

DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

# UNIVERSITY OF GHANA—LEGON

THE PHENOMENON OF *BASES* IN GHANAIAN MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

IN ACCRA

BY

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INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

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### DECLARATION

I, Ali Baba Mohammed, do hereby declare that this thesis is the true result of the data that I personally collected and analyzed. I have duly acknowledged and cited all the written and oral sources that I consulted in the course of the research. I therefore hold myself accountable for errors, misrepresentations and misinterpretations found in this thesis.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Dr. Ibrahim Hussein, Hajj Mumuni Sulemana (Afa Sulley) and Sheikh Seebaway Zakaria whose contributions in my academic journey has been phenomenal.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I hereby express my deepest thanks and gratitude to the Most High for bringing me this far. I am grateful to my mother (Hajia Rabiatu) and wife (Hajia Adiza) for their love, support and constant prayer for me in my academic journey. I acknowledge and appreciate the diverse support I received from my lecturers especially Dr. Rabiatu Ammah.

I am particularly indebted and grateful to my supervisors, Dr. Cosmas Ebo Sarbah and Hajj Mumuni Sulemana for their encouragement, tolerance and patience in going through the work and their useful criticisms and suggestions.

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My profound gratitude goes to my brothers and colleagues, Imam Mohammed Mujib and Imam Abdul Rahman Alhassan. I am also grateful to all respondents in this study, especially the *Bases*.

## ABSTRACT

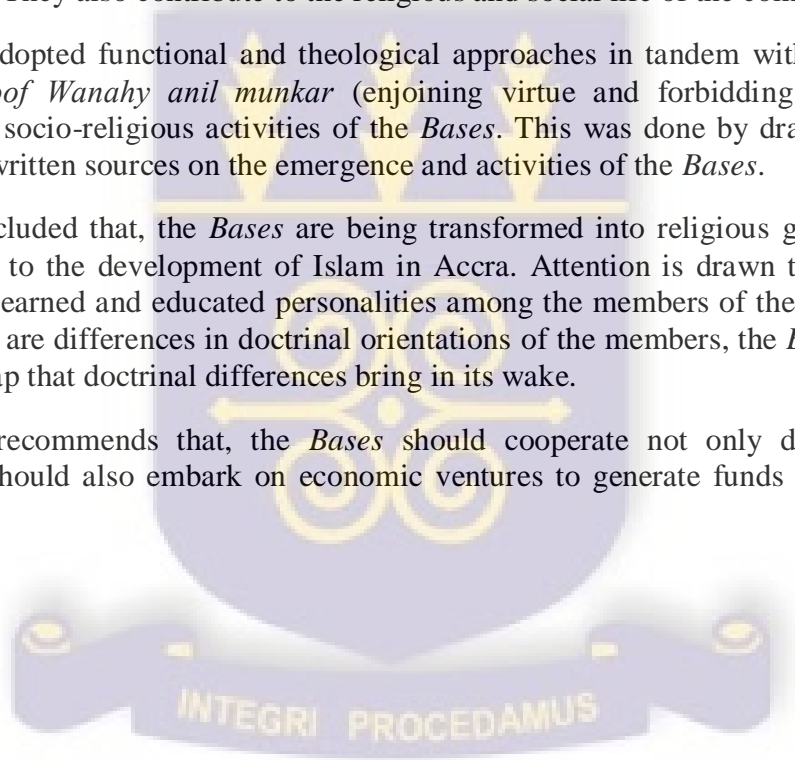
Many people including some scholars are of the view that *Bases* are places of negative ideas and attitudes. They argue further that *Bases* increase the level of crime in the community and that; they also encourage laziness and discourage education. These points of view criminalise the phenomenon of *Bases* and seek their abolition.

On the other hand, some people think that *Bases* contribute in one way or the other to the security of the community. They serve as mouth pieces for the youth of various communities. Additionally they give the people a sense of identity and a feeling of belongingness. They also contribute to the religious and social life of the community.

The research adopted functional and theological approaches in tandem with the theory of *amr bil ma'roof Wanahy anil munkar* (enjoining virtue and forbidding indecency) to investigate the socio-religious activities of the *Bases*. This was done by drawing materials from oral and written sources on the emergence and activities of the *Bases*.

The study concluded that, the *Bases* are being transformed into religious groups and they also contribute to the development of Islam in Accra. Attention is drawn to the fact that, there are well learned and educated personalities among the members of the various *Bases*. Although there are differences in doctrinal orientations of the members, the *Bases* are trying to bridge the gap that doctrinal differences bring in its wake.

The research recommends that, the *Bases* should cooperate not only during religious activities but should also embark on economic ventures to generate funds to sustain their activities.



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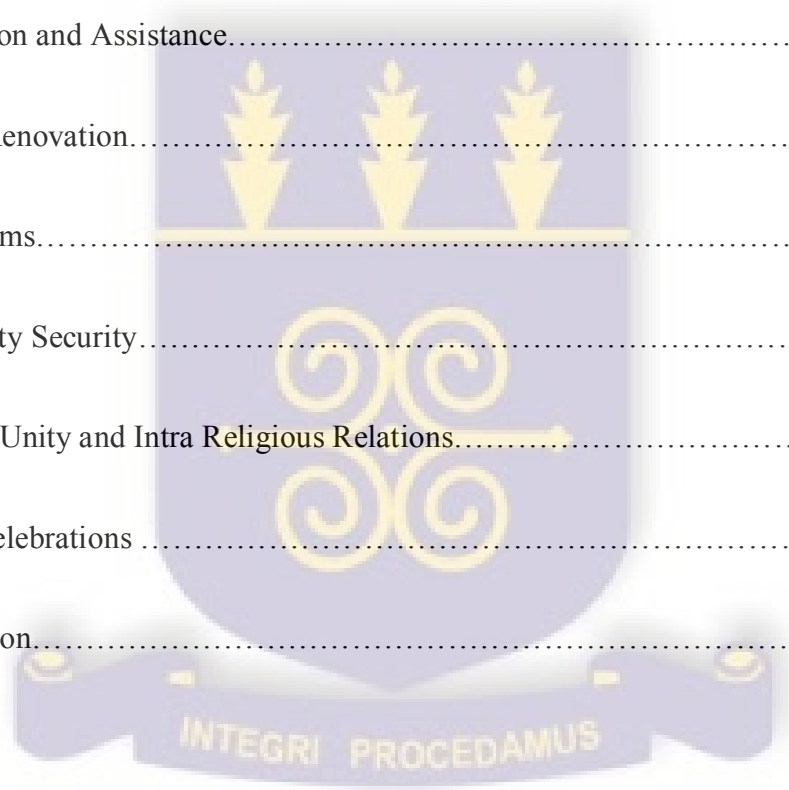
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## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Almighty Allah (Q3: 110) describes Muslims as the best *Ummah* (community) among human kind on the basis that they promote righteousness and discourage evil in the society. It is in light of this that the Quran (5: 2) enjoins Muslims to help one another in virtue and righteousness but not in sin and transgression. One can deduce from these verses that Muslims are encouraged to form constructive groups or partner one another to work in the collective interest of the community. Therefore, from the *Zongo*<sup>1</sup> perspective, the establishment of “*Bases*” is perceived as a calling for cooperation among the Muslim youth.

In this study, the term ‘*Base*’ is used to designate a cell or caucus of Muslims in a selected Muslim community to pursue certain set objectives. Members of a particular *Base* are more often than not the indigenes or residents of that community though some members may also come from outside the community. Some *Bases* exhibit certain characteristics and attitudes which send conflicting signals to the other members of the community accounting for the varied opinions on the phenomenon.

The phenomenon of *Bases* in *Zongo* communities including Accra-New Town, Nima and Mamobi is a common one and is on the ascendancy. A single community can be home to

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<sup>1</sup> Zongo means is a Muslim dominated settlement or quarters

three or more *Bases*, depending on the demography of the people. The youth seem to be the majority and the active members of these *Bases*.

Somewhere around 1989 to 1994, the defunct Ghana Muslim Youth Movement under the leadership of Sheikh Mahmud Geddel, attempted to reorganize the *Base* and change the orientation of its activities into a religious one. Initially, it made headway in Accra New town as most *Bases* subscribed to his vision but failed in Mamobi and Nima.<sup>2</sup> This was because, most of the *Bases* in Accra New Town were used to holding formal meetings and also had a good number of literates in their midst. Ever since, the focus of the *Bases* gradually began to shift in favour of religious orientation.

Some opinion leaders and scholars in Ghana are of the view that *Bases* promote negative attitudes and conduct in the Muslim community. They argue further that, activities at the *Bases* increase the level of crime in these communities and also encourage laziness and discourage the pursuit of education. For instance, Rabiātu Ammah is of the conviction that *Bases* seem to be one of the factors that breed poverty in Muslim communities.<sup>3</sup> These views criminalize the phenomenon and seek their abolition in Muslim communities.

On the contrary, other opinion leaders and scholars, think that *Bases* contribute in one way or the other to the security of the community. They serve as mouthpieces for the youth of *Zongo* communities. Additionally, they give the people a sense of identity and a feeling of belongingness. They also contribute to the religious and social life of the community. This

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<sup>2</sup> Zakari Yakubu, speaking during the climax of the Ramadan Tafsir Lectures at the Wawa Road Base at Accra New Town, 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2014

<sup>3</sup> Rabiātu Ammah, "Islam and Poverty Reduction Strategies: Attempts at Dealing with Poverty in the Ghanaian Muslim Community", *Ghana Bulletin of Theology*, Volume 2,( July 2007), 14

is done by organizing symposia for the education of the community on Islamic issues and they also organize the *Maulid Nabi* (Birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W). Some *Bases* also organize ‘evening classes’ in Islamic studies for the community.

Attention is normally drawn to the fact that there are well learned and educated personalities amongst the members of various *Bases*. For instance Tawfiq Jamal Baba argues that currently, there is a healthy competition in the pursuit of knowledge and religiosity among various *Bases*.<sup>4</sup> From the early 2000s, religious activities have been the pivot of most *Bases*. It is against this background that, the study seeks to investigate the phenomenon closely since the orientation of the various *Bases* has shifted from sociological to religious.

## **1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

It is an emerging reality in contemporary times that, *Bases* are being transformed into religious groups and for that matter any *Base* that does not fall in line with this transformation risks irrelevance in the scheme of *Zongo* youth affairs. There is a paradigm shift as well as cooperation and collaboration among various *Bases* in inculcating positive attitudes and conduct among their members. In spite of this paradigm shift, some people still relegate the religious contributions of these *Bases* to the background. It is in light of this development that the current research deems it necessary to closely examine the socio-

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<sup>4</sup> Ali Baba Mohammed, “The Phenomenon of Bases and its Impact in Muslim Communities: A case study of Accra New Town”, A Long essay submitted to the Religious Studies Department, Islamic University College, 2012

religious activities of these Muslim cells and their impact in the development of Islam in Accra.

## **1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION**

What are the socio-religious activities of the *Bases*?

## **1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

This thesis is designed to:

- Trace the origins of the phenomenon of *Bases*
- Highlight the composition of its membership
- Examine the foundation of their activities
- Assess their contribution to the development of Islam in Accra

## **1.4 SCOPE AND SAMPLE OF THE STUDY**

Since the phenomenon of *Bases* is on the ascendancy, the scope of the study included the genesis, religious activities and their relationship with the communities. This enabled the researcher to appreciate the phenomenon. Geographically, the study is limited to Accra New Town, Nima and Mamobi. These areas were chosen because they deeply manifest the

phenomenon and hence present a true picture of *Bases* in Accra. Data were collected from forty five respondents.

Purposive sampling method was employed in order to give an equal representation to the respondents. Respondents were selected based on their knowledge of the issues being investigated and thus, helped the researcher to obtain accurate representative views of the respondents.

## **1.5 METHODOLOGY**

A case study research design was adopted for this study. Case study research design refers to an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within a real- life context; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the study adopted multiple approaches such as the theological and the functional approaches.

## **1.6 THE THEOLOGICAL APPROACH**

The theological approach is concerned with God or transcendence, doctrines and activities arising from faith and interpreting faith. Scholars such as Seyyed Hossein and Huston Smith contend that, although religions are externally different, they converge at the level of

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<sup>5</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, (California: Sage Publications,1984),23

spirituality.<sup>6</sup> For instance, David Ford intimates that even though the term theology has no one Arabic equivalent, other Islamic concepts such as *kalam* (scholastic theology) performs the functions of theology in the sense that it applies to different forms of scholarly reasoning in interpreting the scripture.<sup>7</sup> This approach was used to analyse in chapter four, the religious activities of the *Bases*. Suffice to mention that, the theological approach does not involve only reading the scriptures but also studying them and analysing implications and nuances while raising critical questions about doctrines.

## 1.7 THE FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

Functional approach is based on the assumption that society is made up of integrated parts, all of which seek to avoid conflict because any change in one part affects the other parts. Thus, consensus on common values and norms is the tool for promoting stability in society.<sup>8</sup> This approach claims that the primary function of religion is the creation, reinforcement and maintenance of social solidarity and social control.<sup>9</sup> Proponents of the functional approach include, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Pearson and Bryann Wilson. According to Wilson, the function of religion is divided into the manifest and latent. The manifest function of religion, in his view, is to offer eternal salvation to its adherents. Through rituals such as prayers and ethical behaviour, the religious person or community communes with his God or gods, and

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<sup>6</sup> Frank whaling, 'Theological Approaches', in *Approaches to the Study of Religions*, ed by Peter Connolly, (London: continuum, 1999),239

<sup>7</sup> David F. Ford, 'Theology' in the *Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed by John R. Hinnells, (New York: Routledge, 2005),69

<sup>8</sup> Lisa J. McIntyre, *The Practical Skeptic: Core Concepts in Sociology*,( London: Mayfield Publishing Company,1999), 38

<sup>9</sup> Michael Hughes et al. *Sociology: The Core*, (New York: McGraw Hill,2002),368

thus, attains salvation. The manifest function of religion therefore, enables the person or community to deal with the unexplained, such as extraterrestrial life.

The latent function of religion, on the other hand, is to provide personal and spiritual empowerment of its adherents or community. This is achieved with the help of the spirit that is always at work in the believer's life to enable him to attain bodily and material well-being.<sup>10</sup>

This approach was adopted for the study because it helped the researcher to appreciate the metamorphosis of the *Bases* into religious groups. Also, the theory was adopted for the research based on the assumption that, the diversion of the various groups into the religious lane has direct link with morality and hence, social orderliness.

## **1.8 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

The study employed qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. A qualitative approach enables the researcher to obtain an impression of an object or event through seeing, hearing, smelling, and touching; thus the researcher is able to describe or give an in-depth account as well as interpretation of what he perceived during the data collection.<sup>11</sup> This method was adopted to investigate the activities of the *Bases*.

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<sup>10</sup> Michael S. Northcott, "Sociological Approaches" in *Approaches to the Study of Religions*, Ed by Peter Connolly, (London: Continuum, 1993),203

<sup>11</sup> Thomas H. Schram, *Conceptualizing and Proposing Qualitative Research*,( New Jersey: Pearson Education Ltd.,2006), 11

Both primary and secondary sources of data collection were used. The administering of questionnaires and conducting of personal interviews formed the basis for the primary source of data collection. Five *Bases* each from the research areas were selected and this was to give a fair representation of the phenomenon and to get a clear and detailed understanding of the issues. Also, religious leaders from each area were interviewed in the communities under investigation. This was to help gather data from multiple sources. The researcher also participated in the religious activities of the *Bases* by way of participant observation.

Additionally, the review of journals, magazines, the internet and relevant academic theses and published works formed the secondary source of data collection. Data gathered was processed qualitatively and hence written in the form of a report.

## **1.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

“Research without theory is blind and theory without research is empty”.<sup>12</sup> This quotation signifies the importance of building a research on a theory, thus a tool being used to explain and elaborate something that one would otherwise find baffling. Theory helps the researcher to be linked to scholarly works as well as connect his study to the larger body of knowledge. This linkage guides the researcher to limit himself to aspects of the subject which he finds to have been left out by previous researchers instead of discussing everything.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Norman Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*,(UK: Polity Press ,2000), 128

<sup>13</sup> Thomas H. Schram, *Conceptualizing and Proposing Qualitative Research*, (Columbus : Pearson,2000), 60

In the light of the above said role of theory, this study was founded on Ali Shariati's *Amr bil ma'roof wan Nahy anil munkar* which posits that, commending good or virtue and preventing evil or vice saves a society from deterioration and annihilation by encouraging the righteous and deserving ones and discouraging the unjust and unworthy.<sup>14</sup> The terminology for the theory is derived from the Qur'an.<sup>15</sup> According to Shariati, the theory is one of the salient features of Islam and is considered as one of the dynamic motors for survival and revival of the *Ummah*. It is important to mention that, the duty of enjoining the good is to be carried out even in the absence of an ideal Islamic state; and forbidding what is wrong is an independent and equally significant obligation. The secret behind this obligation of *amr bil maroof wa nahy anil munkar* is nothing but the improvement of the society to enhance peaceful existence.

## 1.10 LITERAURE REVIEW

Several studies have been done on social groupings from different perspectives and for that matter, available literatures for this study are numerous but that notwithstanding, the following are the ones that best suit the work.

