

## **The Islamisation Mission of Islamic Education Trust (IET) among the Kambari People, 1970-1980**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper is on the history of Islamic development among the Kambari ethnic group through the efforts of Islamic Education Trust (IET), a non-governmental Muslim charity organisation founded in 1969 in Nigeria. IET was aimed at coordinating Da'awah (call to Islam) activities in Northern Region to compliment the glorious Islamic conversion victories achieved by the Premier of Northern Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello Sardauna. Following the Sardauna's death in 1966, Islam recorded some setbacks among the Kambari who were left ignorant regarding the proper observance of the principles of Islamic teachings. Consequently, some of the Kambari returned to animism until the appearance of the IET in Yauri Emirate in 1970. This helped in re-awakening the glory of Islam among the Kambari. The organisation drew a considerable number of the Kambari into Islam and imparted practical Islamic knowledge on the Kambari Muslim converts. This paper has therefore, examined the achievements of the IET on the Kambari as well as the major challenges faced by the organisation.*

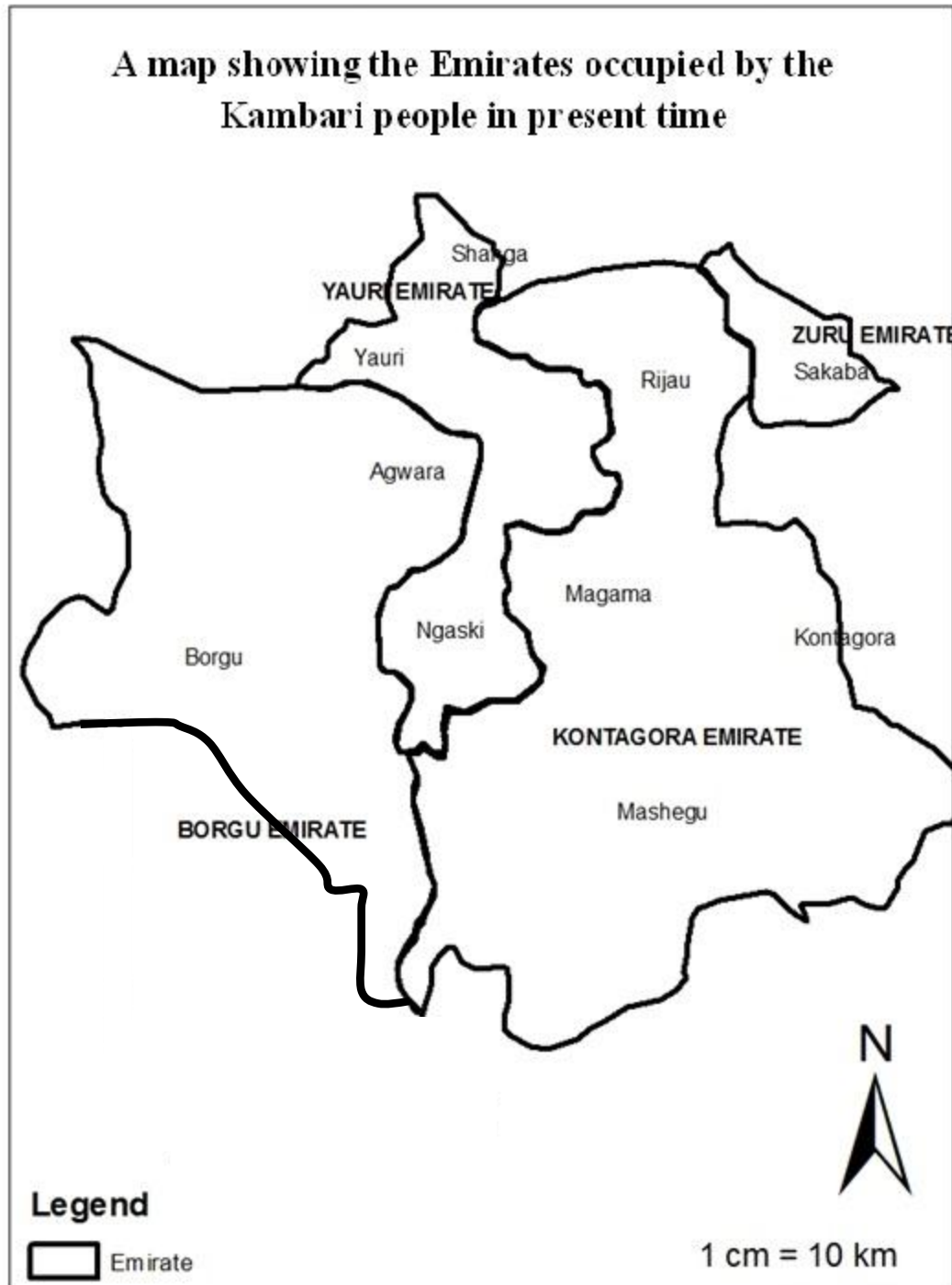
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**Keywords:** *Islamic Education Trust, Growth of Islam & Kambari People*

