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# 2

## **Taxonomy of Sound in Islamic Religious Practice among the Ansar-ud-Deen Society of Nigeria**

*Yekini-Ajenifuja, Isaac, PhD*

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### **Abstract**

*The use of sound in religious practices of the Ansar-ud-Deen Society and most other Islamic organizations in Nigeria is generally seen as musical and non-musical activities based purely on religious inclination and philosophies. Unlike other Islamic organizations, the Ansar-ud-Deen overwhelmingly embraces the use of sound in its religious practices. This paper examines major religious activities of the Ansar-ud-Deen of Southwest Nigeria, analyzes and classifies sounds used in their religious practices, relying on descriptive and musicological analyses, and employing library study, observational techniques and interviews to elicit data. The paper concludes that sounds as employed in the liturgy and other religious practices are very creative and should be “open” for further use.*

*Keywords:* Islamic religion, liturgy, prayer, asalatu, sound

### **Introduction**

THE ADVENT OF ISLAM IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA BROUGHT CHANGES IN THE lives of the people. The changes influenced religious, cultural and social life style of the people. Within the sphere of religion, the concept of worship between Muslims and other religious groups may be different however, all religious groups share the same concepts on sound as being central and put to similar use in communications with their adherents. Every religion in the world has sounds employed as means of communication in worship respectively, however, there are differences in the mode, style, form and practice. The concept, belief and philosophy of each religion determines the use of sounds in its worship thus creating distinctions among religions. It is also pertinent to note that the use of sound in religion is considered as integral and marginal. There are

terminologies that are generally used by other religions that are unacceptable in Islamic religion. This paper investigates the various sounds use in the religious worship of the Ansar-ud-Deen Society of Nigeria. It further classified “these” sounds into musicological terminologies without necessarily undermining the religion’s belief and philosophy. The choice of Ansar-ud-Deen as a case study for this investigation is borne out of the fact that the Islamic movement is one of the oldest in Southwest that liberally and extensively use sound more than others.

### **Ansar-ud-Deen of Nigeria**

Ansar is the name of a group of philanthropists in Saudi Arabia known for their generosity toward the propagation of Islam globally. The name was later adopted by Yoruba Muslims and was coined as Ansar-ud-Deen Society of Nigeria in 1923. The society was formed to practice and propagate Islam within and outside Yoruba communities through charity. The society gained wide acceptance and experienced rapid expansion from its first secretariat at Alakoro in Lagos Island to Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, Ekiti, Abuja and Northern states. Its organizational structure is widely spread among its subgroups in order to allow for wide input in decisionmaking and to regularly review all aspects of its activities. The subgroups of the society include National Council, State Council, Branch, Division, Women Advisory Committee and Youth Association. The society is known for its religious and socioreligious activities. Its religious practice is all-encompassing, embracing all the tenets of Islam. Socioreligious activities include building mosques, schools, organizing lectures and awards to honour and encourage members, female empowerment, among others. The use of chorus singing in its socioreligious activities has contributed immensely to the growth of the society and has helped in converting and sustaining its converts.

### **Liturgy**

Yekini-Ajenifuja (2010) stresses that “Muslims worldwide share the same form of liturgical worship, though with little or no modification.” Liturgy in Islamic worship is in two forms namely pure liturgy (*salat*) and socioreligious liturgy attached to ceremonies. Saqib (nd) and Daramola, (2005) report that ‘the pure liturgy worship’ is *salat* (prayer) observed in daily prayer, *jumat* prayer, *id-u-fitre*, *id-ul-adha* and *id-mid-unabi*, among others. This form of liturgy is observed in the full sense of solemnization and good decorum. The prayer could be performed individually or congregationally, though, it is believed that congregational prayer is more profitable (*sunnah*).

The daily *salat* prayers are divided into five namely, *subh/fajr*, *zuhr*, *asr*, *maghrib* and *isha*. The prayers employ various sounds distinctly different from all other types used during other liturgy. The liturgical prayers attached to socioreligious ceremonies and festivals include *nikah* (marriage), *janazah* (funeral), *turban* (ordination), *wolimoh* (graduation). The above are the various religious activities that involved the use of sound in its practice.