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<sup>14</sup> Mir Mohammad Ibrahim, *Sociology of Religions: Perspectives of Ali Shariati*,(New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India Private Limited, 2008),208

<sup>15</sup> Quran 3:110

Osman Bari reiterates that<sup>16</sup>, the Muslim youth were not deeply involved in the religious activities in the the early stage of development of Nima and Mamobi. It should be noted that at that stage, religious affairs were considered as exclusively belonging to adults. This according to Bari, was due to several factors which include, in those days traditions and attitudes of elders did not encourage the youth to participate in the religious activities of the community until a person attains the age of forty. This concept was based on the premise that, the Prophet attained an age of forty before he had the first encounter with Allah. It was not therefore strange that initially the youth were not involved in Sufi or mystic meditation circles to which the adults were predisposed. Bari concludes that, this factor therefore created a vacuum in the society with regard to youth and religious activities which gave rise to the emergence of youth social clubs characterized by music and dance. This assertion of Bari has taken a full turn because currently, the religious activities of the communities rest in the hands of the youth, championed by the *Bases*. Also, same can be said for the Sufi or mystic practices in the communities. These would be manifested as the work unfolds. Bari's work is essential to this research as it paints a picture of the past state of affairs of the youth which will serve as a lens for measuring current religious activities of the youth.

Ali Baba Mohammed discussed the proliferation of *Bases* in the Accra New Town Muslim community. He posits that, a single area can be home to three or more *Bases* depending on the demography and also, majority of the base operators are students of the second cycle

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<sup>16</sup> Osman B. Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana*, (Accra: Dezine Focus Printing and Publications, 2009)

institutions. He is convinced that, the focus of the *Bases* is gradually shifting from sociological to religious orientation. The work however did not trace the trajectories of the phenomenon, nor investigate the religious activities of these Muslim cells and their contribution to the development of Islam in Accra on which this research is focused.<sup>17</sup>

Mumuni Sulemana<sup>18</sup> discussed how Islamic organizations were formed along ethnic and doctrinal lines in Accra between 1953 and 1989. They had similar aims and objectives in furthering the well-being of Muslims. Also they sought to bring Muslims with different orientations to work towards the socio-economic development of the Muslim community and to offer some form of leadership to the Ghanaian Muslim community in general and the Sunni Muslims in particular. He also highlighted the ethnic and doctrinal factors and how these factors negatively affected the development of Islam in Accra, in the sense that all attempts to come up with a united body to represent Muslims in Ghana have been unsuccessful. Though the organizations made attempts to address the needs of the Muslim Community, their activities were uncoordinated and thus operated independently of others in the country. The *Bases* however were not investigated because they fall under natural groups as against formed groups of which Mumuni investigated. This work is vital to this research because it informs the researcher of the activities of other Muslim Organisations and their

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<sup>17</sup> Ali Baba Mohammed “ The Phenomenon of Bases and its Impact in Muslim Communities: A case study of Accra New Town”, A Long essay submitted to the Religious Studies Department, Islamic University College, 2012

<sup>18</sup> Mumuni Suleman, “Islamic Organizations in Accra: Their Structure, Role and Impact in the Proselytisation of Islam”, Unpublished Thesis Presented to the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon, 1994

leadership drive. The *Bases* also offer some kind of leadership to the youth at their level, hence the vitality of this work.

Dale et al<sup>19</sup> classified groups into natural and formed groups. He defined natural groups as those that come together spontaneously on the basis of naturally occurring events, interpersonal attractions or mutually perceived needs of members. Such groups include peer groups, friendship groups, and street groups. Natural groups, according to Dale, lack and do not require formal sponsorship or artificial support. This type of group is not planned per se nor is it constructed by any person or group in a deliberate sense. Suffice to say however that, some of the *Bases* in due course seek for support to execute their programs and still fall under the natural group. This work I consider very relevant to this research because all the *Bases* virtually fall under this natural groups.

Almost all religions talk about man's mythological fall from glory. For this reason, all of our earthly existence consists the endless struggle to re-attain that glory that was lost. The religions then outline righteousness as a criterion for re-attaining the lost state of glory. This means that, religion as a social institution has an earthly purpose. According to Nurudeen alao as quoted by Chiedozie Okoro, there is a common grape that is after the heart of every religionist. The grape that is common to all religions is not in their rituals; the grape is in their common object of helping man to actualize the divine in him, of assisting man to

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<sup>19</sup> Dale et al, *Human Behaviour and the Social Environment*,(New York: Pearson Education Inc.,2006),26

ascend to the pedestal of virtue. It lies in the objective of making each man his brother's keeper and of eradicating all evils in the society.<sup>20</sup> This piece is relevant to the research because it reinforces the researcher's understanding of the theory adopted for the work; which is enjoining virtues and forbidding indecency.

Ali Shariati opines that, the only way to save one's soul is to among others, be utterly intolerant of injustice and immorality. He stressed that if Muslims ever find themselves in a situation where all sorts of wrongs are being committed in their presence, then, it is the demand of their faith to try their utmost best in changing that unfortunate state of affairs. Hence, a theoretical knowledge of right and wrong without the urge to promote the former and destroy the latter is a gross immorality in itself. To enjoin good and forbid evil is therefore the true measure of a person's faith as well as the ultimate function of the Muslim *Ummah*.<sup>21</sup> The review of Shariati's input is essential to this research work in the sense that, it amply throws light on the reason why the *Bases* are using that platform as springboard for moral education and religious conscientisation.

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<sup>20</sup> Chiedozie Okoro, "God in Human Existence", *Ogua Journal of Religion and Human Values*, Vol.2,( October 2012),9

<sup>21</sup> Mir Mohammad Ibrahim, *Sociology of Religions: Perspectives of Ali Shariati*, (New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India Private Limited, 2008),213

First and foremost, religion is a human activity, and part of this understanding is that, man is the center of religion. According to Ubioha,<sup>22</sup> this holds two implications. In the first place, man is religious for self development; and in the second place, since man is in existence with other social beings, his religiosity directly or indirectly affects other social beings. He is therefore not alone in his religious activities. Thus, there is a relationship between religion, ethics and humanity. However, more often than not, religion is alleged of being the root of all human predicaments; that it provides viable and abundant fuel for conflict such that in every continent of the world, there are religious rooted conflict spots. Although this allegation may have its roots in Marx and Lenin, however, the condemnation it has received in recent times is sequel to the various lives and properties that have been wasted on account of religion. Ubioha argues that, religion is absolutely virtuous and not necessarily vicious and that the above allegations are the results of inhuman and unethical practices in religion and that these problems can be minimized when religious adherents appreciate religion, ethics and humanity. This piece will contribute in analyzing youth-religious-activities because wherever there is religious disturbance, it is the youth that are employed.

One of the most effective element in advancing and developing in the arena of life is to penetrate the hearts of other's heart and influence them. Those who have the ability to control other's hearts by their maneuverability and noble traits can enjoy the support of the members of society during their advancement in life. Mujtaba asserts that, certain

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<sup>22</sup> U.P.Ubioha, "Ethics, Religion and Humanity: Rethinking Religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Africa", *Global Journal of Humanities*, Vol.8, No.1&2, 2009

characteristics and unwanted habits weaken the ties of love and sometimes breaking up excellent relationships. Individuals, who are unable to keep the love of others, erect an indestructible wall between them and society. It is therefore necessary for one who wishes to interact in his society to first realize the art of interaction, and after becoming familiar with it, put it to use according to the acceptable social rules. Without this process, a person cannot live in harmony with his society. Good conduct is therefore, the main basis of happiness between people and also, it allows man to make use of his abilities to effectively manage society.<sup>23</sup> This work is consequential to this research because the crux of laudation or damnation of the youth in a society had to do with morality.

There is the belief that the phenomenon of development from the religious point of view focuses on the effort to create a balance between material and spiritual wellbeing of adherents of a religion. Hussein Ayatollah intimates that there is no distinction between spirituality and secularism in Islam.<sup>24</sup> For many Muslims, Islam is a total way of life and therefore believed to be relevant and integral to education and social life among others. Esposito examined that these areas of life are not viewed as secular but religious based on the belief that Islam is a complete way of life and thus, religion and society are interrelated.<sup>25</sup> Ezzati posits that there is no divorce between material and spiritual, physical and mental, religious and political affairs in Islam. Hence Islam is an all-embracing,

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<sup>23</sup> Sayyid Mujtaba Musavi Lari, *Youth and Morals*, Trans by Odeh Muhawesh,(Qum: Islamic Culture Development Office, 1990)

<sup>24</sup> H. Ayatollah, "The Relation Between Religion and the State: An Islamic point of View", in *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies*, Vol.1, No.2, (2008),45

<sup>25</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*,(Oxford: Oxford University Press,2005),159

comprehensive and inclusive way of life covering the social, political, religious and moral aspects of individuals and society.<sup>26</sup> These works would contribute to this research in the sense that, the revival of *Bases* in the path of Islam is amply demonstrated by the above mentioned view or theory.

Information is an essential powerful resource for our daily living as human beings and nations. We cannot do without it, and information as a resource is in the life of every individual human being and nation. It is not only vital for scientific, technological and economic advancement, but also for educational, cultural and social transformation in any society. According to Luka Ishaya, information is very vital to the overall development of individuals and nations.<sup>27</sup> It has been recognized that, the absence of information may impede development and progress. The review of Luka's work is critical to this research in the sense that, it amply provides an explanation of the reasons of progress of various *Bases* since they have embraced literacy which makes information easily accessible and by extension able to better organize their activities. However, in spite of the availability of information, guidance is highly needed especially in religious activities so as not fall out of order.

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<sup>26</sup> A. Ezzati, *The Spread of Islam: The Contributing Factors*, (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press, 2002), 158

<sup>27</sup> Luka Ishaya, "Information: A panacea for Decision-Making and Problem Solving", *International Journal of Research in Education*, Vol. 8, No.1, 2011

It is only in cases of necessity and helplessness that man lends a hand to cooperate with society. Tabatabai posits that, it is as a result of man's countless needs, which can never be fulfilled by him alone, that he recognizes the possibility of fulfilling them through the help and cooperation of others. Similarly, he understands that his desires and wishes are also shared by others, and just as he defends his own interest, so others defend theirs. Thus, out of necessity he cooperates with the social nexus and gives a certain measure of his own efforts to fulfill the needs of others; in return he benefits from the efforts of others in order to fulfill his own needs.<sup>28</sup> Tabatabai further asserts that, in truth, man has entered into a market of social wealth, always open to traders and offering all the benefits obtained by the collective work of the society. This work will guide the researcher in examining the cooperation of the various *Bases* in chapter four.

William Cockeram<sup>29</sup> is of the view that because of shared goals and continued close interaction, groups can provide a sense of belonging and a feeling of solidarity that can be a powerful source in influencing the behaviour of group members. Additionally, groups furnish a means of identity. Thus, groups provide us with a context for describing who we are and where our place is in society. The review of this work is important to this study in the sense that, it presents the benefits people derive from being members of a group. However, the assertion that groups influence behaviour cannot be said to be the case always.

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<sup>28</sup> Allamah sayyid M.H. Tabatabai, *The Quran in Islam: Its Impact and Influence on the Life of Muslims*, (Qum: Ansariyan Publication, 1986), 72

<sup>29</sup> William C. Cockeram, *The Global Society* (New York: McGraw Hill Publication, 1995)

Sayyid Mujtaba has mentioned that man leads his life among people and the fabric of his personal existence is made in society.<sup>30</sup> He states further that man cannot break his links with his fellow men or live in isolation because the frightful darkness of loneliness would make his life grim and unbearable and make his spirit languish in solitary confinement. Mujtaba is of the view that, in the same way that the body needs various kinds of nourishment for its health and strength, the soul also draws its nourishment from the company of friends; often acquiring virtues and merits from them and at times becoming tainted with their vices and sins. This phenomenon confirms why some people criminalise the issue of *Bases* while others hail them. However, we must admit that it is not always the case that, one is influenced by his society, although the study of various situations relating to emulation indicates that one's conduct, feelings, decisions, and even one's opinions and judgment may be affected. Mujtaba's work is vital to this work because it explains how the individual is affected by the kind of group he belongs to.

Rabiatu Ammah<sup>31</sup> mentioned that, there seems to be a perception that Muslims in Ghana are poor. She is of the view that, this issue is debatable because, for some it is a perception and must remain as such since poverty is not peculiar to Muslims alone. It has also been suggested, on the contrary that, relatively there may be underdevelopment in predominantly Muslim areas. The community is not pulling its weight in the fight against poverty and for

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<sup>30</sup> Mujtaba Larry, *Ethics and Spiritual Growth* (Qum: Foundation of Islamic Cultural Propagation in the World, 1997)

<sup>31</sup> Rabiatu Ammah, "Islam and Poverty Reduction Strategies: Attempts at Dealing with Poverty in The Ghanaian Muslim Community," *Ghana Bulletin of Theology*, Vol.2, July 2007

that matter; Muslims may even be perpetuating it unconsciously by their general life styles and attitudes. Indeed, I believe the general lifestyles of Muslim communities may be a factor, however, there is real poverty due to lack of education and qualification, and that has cut off many people from having a share of the national cake. Rabiatu's article will enhance the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation because; Rabiatu opines that, the *Bases* are one of such lifestyles that contribute to the cycle of poverty within the Muslim community. The article however did not examine the religious activities of the *Bases* on which the current research is focused.

Ideally, socialization brings about conformity, and conformity is voluntary. According to Joan Ferrante,<sup>32</sup> when conformity cannot be achieved voluntarily, other mechanisms of social control are used to convey and enforce norms and expectations. Such mechanisms are known as sanctions. Ferrante elaborates that sanctions can be positive or negative, formal or informal. A positive sanction is an expression of approval and a reward for compliance; such a sanction may take the form of applause, smile or a pat on the back. On the contrary, a negative sanction is an expression of disapproval for non compliance, and the punishment may be withdrawal of affection, ridicule, ostracism, banishment, physical harm, imprisonment, solitary confinement or even death. Informal sanctions, according to Ferrante are spontaneous and unofficial expressions of approval or disapproval and are not backed by the force of law. Ferrante's work is relevant to this research because, the Muslim community

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<sup>32</sup> Joan Ferrante, *Sociology: A Global Perspective*, (New York: Wardsworth Publishing Company, 1998)

is faced with the challenge of dealing with deviant behaviours without the necessary intervention of the central authority since most of the demeanours have to do with laxity in conduct which is Islamically unacceptable and not typically criminal, sanctions of which Ferrante outlines.

Sayyed Mujtaba Larry<sup>33</sup> buttresses the need for moral uprightness in the youth. He quotes the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) as saying that; if you do not find young people to wed your daughters who correspond with your personal desires, then have regard only to their character, especially their morals and their religion, and let the qualification you require in husbands for your daughters be faith and morals alone, since with these, according to Mujtaba, a young man makes a satisfactory husband. The review of this work will enhance the researcher's appreciation of the phenomenon because; the contention around the activities of the *Bases* rests on the moral uprightness of the members.

The first messages of Islam were general and universal—equality, justice, humanity, charity, morality, honesty, modesty, humility, sincerity and all behavioural principles aimed at raising the moral standards of a society. The Prophet did this by first being an example of undeniably excellent etiquette before even mentioning a belief system. Batool has it that, the dos and don'ts of Islam were revealed gradually over the years of prophethood, but the

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<sup>33</sup> Sayyed Mujtaba, Larry, *Western Civilization through Muslim Eyes*, translated by F.G. Goulding, (Qum: Al Hadi Press, 1993)

spiritual principles on which the faith is founded were established immediately and completely. He observed that, while there were exceptions to the laws for the sick, the unable and the traveler, there is no compromise when it comes to justice, humanity and sincerity. Therefore the philosophy of doing what is morally right and shunning what is wrong has always been absolute and firm.<sup>34</sup> This piece of work will guide the research in the face of constant call to reform by most *Bases*.

Yunus Dumbe is convinced that, the foreign policy of Kwame Nkrumah which inclined towards engaging with Africa and Muslim countries attracted movements such as the Salafism, Shi'ism and the Third Universal Theory of al-Qadhafi's Green Book into the Ghanaian religious space where the Tijaniyyah already played an important role.<sup>35</sup> He asserts that with the advent of *Faida*<sup>36</sup>, the idea of *Maulid*<sup>37</sup> acquired a different meaning as a mass religious gathering for the Tijjaniyyah fraternity regardless of literacy, age, gender and class. The review of this work is necessary as it shapes the researcher's views on contemporary issues in Islamic revivalism of which the youth are a vehicle.

Hajara Mohammed discussed the historical development of *Maulid* celebration in Ghana and its impact in the lives of the *Ummah*. She reiterates that, *Maulid* which has become

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<sup>34</sup> Batool Haydar, "Growing into a Better Muslim", *Islam Today: Engagement, Strategy for Survival*, Issue 18. Vol.2,( April 2014), 48

<sup>35</sup> Yunus Dumbe, *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana*, (Stockolm: Soderton University, 2013)

<sup>36</sup> Faida means Flood of grace

<sup>37</sup> The anniversary celebration of the prophet's birthday

widespread in Ghana among scholars and students of Islamic schools begun in the 1900s in Kumasi. Presently, *Maulid* celebrations in Ghana are characterized by public activities such as Qur'an recitations and the reading of the *Seera* (Biography of the Prophet) which is known as the *Maulid*. She acknowledged that, all Muslim groups in Ghana celebrate the *Maulid* in different forms with different motivations except the *Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'h* (Salafi) who oppose its celebration. Hajara posits that, unlike other festivals, *Maulid* requires a lot of learning and intellectual activity to celebrate because; it involves research and learning of the Qur'an, Hadith and Islamic history. This phenomenon goes to buttress the fact that, *Maulid* as a festival is highly intellectual and has the potential to help transform the educational exploits of the *Ummah*.<sup>38</sup>

The review of this thesis is consequential to this research because the celebration of *Maulid* is one of the religious activities of the various *Bases* under study. Also, the youth have begun empowering the learned ones amongst them to mount the various platforms instead of relying on the old *Ulama*. However there is a new trend emerging in *Maulid* celebrations in the area of Accra New Town and this would be discussed in subsequent chapters.

