

Islam and the Transformation of *Murabye* - Marriage Rites Among The Gbagyi Community of Minna Area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria

Idris Abubakar Zakari¹

Abstract

In this article an attempt is made to examine Islam and transformation of *Murabye*-marriage rites among the Gbagyi community of Minna area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria. This has been done by first examining the contact and arrival of Islam among the Gbagyi. Then a meaningful discussion on the courtship among the pre-Islamic Gbagyi has also been made. After these an appraisal on *Murabye*-Marriage procedures among the pre-Islamic Gbagyi was considered. This was followed by an exploration of Islam and transformation of *Murabye*- Marriage rites among the Gbagyi. Community of Minna Area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria and finally a conclusion was drawn.

Introduction

The Gbagyi ¹.People are one of the political communities in the Northern part of Nigeria. The people are today found predominantly in Kaduna, Nassarawa, Niger State as well as Abuja, the Capital city of modern Nigeria.²The Gbagyi of Minna area of the present day Niger State of Northern Nigeria who are the concern of this paper live in places such as Minna, Kuta, Paigo, Bosso, Maikunkele, Guni, Galadima Kogo, Manta, Kwakuti, Gbasha, Kaffin-koro, Munya³ etc. The introduction of Islam among the Gbagyi in the study area was an important development that brought about profound changes in the political and as well as socio-cultural practices which includes the *Murabye*-marriage rites. ⁴ The *Murabye*-Marriage rites among the Gbagyi of Minna area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria was a cultural rites which predated Islam. ⁵The cultural rites among the Gbagyi in the study area was not only unique, held in high esteem, accorded venerability but had been the practice of the people in the study area for a long time to the extent that Islam affected its practice when it arrived the area.

The Contact and Arrival of Islam Among the Gbagyi of Minna Area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria

It is difficult to mention precisely the exact date when Islam first had contact with the Gbagyi of Minna area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria. For the dearth of reliable history records there is also scarcity of documented history of the contact and arrival of Islam among the Gbagyi of our area of study i.e. Minna Area of Niger State of northern Nigeria. While some suggests and date the contact and arrival of Islam among the Gbagyi in the study area to the second half of the 19th century's Islamic expedition into the region by Malam Muhammad bn. Fate alias Dendo ⁶ and the conquest of some Gbagyi settlements such as Shatta, Bosso, Maikunkele, Kuta, Paigo etc. by Umaru Nagwamatse⁷ and his successors, others asserted and maintained that Islamic influence reached Gbagyi of Minna area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria in the last quarter of the 19th century with the arrival of Malam Muazu Sokoto in 1898. ⁸ The appearance of Malam Muazu Sokoto in the study area in the above mentioned date the tradition added that it did not only occasioned the adoption of the beautiful Muslim names by the Gbagyi in the region but the study area witnessd the spread of Islam and its ideals in villages such as Bosso, Paigo, Kuta, Maikunkele, Gbasha, Kwakuti⁹ etc.

¹ Department of History, Bayero University, Kano, Kano State, Nigeria

But contrary to the above views one oral source denied the role Malam Muhammad Ibn Fate alias Dendo, Umaru Nagwamatse, his successors and Malam Muazu Sokoto in respect of the early contact and arrival of Islam among the Gbagyi of Minna area of Niger State of northern Nigeria¹⁰ the author argued that the information in relation to the early contact and arrival of Islam among Gbagyi of Minna Area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria are not only hinged on the legends but do not collaborate with any other sources. He however, established the contact and arrival of Islam among the Gbagyi of Minna area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria to the 17th century with the arrival of Kanuri, Nupe, Fulani and Hausa.¹¹ The 17th century date of the early contact and arrival of Islam among the Gbagyi of Minna area of Niger state of northern Nigeria may be true because this view has an re-enforcement in another tradition which make it vivid that this date, apart from being the most acceptable version of the majority of the Muslims in the study area, it remains the period in which the study area i.e Minna area of Niger state of northern Nigeria began to witnessed not only the growth of Muslim commercial settlements in towns and villages such as Kwakuti, Maikunkele, Bosso, Paigo, Kuta etc.

And the adoption of Muslim form of worship but the emergence of Muslim institutions such as Mosques i.e Tawali-Kuta mosque which was built in 1682 and filtration of Islamic centres of learning in places like Erana, Guni, Kaffin Koro, Kuyi etc Northwest and Southwest of Minna area of Niger state¹² It is worthy of note that when Islam arrived Minna Area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria in the 17th century, it met Gbagyi people in the area with their unique cultural rites. One of the cultural rites of the Gbagyi of Minna Area of Niger State of northern Nigeria which predated Islam was the *Murabye* – marriage rites. The *Murabye* - is a kind of marriage rites among the Gbagyi people. It was one of the cultural rites which occupy not only a unique position but was held in high esteem among the Gbagyi of Minna Area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria. Because of the regard Gbagyi in the study area has for this rites, a special respect was reserved for *Ayeri* –in-laws. A Gbagyi in the study area could greet his *Dada* – father or *Nma*–mother with only a slight bow but would go down right on his knees with his *Bwada* – shoes removed while greeting his *Ayeri* – in-law and will remained in that position until he was asked by his *Ayeri*-in-laws to get up¹³.