## **Islamic Belief about Classification of Sound**

The classification of sound in Islamic religion is controversial when considered through the lens of general view. The controversy is based on religious belief on the use of the word 'music' for the classification of its sound. The word is seen as an estranged word that should not be used to describe its religious setting because of what is considered as music. It is instructive to note that Islamic liturgy is devoid of music and the sound used cannot be admitted as music. Shiloah (1995) in Yekini-Ajenifuja, (2010) expressed that 'the attitude towards music has always been ambivalent as expressed in a series of contradictory feelings and concept predilections, mistrust and devilish; exalting disruptive admissible – prohibition'. It is generally believed that the word music is considered to be powerful force that intoxicates the mind and is capable of creating extreme excitements. It is also viewed as instrument of the devil that is capable of making someone to lose control of reasoning and go against his or her wish uncontrollably. Basically, the Qu'ran did not discuss the issue of music and thereby allowed followers to moderate themselves. Opeloye (1998) expressed that 'the Islamic belief and worship . . . have to with man's relationship with God'. Consequently, worship should be done without distraction (music). Vidal (1977) in Yekini-Ajenifuja, (2010) corroborated that 'the official attitude of Islamic religious leaders to music has always been negative'. The sound used in the religious worship is preferably identified in Islamic term rather than the word music. Renard (2005) remarked that 'Muslim worship is uniquely centered on the word of God to such an extent the spoken or recited word is the only sound associated with ritual prayers'. Sadie (1998) stressed that ' . . . no Islamic language has ever described the reading of the Koran, Hymn singing or even dervish dance as *musiqi* (music) but has used special designations in order to avoid the secular implication of the word'.

It is imperative to note that the word music is not totally abolished among the Muslims especially the Yoruba Muslims who have antecedent of strong musical background. The socioreligious activities of the Muslims are acclaimed musical activities. Olukoju (1987) remarked that music making was not part of Islamic worship but its uses for socioreligious activities were drawn from the Yoruba traditional institution. Euba (1988) buttresses that music is comprehensively explored outside mosque ceremonies.

## **Classification of Sound**

Sounds employed in the religious activities of Islamic Religion are classified as follows:

- A. Liturgical sound:
  - i. *handasah al sawt*
  - a. *qira'ah* (quran chanting)
  - b. *adhan* and *iqamat* (call to prayer)
  - c. *madih* (eulogy)
  - d. *dhirk* (hymn)

- B. Socioreligious sounds:
  - i. *asalatu* (religious songs)
  - ii. *were* (wakening songs)
- C. Musical Instruments
  - i. Drum

## Liturgy

Liturgy as earlier mentioned, is a sacred worship that is observed in solemnities. It is acknowledged as a means of communication to the Almighty God, therefore, much reverence is given to its practice. Sounds used in the liturgical worship are basically classified as *handasah al-sawt* in order to avoid the use the word music which is considered secular.

### *Handasah al-sawt*

*Handasah al-sawt* is an Arabic expression which refers to artistic combination of tones and rhythms within Islamic culture. *Handasah al-sawt* was coined to find appropriate word for sound used in the context of Islamic liturgical worship.

*Handasah al-sawt* is used in the following status:

- a. *qira'ah* (Quran chanting)
- b. *adhan* and *iqamat* (call to prayer)
- c. *madih* (eulogy)
- d. *dhirk* (hymn)

## Quran chanting

Quran, the holy book of Islam, is regarded as the original source from which all ordinances, principles, guidance and information about Islam are written. It is obligatory for Muslims to read and memorise all or parts of the Quran for the purpose of prayers. The Quran could be read or chanted but is preferable to be chanted according to the *tajwid* (rule of pronunciation, production and articulation in the correct manner)

Quran 73:4 state that 'or a little more, recites the Quran in slow measured rhythmic tones'. Consequently, the chanting of the Quran followed varying significant patterns which makes it subtle and creates sub conscious role in the readers and listeners. In the salat prayer the chanting of the Quran following the rule of *tajwid* include *dva* and *Surah Fatihah* among others.