### **1.11 LIMITATION**

Some of the *Bases* were reluctant to respond because they suspected that the researcher was gathering information for the Western embassies, particularly the American embassy. I

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<sup>38</sup> Hajara Mohammed, "Maulid Celebrations in Ghana : An Intellectual Festival", Unpublished Thesis presented to the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana-Legon 2010

therefore had to explain thoroughly that, it is part of my Mphil program at the University of Ghana, Legon. This phenomenon has arisen because, it came to light during Julius Assange's famous Wiki Leaks that, some Muslim leaders in Ghana have surreptitiously been dealing with the Western embassies, especially the American embassy. In view of this, the "Baye City *Base*" which was targeted as one of the groups to be investigated proved evasive and had to be substituted with another.

### **1.12 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This research would be valuable in various aspects. It will in the first place fill the vacuum created as a result of lack of written material on the phenomenon of bases. Furthermore, the outcome of the research will add to the body of knowledge existing on the activities of *Zongo* communities. It will also help the leadership of the Muslim community as well as state policy makers in policy formulation; for instance, the National Security and the Accra Metropolitan Assembly.

### **1.13 ORGANISATION**

The study has been structured into five chapters. Chapter one which is the General Introduction to the study comprises the Background to the Study, Statement of the Problem,

Aims and Objectives, Theoretical Frame Work, Scope and sample, Literature Review, Research Design, Methodological approaches and Review of relevant literature.

Chapter two is entitled Islam and the Youth. The chapter discussed the perspectives of the youth from the Qur'an as well as the *Sunnah*.. The discussion was centered on the constructive roles expected of youths as outlined in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* as well as the challenges facing the youth. Furthermore, the role of parents in bringing up children is also highlighted.

Chapter three focused on the emergence and structures of the *Bases* using the functional approach to unravel the origins of the phenomenon. It also highlighted the composition of the membership of the various *Bases*.

Chapter four employed the theological approach to examine the socio-religious activities of the *Bases*.

Chapter five presented the final report of the research by summarizing the major findings of the work, drawing concluding thoughts and making some recommendations for policy making and also for further studies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ISLAM AND THE YOUTH

#### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter we dealt with the background to the study, now my focus is on Islam and the youth. The discussion is centered on the constructive roles expected of the youth as outlined by the primary sources of Islam. The challenges facing the youth and the role of parents in child upbringing is also examined.

#### 2.1 ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE OF YOUTH

The notion of “youth” according to Swedenburg tends to be taken for granted as a natural stage in human development. But in fact, “youth” is a socially and culturally determined category, a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood that, in its contemporary form, is a product of modernity.<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, Islam has recognized youth as a potent force, a sensitive and important phase of man’s life requiring careful attention and right training. Allah says (Quran, 30:54) *“It is He who created you in a state of weakness, then gave you strength after weakness, then after strength gave you weakness and grey hair.”* This means, the period of youth is between childhood and old age. It also means that, there are three phases in human development: childhood, youth and old age and there are different requirements in every phase.

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<sup>39</sup> Ted Swedenburg, “Imagined Youth”, *Middle East Report No. 245*, (2007), 4-11

The period of youth is crucial because it is the period that generally determines the way in which a person's life is spent. If this period is spent in tune with Islamic principles and associating with the pious, ethically and morally upright people, then it is hoped that the rest of one's life will be spent in the same way. It is in this exciting period of vitality and vigor that the body gets stronger and the mind develops. In other words, it is a time of transition, a period of change where a man's body moves towards physical and mental maturity.<sup>40</sup>

Islam as a complete code of life provides a guide in every aspect of human development. It has therefore laid down the right conduct for the young and the old. It is appropriate to say, youth is a time of challenge, offering many opportunities for humankind to build a sound and a happy future; but also has a number of pitfalls which can affect one's future wellbeing.

## 2.2 AN IDEAL MUSLIM YOUTH

Youth is the most vital stage of life, it is therefore essential to make the best use of it and to strive towards excellence. It is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Youngsters are full of energy and passion. It is a very sensitive period that requires caring, reinforcement of good guidance and ethics in Allah's way. It is through faith and good ethical values that enhances the development of the Muslim youth. Allah declares: "*they were youth who believed in their Lord, and We increased them in guidance.*"(Qur'an 18: 13)

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<sup>40</sup> Ahmed Sheriff, *Youth in Islam*,(Dar-es Salam: Bilal Muslim Mission,1990),50

For instance, Luqman turned his attention to the moral training of his son with particular care and creativeness. He addresses his son by giving him good advice, and by explaining to him the right course and the nature of his duties. He shows him how to lead a virtuous life, through which spiritual and moral values can best be experienced. In order to motivate his son and guide him towards his ultimate goal, he began by clearly setting out for him his duties towards his Creator and reminds him of the unity of Allah. The Qur'an (31:13-14) states:

And when Luqman said to his son while he admonished him: O my son! Do not associate aught with Allah; most surely polytheism is a grievous iniquity. And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years, give thanks to Me and your parents. Unto Me is the final destination.

After explaining to his son his responsibilities towards his Lord, he then outlined his duties towards his parents so that he could properly discharge his responsibilities towards his mother and father. Additionally he said:

O my son! Keep up prayer and enjoin the good and forbid the evil and bear patiently that which befalls you; indeed these acts require courage; and do not turn your face away from people in contempt, nor walk in insolence through the earth; surely Allah loves not any arrogant boaster (Q31:17-18).

In this speech Luqman advised his son about the fundamental principles which one should adopt so that he may preserve himself from corrupting his soul. He began with *amr bil ma'roof* and *nahy anil munkar*. The former means to promote good, and the latter means to prevent evil. This is because Islam is a social religion and it deals with all aspects of human

life. It also seeks to create peace and harmony in the social life of a Muslim community. This principle is therefore crucial at the individual level as well as communal level. Suffice to say that it is a moral and ethical safety- net for the Muslim community and the nation at large because; it does not allow the Muslim community to abandon its members on the path of immorality and destruction.

Also, Luqman admonished his son to bear with patience at whatever befalls him. This is because life is full of uncertainties; and trials would come from different angles and dimensions. It is therefore necessary that, one bore patience. Allah says in Quran (2:155) *“And certainly, we shall test you of something of fear, hunger, and loss of wealth, lives and fruits but give glad tidings to the patient.”*

Furthermore, Luqman advised his son against conceitedness. Man was created sociable; therefore socialization is necessary for his development. It is an undeniable fact that, man cannot reach happiness without others.

Finally he admonished his son who is a social being to be aware of behaving arrogantly. This is because arrogance always results in an adverse reaction from the people and opens the door to hatred towards the conceited individual. It is necessary for the youth to heed to this advice of Luqman because it would help form sound relationships with Allah and their fellow humans.

Islam takes very special care of the youth, and urges youngsters to make the best use of this valuable period of their life. Every Muslim shall be asked by Almighty Allah about his/her

life in the Hereafter, but the period of youth has a special reckoning with Allah. The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) is reported to have said:

The son of Adam will not pass away from Allah until he is asked about five things: how he lived his life, and how he utilized his youth, with what means did he earn his wealth, how he spent his money, and what did he do with his knowledge.<sup>41</sup>

Islam urges young people to seek knowledge, follow Allah's guidance, obey His commandments, and aspire to be the best by performing good acts. When this is achieved, the community becomes physically and spiritually healthy. According to the 1996 World Development Report, a well educated, healthy workforce is essential for economic growth. It also indicated that majority of the unemployed and poverty stricken belonged to the ill-educated category of people.<sup>42</sup>

An ideal youth is one who is righteous, modest and harmonious with the teachings of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Such a youth is exemplary whose life is worthy of emulation.

### **2.3 YOUTH AND ETHICS**

Islam stresses the immense value of early religious and ethical training in the upbringing of a child. Luqman's advices to his son include one's relation to Almighty Allah. The Qur'an (Q31:13) states: "And remember when Luqman said to his son when he was advising him:

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<sup>41</sup> Sahih Bukhari, Translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Vol 7 ( Beirut: Daral Arabia, nd)

<sup>42</sup> From Plan to Market: World Development Report 1996, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996),123

O my son! Join not in worship others with Allah. Verily joining others in worship with Allah is a great *Zulm* (wrong) indeed.”

In the light of Islamic teachings, the path to progress and success is faith, good deeds, ethics and good morals. Those who possess them are the most advanced and their lives, most successful.<sup>43</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the *Sunnah* stresses the importance of taking good care of childhood which precedes that of youth in order to guarantee a solid ground for a child’s upbringing. Thus, the performance of regular prayer is emphasized from early childhood. The Prophet said: "Order your children to pray at the age of seven and discipline them when they refuse to perform their prayers at age ten." <sup>44</sup> With regards to his moral training, Ali Ibn Abi Talib (A.S) said:

I used to trail the Prophet the way a she camel’s little one trails it. Every day he used to raise the flags of good morals for me and used to order me to follow them.<sup>45</sup>

This upbringing played such an important role in the development of his personality that, it reflected in his morals, knowledge and actions.

Youngsters have strong physical drive and desire that must be directed properly to safeguard their faith, and strive to avoid committing immoral and unlawful acts. In this direction,

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<sup>43</sup> Ali Dawani, *Portraits of Youths in Quran and History of Islam*, Trans by Athar Hussain Rizvi, (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2005),11

<sup>44</sup> Hammuda Abd al Ati, *The Family Structure in Islam*, (Maryland: America Trust Publications,1997),199

<sup>45</sup> Mufty Jafar Husayn, *Biography of Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib*, Trans by Sayyid Tahir Bilgrami (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2006),135

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) said, youth is of madness a part, and women are Satan's traps.<sup>46</sup> Again, he is reported to have said:

O young men! Those of you who can support a wife should marry, for it (marriage) controls the gaze and preserves one from immorality. And whoever cannot (marry) should fast; for it is a means of reducing the sexual desire.<sup>47</sup>

Marriage serves as a means of emotional and sexual gratification and as a means of tension reduction.<sup>48</sup> It also makes sexual intercourse lawful to a couple and prevents people from engaging in promiscuity.<sup>49</sup> It is hoped that when a person is married, he becomes responsible by guarding his dignity and also protect that of his partner thereby compelling him to be in the moral lane. That is why the youth are encouraged to get married when they have the ability or observe optional fast.

In the light of the above, Imam Ghazali takes into consideration, five benefits of marriage. These benefits are; production of children, defeating the canal lust, giving calmness to self, bringing settlement to the heart and self discipline.<sup>50</sup>

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) gave young believers glad tidings that, Allah will bestow upon them His forgiveness in the Hereafter. He said: "Seven (kinds of people) will be sheltered

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<sup>46</sup> Nahj Al Fasahah, Trans by Hussein Vahid Dastjerdi,(Qum: Ansariyan , 2006),450

<sup>47</sup> Hafiz Asqalani, *Bulugul Maram*, (Cairo: Darul Fikr,2000),315

<sup>48</sup> Weitzman Lenore, *The Divorce Revolution* (New York: The Free Press, 1985),3

<sup>49</sup> Abdesamad Dialmy, "Sexuality and Islam", *The European Journal of Conception and Reproductive Health Care* (2010),398

<sup>50</sup> Mahdi Mahrizi, *Woman*, Trans by Hassan Najaf (Qum: Ansariyyan,1993),15

under the shade of Allah on the Day of Judgment, (among them) a young man who passed his youth in the worship and service of Allah."<sup>51</sup>

Islamic history has a myriad of examples of great Muslim youth who were luminaries of humanity. There were young believers who gathered around the Prophet (S.A.W) at the beginning of his call and young people who carried the call. To name a few, Zaid bin Thabit, who collected the whole text of the Holy Qur'an, and Mus'ab bin Umayr, who was the first missionary in Islam. He was asked by the Prophet (S.A.W) to go to Madinah to preach Islam and through him and his preaching he won numerous for Islam.

Another instance was, after the conquest of Makkah in the eighth year of the Hijrah (630 C.E), the Prophet appointed a young twenty –one year old Itab Ibn Usayd as the governor of Makkah. This was the most sacred place on earth for Muslims, and an undoubtedly sensitive location, being the former nerve-center of opposition to the Islamic message. And yet the Prophet entrusted it in the care of a young man who had just finished his teens. When challenged about putting such a weighty position in the hands of one who was so young, the Prophet replied:

None of you has the right to object to the young age of Itab Ibn Usayd because greatness and excellence do not depend on seniority of age. Rather, the criterion of human greatness and excellence is spirituality.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Abu Zakariyyah Yahya Ibn Sharaf Al Nawawi, *Riyadul Saliheen*, Hadith No.376 (Kuwait: Africa Muslims Agency, 2007)

<sup>52</sup> Ali Jawad, *The Shapers of Tomorrow*, *Islam Today*, Issue No.18, Vol.2 ,2014 (15-17)

## 2.4 PARENTING AND OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS IN ISLAM

Allah has blessed and entrusted parents with the care for children. Parents bear the responsibility of bringing up their children in the Islamic way. If they do that they will be blessed in this life and in the Hereafter; but if they do not, they will regret now and in the Hereafter because, the children may go astray or way-ward. In Islam, parenting is not limited to either the man or woman alone; it is the collective responsibility of every couple to nurture children to become responsible Muslim adults. Children should be educated in both Islamic and secular knowledge and be equipped with good manners whiles being shown kindness.

However, the role of parents in raising children should not be confined to compassion, care and expenditure because; these alone do not make good offspring but should be transparent by setting good examples. The effect of conduct and actions is far greater than that of conversation and speech; hence the qualities of a parent and their manner of behavior have a great and a fundamental impact on the child.<sup>53</sup>

Some researchers have suggested a strong link between parental attitude and the attitude of their children. For instance, Jeffrey and Thomas posit that, the higher the marital quality in the parent's marriage, the higher the marital quality in the adult children's marriage.<sup>54</sup>

Parents should therefore serve as counselors at every stage in the life of the youth. In the light of this, M. Albar is of the view that, Islamic teaching encourages counseling and

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<sup>53</sup> Mujtaba Musavi Lari, *Hidden Truths in God's Wisdom*, Trans by Abbas Jaffer, (Qum: Foundation of Islamic CPW,2009),160

<sup>54</sup> Jeffrey H. Larson and Thomas B. Holman, *Premarital Indicators of Marital Quality and Stability*, Published by National Council on Family Relations, April 1994, Vol.43, No.2, 228-9

stresses that, the counselor should be considerate and compassionate because of the prophetic statement that “religion is sincere counseling and good advice.”<sup>55</sup>

Allah creates children with pure innate nature, and whatever defects that happen later is the result of bad nurturing. The Prophet is reported to have said: “Every child is born on *Fitrah*<sup>56</sup>, his parents make him Jewish, Christian or a Fire worshiper.”<sup>57</sup> That is why Islam has ordered parents to take care of their children and to bring them up according to Islamic manners.

In modeling the appropriate behaviour of a Muslim, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) divided the life of a child from the age of infancy to twenty-one into three stages, each lasting seven years. During the first stage from zero to seven years old, it must be a priority to instill in children the values necessary for a proper upbringing and to work on character building; That is not the period to introduce complex concepts in Islam and nor is it appropriate to use fear and shame as a tactic to get children to comply with Islamic laws. Instead, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) teaches that, at this stage, parents must model appropriate behavior and treat children with grace and respect.<sup>58</sup>

Subsequently, the next stage begins from age eight to fourteen. The prophet said, at this stage the child is a slave for the next seven years since this is the age when the child’s mind can grasp logical reasoning and is developed for formal education. It is very consequential that the child not only be educated but also should be raised with Islamic ethics. By saying

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<sup>55</sup> M. A. Albar, “Counseling About Genetic Diseases: An Islamic Perspective”, *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal*, 1999, Vol.5 No.6, 129-133

<sup>56</sup> Fitra :Man’s innate disposition to monotheism

<sup>57</sup> Sahih Muslim, Hadith No.6423

<sup>58</sup> Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, *Faith, Practice and History*, (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2004), 246

that the child is a slave at this stage, the Prophet wants to emphasize that, parents should be strict in disciplining their children. A child is a slave in the sense that, he has to follow the instructions of his parents and teachers.<sup>59</sup>

Additionally, the third stage starts from age fifteen to twenty –one. The Prophet described this stage as a partnership because; the parents should treat the child like a ‘friend’ than a ‘slave’.<sup>60</sup> At this stage the parents should guide and help their teenage children in making correct or right decisions for themselves. This is also the time when the child is nearing the age of marriage. Counseling is therefore critical at this juncture.

At the age of twenty-one however, the parents responsibility towards their children comes to an end. Consequently, if any one raised his children based on Islamic values, the child would surely be the delight of the parents and the Muslim community in general.

One of the issues raised against the youth in contemporary times is that of disobedience to parents. However, from the scriptures success in this world and in the hereafter is based on obedience and kindness to parents. The almighty Allah says in Qur’an (17:23-24):

And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect nor shout at them but address them in terms of honor. And lower unto them the wing of submission and humility through mercy, and say: My lord! Bestow on them your mercy as they did bring me up when I was young.