***Nyigoido*-Courtship Among The Pre-Islamic Gbagyi of Minna Area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria**

According to one tradition, the search for a future partner among the pre-Islamic Gbagyi of Minna Area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria starts from ordinary *Nyigoido* – friendship between the boy and girl. It is during *Ebwoba* – festival that *Nyigoido* – friendship starts. Communication to *Bingoi* – girl may be through intermediaries like *A'nuko* – friends. While in some cases intermediaries are not required¹⁴. Also *A'Zamaigo* – parents often engaged male and females cousins at the age of ten. This practice is common in areas such as Paigo, Kwakuti, Minna, Bosso, South West of Minna Area¹⁵. The courtship according to one oral tradition could last for a minimum of two years and maximum of ten years¹⁶. It is during the period that the boy will be introduced to the *Bingoipi* – girl's family. If the *Bingoi* – girl accepts the proposal, the boy subsequently informs his *A'Zamaigo* – parents¹⁷. A representative of the *A'Zamaigo* – parents of the boy called *Wyubyi* – is sent with gifts a symbolic gesture of seeking the hands of the *Bingoi*– girl in marriage. The gift items include *Wokagbai*– one cowry shell and traditional wine called *Eje*¹⁸ – in Gbagyi. This is accompanied by *Bwobwabe* – festivity needed to be done and form part of *Murabie* – marriage rites. The relevance of the above practices was to show appreciation and to thank the forebears for giving their daughter a suitor and as well as to prevent other boys from approaching or seeking the *Bingoibwa* – girl's hand in marriage¹⁹. On receiving the good tidings that his suitor has been accepted, the would be *Muraba* – groom would arranged for *Yeifa* – community co-operative farming to his *Ayerifa* –in-laws farm with eight abled – bodied men of would be *MurabaYezhu* – groom age at least four times in a year and the whole exercise i.e *Yeifa* – group farming to *Ayerifa* –in-law farm lasts between four to seven years and the practice was expected to terminate completely after two or three years after *Mura* – marriage²⁰.

The *Murabye* – Marriage Rites Procedures Among the Pre-Islamic Gbagyi of Minna Area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria

The year proceeding to the *Murabye* – marriage ceremony will witness series of *Bwobwabe* – festivity. This according to one oral account involved bathing the would be *Murango*– bride on *Ghini* – motar in this process she would be required to wear ceremonial piece of native woven cloth called *Epa*-pant. As she sat on the *Ghini*–motar, *Ebo* – calabash with some fish and straw are brought²¹. It was at this stage that she would be washed in a big

Ebo – calabash by an elderly woman and after the bath as elucidated in one tradition, the water was thrown by using small *Ebo* – calabash in four direction starting with the East, North, West and South²².

The above practice, the tradition added was prayers from *A'nyigbango* – elders that the *Murango* – bride be protected from her enemies from all directions²³. After this *Eza* – onitment which was red in colour would be rubbed on the body of the *Murango*– bride to be and there after she would be given a new set of native woven cloth to wear. The *Muraba* – groom to be was expected to undergo the same rites. It is however worthy of note that these rites are not applicable to a man or woman marrying after divorce²⁴.

In the same vein, after all of the above procedures or process, the *Muraba* – groom to be would be asked to pay the *Gbasa* – dowry, the *Gbasa* – dowry among the Gbagyi people in the study area was an essential ingredient before marriage can take place. Though, very important the *Gbasa* – dowry according to one accounts among the people in the study area differ, for instance, while the Gbagyi of Paigo, Minna, Bosso, Maikunkele, Gbasha, Kwakuti and Gbago, *Muraba* – groom to be give the *A'Zamaigo*– parents of the *Murango* – bride to be and not the *Murango* – bride to be herself *Ejeshaku* – pot of traditional wine, *Awyi* – corn and *Pisengba*– cock as *Gbasa* – dowry²⁵.

The Gbagyi who live at Kuta, Fuka, Dangunu, Guni, GaladimaKogo and Kurmin Gurmana on the other hand, give the *Murango* – bride to be *Wokakpagbaituwosuhba* – 1,200 cowrie shells, her *A'zamaigo* – parents *Wokawashisutuasha*- 800 cowrie shells and a pile of fire woods for virgin girls as *Gbasa* – dowry²⁶. Whatever, may be the causes of the variations and differences in the payment of *Gbasa* – dowry the Gbagyi people in the study area give and accepts *Wokappakoawo* – 2,000 cowrie shells, *Wyiga* – bundle of guinea corn, *Shewyikanpweguawa* – 10 baskets of hungry rice, *Aéjenyiku* – pots of traditional wine, *Amikochekpanba* – bottle of shear butter, *A'ejegbabo* – gourds of traditional wine, and *Pisengba* – cock as *Gbasa* – dowry²⁷.

