedding ceremony.”<sup>233</sup> The new ritual in Koko failed to take hold, in large part because within a decade national economic decline had withered the material benefits a civil wedding conferred on participants.<sup>234</sup> In contrast, today among Yoruba Muslims weddings in rented halls or mosques are coded as “elite,” whereas weddings in family compounds are coded as “low class,” though neither continues to indicate one’s sectarian religious affiliation,<sup>235</sup> and the *wolimo* rarely accompanies the wedding.<sup>236</sup> The colonial state closely intertwined Christianity, English literacy, and elite civil servant jobs—Lagosian Muslims initially resisted these changes, but increasingly chose to engage with colonial society on their own terms. Thus, what I’ve been calling Islamic reforms were in a sense also vernacular, tied as they were to local demands and hierarchies.

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232 Ibid., p. 135.

233 Ibid., p. 138.

234 Ibid., pp. 146–48.

235 Fieldnotes, May 9, 2015. Ibadan.

236 Noibi, interview, June 2017; Adams, 2017, interview. Professor Noibi, who has been conducting marriage ceremonies since the 1970s agreed that the practice of the *wolimo* has declined, which he attributed to the rise of Western education. Though more research on this is needed, Hussein Adams, a Hausa informant who lives and works in the Sabo quarter in Ibadan, suggested that the practice is still common among the quarter’s Hausa residents.