In a similar vein Allah says in Qur’an (31: 14-15):

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<sup>59</sup> Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, *Faith, Practice and History*, 247

<sup>60</sup> Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, *Faith, Practice and History*, 248

And we have enjoined on man to be dutiful and good to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years; give thanks to Me and to your parents. Unto Me is the final return.

When the Prophet was asked about the best deeds, he said, “To perform the daily compulsory prayers at their stated fix times and to be good and dutiful to one’s own parents”.<sup>61</sup>

For instance, Prophet Ismail (A.S) was instrumental in the building of the *Ka’bah*<sup>62</sup> as a youth. When Allah commanded Prophet Ibrahim (A.S) to build the house, he informed his son (Ismail) who volunteered to fetch the stones while his father did the actual building. This earned Ismail a sublime status in the sight of Allah and the community as well.

Again when Prophet Ibrahim (A.S) was instructed to sacrifice his son, who had then become a major and youthful, he informed him and sought his opinion. Prophet Ismail (A.S), the son, was convinced it was a divine order to his father. He therefore asked the father to do as he is ordered and that he will find him obedient and patient (Qur’an 37:102). Prophet Ismail exhibited obedience to his parent and worked towards the will of Allah. The youth of today ought to emulate this tradition. The Messenger of Allah emphasized that, to join partners in worship with Allah and to be undutiful to one’s parents constitute the biggest of the Great Sins.<sup>63</sup> This is buttressed in Qur’an (31:13) as discussed earlier.

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<sup>61</sup> Sahih Bukhari, Vol.9, No. 625

<sup>62</sup> Ka’ba is square stone building in the great mosque at Makkah towards which all Muslims face in Salat

<sup>63</sup> Sahih Bukhari, Trans by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Vol 8, Hadith No.7 (Beirut: Daral Arabia,nd),5

Being dutiful to parents is a component of the worship of Allah. Sometimes the youth is so sure of the correctness of his views and opinions that he considers every advice and view of his parents wrong and irrelevant. Though this type of practice makes the youths independent, it takes away their ethical capacities. Islam is against extremism in every aspect, hence it neither advocates absolute control of the parents nor does it accept absolute disobedience and rebellion of the youth. The dynamism of youth should therefore be accompanied by the wisdom of the elders with their experience and thoughts because; both parties are indispensable from the other.<sup>64</sup> When the youth tap from the experiences of the elderly, they gain insights into the intricacies of life, which may help them make informed decisions.

The ultimate goal of education from the Islamic point of view is to transform the human being to become a good member of the society and a better servant of Allah.<sup>65</sup> Prophet Ismail's (AS) obedience to his parent is therefore an example for the youth to emulate whilst Ibrahim's actions also brings to the fore, the importance of consultation between parents and their children

## **2.5 YOUTH AND WILL-POWER**

Islam is complete submission to the will of Allah. It also comprises a set of regulations that are necessary requirement of the order of creation. The Islamic law for instance, is

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<sup>64</sup> Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, *Marriage and Morals in Islam*, (Qum: Ansariyyan,2001),35

<sup>65</sup> Khosrow Bagheri Noaparast, *Islamic Education*, (Tehran: Alhoda Publishers,2011),3

immutable and not subject to human caprice. This means, a Muslim ought to submit totally to the *Shariah* (Islamic law).

Prophet Yusuf (A.S) had a will power and a unique foresight as a youth. He narrated a dream to his father at a tender age, who foresaw that Yusuf will attain an honorable status in this life and in the hereafter but warned him not to divulge the information to his brothers else, they would plot against him (Q12:4-6). According to Dali Balta's account, the conversation between Yusuf and his father was heard by his father's wife who in turn told his brothers.<sup>66</sup> However, Al Majlisi's version stipulates that Yusuf himself disclosed the dream to his brothers and he indeed suffered the consequences thereof.<sup>67</sup> He was sold as a slave to a king. When the wife of his master and guardian attempted to seduce him, he resisted vehemently (Q12:23).

One of the major challenges of most youth has been the inability to resist illegal engagements. Abdur-Raheem laments, the moral decay of the society in the area of over indulgence in sex calls for concern. The evil is so widespread that many persons, men and women, see it as normal.<sup>68</sup> Prophet Yusuf in this case serves as role model for the youth because; the period of youth is a time when a person goes through many changes and experiences. For instance, his or her desires increase by the day, thus becoming attached to the opposite sex. However, if one is able to sacrifice some of these attractions, he can become a future role model for the youth of his community and beyond. The Messenger of

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<sup>66</sup> Mohammad Dali Balta, *Lives of the Prophets*, (Beirut: Sharif Al Ansari Son's Company,2007),78

<sup>67</sup> Muhammad Baqir Al Majlisi, *Hayat Al-Qulub*,(Qum: Ansariyan Publications,2003),238

<sup>68</sup> M.A.Abdur-Raheem, "Nigerian Muslim Women and the Importance of Being Assertive", in *Religion, Leadership and Society: Focus on Nigeria*, Ed by Ade Dopamu, (Lagos: Free Enterprise Publishers,2004),193

Allah advised the people to, among other things; make the best use of youth before old age.<sup>69</sup>

Titus Reid is of the opinion that, low self control is a product primarily of poor parenting but may improve over time through improved parenting, or through social institutions. Though low self control does not cause crime but it interacts with crime opportunities.<sup>70</sup>

Again when Prophet Yusuf (A.S) was released from prison, he chose to be made the Financial Controller of the state as that was his expertise (Q12:55). There is a lesson to be learnt here in the sense that, Prophet Yusuf (A.S) concentrated or chose to serve in a capacity he knew best. Hence the youth ought to know their strength and weaknesses in any endeavor they decide to venture into. The Prophet admonished Muslims to seek the prevailing knowledge of every time so as to be able to discharge their responsibilities to Allah and mankind.<sup>71</sup> He is also reported to have said that he is the city of knowledge and Ali is the gate to the city. This means, Ali's erudition was unquestionable. It means also that Ali took learning very seriously and hence became a scholar under the tutelage of the Prophet.

It would be appropriate to say that, the only hope for the contemporary Muslim youth lies in education. It is this that will empower him or her to greater heights and to be able to change their fortunes as far as development is concerned.

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<sup>69</sup> Nahj Al Fasahah, 175

<sup>70</sup> Sue Titus Reid, *Crime and Criminology*,(New York: Brown and Benchmark Publishers,1997)

<sup>71</sup> Baqir Sharif, *The Educational System in Islam*, (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2006),24

After the battle of Badr, Qurayshi captives who were found to be learned were made to tutor the Muslim youth in Madinah to read and write, and this service counted as their ransom. Ten boys were assigned to each Qurayshi captive who was able to give the required instruction. As soon as the pupils had attained the stipulated degree of progress, their tutors were set free.<sup>72</sup> In Islam much value is placed on the dissemination of knowledge. For instance the Prophet is reported to have said that, the best of the Muslims are those who learned the religion and teach it to others.<sup>73</sup>

Furthermore, education is concerned with the provision of knowledge and skills to the youth. It is believed that education is an important tool that can be used to eradicate poverty, to provide the manpower needs of the country and for socio-economic advancement. Education is also a means of providing the youth with employable skills needed by industries and commerce.

Despite the inexperience of the youth, it is a time in a Muslim's life when his faith is likely to be tested repeatedly by temptations of the flesh. It is therefore the duty of young Muslims to overcome these temptations and preserve their morality because they are expected to play an important role in the advancement of Islam.

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<sup>72</sup> Safiu-ur-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri, *Biography of the Noble Prophet* (Saudi Arabia: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 1996),231

<sup>73</sup> An Nawawi, *Forty Hadith* Trans by Ezzedin Ibrahim and Denys Davies (Riyadh:International Islamic Publishing House, nd),659

## 2.6 YOUTH AND LABOUR

In man's existence on earth, he is surrounded by certain necessities which hold a tight grip on him from birth. Necessities such as food, clothes and shelter are basic and the preservation of life depends on them. However, one ought to satisfy these needs in a lawful manner. Differently put, he ought to earn a living legitimately. Blessed is the one who is a Muslim with sufficient sustenance, says the Prophet (S.A.W).<sup>74</sup>

Islam encourages the development of self and links it with human dignity. To earn a decent living, work has become worship and he who works for his livelihood is better than the worshipper. The Prophet is said to have raised the hand of a poor worker and kissed it, and then said "seeking lawful sustenance is a duty of every Muslim man and woman."<sup>75</sup>

On arrival at Midian, Prophet Musah (A.S) witnessed two female shepherds driving back their flock from a well because they could not lift its cover to water the animals. Prophet Musah (A.S) volunteered to water their flocks for the sake of Allah. This serves as a precedent for the youth to emulate by volunteering to serve the needy for the sake of Allah if they have the ability.

One of the ladies who was sent to invite Prophet Musah (A.S) home was impressed with his strong moral character and was convinced that, besides his righteousness, also possessed very high moral qualities. She therefore entreated her father to hire his services because; the

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<sup>74</sup> Nahj Al Fasahah, Trans by Hossen Vahid Dastjerdi,(Qum: Ansariyan,2006),53

<sup>75</sup> Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Bihar al Anwar*, Vol. 103, (Beirut: Dar-Ihya'u Turathul Arabi, 1983),9

best employee or servant is one who is honest as well as physically strong.<sup>76</sup> It is to be noted that, Islam attaches importance to physical strength and the youth need to take cognizance of this fact in order to guard their health. Although the Muslim usually enjoys good physical health because of his abstention from *haram* or harmful food and drink, he must still make a concerted effort to improve his bodily strength. Therefore the healthy eating habits ought to be supplemented by an organized exercise program, appropriate to his physical condition and age. This gives strength, energy and vitality to his body.

Again, the youth ought to engage in honest labour to earn a livelihood as exhibited by Prophet Musah (A.S). However, the *laissez -faire* attitude of modern Ghanaian Muslim communities where nobody's source of wealth is examined or questioned, and also the placement of premium on riches to the neglect of morality seem to encourage the youth to adopt illegitimate means in their dealings and also acquire wealth by subterfuge.

When the Prophet attained majority, he worked as a shepherd to earn a decent and legal living. He did not take part in the aimless and pervert pleasures in which the young of his community participated. The aspect of his personality that was particularly valuable in a corrupt environment as a youth was his honesty and sense of justice which culminated in his being named *al Amin* (the trustworthy).<sup>77</sup> He was excellent in character (Q68:4).

However, it would not be wrong for the youth to follow pleasure that is *Shariah* compliant.

The Prophet also worked in a caravan trade when he was employed by Khadijah due to his

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<sup>76</sup> Qur'an 28: 26

<sup>77</sup> Sayyid Mujtaba Lari, *The Seal of the Prophets and his Message*, Trans by Hamid Algar, (Qum: Foundation of Islamic CPW,2010), 85

honesty and diligence in the discharge of his duties, he eventually married her.<sup>78</sup> His hard work and honesty won him the heart of Khadijah who became instrumental in his campaign to spread the message of Islam. This again is a clarion call for the youth to be honest in their dealings because it pays, spiritually and materially. It would be appropriate to add that when he was asked why he was not married earlier on; his response was that he had no means to do so.<sup>79</sup> It is therefore worth being in an appreciable state of economic stability before venturing into marriage. The Prophet is reported to have said, “The best of people in faith are the best of them in morals.”<sup>80</sup>

## 2.7 YOUTH AND PEER INFLUENCE

Undoubtedly, having a company of good friends adds to the joy of the youth as it helps get rid of loneliness. A good friend can be of real help in relieving sadness when one feels depressed. Also a good friend assists when in trouble. Nonetheless while choosing friends, it is essential to know the right choice of friends. It is a basic principle of social relations that, one tends to become like those around him if he associates with them long enough. Thus, close friends are bound to have a lasting effect upon the mind of a youth. There is no way social life could go on without a minimal amount of conformity and obedience from group

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<sup>78</sup> Hussain Haykal, *Muhammad*, (Chicago: University Press, 1935),125

<sup>79</sup> Martin Lings, *Muhammad*, (UK: Islamic Text Society,1991), 35

<sup>80</sup> Baqir Sharif Al Qarashi, *The Life of Muhammad*, Trans by Abdullah Al Shahin,(Qum: Ansariyan publications,2007), 371

members.<sup>81</sup> It can be said therefore, the kind of influence that a group has over an individual is enormous. The youth ought to be circumspect in their choice of friends.

According to the Prophet, a good companion is like unto a perfume seller who might not spare you any perfume, but the pleasant fragrance of his perfumes you can surely smell. And a bad companion is like unto a blacksmith whose flame of fire you might be able to escape but you surely suffer the bad smell of his working place.<sup>82</sup> This means that, whatever group one belongs to, he would one way or the other be affected by their attitudes either positively or otherwise. Indeed one of the prerequisites of happiness and an effective method of spiritual development is friendship with righteous people.

The *Ashabul Kahf*<sup>83</sup> are famous simply because they were youth who followed the path of Islam under a tyrannical leader. These were believing youth who refused to give in to idol-worship (Qur'an 18:22). The Muslim youth is obliged to take care of his soul, so he starts to polish and refine it through constant worship and consciousness of Allah. He is alert to the devious tricks and deceptive whispers of the *Shaytan* (Satan) and when evil thoughts come to him from that source, he remembers Allah and finds his way back to the straight path.

Therefore the activities of these young men in such a difficult circumstance, was indeed an indication of wonderful courage and steadfastness. These traits are very important in youth activities, especially where there is so much pressure from peers to go contrary to laid down

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<sup>81</sup> James Levin and Jack Spates, *Starting Sociology*, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1990), 91

<sup>82</sup> Nahj al Fasahah, Trans by Hossein Vahid Dastjerdi, (Qum: Ansariyan, 2006), 17

<sup>83</sup> Ashabul kahf : People of the cave

*Shariah* principles. The right choice of friends surely contributes to a great extent to staying in the moral lane as one would be advised whenever he goes overboard.

Eventually when these youth (*Ashab al kahf*) sought refuge in a cave, they said: “Our lord, bestow on us mercy from you, and facilitate for us a right course in our affair, (Q18:10).”

The striking lesson apart from the courage and the steadfastness of the youth is the inclination towards prayer and their reliance on God in their activities. This was possible because they were righteous and morally upright. There is the need for the youth to conduct themselves in accordance with the *siratal mustaqeem*. Within the first *Surah* or chapter of the Qur’an is the term *Sirat al Mustaqeem* or the Straight Path. This refers to a path of right guidance that one Muslim student defined as a way of defying negativity.<sup>84</sup>

The importance of staying on the *siratal mustaqeem* becomes particularly germane to Muslim youth who live in non Muslim societies. Things such as dating and premarital sex, drug and alcohol use which are common practices among some section of the Ghanaian youth are strictly forbidden in Islam. As such, the religious values and lifestyles of the Muslim youth can be difficult to maintain in a society based on often contradictory secular norms.

Consequently, staying on the *siratal mustaqeem* therefore represents a struggle for the Muslim youth that is both spiritually conscious. The day-to-day lives and schooling experiences of the Muslim youth are complicated by social pressures that are contradictory to their faith.

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<sup>84</sup> Yasmine Zine, “Muslim Youth in Canadian Schools: Education and the Politics of Religious Identity”, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No.4, (2001), 399-423

On the other hand, religion can effectively reinforce societal norms and values only when a single religion within that society has a monopoly of that truth. It is a fact that Islam is not the only way to lead a moral life. There are different groups of youth who deploy or employ different strategies in maneuvering between being young and being Muslim and these strategies are not necessarily of a religious nature. For instance, there are “club boys” in the Muslim community who move around from one discotheque to the other and are usually Muslims, in that they pray (irregularly) and fast (irregularly) during *Ramadan* but express their Muslim identities in ways distinct from the ideal Muslim. This poses a challenge to the youth in our *Zongo* in particular, as these figures may corrupt their peers.

Also present are the pressures, particularly for girls, to conform to less- modest western dress codes at the expense of the *Hijab* or headscarf. This particular issue of the *hijab* has triggered some heated debates between the Ghanaian Muslim leadership and their Christian counterparts in recent times.

## **2.8 CHALLENGES OF YOUTH**

In Islam, *Taklif* (puberty) marks the entry into the religious responsibilities of a Muslim.<sup>85</sup>

The Prophet is reported to have said:

“The pen has been lifted for three: the insane until he regains his sanity, the child until he reaches puberty and the sleeper until he wakes up”.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Abdul Rahman Al Ahdari, *Matnil Ahdariy*, (Beirut: Darul Fikr, nd), 1

From this time onwards, a young person is obliged to perform the religious duties just as an adult Muslim. Adult Muslims have an ethical, religious and moral duty to assist young people at this stage in their development. However, poverty, educational under achievement and unemployment are obstacles to the social development of the youth. Islam teaches a code of behavior, social values and gives meaning for man's existence. Of particular value during the adolescent transition is its guidance towards toleration and developing adaptive capacities in the face of stressful life events.