Indeed after the payment of the *Gbasa* – dowry, a day would be fixed to escort the *Murango* – bride to her *Murabapi* – groom's house which according to one tradition was in two stages, firstly, through proper arrangement in which a day was fixed whereby aged women and men and some young girls and boys from *Murabapi* – grooms house will come and collect their *Nyigo*– wife while the second arrangement for the escort of *Nyigo* – wife to her *Murabapi* – grooms house was the one that entails the use of force²⁸. In this arrangement some strong youth who were mostly *Murabanuko* – groom's friends caught her by force at *Ebwoba* – festival or at her residence. In some places like Gini, Egwa, Erana, Shakwatuetc some Gbagyi girls co-operates and walked to *Murabapi* – groom's house without any form of force²⁹. Similarly, before the advent of Islam among the people i.e Gbagyi in the study area i.e Minna area of Niger State, there was the practice of elopement. This was the practice where a young man would elope with a girl who was under courtship or eloped with a woman already married to someone else. In this case, according one account, a young girl would just agree to walk away with a different man she loves and moved in to his house unannounced. The man would on the other hand without hesitation announced his marriage³⁰. Rituals are not observed in this type of marriage, partly, because in most cases, some of the women do not stay long in this type of marriage particularly young girls.³¹

From the above analysis, it is evident that *Murabye* – marriage rites among the Gbagyi people in the study area before the arrival of Islam was not a civil contract that was regulated or govern by defined rules and regulations and that a Gbagyi woman was at liberty to give herself in marriage without the consent of her guardian. However, prior to the escort of the *Murango* – bride to her *Murabapi* – groom's house on the following morning the *MurangoDada* – bride's father in company of all males members of the family and carrying along with them the *Gbasa* – dowry would head for his *Zhibata* – Shrine. Prayers will be offered to his ancestors and the *Pisengba* – Cock will be killed and its blood would be sprinkled on stones, sticks and mud which is the *Zhibata* – shrine, *Eje* – traditional wine and food would be offered to *Zhibata* – Shrine. The meat of the *Pisengba* – cock killed are cooked parcelled and each member of the family will receive a fragment and bit will be reserved for *Muraba* – groom which the *Murango* – will carry it back to him³².

The washing of *Murangobwa* – bride's hand marked the beginning of the initiation of the girl into marital life. After the washing of *Murangobwa* – bride's hand the ritual bath of the whole body of the *Murango* – bride would be undertaken which was done according to one oral source to do away with any kinds of dirt on her hand or evil things³³. At this point, the *Murango* – bride would be escorted to her matrimonial home. The celebration for the arrival of the *Nyigowowoi* – new wife among the Gbagyi people in the study area lasts for seven days which there was dancing and drinking of *Eje* – traditional wine³⁴.

On the seventh day before the departure of those who escorted the *Murango* - bride to her matrimonial home, food will be prepared and take back and a small girl of twelve years will be left with *Murango* - bride for four days to assist her in her domestic work. After the *Mura* – marriage at the end of every year the *Muraba* – groom was to give *Wyigaguaba* – two bundles of guinea corn to his *Yezhi* – in-law. In addition to the above *Eysah* – grass was given to enable *Ayeri*– in-laws roof their hut³⁵.

It is worthy of note that Gbagyi man in the study area before advent of Islam could support as many wives as he could for two principal reasons, firstly, to earn respect and recognition among his peers and secondly to procreate children who will assist him in his farm work³⁶. This gives the idea of the existence of unlimited polygamy among the Gbagyi people in the study area before Islam. In the case of *Nyigoyabe*– divorce, an integral part or aspect of *Murabye* – marriage rites among the Gbagyi people, as expostulated by an informant, before Islam there was no ceremony at divorce. What existed the author added was Gbagyi woman in the study area might leave her *Ebahpi* –husband's house for another man without any penalty³⁷. This gives also an idea that right to divorce resides in the women and not man among the Gbagyi in the study area before Islam. The death of *Ebah* – husband is another important aspect in the analysis of *Murabye*– marriage rites among the Gbagyi of Minna Area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria. Immediately, it was confirmed among the people that *Nyigozabah*– woman's husband was dead, the *Nyigo* – wife would be made to leave or vacate her deceased *Ebahpi* – husband's house and she would not return to that house until after the entire interment exercise of her deceased *Ebah* – husband³⁸. This was so, because of the aged long belief current among the Gbagyi before Islam that if the *Nyigo*– wife by accident or mistakenly sees the corpse of her deceased *Ebah*– husband she would follow suit i.e die³⁹.

However, in the same vein, after the completion of the interment rites of her deceased *Ebah* – husband, the *Nyigo* – wife would return to her deceased *Ebahpi* – husband's house and enter another interesting aspect or stage in Gbagyi *Mura* – marriage rites called or known as *Nyigba* – widowhood. The *Nyigba* – widowhood was a period set aside for a Gbagyi woman in the study area for mourning and lasts for three months⁴⁰. In the state of *Nyigba* – widowhood, the *Nyigbai*– widow was expected to wear *GohdoZhizhi* - black hand woven cloth and would be confine to a particular room inside her deceased *Ebahpi* – husband's house. During the period, *Nyigbai* – widow's movement would be restricted and domestic works such as cooking, sweeping, washing etc would be forbidden for her. Equally, her hair would be shaved and she would be forbidden from answering any greetings and she would not take any food from anybody outside the room she was being confined to except the person greeting or given her the food entered inside the room she was being confined⁴¹. On the very day the *Nyiba* – widowhood expired, *Pisengba* – Cock, *Bukuzhizhi* – black he goat and *Eje* – traditional wine would be used for sacrifice. The purpose of the rites was to thank the forebears for protecting her throughout the period of *Nyigba* – widowhood and in addition ward off to divorce her from the excessive thinking of her deceased *Ebah* – husband. It was on this very day according to one tradition that her hair will be plaited, different kinds of food would be prepared for her and her parents, relatives and well wishers would present her with gifts both in cash and kind⁴².