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### **Introduction**

The Kambari sub-ethnic groups consist of the *Awunci, Avadi, Agadi, Akimba, Agaushi* and *Ashen*.<sup>1</sup> The Kambari people today are predominantly found in Yauri Emirate of Kebbi State and in Kontagora Emirate of Niger State. Few of them are also found in the present Borgu Emirate of Niger State and Zuru Emirate of Kebbi State. Precisely, they can be found in ten Local Government Areas of the four Emirates as shown on the map attached herewith. Due to the scarcity of the secondary sources, oral information has been largely used in reconstructing the history of the organisation in the area.



Source: Population Census Map of Nigeria

Drawn by A I Tijani

### Establishment of the IET

The IET was a non-governmental charity organisation established in 1969 by Sheikh Ahmed Lemu, his wife Hajiya Aisha Bridget Lemu and late Alhaji Ashafa Sulaiman. Its first administrative headquarters was at Sokoto city, the Islamic headquarters of the 19<sup>th</sup> century defunct Sokoto Caliphate of Sheikh Uthman Ibn Fodio. At present, the IET has its headquarters in Minna, the capital of Niger State.<sup>2</sup> The death of the first and only Premier of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello Sardauna in 1966 was what led to the establishment of the IET. The organisation was aimed at calling people to Islam to support the glorious Islamic conversion victories already achieved by the Sardauna, especially in the non-Muslim areas. So, the rise of Islamic Education Trust (I.E.T) in 1969 was a breakthrough that greatly helped in re-awakening the glory of Islam in Northwestern Nigeria.<sup>3</sup>

Though *Jam'atu Nasri Islam*,<sup>4</sup> has predated IET in the area but it did not perform much active role in the Islamisation of the Kambari and the other non-Muslim communities.

### Penetration of the IET into the Kambari Territory

In 1970, IET opened its branch in Yauri town at the premises of Wali Primary School, aimed at providing adequate Islamic awareness and services among non-Muslim communities dwelling in Borgu, Yauri, Kontagora and Zuru Emirates. The branch had received students from different areas such as in Yauri, Zuru, Kontagora and Borgu Emirates.<sup>5</sup> Late Malam Musa Salihu Abarshi (Magajin Garin Yauri, died 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2013) was the IET Branch Coordinator, Alhaji Sule Takware Accountant Yauri Native Authority, Malam Danjuma Illo Tutor, Late Alkali Hamidu Gebe<sup>6</sup> Supervisor and also a preacher.

Research conducted by Frank has shown that by 1972, the organization had a total number of twenty two *Mallamai* (learned men) who mostly resident in rural villages, outside Yauri. Most of the preachers spoke Hausa fluently and some of them came from the indigenous tribes of the area, a method used by the IET to facilitate easy interactions with the remote non-Muslim communities. Some of the Head Teachers were provided with motorcycles to ease transportation, while others used bicycles.<sup>7</sup>

### List of Students who Received Training on Islamic Propagation at IET Branch in Yauri

S/No.	Name	Place
1	Late Alkali Hamidu Gebe (Kambari): Hamidu Gebe was the first judge in Yauri Emirate and also a teacher at IET who also used to join the group of preachers for propagation works. He played a great role in drawing the attention of some Muslim Mallams into Yauri Emirate for propagation, whom he met while serving as judge at Shanga, Yauri, Gebe and finally at Wara where he retired. After his retirement, he became the Chief Imam of Cupamini village where he served for 20 years. He died in the year 2002.	Cupamini, Yauri Emirate