Needless to say that, prevailing unemployment among the educated youth may cause frustration and grievances that could lead to social violence which affects the socio-religious well being of the people. Producing large classes of educated youth the labor market cannot absorb has the potential to serve as a ready market for militant ideologies. For instance, Lia Brynjar argues, the expansion of higher education in many countries in the Middle East, producing large classes of educated youth that the labor market cannot absorb, has had a radicalizing effect and provided new recruits to militant organizations.<sup>87</sup>

The precarious situation of the youth in many societies due to lack of jobs and future prospects, makes the youth a subject of a growing research interest.<sup>88</sup> Nowadays, Ghanaian youth in general and the *Zongo* youth in particular, face many problems in their development into adulthood than ever before. These problems range from participation in

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<sup>86</sup> A.Abdul Rahman, *Sunan Abi Da'ud*, (Beirut: Daaral Kutb Al Ilmiya, 1998), Hadith No. 4403

<sup>87</sup> Lia Brynjar, globalization and the future of terrorism: patterns and predictions, (London: Routledge, 2005),145-146

<sup>88</sup> Rijk Van Dijk et al , "Introduction: Ideologies of Youth", *Africa Development* Vol. XXXVI, No.3&4, (2011), 1-17

political violence, drug addiction and lack of employment. And they affect the quality of life of the youth, making it extremely difficult for them to reach their full potentials.

Again, youth problems have worsened due to the structural adjustment programs that were introduced in the last two decades by Ghanaian authorities. These economic programs have significantly altered the structure of the Ghanaian economy, resulting in a massive growth in service sector employment in urban areas and a corresponding reduction in non-service sector jobs. The fact is that the new economic structure has made primary production such as agriculture less attractive; hence most of the youth have migrated from the rural areas into towns and cities in search of service sector jobs, which are not enough to go around.

Furthermore, there is the threat that comes from other Muslims who follow the cultural norms of the mainstream as well as non Muslim friends, trying to fit in to the dominant social norms within secular schools. This has become a pitfall for some Muslim youth. The attempt to commit one's self to maintaining Islamic lifestyles despite the pressures of conformity to the dominant culture is a daunting task to the *Zongo* youth in particular. Hence, resistance to cultural conformity and the actualization of an Islamic identity remains a challenge.

Additionally, in the Western World the purpose of education is to provide for the economic prosperity of a nation. At a personal level the purpose of education is to acquire academic and professional skills that enable one to earn a respectable living with riches and fame, and also a luxurious and comfortable life.<sup>89</sup> For a Muslim, providing economic prosperity of a

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<sup>89</sup> Ibrahim B. Syed, <http://www.irfi.org>, accessed 10<sup>th</sup> January 2015 at 1: 40 am

nation does not contradict his/her Islamic beliefs, however, focusing the goals of education solely for the purpose of money making is unpalatable.

On the other hand the aim of Islamic education is character building. Growth and development of an Islamic personality should be the final goal of any Islamic School. Islamic values are the foundation of the Islamic personality. As Muslims, the educational aim is to develop the personalities of children to the end that they will be conscious of their responsibility to God (the Creator) and to fellow humans. The training imparted to a Muslim must be such that faith is infused into the whole of his or her personality and creates in him or her an emotional attachment to Islam and enables him to follow the Qur'an and *Sunnah* and be governed by Islamic system of values willingly and joyfully so that he or she may proceed to the realization of his or her status as *Khalifatullah* (God's representative) to whom God has promised the authority of the universe.

However, the adoption of the total Islamic way of education in Ghana effectively rules out the Muslim youth from the national cake, as the system of education was engineered based on the secular methods by the Colonial Masters and has remained as such. There is therefore the challenge of blending the secular education with the Islamic orientation. This has not been easy for the Muslim youth in Ghana as some have completely abandoned Islamic education.

Again, religion as a social phenomenon touches on, and influences decisively, other spheres of human life—cultural, economic and political.<sup>90</sup> However, religious pluralism where different religious faith exist within a single society, splinters society; thus weakening the influence of religion and inhibiting it from acting as a cohesive force within society.<sup>91</sup> This gives rise to waywardness as the youth misbehave with impunity and that has become a challenge for the aspiring morally conscious youth in the Ghanaian *Zongo* communities where pluralism is the order of the day. In other words, religious pluralism does not allow religious values to represent the community's value.

Additionally, globalization is regarded across the board as one of the greatest sources of danger to susceptible youth. Western culture and its immoral values threaten the youth with evils of premarital sex among others.<sup>92</sup> A related threat is the media, held as responsible for relaying corrupting influences to young people. For instance, the use of the internet has become very necessary in the academic pursuit of knowledge and for that matter, every child must have access to the web. Access to the Internet is very important for young people to obtain educational materials for teaching and learning. However, exposure to the Internet among adolescents can also give negative implications. There are many studies that show there is a relationship between use of the Internet to increase social problems among youth such as adultery, gangsterism, drugs, gambling and vandalism. This is because most teenagers are found using the Internet to visit sites that are not helpful and immoral, which

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<sup>90</sup> Rose C. Uzoma, Religious Pluralism, Cultural Differences and Social Stability in Nigeria, *BYU Law Journal*, No.2, (2004), 651

<sup>91</sup> Michael Haralambos and Robin M. Heald, *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, (London: Harper Collins distribution services, 1985), 476-78

<sup>92</sup> Ted Swedenburg, "Imagined Youths", *Middle East Report* No.245, 4-11

exposes them to information that are destructive.<sup>93</sup> The *sakawa* (cyber fraud) menace that has dented the image of the *Zongo* youth to some extent stems from this reality.

However, the youth is expected amidst these challenges, to maintain a credible life style and to gradually surmount most, if not all of the stumbling blocks to spiritual progress.

## 2.9 CONCLUSION

The chapter has stated the Islamic perspective, role expected of youth and their behavioral patterns. It has also expressed that, the only way the youth could succeed is through education and modesty. The duties and responsibilities of parents in raising children have also been discussed. It can be argued that the effect of conduct and action of a parent is far greater than that of conversation and speech in the nurturing of children.

The discussion on Islam and the youth is necessary to establish smooth linkage to the emergence of *Bases* which is discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>93</sup> Muhamad Zaki Mustafá et al, “Facebook as Social Media Tools Among Muslim Youths in Malaysia”, *American International Journal of Social Science*, Volume 2, No. 8,( December 2013), 173-77

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE EMERGENCE AND STRUCTURE OF *BASES* IN ACCRA

#### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter looked at Islam and its position on the youth. This chapter is devoted to the emergence and structure of the *Bases* and thus addressing the first and second objectives of the research which bothers on the origins of the phenomenon as well as the trajectories and the profile of the membership. Since these *Bases* operate in the *Zongo*, a brief account of the history of *Zongo* is outlined.

#### 3.1 ZONGO IN RECENT TIMES

Originally the word *Zango* meant bush camp or transitory settlement which was established by Hausa and other traders along trade routes. Such temporary campgrounds over the decades develop into sites of diaspora communities which has become a common feature throughout the Sahel and Sudan Savannah.<sup>94</sup>

In Ghana, on the other hand, the word *Zongo* is more specifically used to refer to the residentially segregated quarters where strangers especially Muslims or at least people

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<sup>94</sup> Holger Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism: Muslims, the State, and Society in Ghana from the Precolonial to the Postcolonial Era*, (Helsinki: the Finish Oriental Society, 2008), 247

influenced by Islam, settle. In other words, *Zongo* means a community in the South dominated by Muslim settlers.

For some time now, the *Zongo* has received some prominence in the media and by extension the public. This is partly as a result of the climax of political activities leading to the 2012 general elections in Ghana. Another factor that brought the *Zongo* into the media or public milieu was the breakdown of social cohesion leading to some skirmishes in June 2012, between the indigenes (Ewe) and the Muslim community (*Zongo*) of Hohoe in the Volta Region. *Zongo* further received accentuation on Saturday, June 16, 2012, at the inauguration of the National Council of *Zongo* Chiefs (NCZC) at the Accra International conference Centre.<sup>95</sup> This Council was formed to adopt a new approach in dealing with the challenges confronting the *Zongo*. The NCZC resolve to cleanse the *Zongo* from its bad past and thereby give it a new image.

### **3.2 THE EMERGENCE OF ZONGO COMMUNITIES.**

A general feature of the *Zongo* was and is that, it consists of people with hardly any blood relationship, the only unifying factors being their common desire to better themselves through their own professions and their membership of one cultural entity. Both in Northern as well as Southern Ghana, the establishment of *Zongos* started during the colonial period and were tied to the attempts by the colonial authorities to regulate the development of townships; although, communities of Muslim traders of Mande (Wangara descent) and

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<sup>95</sup> Daily Graphic , June 18, 2012

Hausa or Mossi caravan traders had existed before the colonial period in both Asante and in the North.<sup>96</sup>

Subsequently, the first *Zongo* in Accra was founded in the early part of the nineteenth (19<sup>th</sup>) Century in the heart of Ga Mashie (Central Accra) at a place which later became known as Ussher Town.<sup>97</sup> It would be noted that Ussher was the name of one of the British Colonial Personalities in the colony and the Fort by the beach was named in his honour.

To the settlers, this *Zongo* was called *Zongo Mallam* but generally it was known as Ussher Town *Zongo*. The founder of the said *Zongo* was Mallam Na-Inno, an Islamic scholar who hailed from the historical Northern Nigerian city of Katsina.<sup>98</sup> His closest companion, Mallam Gariba also an Islamic scholar became the Imam or religious leader of the community in Accra. The community consisted mainly of Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Baribari, and Nupe. Mallam Na-Inno was not officially installed as the *Sarkin Zongo* (Zongo Chief) and he did not claim to be such even though several overtures were made by his people for him to accept the position of *Sarkin Zongo*.

Governor Rogers had in his parley with Chief Brimah I and other elders of the *Zongo* community in Accra suggested in 1908 that the settlers be relocated to a place on *Oblogo* Road which has become *Sabon-Zongo* (New Zongo). Muslim settlements in Accra include *Kawle* (Cow Lane), *Zongo Lane*, *Tudu*, *Albarka* (Adabraka), *Nima*, *Alhamdu* (Maamobi),

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<sup>96</sup> Holger Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*, 248

<sup>97</sup> Mumuni Sulemana: *Islamic Organisations in Accra*, 25

<sup>98</sup> Osman Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana*, 392

Lagos Town (New-Town), Madina, *Shukura*, *Sabon Zongo* and *Fadama*. *Zongo* communities in Ghana could be around three hundred.<sup>99</sup>

The mention of *Zongo* in Ghana gives a public impression of communities inundated with derelict structures, poor road network, insufficient amenities and above all lack important social amenities.

Another lingering perception is that *Zongo* is principally a Muslim enclave. In the logic of these persons other religions are not practiced in these inner communities. In effect these communities are intolerant of other faiths. This stance is erroneous, for my knowledge of Accra New Town and Nima in Accra, paints a different picture, since there are huge churches and of different denominations well situated in prime areas in these communities, hence Christian preaching or evangelism could be heard at all times of the day. It also means that, though the community is predominantly Muslim, there is a good number of Christians and people of other faith living together harmoniously.

### **3.3 THE EMERGENCE OF *BASES***

Osman Bari highlighted that, one of the major characteristics of the youth within the *Zongo* communities is that, they are mostly preoccupied with formation of social clubs known as

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<sup>99</sup> Osman Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana*, 379

*Bases*. Each club has its distinctive name. Some of the *Bases* are broadly social whereas others are socio-religious in nature and practice.<sup>100</sup>

Interestingly, most *Bases* adopted the names of European, Asian and American cities, for instance, Berlin, Tokyo, Antwerp, Amsterdam and Nebraska among others. Even though they are not part of this research, it can be deduced how the youth were obsessed with travelling to Europe, Asia and America at the time. It is worth mentioning that, the Member of Parliament for North Ayawaso Constituency, Honourable Mohammed Toure (McNaza) was a member of the Nebraska *Base* at Nima in the early part of 1980 before he migrated to Japan and played a monumental role in the migration of most of the youth abroad directly or indirectly by assisting them financially or otherwise.

During the latter part of 1960s to the latter part of 1970s, the objective of the youth groups was to contribute to organise annual parties during *Eid* Celebrations. The women then also had similar groupings under various names, such as *Limana*, *Mirinda* and *Awaaye* among others.<sup>101</sup>

In the early part of the 1980 through to 1990 however, the quest to travel abroad for greener pastures became the premier goal of most of the *Zongo* youth. This led to a decline in the pursuit of education as the Muslim youth were bent on travelling abroad; also some of those who were already in school truncated their academic journey and joined the exodus. This zeal of leaving the shores of Ghana gained currency because those who had made it painted a perfect picture of their sojourn. Thus, they encouraged those at home to strive to make it to

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<sup>100</sup> Osman Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana*, 517

<sup>101</sup> Ibrahim Djibril, CEO of Limayiri Transport, Interviewed on 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2015 at Kokomlemle

the “Promised Land”. The news that trickled from abroad coupled with the prestige accorded those who travelled, precipitated the coming of the youth together to help one another towards actualizing this dream. The *Bases* therefore naturally sprang up in every community as they became a place to discuss how to actualise this ambition among other objectives. Some of the *Base* members became pseudo “Geographers” as they could easily tell, which country shares borders with another and which countries do not require a visa to enter. According to Ali Abdullah, some members even carried maps to the *Base* and studied the map as though they were being examined on it.<sup>102</sup>

This phenomenon was widespread in Nima and Mamobi and gradually found its way into Accra New Town. The Nima Township has a wider coverage geographically and demographically than Accra New Town and shares a border. The phenomenon is also only found in the *Zongo* communities.

Again, from 1992 the focus of the *Bases* changed into helping one another in times of need, for instance during birth, death and marriage ceremonies. It was also the time that Ghana was returning to constitutional rule after two decades of military dictatorship. This shift of focus was also partly due to the complexity of securing a visa to travel abroad. From 1996 however, there was a paradigm shift into the domain of religious activities by the *Bases*. According to Honorable Toure, although the youth have not abandoned totally the aim of

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<sup>102</sup> Ali Abdallah is a member of Wawa Road Base resident in the U.S.A, Interviewed on 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2015 via phone

travelling abroad, it is no more the priority because there is competition in the attainment of education to an appreciable height.<sup>103</sup>

## **BASES SELECTED FROM ACCRA NEW-TOWN**

### **3.4 WAWA ROAD BASE (1967)**

The *Base* was established in 1967 and carries the name of the street in which it is located. Wawa Road is located between Agbami and Mensah Sarbah Road in Accra New-Town. This territory falls within the Ayawaso Central Constituency. It has fifty members. The *Base* is aimed at helping reform the attitudes and character of members and also propagate the message of Islam to others. The membership includes women especially young ladies in the community and that served as the women's wing of the *Base*.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the *Base* was affiliated to the World Islamic Call Society of Libya and also the Ghana Muslim Youth Movement (GMYM). However, the group severed its ties with the Libyan organisation because they felt they were being used by the Ghanaian representatives for their selfish interest but remained with the GMYM until it became defunct. Most of its members are employed in various establishments and a good number are also self-employed and businessmen/ women. According to Rahman Botchwey, there is also a sizeable number of its members who have travelled outside the country for greener pastures and also for further studies. When they come back, they still identify

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<sup>103</sup> Honorable Mohammed Toure is the Member of Parliament for North Ayawaso Constituency, Interviewed on May 25 at the Parliament House

themselves with the group.<sup>104</sup> One of the clauses in their by-laws states that any member, whose word or action or deed is found to be inimical to the tenets of Islam and to the public good, will be cautioned or be punished. Failure to abide by the rules of the *Base* will result in forfeiture of membership. This is amply explained by the functional perspective as indicated in chapter one. According to the proponents of the theory, consensus on common values and norms is the tool for promoting stability in society. Therefore the primary functions of religion are the creation, reinforcement and maintenance of social solidarity and social control as could be seen in the laws of this *Base*.<sup>105</sup> In the execution of *amr bil maroof wan nahy anil munkar* (commending good and preventing indecency); it is not enough to promote virtues only but to prevent vices as well. Again, Joan Ferrante is of the view that, when conformity cannot be achieved voluntarily, other mechanisms of social control are used to convey and enforce norms and expectations. Such mechanisms are known as sanctions.<sup>106</sup>

The *Base* is socially oriented as they organise clean up exercises quarterly and also contribute to assist members during birth, death or sickness. Also, some members were assisted in the purchase of tickets to fly abroad for greener pastures. They organised annual parties and also Eid celebrations.

In 1995 however, the Wawa Road *Base* shifted its focus and moved more towards the Tijjanniyah and *Failah* fraternity under the guardianship of the late Sheikh Jamal Baba, a

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<sup>104</sup> Rahman Botchwey is the Treasurer, Interviewed on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2015 at Wawa Road

<sup>105</sup> Lisa J. McIntyre, *The Practical Skeptic: Core Concepts in Sociology*, 38

<sup>106</sup> Joan Ferrante, *Sociology: A Global Perspective*, 235-236

graduate of al Azhar University in Egypt who was their patron and spiritual guide. Tijjaniyyah is a Sufi Order in Islam, tracing its roots to Sheikh Ahmed Tijjani; however, there are few members with *Salafi* (ahlus Sunna) orientation who contribute financially but do not take part in the Sufi activities, such as *Maulid*.

This *Base* is guided by a constitution and meets monthly in a general meeting, despite the fact that members usually meet every day to discuss issues of interest and share ideas. The *Base* is not politically affiliated to any party and they pay monthly dues of five Cedis. Ages of members range between twenty one (21) and forty two (42). Most of their members are married with kids.

Some of their members are students in the tertiary institutions and a few at the second cycle institutions.<sup>107</sup> The assembly member for the Kokomlemle electoral area, Honourable Moses Abbor is a member of Wawa Road *Base*.