Text

*Alhamdulilahirabil al amen*

*Ar Rah manir Raheem Maliki yaw middeen*

*Iyyakanabudu waiyyaka nastaeen.*

*Ihdinas siratal mustaqim*

*siratal lad heena an'amta alayhim*

*Ghayrim agh dubi alayhim walad daleen. Ameen.*

## Surah Fathah

The musical notation is in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The lyrics are as follows:

8 Alham du lil- labi rab- bil\_ al - a mehn\_ Ar Rah man ir- Ra heem. Ma - li ki yaw

15 mid- deen. Iyya - ka na budu nas - tsa 'een. lh - di-nas si - ra-tal mu-sta- qeem\_

si - ra - tal lad heena an-am-ta a-lay - him Ghayri magh- du - bi a-lay - him wa-lad da - i ee - n. A - meen.

Source: Yekini-Ajenifuja (2010)

## Analysis

The above recitative is in the form of spoken words in the structure of a chant. Its rhythmic pattern is exploitative while the tone is short in range and repetitive. It is usually chanted in unison but, occasionally, it is performed in two or more parts counterpoint: the male cleric who leads the chant usually starts with a low or mid-low voice while high voices available add ostinato parts at high range. However, the parts system is usually not preplanned but accidental. The sonority of the chanting inspires the parts system.

### *Adhan* (call to prayer)

*Adhan* is a prelude to *salat* prayers and it is otherwise known as call to prayer. *Adhan* is chanted at every *salat* prayer to announce congregational prayer. The chanter of the *adhan*, usually a male, is called *mu'adhan*. The *mu'adhan* could be any member of the congregation that is knowledgeable of what to recite and possessing loud voice capable of reaching people on the street. To recite the *adhan*, the *mu'adhan* must face the Kabah in Mecca and his index fingers must be in his ears while he recites in a loud voice. When he says *Hayya alas salah*, he turns to the right, and when he recites *Hayya alas salah*, he turns his faces to the left.

#### Text

*Allah akbar, Allah akbar*

*Allah akbar, Allah akbar*

*Ash haduan la ilahilahlah*

*Ash haduan la ilahilahlah*

*Ash haduan la Muhammadar Raullullah*

*Ash haduan la Muhammadar Raullullah*

*Hayya alas salah, Hayya alas salah*

*Hayya alas salah, Hayya alas salah*

*Allah akbar, Allah akbar*

*La ilaha illah lah*

## ADHAN

Traditional

9

17

25

33

41

Source: Yekini-Ajenifija (2010)

### *Iqamat (call to prayer II)*

This is the second call to prayer or call to start congregation prayer. It is an alert by the *ma'adin* to the congregation to rise up and start the congregational prayer. It could be recited by the person who made the first call (*adhan*) or another person who has the knowledge of what to recite. *Iqamat* is recited standing and in a position the congregation can join the *ma'adin* to form a roll for the prayer.

#### Text

*Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar*

*Ash hadu an-la-Mahummadar Rasulullah*

*Hayya 'alas salah, Hayya 'alal salah*

*Qadqamatissalah, Qadqamatissalah*

*Allah akbar, Allah akbar*

*La ilaha illah la*

Source: Yekini-Ajenifiya (2010)

### ***Madih (eulogy)***

*Madih* refers to as eulogy is strictly use for the praise of Prophet Muhammad. Its theme is based on the attribute of his philosophy, judgment, sociology, business entrepreneurship, leadership model, trust, transparency and honesty among others. Apparently, it is one of old Arabian traditions in the pre-Islamic era but adopted only for the praise of the Prophet. It is further used by the Ansar-ud-Deen as gesture to encourage good Islamic manners, good conduct, morals among Muslims faithful in order to keep and sustain high standard. It is often used at religious gatherings such as *khutuba* (religious talk) *salat*, and other appropriate gatherings. The poetry is usually chanted in chorus form or in call and response.