2	Sheikh Abubakar Salihu Wara (Hausa): Abubakar was among the leading preachers in Ngaski District under IET. He left for Saudi Arabia in 1974 where he studied Islamic Studies at Islamic University Medina. He was the Chief Imam at State House Lagos, under the regime of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (1985-1993). Sheikh Abubakar is now Director and Chairman Education Committee, Bureau for Islamic Education, Ikoyi Lagos. He is also an Islamic teacher and Qur'an <i>Mufassir</i> (interpreter) whose preaching is being heard on the Voice of Nigeria, Ikoyi Radio Lagos during Ramadan period, from 10:00 p.m. daily. He built a mosque and an <i>Islamiyyah</i> school called Madarasatu Ibn Ka'ab (now <i>Nizzamiyyah</i> Primary School) in Wara where he engaged himself in educating the Kambari, Gungawa, Lopawa and Hausa people to the recent period.	Wara, Yauri Emirate
3	Alasan Imam Libata (Akimba Kambari d. 21/10/2015): The son of a certain Nupe Malam called Adamu, who championed the earliest cause of conversion among the Akimba of Libata and environs in the 1940s.	Libata, Yauri Emirate
4	Alhaji Tukur Maidoki, the current <i>Galadima</i> of Maginga (Hausa)	Wara, Yauri Emirate
5	Late Muhammadu <i>Limamin</i> (Imam) Shabanda (Balope from Shabanda)	Shabanda, Borgu Emirate
6	Malam Dodo (Hausa from Wara)	Wara, Yauri Emirate
7	Malam Haruna Bussa (Bussa. He was sent by the Emir of Bussa Late Musa Muhammadu Kigera III son of Muhammadu Sani (1968-2000) to attend the IET programme for the benefit of his people): Malam Haruna succeeded in drawing a considerable number of the Kambari and Bussawa ethnic groups to Islam in Borgu District.	Bussa (Now Kainji Town), Borgu Emirate
8	Late Yunusa Abdullahi (Hausa from Utono): He was an outstanding figure of Islamic progress among some Kambari of Utono Island and surrounding, Makawa, Ngaski, Fari Ruwa and Guguwa among others.	Utono Island
9	Malam Amadu Dandare (Bagunge): now the Deputy Imam of Bussa Central Mosque, Kainji.	Wara, Yauri Emirate
10	Malam Muhammadu Bello (Dakarkari): He was among the leading IET students from Zuru Emirate, whom after his return he engaged himself in full time preaching in several villages in the emirate among the Dakarkari, Kambari and Dukkawa tribes.	Zuru town, Zuru Emirate

11	Malam Usman Abdullahi (Bafakke, d. 1991): He was among the first students to have attained IET training in Sokoto in 1969. He later returned to Mahuta town in Zuru Emirate in the 1970s and established a large local <i>Kor'anic</i> school there. He was said to have received students from the neighbouring villages who comprised of the Dakarkari, Fakkawa, Hausa and the Kambari. Among his disciples were the leading prominent Muslim scholars of today in the emirate who have taken leadership positions in running Islam in their respective communities.	Fakai, Zuru Emirate
12	Malam Usman Kube (Hausa): He also attained his propagation training at Sokoto between 1969 and 1970 and later engaged in preaching Islam within the area of Birnin Tudu District of Zuru Emirate. He was still alive working with Pilgrims Board in Mahuta Local Government Area.	Mahuta, Zuru Emirate

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Apart from copies of the holy Qur'an, the IET donated other Islamic books like *Muwattah Maliki*, *Ashmawi* and *Risala* for distribution to the new converts. The monthly salary paid to each preacher which at that time was an appreciable amount was four Naira (₦4.00).<sup>9</sup>

### **The Activities and Challenges faced by the IET**

Just like in the case of other Muslim organisations in the non-Muslim areas of northern Nigeria, the IET activities in the expansion of Islam among the Kambari was not achieved under a peaceful condition. Their effort to Islamise the area encountered some material, ecological and spiritual challenges, especially during the preaching expeditions which to some extent undermined the progress of the IET activities in the area. By the end of 1974, the IET mission began to face setback.<sup>10</sup> Some of the major factors that hindered the IET struggles are discussed in the pages that follow.