Religiously, the group celebrates the birth anniversary of the Prophet of Islam (Maulid) annually. The *Base* also celebrates the birth of Sheikh Ibrahim Nyass of Kaolack-Senegal. They have instituted annual *Tafsir* of the Qur'an in Ramadan and also dedicate the last Thursdays of every month for the recitation of the Qur'an to seek Allah's providence and guidance for the community. They also operate and administer the 'Adamu' Mosque which they have refurbished and given a face lift with a modern interior decoration. A discourse in this *Base* is more often a debate on religious texts as I have witnessed. They also contribute to the weeding and tidying of Muslim cemeteries in Accra.

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<sup>107</sup> Tanko Zeba is the Vice President, Interviewed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2015 at Wawa Road

### 3.5 ANGOLA BASE (1968)

Angola *Base* was initially known as ‘*AhlulLah*’, ‘*Ahlul Bayt*’, and ‘*Ahlul Zikr*’ in the early part of 1970. According to Salim Musah<sup>108</sup>, when the Southern African nation of Angola gained its independence from its Portuguese Colonial Masters, the name was adopted. This was because the *Base* had formed a football team in 1975 around the same time that Angola had its freedom; hence the choice. This *Base* falls under the East Ayawaso Constituency.

The *Base* was started under the guidance and leadership of the late Mallam Baba Abu, a contemporary of Mallam Mukhtar Abbass, the Chief Imam of Accra (1973-1984). Mallam Baba was considered by some people as a Muslim Mystic in Accra New-Town. The *Base* has one hundred (100) members and their ages range between eighteen (18) and forty five (45). Most of its members are literates and well educated. It has artisans and businessmen/women as well. Some of its members are married with children. In 1990, this *Base* was affiliated to the Ghana Muslim Youth Movement (GMYM) but withdrew from the relationship because of sectarian differences. The *Base* accused the GMYM of being overly *Salafi* oriented. This corroborates Mumuni Sulemana’s assertion that, ethnic and doctrinal factors have negatively affected the development of Islam in Accra to the extent that, all attempts to come out with a united body to represent Muslims in Ghana have been unsuccessful.<sup>109</sup>

This has been the scenario at the macro level, and is replicated at the grassroots as well.

<sup>108</sup> Salim Musah is an executive member of the Base, interviewed on February 28, 2015 at Accra New Town

<sup>109</sup> Mumuni Suleman, “Islamic Organizations in Accra: Their Structure, Role and Impact in the Proselytisation of Islam”, Unpublished Thesis Presented to the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon, (1994), 138

The Angola *Base* is rich in human resources as they have Bankers, Teachers (religious and secular) and Information Communication Technology professionals among others.

The *Base* is guided by a constitution and by-laws and members pay monthly dues of five Cedis. However, the religious activity of the *Base* is under the influence of the Tijjaniyyah Sufi Order after it severed its ties with the GMYM. Therefore the role of the Chairman or the President has given way to the authority of the *Muqadam*<sup>110</sup> or the spiritual leader and the formal way of holding meetings has also given way to meetings at the *Zawiya* daily. *Zawiya* is a centre or corner for performing *Dhikr* (meditating on the attributes of Allah).

Until 1991, the *Base* was hugely social as the group organized clean up exercise monthly and also organised parties for its members during weddings. This is termed as *faila* party and the bride and groom danced before the audience whiles being sprayed with money. It is normally organised on a Saturday whilst the marriage ceremony is on Sunday. Football competitions were a major activity.

In 1992, the *Base* began organizing *Maulid* in honour of the late Sheikh Ibrahim Nyass, who made it much easier for people to access the Tijjaniyyah Sufi Order especially Ghanaians.<sup>111</sup> Additionally, they organise annual *Maulid* for the kids in the community and this precedes the actual *Maulid*. They also provide preaching services to the community during funerals. The *Base* also participates in the Jallo *Maulid* at Prang in the Brong Ahafo Region and also organises a trip to Kaolakh- Senegal for *Maulid* which was instituted by the late Ibrahim Nyass (Tijjaniyyah Leader). Some of the members have travelled outside the

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<sup>110</sup> Muqaddam : A leader in Sufi practices

<sup>111</sup> Yunus Dumbe, *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana*, 42

country for greener pastures but remit their contributions annually during the celebration of the birth of the Prophet of Islam (Maulid).

The organization of their *Maulid* celebration takes a new form and this would be highlighted in chapter four. The group is also a major player in the activities of the Accra New Town Faila Youth Association (ANFYA). It recently clashed with a group from Mamobi that caught the attention of the media. For instance, the Daily Guide captioned in one of its reportage “Man stabbed during Islamic celebration”.<sup>112</sup> More often than not, religion is alleged for being the root cause of all human predicament because it provides viable and abundant fuel for conflict. However, as reviewed in the first chapter of the work, U.P. Ubioha argued that, religion is absolutely virtuous and not necessarily vicious and that the above negation is the result of inhuman and unethical practices in religion. The details of the incident would be discussed in chapter four.

### **3.6 KUBURA BASE. (1985)**

According to Mohammed Naza,<sup>113</sup> they adopted the name *Khatimul Kubura* (the great seal) because the group believes it is the last in the community to transform into a religious *Base*.

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<sup>112</sup> The Daily Guide, January 3,( 2014), 6

<sup>113</sup><sup>113</sup> Mohammed Naza is the Chaiman of the base; Interviewed on 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2015 at New Town



Fig 1: Some members of the Kubura *Base* during *Maulid* celebration.

This is a *Base* located behind the Accra New-Town branch of the Ghana Commercial Bank. It currently consists of twenty eight (28) members. Of this number, fourteen (14) are gainfully employed. The eldest among them is forty two (42) and the youngest is eighteen (18) years old. Membership is automatically guaranteed if one is an indigene of the community and willing to be part. The area has a significant population of Christians due to its closeness with Kpehe Township. Kpehe is an area in the Central Ayawaso Constituency which is predominantly Christian with a good number of churches.

One can also become a member by constantly taking part in the activities of the *Base*. There is no constitution for the *Base* but there are by-laws guiding their activities. The group is visible only in the evenings because their catchment area is purely a commercial domain with banks and other business outlets operating during the day.

The Kubura *Base* was established in 1985 but shot into prominence in the year 2011, when members decided to formalize their activities and also seek recognition from other *Bases*. Seeking the recognition of sister *Bases* in contemporary times means, embracing or switching to religious activities rather than purely social orientation. This is because, what keeps the *Bases* in cooperation is the aim to promote Islam. As mentioned in the introduction in chapter one, any *Base* that does not adapt and adopt religious activities, risks irrelevance in the scheme of youth affairs in the *Zongo*. This is an indication of Islamic revivalism in the youth.

The *Base* is affiliated to the Accra New Town Failah Youth Association. Accra New-Town Faila Youth Association is the mouth piece for all youth *Bases* in the Accra New Town area that sympathises or identifies with the Tijjaniyyah Sufi Order or at least has *Maulid* celebrations prominent in its activities. It is worth mentioning that, I have not come across a *Base* that has no Sufi sympathisers even if socially oriented. There are also sympathisers of the *Salafi* among the *Base* members. I observed that, the Shi'ah also has individuals in the *Bases* but these are Tijjaniyyah as well. However, the Tijjaniyyah adherents are alarmed by the conversion of some members to Shi'ism. They alleged that, those who embraced Shi'ah doctrines eventually display lukewarm attitude towards the Tijjaniyyah path of spirituality.

Their social activities include clean up exercises, helping one another in business by introducing and linking members with the necessary people in the field and the facilitating of financial assistance. They also organise parties for members during festivities such as *Eid-ul-Fitr* and *Adha* and also leisure trips to amusement parks.

In 2012 however, the *Base* began celebrating the birth of the Prophet of Islam annually thereby tilting towards religious activities. They also organise Qura'nic recitation annually to usher in the New Year. Most of the members also travel to Senegal for the *Maulid* celebration in Kaolakh.

Four of its current members are students at the second cycle institutions and two are doing their national service after their Bachelor programs. The majority of members are businessmen/women. They pay monthly dues of twenty Cedis but it is waived for students.

### **3.7 IBADU-RAHMAN BASE (1990)**

The name *Ibadu-Rahman* (Servants of the Merciful) was chosen because they always wanted to remind members of their duties to the Creator.<sup>114</sup> Originally, the name of the *Base* was “House Party” when they started operating. “House Party” is the name of a restaurant located behind the *Base* and was then very popular, hence the base was identified with it. However, the change of direction of the *Base* warranted a change in the name in order to give it a religious identity.

*Ibadu-Rahman Base* is located behind the Accra New-Town branch of the former Social Security Bank and now the SG-SSB Bank. This *Base* was formed in 1990 by a group of young vibrant youth who are still leading the group. That is not to say members were not meeting until then but rather, their activities was confined to themselves alone.

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<sup>114</sup> Mallam Abideen Mohammad is the leader of the base: Interviewed on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2015 at New Town



Fig 2: Some members of the Ibaadu Rahman *Base* during a Friday *Dhikr*

Among the prominent members of the *Base* are Abideen Mohammad and Baba Sumaila. Abideen is an Islamic teacher and a youth activist who has been championing the cause of unity among the Muslim youth and the need to be morally upright. For instance, he laments on how the youth have embraced dancing in the presence of the *Ulama* (Islamic scholars) during *Maulid* celebrations. To him, this does not augur well for spiritual development.<sup>115</sup>

He is also a motivational speaker and has scores of students under his tutelage.

The *Base* has a total membership of forty (40) people. Twenty (20) of its members are workers in various institutions and the rest are businessmen/women and with a few who are unemployed.

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<sup>115</sup> Abideen Muhammad: Interviewed on 25<sup>th</sup> February at New Town

This *Base* is also not politically affiliated to any party but religiously affiliated to the Accra New-Town Failah Youth Association (A.N.F.Y.A) and disagrees with the affiliated body on the issue of dancing because; the A.N.FY.A sees nothing wrong with it.

Their social activities include clean up exercises, community security alert and football competitions. Additionally, they organize annual celebrations to usher in the New Year in the Gregorian Calendar.

However, the *Base* switched to religious activities in 2005 and began the celebration of the *Maulid* of Sheikh Ibrahim Nyass and the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). They also organize ‘the Sufi Forum’ where followers and students of the Sufi Order discuss issues and share ideas. The *Base* also participates in the annual Jallo *Maulid* at Prang in the Brong Ahafo Region which was instituted by the late Sheikh Abdallah Maikano.

Their sources of funding are contributions from members but there is no document guiding their operations. Each member is levied an amount to finance any proposed budget for their programs. Five (5) of their members have completed second cycle education while three (3) are graduates from tertiary institutions. Some of their members, who have left the community for another, still identify with the *Base* and pay their contributions but do not sit at meetings.

Their president, mallam Abideen Muhammad is currently the Public Relations Officer of the Accra New Town Failah Youth Association.

### 3.8 CHICAGO BASE (1970)



Fig 3: Some members of the Chicago *Base* after a Friday Congregational Prayer

The Chicago *Base* is closer to the Eastern boundaries that separate Nima and Accra New-Town. It also borders Kotobabi to the North. The geographical location of this *Base* reveals the lack of proper planning in Accra New-Town as there are no roads linking the area with the rest of the communities except the main road.

According to Aminu Garry<sup>116</sup> who is the President of the *Base* and also the Vice President of the Accra New-Town Failah Youth Association, the name Chicago was given to the *Base* by one of their brothers in the latter part of 1970 who had travelled to the United States of America and lived in the city of Chicago. When he returned home, he used to call the area

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<sup>116</sup> Aminu Garry is the President of the base, Interviewed on the 9<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at Chicago base, New Town

Chicago. Gradually the name came to stay and ultimately became the name of the area. Even though the *Base* was established in 1970, the current group members in January 1995 decided to formalize their activities and identify with other *Bases* who share common aspirations with them.

The *Base* presently has sixty (60) members and their ages range between eighteen (18) and forty three (43). Twenty of its members are working in various professions. However, twenty (20) of the members are unemployed and are still striving to get jobs. Securing a job has been a challenge in recent times and very worrying to the youth.

The group is affiliated to the Accra New-Town Failah Youth Association. Though the *Base* is non-political, some of its members are prominent foot soldiers of some political parties in the country and very conspicuous.

Their social activities include football competitions, assisting members in times of need, for instance birth, death and marriage. However, since 1996 when they fully aligned with other *Bases* in the area and tilted towards religious activities, their major activity has been the organization of the *Maulid* of the Prophet of Islam annually. Annual Qur'an recitation to seek for Allah's guidance has become basic with virtually every *Base* and Chicago *Base* is no exception.

Their main source of funding is individual contributions and also donor assistance. They pay weekly dues of two Cedis. Twenty five (25) of its members are currently studying at various levels of education with most being at the second cycle. The *Base* belongs to the Tijjaniyyah

fraternity. At the time of the research, it came to light that, the *Base* splited into two factions due to misunderstanding with the A.N.T .F.Y.A which bothers on disciplinary issues.

For instance, the *Base* had written to the Accra New Town Faila Youth Association to protest against certain inactions of the executives with regards to the protection of the dignity of every Muslim preacher. A preacher insulted another during a program in the vicinity of the Angola *Base* and the organizers did not react. This has infuriated the Chicago *Base* and has threatened to abrogate the affiliation. Some of the members also think the abrogation is not justified. For instance Mohammad Sani Nagayya, an executive member, refused to sever ties with the Association thereby creating a faction. Mohammad Sani Nagayya was subsequently excommunicated by the mother *Base*.

## ***BASES SELECTED FROM NIMA***

### **3.9 ADABUL FAILAH BASE (1980)**

The *Base* is located at *Kusuntu* line in Nima. *Kusuntu* is the dominant ethnic group in the community. The area is about one hundred meters away from one of the bridges linking Nima and Accra New Town. The *Base* was formerly known as *Kusuntu* but consequently, the name of *the Base* changed to *Adabul Failah*, (morals of *Failah*) when the group tilted towards religious activities.

Their number is forty (40) and they are also in constant touch with some of their members in Europe and America who remit their contributions to support their activities. Their ages range between twenty two (22) and forty five (45). They have students numbering ten. Three of whom are doing their National Service whiles one is studying at the tertiary level and six of them are in the second cycle institutions. The rest of the members are gainfully employed. Their professions include Islamic and Arabic teachers, architects and tailors among others.

Most of its members identify themselves with the Tijjaniyyah Sufi Order and therefore the activities of the group are tilted towards that Order based on the influence of Sheikh Musah Atiya. Musah Atiya is a native of Bawku in the Upper East Region of Ghana who migrated to Accra after the completion of his studies in Egypt and Senegal.

Their social activities include football competitions and also assisting one another during rites of passage. One of their bye laws states that, if a member gives birth without marriage, he is not to be helped and this is in line with the *Shariah*. The question that arises is why the *Base* singled out birth outside marriage. It appears that sexual impropriety is on the high side in the *Zongo* communities. As lamented by Abdur Raheem in Chapter two, the over indulgence in sex calls for concern. The vice is so widespread that many persons, men and women, see it as normal.<sup>117</sup>

However in 2008, the *Base* embraced religious activities and began to celebrate annually, the birth anniversary of the Prophet. The first of *Muharram* is also firmly fixed in their scheme of affairs as there is Qur'anic recitation to usher in the Islamic New Year and to

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<sup>117</sup> M.A.Abdur-Raheem, "Nigerian Muslim Women and the Importance of Being Assertive", in *Religion, Leadership and Society: Focus on Nigeria*, Ed by Ade Dopamu, (Lagos: Free Enterprise Publishers,2004),193

pray for departed Muslim souls. Most members take up morning studies with the Imam Musah Atiya in Islamic jurisprudence and Arabic Grammar during the week. Some members of the *Base* travel to Kaolakh in Senegal for *Maulid*.<sup>118</sup>

They have also adopted Sheikh Musah Atiya as the spiritual guide. Just like other *Bases*, *Adabul Failah* is non political but has active individuals in various political persuasions. They meet on Fridays after the *Isha* prayer in order to discuss issues of societal concern, normally a topic is chosen by the Imam for discussion. They have a good relationship with the community because doctrinal differences has no place in their scheme of affairs as there are members with different doctrinal orientations in the *Base*.

Leadership in this group is by selection and election by the elders. They choose whoever they consider or deem competent to lead and he serves for as long as he can, barring any moral corruption or health troubles. The *Base* has a women's wing.

### **3.10 CHICAGO BASE-NIMA (1980)**

This *Base* is located on the Alata Street in the North Ayawaso Constituency, precisely House number E94/11 next to one of the magnificent edifices in Nima known as the UN building. The *Base* came into being in the latter part of 1980 but was then known as the Third World *Base*. Subsequently, during the days of the Chicago Bulls Sports Club in the United States of America, they fell in love with the team, hence the adoption of the name

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<sup>118</sup> Mallam Ibrahim Sulaiman chairman, interviewed on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2015 at Kusuntu line in Nima

Chicago. It must be stated that, there is a *Base* in Accra New Town with the same name but different motives for the adoption.

Membership of this group is sixty with ages ranging between twenty eight (28) and forty five (45). All members are employed. Amongst them are Journalists, Security Personnel, Tailors, Barbers and Businessmen/women.

Their main activity was sports competitions as they aimed to raise talents for further sporting careers since sports has become a very lucrative venture. They also contribute to help one another in times of need, for instance sickness or if one is bereaved. Members pay weekly dues of two Cedis, although they are levied as well when the need arises. They also organize clean up exercises quarterly and also in the last week before the start of Ramadan. It is worthy of note that, funds are generated internally through members' dues and they meet on Fridays in the evening to discuss issues of importance to the community.