### ***Dhikr (hymn)***

*Dhikr* is a chant to praise and acknowledge Allah. The theme is taken from the Qur'an but, it is self-composed and chanted according to anaasheed Islaamiyyah. *Dhikr* is structured like the hymn reminiscence of the early church chant (Daramola 2005). It is performed in free rhythm in ad-lib and in a manner close to the Qui'rah, which makes it almost inseparable except that its pitch contour is more undulating with lots of embellishment. The poetry is usually chanted in chorus form or in call and response.

Text

*Marhabanbikunmarhaban*

*Marhabanbikunmarhaban*

*Aha lanwasahalan*

*Marhabanbikunmarhaban*

*Eki won,*

*Marhabanbikunmarhaban*

Marhaban bikum

6

9

10

11

Source: Yekini-Ajenifuja (2010)

### **Asalatu (worship song)**

The word *asalatu* was derived from *as-salat* (*ad-du'a*), meaning to seek Allah's favor and praise of Allah (Adekola, 1995). *Asalatu* is used in the socioreligious activities of the Ansar-ud-Deen society and is one of the major identities associated with the society. *Asalatu* chanting originated from the prominent *dhikr* chanting before experiencing language barrier among the people. *Dhikr* was chanted in Arabic language but because of the level of illiteracy in the use of Arabic language, thereafter *asalatu* chanting emerged among the women to increase their level of participation in the practice. It also became an avenue for the emancipation of women in the religious practice. The chant which is a derivation of the *dhikr* and fused with Yoruba musical performance practice has grown tremendously. Several songs where tunes from the *dhikr* are set into Yoruba text or a part of the *dhikr* fused with Yoruba text exists. Some Yoruba cultural tunes are also set into religious text. *Asalatu* songs have evolved and developed further into Islamic influenced genres such as *waka*, *dadakuada* and *senwele*, among others (Adeola 1997; Biodun, 2000; Daramola, 2005).

### **Were**

The socioreligious activities of Muslims include activities during Ramadan festivals. Apart from the general liturgical worship known to all Muslims the world over, Yoruba Muslims also created its musical expression to expand the list of Islamic/Islamized music globally. One of the activities required by Muslims is the observance of sari that precedes fasting. Independent musical groups usually

engage in light musical performances to awaken Muslims for the early morning food. At its inception, it was to alert Muslims but gradually emerged to become a music genre. The songs used in these performances are composed in the Yoruba cultural context, though, sometimes, Arabic texts are infused. The instruments use includes drum, *sekere* and *agogo*, among others.

## **Musical Instruments**

The use of musical instruments in Islamic religion is marginal. It is not considered very important compared to the vocal renditions. Musical instruments are used as simple accompaniment in the socioreligious activities of Muslims while they are totally forbidden in the liturgy. Drum is the only officially certified musical instrument for the socioreligious activities. The *asalatu* women group performs their socioreligious activities with or without the drums. However, *were* groups' performances are often with the drum and other light percussions. This group depends heavily on percussion because of their concept and motive. Arguably, the groups' vocal renditions without percussion may render their motive irrelevant. In recent time, more musical instruments are now being introduced among the various musical groups particularly for socioreligious activities only. Duff drums are generally considered Islamic drums for socioreligious activities but where such drums cannot be found local drums like *dundun* drum and *sakara*, among others, are employed.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has identified and examined the various sounds used in Islamic religion using Ansar-ud-Deen Society of Nigeria as a case study. This paper has classified the sounds into two namely, Liturgical and socioreligious sounds respectively. The liturgical sounds are strict and are confined to salat prayer only. While the socioreligious sounds are general and flexible. The use of musical instruments is restricted to drums though strictly confined to socioreligious activities and forbidden in the liturgical worship. The understanding of this classification will enhance an appropriate use of the sound and also open up the socioreligious sound for more creative exploration.

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