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THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS STATUS OF MUSLIM
WOMEN IN YORUBA LAND WITH REFERENCE TO
THE WORK OF SHAYKH AL-ALBĀNĪ

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis engages in a comparative phenomenological study of the socio-religious status of Muslim women in contemporary Yoruba land, Nigeria and the book, *Jilbāb al-Mar'ah al-Muslimah fī al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah*. It studies the socio-religious developments and conditions of Muslim women since the Sokoto Caliphate in Nigeria; with particular reference to the Southwestern part of Nigeria. The research begins with a short introduction. It then turns to the socio-religious status of Muslim women in Yoruba land. The advent of Islam in Nigeria and the *Islamization* carried by Usman Dan Fodio is examined. The place of women both before and after the Sokoto *Islamization* is ascertained so as to locate the impact of its legacy on the prevailing conditions of Muslim women in the study area. It focuses on Muslim women and their activeness in Islamic organizations. The image of Islam portrayed by these women contradicts that of secular feminists who still portray Islam in Nigeria, especially, the role played by Muslim women using long established stereotypes by orientalist during their studies on Muslim societies. A discussion on the revival of Islam in Nigeria follows. It analyzes the fundamental factors, which contribute towards the revival of Islam. It further examines the complex phenomenon of Muslim women's ongoing reaffirmation of their identity in Islamic religious belief. The new trends in the changing roles of Muslim women in Yoruba land and their perception of the feminist movement is also examined. This reveals the extent to which these women are complacent or worried with their socio-religious roles and are motivated either by Islam or the feminist movement in their feminist aspirations. In doing so, it adopts the interview method to examine the socio-religious status of Muslim women in the area as perceived by these women themselves. The report of the interviews conducted is analytically presented. The study also offers an overview of feminism with special focus on the new trends among Muslim women referred to as Islamic feminism. It traces the origin and development of feminism from the eighteenth century so as to understand the postmodern concept of gender feminism. It reveals both the views of secular feminists who want women to be completely free and Islamic feminists who want to live in the shade of Islamic teachings. The work of *Shaykh* al- Albānī also forms the core of this thesis where his views on Muslim women in the above book are critically presented. The thesis traces the historical background and milieu in which the book was written. It investigates the factors that warranted the writing of the book

in order to ascertain the actual contributions of the book to the conditions of Muslim women. Using the views of Muslim women in the study area as basis of comparison, the thesis provides a critical and comparative analysis of the contributions of the book to Islamic feminism. Despite his fame as a conservative *Wahhābī* scholar, the work of the *Shaykh* shows analytically the extent to which he has responded to Islamic feminist aspirations. Finally, the research discloses the impact of the book in the educational activities of Muslims in Yoruba land especially the Muslim students' society of Nigeria. It concludes with the demand by Muslim women in Yoruba land for a return to the pristine Islam which they believe will meet their feminist aspirations.

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APPROVAL PAGE

The thesis of Ibrahim Olatunde Uthman has been examined and is approved by the following:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references and a bibliography is appended.

Name: Ibrahim Olatunde Uthman

Signature..... Date.....

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The Socio-religious status of Muslim women in Yoruba land With Reference to the Work
of Shaykh al-Albānī

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Date

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Alhaj Abdul RazÉq UthmÉn and my mother, Alhaja Uthman who constantly helps me spiritually in my life especially throughout this study. May AllÉh enrich them on this earth and later in the HereAfter, ÓmÊn.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This research seeks to be part of the feminist genre by studying the socio-religious status of Muslim women in Yoruba land, Nigeria. Feminism as a prominent force now dominating world religions and Islamic thought inclusive, posits that there is an urgent need to re-define religious attitudes toward gender, which are mostly responsible for the social-cultural conditions of women. By seeking to be part of this feminist genre, this study hopes to reveal that objectivity in the feminist analysis of Muslim societies is socio-culturally conditioned in western and secular matrices. It examines the feminist secular discourse within the context of the socio-religious conditions of Muslim women in Yoruba land, Nigeria. The study is broad enough to incorporate together, the perspectives of Muslim women and a work of a traditional Muslim scholar, so that it can in the long run clarify contemporary paradigms on the studies of Muslim women, which in reality proceed from two different socio-cultural analyses, the western and secular matrices and the Islamic socio-cultural matrices.

The study is therefore an inquiry into what can be termed Nigerian Islam as it affects Muslim women and will trace the advent of Islam in the country, the contribution of the Sokoto Caliphate to the *Islamization* process in Nigeria and the status of women under the Caliphate. The choice of studying the status of Muslim women in Nigeria can only be understood within the context of a global society where Muslim women are now confronting what can best be described as “×ijÉbphobia”. A study of Nigeria is, as a matter of fact, a study of the most populous African country with a large Muslim population majority, a Muslim population higher than that of any of the Arab countries and most Asian countries.

The goal here is to provide a basis for exploring the main dimensions of the status of Muslim women as central to practices in the Muslim world using Yoruba land as a case study. It is hoped that this can stimulate the Muslim world, starting from Islamic organizations, especially the students’ society in Nigeria, to address these dimensions in formulating their policies on women. This study actually began in 1997 as an attempt to communicate some of these dimensions to members of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN) and to challenge Islamic scholars to promote