Little success was recorded due to the shortage of human, material and financial resources that coupled up with the refusal of quite a number of the Kambari to abandon their traditional religious beliefs as they were so much attached to their culture. The IET preachers were very few whose activities mostly concentrated in Ngaski District of Yauri Emirate, thereby abandoning other Kambari remote settlements in Borgu, Zuru and Kontagora Emirates. Also, some of the preachers were preoccupied with farm works, which made them to give less attention to their preaching expeditions. Moreover, bicycle which was mostly owned by privileged individuals was the only means of transportation in the area. So, trekking was the only option and the IET propagation outreaches were cut short.<sup>11</sup>

According to Alhaji Abubakar, there had never been a difficult place for preaching than in the village of Ra'ishe in Ngaski District. He narrated some instances when in 1972, he escaped death on two occasions at Ra'ishe, when the father of one convert called Salihu, a staunch adherent of traditional beliefs blamed him for converting his son to Islam, and attempted to spear Abubakar to death. His impending plan was unsuccessful. Places like Kwanga, Karoliya, Libata, Gungun Tagwaye, Auna and Ntade among others were not staunch opponents of Islam. The IET *Mallams* adopted the system of travelling to far

away villages to preach the Qur'an during Ramadan. For instance, Late Malam Dodo along with other volunteering *Mallams* like Ali and Usman were sent to Gungun Tagwaye and surroundings to preach and lead *Tarawih* prayers during the Ramadhan. It needs to be noted that no single mosque was built by the IET. The ones in place were built by the Sardauna as part of the 1968 Kainji Dam resettlement plan.<sup>12</sup>

Poor road network was another factor that fraught the IET mission. Most of the roads leading to the remote villages of the Kambari were somehow flooded by the tributaries of River Niger, thereby becoming not easily passable, especially during raining season. That posed a serious threat to the propagation works of the IET. Consequentially, the teachers' efforts were almost defeated into being a dry season errand.<sup>13</sup>

Non-participation of some Kambari, Lopawa and Gungawa cultural troupes during the rehearsal of Second World African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) festival<sup>14</sup> scheduled to hold in Lagos in 1977, was another challenge to the IET. The traditional rulers of the area interpreted this act as sabotage to their territorial representation in the memorable cultural display. No wonder Yauri Emirate almost lost its representation in the 1977 FESTAC festival. As a result of that, some of the IET trained personals in Ngaski District were said to have been intimidated by their respective traditional rulers, especially those who were not members of the royal families. By 1976, the IET preaching session slowed down as most of its indigenous preachers continued to receive warnings from their parents to abstain from the program to avoid confrontation with the royal class. However, the organisation had already produced some vibrant volunteering individuals in remote areas who even though not recognised as IET official staff, but took the mantle of spreading Islam in their localities as supportive preachers.<sup>15</sup> A prominent Supportive Preacher was Alhaji Aliyu Lumamu. He used to go house to house and farm to farm calling his tribemates (the Kambari) to Islam in Birnin Yauri and Kambuwa Districts of Yauri Emirate. Lumamu was now a retired civil servant living in Kambu village. This prolonged the activities of the IET mission up to the end of 1979 when *Izala*<sup>16</sup> Islamic movement emerged in the area and succeeded the challenges of Islamic revivalism. By the 1980s, when the *Izala* had strongholds in the Kambari territory, the area was already a fertile ground for Islamic activities. Thus transformation of Islamic idealism was plausible.

### **The Impact of the IET Mission on the Kambari**

The organisation activities helped to enforce Islam that brought about far reaching changes to Kambari society, which foremost introduced a complete change in their cultural, political and economic life. First, Islam regulated some aspects of life of the converted Kambari people, particularly their social order, which was almost changed in conformity with Islam. Their lives became guided by the Holy Qur'an as a book of law and precept, regulating the eating and drinking habits of Kambari, containing laws of marriages, divorce and inheritance and establishing a political community based on adherence to Islam which cut across all families, clans, and ethnic groupings within their environs.<sup>17</sup>

From 1970 to 1980, the total approximate numbers of 400 Kambari converts were drawn by the IET preachers. Some of them embraced Islam individually and in groups. Those converts were mostly from Ngaski, Auna and Borgu Districts.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the supportive preaching effort of Aliyu Lumamu drew about 50 converts from among the Kambari of



Birnin Yauri District and vicinity. Lumamu was still active in calling his tribesmen to Islam.<sup>19</sup> It is pertinent to note that the IET Islamisation activities was not only limited among the Kambari. It affected the other neighbouring communities like the Gungawa, Laru and Lopawa.