In 1998 this *Base* zoomed into religious domain and scheduled the first week of April as the date for their annual celebration of *Maulid*. Also, serving as their spiritual guides are Sheikh Salis Ibrahim and Sheikh Ridwan Sulaiman. Sheikh Salis is a teacher at the Rashidiyyah Islamic school in Nima whiles Sheikh Ridwan (a student of Sheikh Jamal Baba) is an exegete. The *Base* has also instituted *Tafsir* every weekend after *Maghrib* prayers in order to educate the community.

As part of their intellectual exercise, a topic is chosen to be debated or deliberated upon during the week at the *Base*. This is normally in the field of *Shariah* (exoteric) and *Haqeeqa* (esoteric) since, it has been recognized that, the absence of information may impede

development and progress. Differently stated, information is necessary for educational, cultural and social transformation in any society.<sup>119</sup>

Leadership in this group is by election. According to their constitution, a leader shall be deposed if there appears a negative change in his character or behaviour. Also, the *Base* is non political and they assist in refurbishing the *Rashidiyyah* and *Ansarudeen* Islamic schools in Nima since majority of its members are alumni of these schools.<sup>120</sup>

### **3.11 IBRAHIMIYYAH BASE (2006)**

In proximity to the “free pipe” *Base* is the Ibrahimiyah group that sits in front of house number E156/6. According to Salim Hussein,<sup>121</sup> they have chosen this name in order to express their love for Sheikh Ibrahim Nyass of Senegal. The main aim of the *Base* is to entrench their religious practices. However, it started as a social group in 2006 with interest in soccer, though individual members were highly religious. It is to be noted that, this *Base* is an offshoot of the Ashura *Base*. The Ashura *Base* is a Tijjaniyyah organization led by the late Ismail Ashura, an Islamic teacher and a disciple of Sheikh Jamal Baba.

The *Base* organizes clean up exercises monthly and also helps needy students in the community by paying their school fees. They meet on Thursday evenings to tackle issues of

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<sup>119</sup> Luka Ishaya, “Information : A Panacea for Decision Making and Problem Solving”, *International Journal of Research and Education*, Vol 8, No. 1, 2011

<sup>120</sup> Ali Cisse is Imam of the Base, Interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2015 at Nima

<sup>121</sup> Salim Hussein Zakariya is an executive member of the Base: Interviewed on 6<sup>th</sup> march 2015 at Nima

communal concern and their relationship with the community is very cordial because of their care for the kids in the community.

They are made up of twenty six members. The eldest and the youngest are in their late thirties and twenties respectively. Seven of their members are students at the tertiary level while two are at the second cycle. The rest are part of the labour force of the country and they are made up of Teachers, Information and Communication Technologists and Carpenters.

In the early part of 2009, the *Base* introduced religious activities in their programs and chose the first Friday after Ramadan or the first Friday in *Shawwal* as a fixed date for the celebration of *Maulid*. Their spiritual guide is Sheikh Hussein Zakariya, a renowned Islamic scholar who studied in Libya and is also the proprietor of Adab Islamic Preparatory and Junior High School at Nima. The *Base* is also in close touch with Sheikh Yahya al Amin, the Imam of *Shukura* (a suburb of Accra). The *Base* generates funds through members' benevolence and also monthly dues of five Cedis per member. As a *Base*, they are not affiliated to any political persuasion and have instituted Friday lectures after *Isha* prayers to enlighten members in particular and the community at large on the *Shariah*. Some of their members travel to Senegal annually for *Maulid*.

Leadership of this group is based on educational qualification and servitude. A minimum of Senior High School Certificate is required of a leader and every other position in the *Base* is held annually except the Imam as stipulated in their constitution.

### 3.12 ASHADDU HAYA'AN BASE (1984)

The *Base* is located close to the Nima market in an area popularly known as Yahya Kansas. Yahya Kansas was the National Democratic Congress' Member of Parliament for Nima from the year 1993-1996 when the New Patriotic Party (N.P.P) boycotted the Parliamentary elections in 1992. The *Base* came by its name through one Ahmed Tijani. *Ashadu Haya'an* is an Arabic phrase that connotes modesty and it was used by the late Ibrahim Nyass in his collection of poems, to describe the life style of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). Hitherto, the *Base* was known as Kansas *Base*.

The youth of this *Base* were motivated by Sheikh Sani Murtala, a Tijjaniyyah *Muqaddam* who encouraged them to embrace the Sufi Order. According to Uthman Umar, though they were religiously conscious as individuals, they were not collectively involved in religious activities. So they decided to turn the *Base* into a *zawiya*, after which they were given a small mosque in the community to run their Islamic programmes. The mosque was later renovated by Mustapha Ibrahim's Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services (ICODEHS), a Non Governmental Organization engaged in the building and rehabilitation of mosques and digging of wells among others.

The membership of the *Base* is thirty (30) and their age ranges between twenty five (25) and forty five (45) and majority of them are university graduates. Some of their expertise include banking, insurance, teaching and administration among others. There is none in the *Base* who is unemployed. This presupposes that, the *Base* is only active in the evenings and their

spiritual guide is Sheikh Lutf Jamal Baba, the son of the late Jamal Baba al Azhari. They have a women's wing and some of the women are tertiary students.

Their social activities include helping one another in times of need, such as birth, death, sickness and assistance to travel abroad when the opportunity comes. Also, they serve the community in a watchdog role in order to beef up the security of the area.

However in 1998, the *Base* unanimously agreed to introduce religious based activities in their affairs. Consequently, the *Base* began to commemorate *Maulid* annually and it is usually in April. Since all members are gainfully employed, the issue of finance is somehow taken care of much easier relatively compared to other *Bases* who have some unemployed members. There is annual Qur'anic recitation to pray for peace and harmony for the community and the nation at large. They organize a symposium monthly to conscientise the community on Islamic principles. They also provide logistics to *Nurul Islam* (Islamic school) that is managed by their spiritual guide. They also provide scholarship for bright but needy students in the school.<sup>122</sup>

The *Base* seems to be a model for others in the Nima community because of its structure and social standing. For instance I found amongst them a juror of the Accra tribunal.

Leadership in this group is by election. Some of the members are vocal political activists of the various political persuasions and are sometimes even heard on radio expressing their party's stance on issues. However, the group as a *Base* is not political.

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<sup>122</sup> Umar uthman is the vice president, Interviewed on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2015 at Nima, Yahya Kansas.

### 3.13 ZUMURATU BASE (1994)

The *Base* is situated Around the Nima Round About in an area known as “Sunset”. “Sunset” is name of a retail shop located at the centre of the area and the community began to be identified with that name. Though the community is Muslim dominated but has significant number of Christians and they live in peace and harmony. The *Base* started as a meeting ground for friends in the community and it was known as Sunset *Base*. The youth sat to chat and discuss matters of common interest, such as economic opportunities. I must state that, their main focus was how to leave the shores of Ghana and the *Base* served as a good information centre for that ambition.

The *Base* has thirty five (35) members and most of them are in their late thirties. They have three students at the Senior High School and two at the Islamic University College of Ghana and the University of Professional Studies. Some of the members are Teachers, Tailors and Butchers among others. Their contributions by way of monthly dues are their source of funding for their activities and it is pegged at five Cedis. The gainfully employed amongst them however shoulder the major part of the budget any time there is an activity because there are a few unemployed in the *Base*.

At a point in time, they began to organize Qur’anic recitation to seek Allah’s blessings for their lives and the community in general. This exercise encouraged and propelled them to embrace religious programs having been patted on the back by the community after this exercise. According to Joan Ferrante, a positive sanction is an expression of approval and a

reward for compliance; such a sanction may take the form of applause or a pat on the back.<sup>123</sup>

In 2004, the name of the *Base* was changed from “Sunset” to *Zumuratu Ibrahimiyah* (associates of Ibrahim) on the recommendation of Sheikh Kamaludeen, the Deputy National Chief Imam of Ghana who is also the life patron of the group. The *Base* therefore introduced religious based activities in its scheme of affairs.

The *Base* has fixed their celebration of *Maulid* invariably, a fortnight after the *Eidul fitr*.<sup>124</sup> They have also adopted Shaban Salis Shaban as their spiritual mentor. Shaban is the son of Sheikh Salis Shaban, an Imam of Mamobi and one time disciple of Sheikh Ibrahim Nyass.

Also, the group organizes symposium quarterly in the community to enlighten the masses on Islam. Whenever there is any religious program in the community, the elders entrust the organization in their hands; for instance they prepare the ground during, birth, death and marriage ceremonies.

According to Nazir Hussein, the group has taken it upon themselves to provide the *kafn* (shroud) for Muslims who died in the community. The *Base* also renovates every single mosque in the community prior to Ramadan Fasting.<sup>125</sup>

Positions of leadership are subject to change annually and one could be removed or retained based on his performance.

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<sup>123</sup> Joan Ferrante, *Sociology: A Global Perspective*, 236

<sup>124</sup> Eidul fitr: Islamic festival to mark the end of Ramadan

<sup>125</sup> Nazir Iddris and Salis Hussein are Chairman and Secretary respectively, Interviewed on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2015 at Nima

## **BASES SELECTED FROM MAMOBI**

### **3.14 AHBAB JALLO BASE (2002)**

The *Base* started as a social one in the Mamobi West territory, with the aim of maintaining the unity of the youth and helping one another during difficult times. It was then known as the Peace Makers *Base*. Their activities then included organizing football competitions. However, in 2010, they changed gear into religious activities on the advice of Sheikh Lutfi Jamal Baba who encouraged them to be religiously active rather than while away precious time. Having heeded to this advice, the group changed its name to *Ahbab Jallo* (Jallo lovers). Their membership base is forty and the age range is between twenty (20) and forty two (42). Amongst them are teachers, herbalists, and herdsman. They have two students in the polytechnic and seven have completed the second cycle awaiting opportunity to further their education, due to financial constraint. The *Zongo* communities have a lot of youth who have dropped out of school because of financial difficulties. I realized that a number of students sponsor their own education at the second cycle and tertiary levels, and the source of their funding is *sakawa* (cyber fraud). It is a quite worrying situation because it depicts failure of parental care.

The *Base* organizes *Tafsir* in the month of Ramadan. Even though the *Base* has not instituted the celebration of *Maulid* on a large scale compared to others, they organize Qur'anic recitation from the first of *Rabiul Awwal* to the twelfth of the same month to mark the birth of the Prophet of Islam. The *Base* has a *zawiya* where they perform *adhkar*

(meditations). Although most members subscribe to the Tijjaniyyah Order, they are frequently missing from the *Sufi* circles where the litanies are recited in congregation.

The *Base* helps the community during rites of passage. For instance, they organize night preaching during funerals. Similarly, they organize symposia periodically to enlighten the community on Islam. They also facilitate the teaching of the young ones in Islamic studies on Saturdays and Sundays in their mosque. Additionally, they organize classes in Islamic studies from Monday to Wednesday free of charge during schools' vacation when most of the pupils are at home. Mallam Ahmad Tanko serves as the spiritual guide of the *Base*.

Their individual financial contributions keep the *Base* running as far as funding is concerned. The group is not affiliated to any political ideology and they meet on Sundays to discuss issues of general concern to the community. Leadership in this group is dependent on the depth of one's religious knowledge and also service to the group. According to Barhama Yusuf-the Imam, a leader is removed from his position if his actions are frequently contrary to Islamic laid down rules.<sup>126</sup>

### **3.15 IDDRISSAN BASE (1993)**

The name of the area is *Kagban* in the Mamobi West territory. The *Base* assumed the name Iddrissan because the owner of the house where the *Base* is located is called Mallam Iddriss. There is a mosque in that house and the Imam is a *Base* member. The group is made up of

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<sup>126</sup> Sheikh Barhama Yusuf, assistant Imam, Interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2015 at Mamobi

twenty five (25) members. Their ages range between twenty eight (28) and thirty eight (38). There are no students but workers in various professions. Amongst them are drivers, traders and tailors. According to Mallam Muhammad Khamis-the Imam<sup>127</sup>, five of the members are unemployed. Mallam Khamis is the spiritual guide of the group and he steers the affairs of the *Base*. Their weekly financial contribution serves as their source of income and is pegged at two Cedis.

The *Base* was started as a welfare seeking one and is an offshoot of the *Kagban Base*. The *Kagban Base* has *Salafist* in the majority. Members were therefore assisted during marriage, sickness, birth or death of a family member. However, this assistance is applicable to one's direct family members only. It is clear that, in the late 1980 and the early part of 1990, the *Salafi* orientation was the dominant in the territory of Nima and Mamobi as there were a lot of people who had scholarship to study in the Arab Gulf Region especially Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar. When these graduates returned home, they propagated the *Salafi* doctrines. However, the advent of Sheikh Jamal Baba with *Tafsir* in those communities in 1991 changed the fortunes of the Tijjaniyyah in those communities.

In 2008, the Idrissan *Base* tilted its activities towards the Tijjaniyyah Sufi Order and therefore performed their Sufi practices in the Idriss Mosque which was handed over to them. Although the *Base* has not instituted the celebration of *Maulid*, they organize Qur'anic recitation every Friday and also *Tafsir* during the month of Ramadan.

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<sup>127</sup> Mallam Khamis is the Imam of the group. Interviewed on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2015

Like the other *Bases*, they are not affiliated to any political party. There is no specific day for discussing issues, hence, issues are discussed as and when they crop up. They are in good standing with the community and they also collaborate with sister *Bases* from other areas. Leadership is chosen by their spiritual guide but in consultation with the general body.

### **3.16 YAKUBU BASE (1997)**

The area is close to the Accra Girls' Senior High School and it looks more of a general residential area than a *Zongo* due to its outlook. There is a significant number of Christians in the community. The base was named after the founder of the *Base*. The group comprises of sixty (60) members and their age range is between twenty (20) and thirty five (35). The *Base* has members who are chartered accountants, tailors, teachers, fresh University graduates who are doing their National Service and twenty students at the second cycle.

The *Base* started as community meeting grounds with the aim of championing the welfare of the area in the field of security and sanitation. The members belong to various doctrinal groups and the Shi'ah are of a significant number. This is probable because, the Shi'ah has a mosque and study centre situated in the community. They are having a fruitful relationship with the entire populace including the Christian folks who are sometimes invited to participate in meetings concerning the community. They meet weekly to discuss issues of general concern.

However, in 2005 the *Base* decided to switch to religious activities on the advice of the founder. This notion got the support of the members who were mostly the students of the founder.

Consequently, the *Base* commemorates the birth anniversary of the Prophet annually and has fixed the twelve of *Rabiul Awwal* as the date for that. According to Islamic history (Sunni perspective), the Prophet was born on the twelfth of *Rabiul Awwal*. The *Base* runs a *makaranta* in the community for free and of which members are the teachers. The group has no political affiliation and leadership positions are assigned by the spiritual head. According to Mallam Yakubu Ibrahim-the leader,<sup>128</sup> he has taught majority of the members and therefore knows what every individual is capable of doing. This means that, the *Base* has no constitution but rely on the general principles of Islam.

### **3.17 YAA JALAL BASE (1988)**

The community is called Nafiu around the Kanda highway. The area is predominantly *Kotokoli* and *Dandi*<sup>129</sup> who are said to be the first to settle there. The *Base* is Yaa Jalal and this is also the name of a Muslim cleric in the area known as Mustapha Yaa Jalal.

Originally, the *Base* was known as Nafiu Stars and they engaged in sporting activities. Also members sat together to share information on how to make it in life particularly information that bothers on migration and possible economic opportunities outside the country.

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<sup>128</sup> Mallam Yakubu Ibrahim is founder and leader of the Base, Interviewed on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at Mamobi

<sup>129</sup> Kotokoli and Dandi are tribes with ancestry in Togo and Benin respectively

In 2002, the *Base* came heavily under the influence of Sheikh Mustapha Yaa Jalal. According to Osman Mustapha, they adopted the name Yaa Jalal because he has been their spiritual guide and role model since they embraced or concentrated on religious activities. The spiritual guide of the *Base* happens also to be the Imam of the community and a member of the Office of the National Chief Imam. Again, he is the headmaster for the Islamic training institute located at Kanda.

The *Base* holds the celebration of *Maulid* of Sheikh Ibrahim Nyass of Kaolack in the month of *Rajab*. They have also built a mosque that was commissioned by the National Chief Imam in the year 2005. They organize symposiums monthly to enlighten the community on Islam. They also run a *makranta* on weekends and it is fee paying. The group provides logistics and other assistance for the smooth running of the school.

They have two students at the tertiary level and many more at the Senior High Schools. Also, amongst them are traders, security personnel and drivers but eight of their members are unemployed.<sup>130</sup> They generate funds internally; however members who have travelled abroad also remit their contributions. Their monthly dues is pegged at five Cedis.

They are not aligned to any party politically and they meet on Fridays to discuss religious issues. The *Base* has an excellent relationship with the community and is looked up to whenever there is any program that requires a religious organization. The members serve as role models to the youth of the community because of their religious knowledge background and general moral conduct.

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<sup>130</sup> Mallam Osman Mustapha is vice President, Interviewed on 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2015 at Kanda

Additionally, the group collaborates with other *Bases* that have religion at heart, for instance, Issakiyya, Shabaniyya and Kubura among others. The *Base* is controlled by the elderly among the group because leadership is by selection or nomination. According to Osman Mustapha, indiscipline is a punishable offence and also dereliction of duty warrants removal from post.