Unlike what was obtained in some African societies whereby a woman after the death of her *Ebah* – husband become the property of the family that was to be inherited along side with other properties left behind by her deceased *Ebah* – husband and forced to marry any member of the deceased *Ebahpi* – husband's family. However, among the Gbagyi in the study area, the situation was completely different. After the expiration of *Nyigba* – widowhood, she seized to be a member of her deceased *Ebahpi* – husband's family⁴³. She was consulted whether she wants to remain with her deceased *Ebahpi* – husband's family. If she answered in affirmative she would be asked to choose among the younger brother's of her deceased *Ebah* – husband. She was on the other hand not to choose among the elder brothers of her deceased *Ebah* – husband to remarry for it contradict the customs and traditions of the Gbagyi in the study area for an elder brother to remarry the *Nyigbai* – widow of his deceased younger brother. It was however, lawful for the younger brother to remarry the *Nyigbai* – widow. On the other hand *Nyigbai* – widow was at liberty to decline not to marry anybody from her deceased *Ebahpi* – husband's family⁴⁴.

Perhaps, if the choice was made, the marriage would be consummated, between the *Nyigbai* – widow of his elder brother the *Nyigbai* – widow and the younger brother of her deceased *Ebah*– husband. It is instructive to note that on a serious note or ground the younger brother who is now the *Ebah* – husband to his deceased brother's *Nyigbai* – widow be allowed to either touched or make use of the left behind properties such as clothing materials and

farm implements belonging to his deceased elder brother, particularly, if the deceased elder brother has left behind a child/children.

This became necessary according to one oral account it was meant to protect the child/children of the deceased elder brother from bad or evil omen that might befall him/her them if the younger brother should make use of the left behind properties of his deceased elder brother⁴⁵.

In the case of the treatment and status of Gbagyi woman in the study area before Islam, the Gbagyi women were not accorded any respect and recognition but relegated to the background. They were treated little better than slaves, forced to work on their *Ebahfa* – husband's farm, parades the streets, markets, public places with transparent dress, no *Hijab* – covering their person and were famous for brewing and selling of *Eje* – traditional wine⁴⁶. Indeed, this was the state of affairs as regards to the *Murabye* – marriage rites among the Gbagyi of Minna area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria before Islam. But with the advent of Islam among the people i.e the Gbagyi *Murabye* – marriage rites become Islamized.

The Islamization of *Murabye* – Marriage Rites Among The Gbagyi of Minna Area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria

Though, Islam is said to have reached the Gbagyi of Minna Area of Niger State in the 17th Century, the period of the twentieth century however, will remain mainspring and remarkable in the history of Islam among the Gbagyi. The period witnessed the conversion campaigns⁴⁷ led by Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sark of Sokoto⁴⁸ among the Gbagyi in the study area from 1963. This conversion campaign among the Gbagyi people in the study area led to the Islamization of their socio-cultural ceremonies including the *Murabye*. The *Murabye* – marriage rites, an important social institution among Gbagyi in the study area were transformed to conform to the tenets of Islam. Certain cultural practices that were considered repugnant to Islamic teachings or un-Islamic were stopped. For instance, during courtship, presentation of *Eje* – a traditional wine is replaced with dates, kolanuts, sweets and any other things approved by Islam. This explains that Muslim should give lawful thing as gift to precede marriage contract and abstain from presenting anything unlawful that are not only forbidden in Islam but cannot be owned, sold and bought by a Muslim. Addressing the Muslims on this issue

Allah (SWT) says:

Whatever the messenger brought to you take hold of it and whatever he forbids you abstain from it. ⁴⁹In the case of *Mahr* – dowry, the Gbagyi in the study area now gives *Mahr*-dowry in both cash and kind and in any other valuable things sanctioned by Islam. This has replaced the former practice of giving *A'ejegbabo* – gourds of traditional wine, *A'ejenyiku* – pots of traditional wine and a pile of firewood to the girl's family⁵⁰ the old practice is not only repugnant and unacceptable that contradict the principle of Islam but it remained an action/deeds that cannot meet the vital condition of Allah (SWT), the most High acceptance and reward for all good deed. This corroborates the saying of the Prophet(SAW) that: Verily Allah is good and He does not accept but what is good ⁵¹

In addition, un-Islamic practices like a young man eloping with married or unmarried woman, woman walking away with a man she loves and move into his house unannounced in the name of marriage and woman giving herself in marriage without the consent of her parents among the Gbagyi gave way for lawful marriage of Islam and Gbagyi realized that there is no valid marriage without the consent of a guardian.⁵² On this issue, Allah (SWT) declared thus: Wed them with the leave of their owners.⁵³

The Prophet (SAW) also says:

Any woman who got married without the permission of her guardian would be considered null and void.⁵⁴ Similarly, on the wedding day Muslim scholars are invited to preside over the consummation of marriage which replaced the old practice of conducting marriages in *Zhibata* – shrines. In the past, the *MurangoDada* – bride's father invites people mostly his relatives and carried along with them *Eje* – traditional wine, *Pisengba* – cock, *Bukhuzhizhi* – a black male goat etc to his *Zhibata* – shrine and offered sacrifices to inanimate objects, such as stones, heap of sand, sticks etc. This gives an idea of secret marriage consummation among the people in the study area before Islam. Islam is totally against consummation of secret marriages but enjoins it adherents on the other hand to expressly, publicly conduct their marriages and with at least two adult witnesses. In relation to this, the Prophet (SAW) says: And there is no marriage except with permission of guardian, payment of dower and two reasonable witnesses. ⁵⁵

On the practice of polygamy, Gbagyi in the study area have adopted the Islamic practice of keeping up to four wives only as against the old tradition which places no limitation to the number of wives a Gbagyi man could marry or support.⁵⁶ In the new order, the Gbagyi in the study area now keep or marry up to four wives concurrently as allowed by the Islam and maintain not only justice among them but equality as well. This practice corroborates the saying of Allah (SWT) that: Then marry women of your choice two, three or four. But if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with them then only one. ⁵⁷The Prophet (SAW) in a Hadith says: Choose four out of them and give up all others.⁵⁸ As regard to divorce, the Gbagyi in the study area have adopted the Islamic system of divorce which impetus reconciliation, arbitration and compromise whenever possible before pronouncement of divorce. In this regard Allah (SWT) says: If you fear a break between them twain, appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family and the other from hers; if they seek to set things aright, Allah will cause their reconciliation: for Allah hath full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things. ⁵⁹

In addition, in the new system of divorce i.e Islamic, husbands initiate divorce proceeding, Gbagyi woman also in the new system may seek for divorce if she has a case but needs to be approved by elders or court after thorough scrutiny⁶⁰. This practice agrees with the statement of Allah (SWT) that: If a wife fears cruelty of desertion on her husband's part there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves; and such settlement is best; even though men's souls are swayed by greed. But if ye do good practice self restraint, Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do.⁶¹ The Islamic divorce system as a whole has replaced the unceremonial system of divorce among the Gbagyi. On *Idda* – mandatory waiting period before re-marry in Islam, though, completely absent among the Gbagyi but with the introduction and intrenchment of Islam among the people the *Idda*- Islamic system of waiting period is now adopted by the Gbagyi. In the study area the Gbagyi women are seen after dissolution of their marriages observing the prescribed three months mandatory periods before remarry and under the custody and proper care of their former husband as enjoined by Islam⁶². This is in accordance with the statement of Allah (SWT) that: The divorce women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods.⁶³ Similarly, the Prophet (SAW) says:

Complete your *Idda* periods in the house of Maktum.⁶⁴ In relation to widowhood, the Gbagyi widows observed the period of four months ten days prescribed by Islamic law. This is in line with what Allah (SWT) says: If any one of you die and leave widow behind; they shall wait concerning themselves four month ten days when they have fulfilled their term, there is no blame on you if they dispose of themselves in a just and reasonable manner. And Allah is well-acquainted with what ye do.⁶⁵ This new practice on the other hand has replaced the old practice of one hundred and twenty days which was accompanied with the observation of certain traditional rites and rituals⁶⁶. In the case of seclusion *Hijab* – *pardah*, called *Nyigogudnabwe* in Gbagyi, seclusion was completely absent among the Gbagyi in the study area and therefore was not practiced. But with the arrival of Islam among the Gbagyi in the study area, the Islamic *Hijab* and *Purdah*- seclusion one of the integral part of muslim marriage was introduced.

The Islamic *Hijab* and *Purdah*- seclusion has now been adopted and institutionalized among the Gbagyi women in the study area. The held negative notion by the Gbagyi women in the study area that their husbands adopted *Hijab* and *Purdah*-seclusion to harm, keep them within the four walls of their rooms, restrict their movements and denied them certain rights did not only changed but died down. In addition, the Gbagyi women in the study area are now zealot about Islamic *Hijab* and *Purdah*-seclusion and discovered that the philosophy behind the adoption of the Islamic *Hijab* and *Purdah*- seclusion by their men is solely to protect their chastity, and to bring or put an end to their parading the streets, markets and public places in transparent dress without *Hijab* covering their persons⁶⁷. To this end Allah (SWT) says:

And stay quietly in your houses, and make not dazzling display like that of former times of ignorance; and establish regular prayer, and give Zakat and obey Allah and his Messenger. And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you; ye members of the Family and make you pure and spotless⁶⁸. The prophet (SWA) also says: Oh! Asmau when a girl reached puberty it not proper that anything on her should remain exposed except her face and hands ⁶⁹ Consequently, on the treatment and status of Gbagyi woman after marriage, the Islamic manner of treating their wives has been adopted by the Gbagyi. Instead of the Gbagyi to treat their wives like slaves and forced them to do heavy work on their farms, they now treat them in accordance with the dictates of Islam.