The cases of “trans-religious conversion” from Islam to Animism among Kambari, due to the Muslim negligence were corrected through rigorous efforts of the IET preachers. Many of the Kambari were reconverted to Islam. Another significant impact to be highlighted here is the fact that the IET mission had facilitated intellectual development both theoretically and practically. This was achieved through teaching the Kambari new converts some basic aspects of Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) as contained in the books of *Risalah*, *Ashmaawi*, *Iziyyah* and others. Consequentially, people of the Kambari ethnicity began to take leadership positions in running Islam in their respective communities. It was these practices that led to the emergence of Imams, Deputy Imams and Prayer Callers among the Kambari. The practices have now been at the increase as many went out in search of Islamic knowledge in local *Koranic* schools and in secular tertiary institutions where Arabic and Islamic education are taught.<sup>20</sup>

### Conclusion

Despite the geographical, human and financial shortcomings faced by the IET in the Kambari territory while discharging its Islamic propagation mission, the organisation had succeeded in drawing a considerable number of people into Islam, which cut across all the indigenous tribes in the neighbouring emirates of Yauri, Zuru, Kontagora and Borgu. Even though the list of the Kambari converts was not recorded.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the IET had relatively imparted practical Islamic knowledge into the minds and hearts of the Kambari Muslims, a commendable situation which bridged the illiteracy gap left behind by the Premier of Northern Nigeria who championed the cause of Islamic conversion in the area from 1956 to 1965. It needs to be noted that despite the Sardauna’s effort toward Islamisation in the area which succeeded in producing thousands of Muslim converts, no further immediate attempts were made in fostering Islamic knowledge among the Kambari converts until toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the IET initiated its mission. Before the introduction of the IET, the Kambari new converts were left ignorant as regards the proper observance of the general principles of Islamic teachings. IET was the Saviour of Islamic faith.<sup>22</sup>

Beside the evangelical activities of the IET, *Jama’atu Nasril Islam* and *Izalatil Bidi’ah wa Iqamatis-sunnah*, there were resurgence of other Muslim organisations like Muslim Students’ Society (MSS), Federation of Muslim Women Associations of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Committee for the Propagation of Islam and Muslim Sisters’ Organisation (MSO) that emerged in the area in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and their Islamisation programmes have been increasing. Islam has had a great influence on the Kambari people, which virtually turned them into an established practicing Muslim society.

### Endnotes

- 1 However, other non-Muslim communities living within the Kambari environ were the Gungawa, Busawa, Laru Lopawa, Dukkawa, Fakkawa and Dakarawa among others. See Abubakar, M., “History of the Akimba Group of the Kambari People to the End of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”, *M. A. History Dissertation*, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, 2010, p. 17.