This concurs with the statement of Allah (SWT) that: Men shall take full care of women with the bounties which Allah bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter and with what they may spend out of their possession. And the righteous women are devoutly obedient ones who guard the intimacy Allah has ordained (to be) guarded.⁷⁰ Similarly, the Prophet (SAW) says: The most excellent of you is he who is best in treating his wife.⁷¹ The Gbagyi wives now have gained recognition for Islam have give them equality with men and conferred on them rights which were exclusively enjoined by males. The Gbagyi women at present are not only in garment of dignity, honour and responsibility but the brewing and selling of *Eje* – traditional wine⁷², on other hand, has seized to rule supreme among them.

Conclusion

The spread and entrenchment of Islam among the Gbagyi of Minna Area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria especially through the conversion campaigns led by the premier of the defunct Northern Nigeria in the 60s has transformed the aspect of socio-cultural practices, such as *Murabye*-marriage rites, the elements of cultural practices in Gbagyi marriages such as *Murabye*-Marriage procedures, *Nyigoido*- courtship, *Gbasa*-dowry, polygamy, *Nyigoyabye* - divorce, *Nyigbai*-widowhood and the treatment and status of Gbagyi women in line with Islamic principles. To this end, the organization and conduct of *Murabye* -Marriage rites in line with the customs and traditions of the Gbagyi had collapsed and Muslim marriage procedures, its rules and regulations including observances have been institutionalized and accepted holistically as supreme and life among the Gbagyi of Minna Area of Niger State of Northern Nigeria.

Endnotes

1. Gbagyi-called Gwari in Hausa, Gwali or Goalin English, Gbari in Nupe and Yoruba for more on Gbagyi see C.L. Temple, Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of Northern Nigeria, Frank Cass Ltd., London, 1965, P. 121 and S. Naibi and H. Dalhatu, *The Gwari, Gade, and Koro Tribes*, University Press, Ibadan, 1969, P. 25.
2. N. Fyenu Byanyiko, *Topics on Gbagyi History*, Idakula Press, Jos, 1979, p. 14 also see S. Ibrahim, *TheNupes and their Neighbours from the 14th century*, University press, Ibadan, 1992, P. 12.
3. Minna is a Gbagyi country and can be located in the central Nigeria area for more on history of Minna area see G. Uwaya, 'an orientation lecture titled, 'Minna and its environs,' directed to fresh students at A.T.C Minna on 18th September, 1981 and M. Abubakar, and S. Adamu, 'Minna: from hilltop to modernity', weekly Newline, Minna, 31st July, 1988, P. 10.
4. Byanyiko, *Topics on Gbagyi History*, op.cit, P.18.
5. B. Isah, 'The role of Gbagyi in the Hausa State of Abuja 1807 – 1979', B.A. Project, Department of History, Bayero University Kano, 1983, P. 9.
6. Malam Muhammad bn. Fate alias Dendo was a flag bearer of Shaykh Uthman bn. Foduye who was said have established Bida Emirate in the 19th century.
7. Umaru Nagwamatse was the grandson of Shaykh Uthman bn. Foduye who established Kontagora Emirate in the 19th century. For more on Umaru Nagwamatse and his successors scenario in Gbagyiland see R.A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria 1804-1906*, Longman, London, 1971,p.4.
8. Malam Muazu Sokoto, was an itinerant Islamic Scholar who arrived Gbagyiland of Paigo in 1898. He was appointed as a judge at Bosso and later served as mediator between laborers in the construction of railway lines in the colonial Minna.
9. A. Muazu, 'Tarihin Kafa Garin Minna', *Tauraruwa Newspaper*, Minna, 15th March, 2001, p.8
10. Alhaji Abdul-Azeez Daudu Dangaladiman Minna, Paigo, Minna Niger State, 5th July, 2004.
11. Ibid.
12. M.T. Usman and I.A. Zakari, 'Islamization campaigns in Gbagyi Areas of former Minna Chiefdom 1963 – 1964' *Lapai journal of Central Nigeria History*, Aboki publishers, Makurdi, Vol. 1. No. 1, 2007, P. 113.
13. J. Shewkwo (Dr.), 'Traditions of Gwari,' *African Guardian Magazine*, Lagos, April 10th 1986, P. 47 also see J. Koce, 'Trends in Gbagyi community life (1),' Newline,Minna, 27th June, 1990. P. 18.
14. Byanyiko, *Topics on Gbagyi History*, op.cit, P.18.
15. A. Iyase, 'Gwari: A people, A culture', *The Democrat Weekly,Kaduna*, 8th October, 1994, P. 20.
16. Byanyiko, *Topics on Gbagyi History*, op.cit., P.15
17. Malam Musa Bazhe, Paigo, Minna, Niger State, 12th April, 2004

18. Shekwo (Dr.), 'Traditions of Gwari', op.cit, P.48
19. . Isah, 'The role of the Gbagyi in the Hausa State of Abuja 1807 – 1979,' op. cit., P. 10.
20. Malam Wubwa Dnaje, Paigo, Minna, Niger State, 5th February, 2004
21. B. Galadima, *Gbagyi As A Native*, Famous Publishers, Minna, 2000, P.9
22. Malam Maku Kafa, Kuta, Minna, Niger State 15th April, 2005
23. Shekwo (Dr.), 'Traditions of Gwari' op.cit., P.47.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. Malam Wumenze Shabwa, Sayako, Minna, Niger State, 18th June, 2003
27. Malam Shaba Kwatu, Gbaiganu, Minna, Niger State, 25th July, 2004
28. Malam Mindayi Shagabe, Maikunkele, Minna, Niger State, 10th May, 2005
29. Galadima, *Gbagyi as a Native*, op.cit., P.22
30. A.M. Gada and I.A. Zakari, 'Toward Understanding the influence of Islam on the Socio-Cultural ceremonies amongst the Gbagyi in Minna and its Environs in the 20th Century', *AL-NAHDAH Journal of Islamic Heritage*, Vol.6, Nos. 1 and 2, centre for Islamic Studies, UDUS, 2009, p. 36.
31. Naibi and Hassan, *The Gwari, Gade, and Koro Tribes*, op.cit., P.23
32. Y.Y. Sada, Gbagyiza: History and Culture of the Gbagyi Speaking People, Federal Capital Territory Council of Arts and Culture, Garki Abuja, 1996, PP. 7 – 9
33. Malam Maku Baje Shagabe, Paigo, Minna, Niger State, 10th October, 2003
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. Malam Kuregbe Shazhi, Kuta, Minna, Niger State, 5th May, 2003
38. Malam Lani Ghani, Dangunu, Minna, Niger State, 6th October, 2003
39. *Ibid.*
40. Malam Musa Karebure Ndagbezhi, Paigo, Minna, Niger State, 9th January, 2003
41. *Ibid.*
42. Malam Najenu Shemu, Kurmin Gurmana, Minna, Niger State, 5th February, 2004
43. Sada, Gbagyiza: History and Culture of the Gbagyi Speaking People, op.cit., P.22
44. Malam Maku Shaba Butu, Paigo, Minna, Niger State, 17th August, 2003
45. *Ibid.*
46. Gada and Zakari, op.cit., p.20
47. The conversion campaigns was launched in the Northern region of Nigeria including Gbagyiland by Sir Ahmadu Bello the Sardauna of Sokoto in the early 60's. For more on Sardauna's Conversion Campaigns among the Gbagyi of Minna Area of Niger State, See I.A. Zakari, 'SirAhmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto's Conversion campaigns and spread of Islam among Gbagyi people in Minna Chiefdom', M.A. Dissertation, Department of Islamic Stidies, Usmanu Danfodiyo, University, Sokoto, 2006. PP. 53 – 60
48. Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto was the premier of Northern Region of Nigeria October, 1954 – 15th January, 1966. He was assassinated during the first military coup of 1966. For more on Sardauna's biograghy, see J.N. Paden, *Ahmadu Bello, The Sardauna of Sokoto Values and Leadership in Nigeria*, Alhuda Huda Press, Zaria, 1986, PP. 67 – 100 and also see 'The Life and Time of Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto', *Nigeria vanguard*, Lagos, 3rd July 1986, P. 8.
49. *Qur'an*59:7
50. Malam Sadiq Musa, ChanChaga, Minna, Niger State 5th, March, 2003
51. Al-NawawiMuhyiddin Abuz –Zakariyya, *Matn al-arbaun al-Nawawiyya, fi al-Ahadith al-Sahiha al-Nawawiyyah*, Matba'at al-Wataniyin, Kano, n.d., p.56.
52. Mallama Aisha Musa, Gwada, Minna, Niger State, 6th January, 2004
53. *Qur'an* 4:25
54. M.Muhsin Khan(translate), *Muhammad Ibn Ismail Bukhari, Sahih UI-Bukhari*, Dar-Arabia, Beirut, vol.2., n.n., 1985, p.52.

55. A.B Sulayman, 'Marriage in Shariah Law', B.A. Project, Department of Law, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1978, P.48.
56. Alhaji Musa Sulaiman, Erana, Minna, Niger State, 5th May, 2003
57. *Qur'an* 4:3.
58. M.F. Abd al-Baqi (ed.) , Al-Muwatta Imam Malik, Kitab Al-Sha'b, Cairo, 1951, p.25.
59. *Qur'an* 4:35.
60. Mallama Aisha Musa, Gwada, Minna, Niger State, 6th January, 2004
61. *Qur'an* 4:128.
62. Malam Abubakar Shehu, Gbasha, Minna, Niger State. 16th February, 2005
63. *Qur'an* 2:228.
64. A.B. Mahmud, Marriage Under Islamic Law, Hamdan Express Publishers, Zaria, 1981, p.25
65. *Qur'an* 2:234
66. Malam Musa Abdullahi, Gwada, Minna, Niger State, 4th March, 2004
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Qur'an* 33:33
69. M.T. Abdul Salam, 'What do you need to know about Hijab', *New Nigerian Newspaper*, Zaria, 20th March, 1981, p.17.
70. *Qur'an* 4:34
71. Mahmud, *Marriage Under Islamic Law*, op. cit., p.30.
72. Mallama Aisha Musa, Gwada, Minna, Niger State, 6th January, 2004