- 2 See more details on IET in...Ndagi Umar M., "Muslims in Niger State: A Survey", Nigeria Research Network, Paper No.6, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, 2012, P.9.
- 3 *Ibid*, p. 9.
- 4 *Jama'atu Nasril Islam* (Society for the victory of Islam) is a renowned Muslim Organisation that has played a prominent role in the expansion and development of Islam in Nigeria. It was established by Ahmadu Bello Sardauna in January 1961 with its headquarters in Kaduna, and he became the grand patron of the organisation. Sardauna liaised with the traditional rulers like Emirs, District and Village Heads to achieve his goals. The JNi reached Yauri Emirate in 1963, Kontagora and Borgu Emirates in 1964 and Zuru Emirate in the 1970s. See C. B. Peter, *West Africa and Islam*, Scotland, Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd., 1982, Pp. 243-244. The *Jama'atu Nasril Islam* was late in reaching other settlements of the Kambari. For instance, it was not until the 1980s that it reached Salka and Auna Districts. The evangelism works of the JNi was inactive due to the shortage of materials and financial resources. As such there were only volunteering representatives who were not officially recognized at the JNi national level.
- 5 In a discussion with Alhaji Abubakar Salihu Wara, (over 70 years), interviewed at New Wara, house No. 274, 6/5/2012, 8:00-12:00 p.m. Alhaji Abubakar (popularly known as Alhaji Gambari) is the son of a certain rich Hausa merchant from Kano popularly known as Shekare Mai Tebur in Wara. At that time there were two rich Hausa traders in Wara who were each called Shekare. Salihu was nicknamed Shekare Mai Tebur because he had a large table on which he has been spreading his wares. The other Shekare was nicknamed Ani because his main stocks in trade were animal skins (*ani* in Hausa) particularly skin of reptiles such as crocodiles, pythons (*maisa*), etc.
- 6 Alkali Hamidu Gebe's grandparents were originally from Ngaski town but his mother was a Balopa by tribe, while his father was Kambari. They later left for Gebe village along with the young Hamidu in the present Shanga Local Government Area, a reason as to why he was named Hamidu Gebe. In discussion with Alhaji Isah Ibrahim Cupamini (60 years), at Cupamini, 25/10/2012, 3:00-4:00 pm
- 7 Salamone A. F., "Becoming Hausa: Ethnic Identity Change and its Implications for the study of ethnic Pluralism and Stratification", in the *Journal of International African Institute*, vol. 45, No. 4, 1995, p. 416.
- 8 The list was extracted from the records of various interviews and discussions held with the IET veteran preachers and indigenous informants, following the researcher's visits to their villages and towns.
- 9 In discussion with Alhaji Abubakar Salihu, *Op.cit*.
- 10 *Ibid*.
- 11 Excerpts from the various discussions with some of the IET preachers in Ngaski District like Tukur Maidoki, Alasan Adam Libata and Abubakar Salihu among others.
- 12 In discussion with Abubakar.
- 13 *Ibid*.
- 14 FESTAC traced its origin in West Africa, in Dakar, Senegal where its maiden festival was held in 1966. It is a World Festival of Black Arts and Cultural display that attracts different sets of Black Africans across the globe, including those in Diaspora for commemoration of their common historical heritage. See Apter, Andrew, "FESTAC for Black People: Oil Capitalism and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria", in *Program of African Studies*, No.6, Evanston IL, Northwestern University, 1993, Pp. 2-3.
- 15 In discussion with one of the supportive preachers Alhaji Aliyu Lumamu (63 years), interviewed in his house, Kambu Village, 13/8/2012.
- 16 The full name of the Izalah movement was "Izalatil Bidi'ah wa Iqamatis-ssunnah" (Society of Removal of Innovation and Re-establishment of the Sunnah) and became popular when it established many branches in the Northern States of Nigeria. See: A. I. Yandaki, *Matsayin Izalah a Nigeria*, Kaduna, Fisbas Media Services, 1992, p. 7. The *Izala* movement was founded in 1978 by Sheikh Ismaila Idris in Jos, Plateau State of Nigeria and was formally registered on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1985. See: *Ibid*. The *Izalah* movement was said to have begun in Kambari territory at Kontagora, where its founder served as military officer at Nagwamatse



- Artillery Barracks. The movement penetrated Salka in 1979, Sakaba, Birnin Yauri, Wara and Auna in 1981, Bussa, Wawa and Agwara in 1988, and Utono in 1989. In discussions with different Izala Mallams in Yauri, Kontagora, Zuru and Borgu Emirates who were mostly part and parcel of the Izala movement in their localities.
- 17 In a group discussion with Malam Jibo Utono (a retired Arabic Teacher, 85 years), at Utono town, 22/8/2012.
- 18 In discussions with some veteran IET preachers like Abubakar Salihu, Tukur Maidoki and Maisunan Malam.
- 19 In interview with Lumamu.
- 20 *Ibid.* Many Kambari youths went out for roving-studentship in places like Sokoto, Borno, Kano, Bauchi, Kontagora, Gwandu and many other places in and out Nigeria. Of recent, some have been attending Universities within and beyond the Nigerian area. The returnees among them had already founded local *Madrasah* (schools), teaching Islam to the young ones.
- 21 Malam Muhammad Sani (over 50 years), a retired Arabic Teacher, Tudun-Wada Mahuta, 11/10/2015.
- 22 See Abubakar, M. W., “A History of the Islamisation of the Kambari people, 1956-1965”, in *Sokoto Journal of History (SJH)*, Vol.3, Sokoto, Department of History, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, 2014, Pp. 297-298.

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