References

- Abubakar, M and Adamu,S. 'Minna: from Hilltop to Modernity', Minna: *Weekly Newslines*, 1988
- Abdul-Albaqi, M.F. (ed), *Al-Mutwatta Imam Malik kitab al-sha'b, cairo*: 1951
- Abdul-Salam, M.T. 'What do you need to know about Hijab', Zaria: *New Nigerian Newspaper*, 1981
- Al- Nawawi, M.A.Z. *Matn Arbaun Al-Nawawiyya fi Al-Ahadith Al-Sahihah Al-Nawawiyyah* Kano: nd
- Adeleye, R.A. *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, 1804-1906*, London: Longman, 1971.
- Banyiko, F.N. *Topics on Gbagyi History*, Jos: Idakula, 1979.
- Gada, A.M. and Zakari, I.A. 'Toward understanding the influence of Islam on the socio-cultural ceremonies amongst the Gbagyi in Minna and its Environs in the 20th Century', Sokoto: Center for Islamic Studies, UDUS, 2009.
- Galadima, B. *Gbagyi as a Native*, Minna: Famous Publishers, 2000
- Ibrahim, S. *The Nupes and their Neighbors from the 14th century*, Ibadan: University Press, 1992.
- Isah, B. 'The role of the Gbagyi in Hausa State of Abuja 1807-1979,' B.A Project, Kano: Bayero University, 1983.
- Iyase, A. 'Trends in Gbagyi community life (I)', Minna: *Newslines*, 1990.
- Muazu, A. 'Tarihin Kafa Garin Minna', Minna: *TauraruwaNewspaper*, 2001
- Mahmud, A.B. Marriage Under Islamic Law, Zaria: Hamdan Express, 1981.
- Muhsin, M.K. (translate), *Muhammad Ibn Ismail Bukhari Sahis ul-Bukhari*, Dar Arabia: 1985.
- Naibi, S. and Dallatu, H. *The Gwari, Gade and Koro Tribes*, Ibadan: University Press, 1969
- Paden, N. *Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto Values and Leadership in Nigeria*, Zaria: Al-huda Huda Press, 1986.
- Qur'an* 2: 228
- Qur'an* 2: 234
- Qur'an* 33: 33
- Qur'an* 4: 3
- Qur'an* 4: 25
- Qur'an* 4: 34
- Qur'an* 4: 35
- Qur'an* 4:128
- Qur'an* 59: 7
- Sada, Y. Y. *Gbagyiza: History and Culture of Gbagyi Speaking People*, Garki Abuja: Federal Capital Territory, 1996.
- Shekwo, J. (Dr), 'Traditions of Gwari', Lagos: *Guardian Magazine*, 1986
- Temple, C. L. *Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of Northern Nigeria*, London: Frank Cass Ltd, 1965

- 'The Life and Time of Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sarkauna of Sokoto', Lagos: *Nigerian Vanguard*, 1986
- Usman, M.T. and Zakari, I.A. 'Islamization Campaign in Gbagyi Areas of Former Minna Chiefdom, 1963-64', *Lapai Journal of Central Nigerian History*, Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2007.
- Uwaya, G. 'Minna and its Environs' an Orientation Lecture Directed to Fresh Students, Minna: Advanced Teachers College, 1981
- Zakari, I.A. 'Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sarkauna of Sokoto's Conversion Campaign and Spread of Islam among the Gbagyi People in Minna Chiefdom', M.A. Dissertation, Sokoto: Usmanu Danfodiyo university, 2006

Interviews

- Interview with Alhaji Abdul-Azeez Daudu (Dan Galadiman Minna) at Paigo, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 5th July 2004.
- Interview with Malam Abubakar Shehu (Islamic scholar) at Sayako, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 16th February, 2005.
- Interview with Malam Bala Shewo (Farmer) at Gwalo Nuwabuyi, Kaffin-Koro, Paigo Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 15th May, 2003
- Interview with Malam Lani Ghani (*Gbenu* cultist) at Dangunu, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 6th October, 2003
- Interview with Malam Maku Baje Shagabe (Civil Servant) at Paigo, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 10th October 2003.
- Interview with Maku Kafa (Priest) at Kuta, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 15th April, 2005.
- Interview with Malam Maku Shaba Butu (butcher) at Butu, Paigo, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 17th August, 2003.
- Interview with Malam Mindayi Shagabe (comedian) at Maikunkele, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 10th May, 2005.
- Interview with Malam Musa Abdullahi (Islamic Scholar) at Gwada, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 4th March, 2004.
- Interview with Malam Musa Bazhe (Civil Servant) at Paigo, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 12th April, 2004.
- Interview with Malam Musa Karebure (*Ndagbezhi*) at Paigo, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 9th January, 2003
- Interview with Malam Musa Sulayman (Islamic Scholar) at Erana, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 5th May, 2003.
- Interview with Malam Najenu Shemu (farmer) at Kurmin Gurmana, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 5th February, 2004.
- Interview with Malam Sadiq Musa (Islamic Scholar) at Chanchaga, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 5th March, 2003
- Interview with Malam Shaba Kwatu (Civil Servant) at Gbaiganu, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 25th July, 2004
- Interview with Malam Wubwa Dnaje (*Gbenu* musician) at Paigo, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 5th February, 2004.
- Interview with Malam Wumenze Shabwa (*Akakayi* Comedian) Sayako, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 18th June, 2003
- Interview with Mallama Aisha Musa (House Wife) at Gwada, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria 6th January, 2004.