### **3.18 SANUSIYYAH BASE (1999)**

The *Base* is located at an area known as four-four- one (441) welfare and is close to the Kanda High Street. The *Base* is an offshoot of the Nebraska *Base* and it has twenty (20) members whose age range is between twenty (20) and forty five (45). The Nebraska *Base* is dominated by members who share *Salafi* convictions and they have more people in diaspora than any *Base*. Its activities are purely social and members discuss issues of communal importance. Also they assist one another in times of need but have not instituted any religious program.

In 1999, Mallam Tanko Sanusi, a Muslim cleric from Kumasi resonated with the group to transform into religious instead of a mere social group because that will be more beneficial to Islam. After paying heed to the advice of the cleric, a mosque was built in the community by Alhaji Muhammad Ahmed for the youth to maintain and manage. The new group therefore branded itself Sanussiyah.

Five of their members have completed the Senior High Schools and two have applied for further studies at the tertiary level. They also have tailors and drivers amongst them. At the time of this research, five of their members were unemployed.

They organize *Maulid* celebration annually and immediately fix a date after the National Chief Imam's *Maulid* at Fadama which has assumed a national outlook. Sheikh Mas'ud Ali is their Imam and leads them in daily prayers and he is also their spiritual guide. The group has instituted a Friday preaching to sensitize Muslims in the community.

As a *Base*, they organize annual Qur'anic recitation for the peace and wellbeing of the community in particular and the country as a whole. The *Base* also dispatches some of its knowledgeable members to assist various *makaranta* in the community by way of teaching, for free. They even go further to providing logistics.

According to Mallam Abdullah Nuhu<sup>131</sup>, they meet every Friday to discuss issues of relevance to the community and by extension Islam. The group has a healthy relationship with the community. The *Base* runs the mosque and fund their activities from their personal contributions. Most of the members are married with kids.

Leadership position is by selection by the spiritual guide. They have a good disciplinary code and a member may be expelled if he is found to be consistently indisciplined. As discussed in Chapter One, the common grape that is after the heart of every religionist lies not in their rituals but their common object of helping man to actualize the divine in him; and also, assisting man to ascend to the pedestal of virtue. The threat of expulsion therefore

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<sup>131</sup> Mallam Abdallah Nuhu is the treasurer, Interviewed on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2015

serves as deterrent to unapproved behaviours. The *Base* is non political as has been the case with the others under this research.

### 3.19 CONCLUSION

This chapter addressed some of the research objectives which bother on the origin, emergence, and the structure and membership of the *Bases*. The chapter employed the functional theory and also the theory of *amr bil ma'roof wa nahy anil munkar* to appreciate and unravel the mystery behind the metamorphosis of various *Bases* from purely sociological focus into religious oriented groups.

Again, it was found out that the *Bases* as religious groups are not politically affiliated though individual members are actively involved in politics and some of them hold executive positions in various parties at the community level. Members of these *Bases* are usually between the ages of eighteen and forty, more or less fitting the definition of youth in Islam. Allah says in (Quran 46:15):

And We have enjoined upon man, to his parents, good treatment. His mother carried him with hardship and gave birth to him with hardship, and his gestation and weaning (period) is thirty months. (He grows) until, when he reaches maturity and reaches (the age of) forty years, he says, "My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favour which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents and to work righteousness of which You will approve and make righteous for me my offspring. Indeed, I have repented to You, and indeed, I am of the Muslims."

Some of the members are highly educated and most members are employed, and funding for activities is generated internally.

Additionally, there is a leadership structure and most of the groups are formally structured with a constitution and an established power structure; For instance, President, Imam, Secretary and Treasurer among others. It was also found out that indiscipline is not countenanced among various *Bases* and there is a threat of expulsion for consistent deviance. I observed that women *Bases* have sprang up but are seen to be visible where a friend has a shop. Membership of such *Base* is dependent on the relationship between an individual and the owner of the shop.

Furthermore, the celebration of *Maulid* is a key component if not the fulcrum of activities. Qur'anic recitation to seek Allah's guidance is taken seriously. And also symposia to enlighten the community, featured prominently in the agenda of the *Bases*. This will be enough to take us to the next chapter which will focus on the impact of the activities of the *Bases* on the Zongo community.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE IMPACT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BASE ON THE ZONGO COMMUNITY

#### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter highlighted on the various *Bases* and their structures. Interest in the question of youth and Islam in Ghana stems from the overwhelming demographic weight of youth and their relatively recent incursion into the public domain; as well as the wave of Islamic revivalism that is currently happening in the *Zongo* communities, particularly, the areas under this research. This chapter therefore dwells on the impact of the activities of the *Bases* on the community.

#### 4.1 EVOLUTION OF THE *BASES*

The phenomenon of *Bases* started around the early 1960s. It was purely socially oriented among the older generations, precisely around the early 1970s because, they were concerned with how to raise funds to help one another in times of need and also celebrate during festivities. The youth were then involved in music and dance but currently, the situation is a total departure from the past.<sup>132</sup> The issue of *Bases* is an interesting one. In the past, there was so much rivalry between groups. That is, each group wanted to exhibit bravery by

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<sup>132</sup> Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Rais, Headmaster of Rashad School, Interviewed on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2015 at New Town.

trying to exhibit might over the other groups, and also they engaged in acts that are religiously and socially unapproved. For instance, the smoking of marijuana and also lack of interest in education even though most had the opportunity.

Currently however, there is a healthy competition in the pursuit of knowledge and religiosity, in addition to obedience to social norms in the community. Most of the *Bases* celebrate the *Maulid* of the Holy Prophet of Islam and the *Maulid* of Muslim personalities who have excelled in their *Da'wah* activities. During the *Maulid*, basic Islamic tenets and social issues are explained to ordinary Muslims.<sup>133</sup>

In Europe and America, according to Sheikh Tawfiq, there are no *Bases*. The youth therefore meet at bars, cafes and restaurants to socialize. In Africa, and especially Ghana, the community is free and there is always free association and interaction amongst people; that accounts for the ease with which the youth converge and share ideas. He added that, just like every human institution, there may be some bad elements among the lot, but the good ones are always in the majority and are always the leaders of various *Bases*. Such good ones always prevail on the rest to do what is right and conduct themselves in accordance with the principles of Islam and the laws of Ghana.

Furthermore, there was a time one could not freely walk at night for fear of being attacked and robbed. The *Bases* have taken it upon themselves to serve the communities in a watch dog role. For that matter, most *Base* members stay out very late, particularly those who are

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<sup>133</sup> Sheikh Tawfiq Jamal Baba is the Imam of Green Mosque, Interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2015 at Accra New Town

self employed. “I am happy that most of the youth in the *Base* are students and probably part of the reason why there is sanity and a shift of focus in their activities”.<sup>134</sup>

Mohammed Awal Kabila Ali<sup>135</sup> is of the view that, the *Bases* contribute immensely during social programs such as marriage, naming ceremonies, funerals and other social forums. They organize and arrange the platform for the programs, particularly if it is one of their own. Also, most *Bases* have contributed money to send some of their members abroad. Some of these members pursue further studies. They in turn, send down money for other members to follow suit when the need arises. This according to Mohammed Awal is economically viable because these people in the diaspora send remittances to support their families.

He added that, most *Bases* now serve as centres for the development of Islam because majority of them have shifted emphasis from helping only themselves to religious activities. According to him, this is very healthy as it helps to minimize anti-social activities in the community, such as selfishness and greed. He admitted that even though there may be individuals in the *Bases* who may engage in deviant behaviors, but they do so in the quiet because other members would not permit such behaviors done in their presence.

Muhammad al Hadi is confident that, the phenomenon of *Bases* is changing because most members are students and workers. There is also a campaign among various *Bases* to lead a good moral life. Some of the members vie for political leadership such as the District

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<sup>134</sup> Sheikh Tawfiq Jamal Baba

<sup>135</sup> Awal Kabila Ali is a Unit Committee member in East Ayawaso, Interviewed on the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2015 at New Town

Assembly membership and the Unit Committee membership and this is a good sign. The days when politicians used the *Bases* for their dirty errands are over; the youth were sometimes hired by politicians to intimidate their opponents during elections but this has ceased.

The National Chief Imam, Sheikh Osman Nuhu Sharubutu stated that his Office will not defend any member of the *Zongo* community arrested for acts of violence before, during and after the December 7, 2012 general elections in Ghana. He has therefore cautioned the youth in the *Zongo* community to desist from engaging in acts that could lead to electoral violence.

According to the Imam, during the 2008 general elections, relatives of most of the *Zongo* youth who were arrested by the police, particularly in Accra, pleaded with him to intervene for their release. Many of these perpetrators, it is reported, had stolen ballot boxes, beaten polling agents and encouraged minors to vote.<sup>136</sup>

According to Muhammad al- Hadi, there is enlightenment at the *Bases* because there are people who have different skills and talents and who also interact and share ideas, thereby, exchanging views and enriching their knowledge *Base*.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Daily Graphic, No. 19009, Tuesday November 27, (2012), 1

<sup>137</sup> Muhammad al- Hadi is the Coordinator of Baye Take Over Association (BTO is an organization that seeks to unite the Muslim youth of Nima, Mamobi and Accra New Town and it has registered with the Registrar General's Department), Interviewed on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at Mamobi

According to Hamid Ahmed Baba, the fact that the *Bases* have shifted attention to religious and societal issues makes them a force to reckon with in the community. They also engage in sporting competitions to unearth talents and this is good for the country.<sup>138</sup>

Moses Abbor is of the opinion that, the phenomenon of *Bases* is an encouraging one because it brings the youth together. For example, he commends highly, the contribution of the *Bases* during clean-up exercises. He added that in the past, you could find some people at the *Bases* during productive hours of the day, but that has changed as almost everybody is occupied in one way or the other. Also, the choice of leaders is based on moral conduct unlike previously, when the most physically strong man in the group became the automatic leader.<sup>139</sup>

Chief Umar Baba Issah recounts that, some years ago, the sizes of Muslim families without a corresponding match of economic resources warranted the creation of *Bases*. A family of six to eight in a single room will indeed compel the children to move out in search of comfort, hence to sit at the *Base*. Also, many were school drop-outs and some did not have the opportunity to school at all. Consequently, some people did not have employable skills and finally found their way to the *Bases* with the hope of travelling abroad some day. He lamented on the attitudes of some *Base* members in those days that were recalcitrant simply because they had neither education nor employable skills and therefore, engaged in all vices to make ends meet. This had dire consequences on them in particular and the community in

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<sup>138</sup> Hamid Baba is the Assembly Member for Kwatsuru Electoral Area, Interviewed on the 15 April 2015 at Accra New Town

<sup>139</sup> Moses Abbor is the Assembly Member for the Kokomlemle Electoral Area, Interviewed on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015 at Wawa Road

general, because it affected the health of the community. However, there is reawakening now in the communities, and there is even competition in education. This is a good sign. There is also an increase in spirituality because most *Bases* are religiously conscious and also organize religious programs.<sup>140</sup>

Yussif Suallah argues that, the *Bases* of yesterday are not the same as those of today. Formerly, there were usually conflicts between one *Base* and another and all sorts of barbaric acts took place in order to exhibit bravery; and this included the use of knives and machetes at the least provocation. There were also certain areas which hitherto were impossible to trek at certain hours of the night. However, all these have changed now because of the vigilance of the youth.

“There is sporting competition among the *Bases* to foster unity. They also act as community policemen providing security to people and property. The current crop of *Base* members are mostly educated and morally conscious though there is room for improvement.”<sup>141</sup>

According to Umar Raees Ibrahim the congregation of youth to chat and share ideas is indeed a good one. By sitting together, they learn from one another. Since the level of education varies, definitely, there would be transfer of knowledge and ideas. The current crop of *Bases* is a clear departure from the past. There is so much cooperation during death, birth and marriage ceremonies. There is also the organization of clean up exercises and other

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<sup>140</sup> Alhaji Umar Baba Issah is the Wangara Chief of Ayawaso (East and Central). He doubles as the chairman for the Muslim Family Counselling Service and also the Public Relations Officer (PRO) for the Council of Muslim Chiefs, interviewed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of march 2015 at his residence

<sup>141</sup> Yussif Suallah is the Busanga Youth Chief of Ayawaso and a Member of the Ayawaso Sub Metro (A.M.A), Interviewed on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April at Kokomlemlle

religious functions. There are also efforts on the side of the youth to aspire to higher positions. For example, some of the *Base* members are now Assembly Members for various communities. According to Mallam Raees, those members who are non-conformists often get disowned by their mother *Bases*. However, most are school dropouts due to financial constraints and this has led them to engage in trading to make ends meet.<sup>142</sup>

Chief Ibrahim Abongo expressed that, it is very pleasing to see the youth almost taking over every religious activity and also consulting the elders on their plans. “During Ramadan for instance, the Mallam Atta youth organizes three Quranic recitations, they also organize a forum to enlighten the community and contribute to the renovation of mosques in the community. This is a clear indication that, we would have good successors when we are no more.”<sup>143</sup>

According to Honorable Mustapha Ahmed, the youth have been inviting him to religious and educational programs in the community; and where he could not avail himself, he delegated. Indeed there is a surge in religious activities by the youth.<sup>144</sup>

“I have been participating in *Maulid* programs in the *Zongo* organized by the youth, particularly Accra New town and Alajo. The youth have taken over the religious activities in the *Zongo* and in some cases they even seek for assistance to help the various Islamic

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<sup>142</sup> Raees Umar Ibrahim is the Imam of Adamu Mosque and the Headmaster of Wataniya Islamic School, Interviewed on 17<sup>th</sup> March at Wawa Road Mosque

<sup>143</sup> Alhaji Ibrahim Abongo is the Hausa Chief of Accra New Town, Interviewed on 26<sup>th</sup> of May at Mallam Atta

<sup>144</sup> Honorable Mustapha Ahmed is the Minister for Youth and Sports and also, Member of Parliament for East Ayawaso Constituency, Interviewed on June 5, 2015 via phone

schools in the community. I therefore partnered them to provide scholarships to bright but needy students in the constituency.”<sup>145</sup>

## 4.2 DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

In Islam, faith on its own is not sufficient. A Muslim is enjoined to worship to show his commitment to Allah (Quran 103:3). A good religious person is required to reinforce, improve, enhance and enrich his or her conduct by practicing the prescribed religious rituals. In the light of this, majority of the *Bases* subscribe to the Tijjaniyyah Sufi practices. Almost all the *Bases* under discussion have a mosque that they operate and perform their *adhkar* (meditations). These include *Istigfar* (seeking forgiveness), *Salat il Fatih* (sending salutations to the Prophet) and *Tahlil* (Lailaha illallah). The question that arises is why are the *Bases* tilted towards the Tijjaniyyah?

The reason for the above is attributable to the late Sheikh Jamal Baba who devoted much of his time in the religious transformation of the youth. He was willing and able to respond to their calls and also encouraged and counseled them to mend their ways and embrace spirituality without losing sight of genuine material pursuit. This endeared him to the youth who eventually became the powerhouse of his support. Unlike the approach of Jamal Baba, some of the *salafi* preachers were harsh in their delivery of the Islamic message. This made most of the *Bases* to take an antagonistic position with the *salafi* orientation because they

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<sup>145</sup> Honorable Henry Quartey is the Member of Parliament for Central Ayawaso Constituency, Interviewed on May 31 at Kphehe

found no encouragement in their scheme of things. This brings home the issue of methodology in preaching. Allah says in Qur'an (16:125):

“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; And argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious. Truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His path, and He is the best aware of those who are guided”.

According to Zainul Abideen, the important point in this exhortation is the spiritual relationship between the preacher and the preached; the stronger the spiritual position of the preacher, the greater will be his influence over the preached.<sup>146</sup> This assertion falls in line with my argument in chapter two that, the effect of conduct and action of a parent is far greater than that of conversation and speech in the nurturing of children. In spite of the differences in doctrines, the major cause of conflict in the Muslim communities is methodology of *Da'wah*.<sup>147</sup>

Again, *dhikr* is a devotional act that praises Allah and emphasizes His glory by reciting one of His attributes or names, or the name of His Prophet. Although it is not one of the five pillars, devout Muslims try to do *dhikr* as much as possible, due to the rewards the Qur'an promises for those who perform *dhikr*. As the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) expressed, “Whoever recites the *Tasbih*, (Subhanallah) and the *Tahmid* (Alhamdulillah) a hundred times, morning and evening, will have all his sins forgiven.” As a traditional form of

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<sup>146</sup> Zainul Abideen Qurbani Lahiji, *The Islamic Ethics and Education*, Trans by M. Farrokh Pey, (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2007), 86

<sup>147</sup> Hussein I. Ibrahim, “Unity Within the Muslim Ummah in Ghana: Expectations and Concerns”, *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.1, No.1(May,2011),5-25

devotion, doing *dhikr* has been, and continues to be, important in Muslim communities. In line with this, the Tijaniyyah liturgies are recited morning and evening. According to Jamil Abun-Nasr, the Tijaniyya liturgies were assigned to the founder of the Order by the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) while in a wakeful state and repeated twice daily.<sup>148</sup>

The *Bases* are therefore seen at the *zawiya*<sup>149</sup> with such practices. I observed wherever I went that, barely does one find more than two elderly persons in those spiritual circles and in some cases it is nil. I also observed, the liturgies were said in a fast tempo wherever the youth dominated and therefore could complete the whole recitation in less than thirty minutes. This might also be a factor why most of the elderly resign and recite their liturgies alone, because they could not cope with the pace of the youth. According to Abdallah Sami Maykano, the speedy recital is not bad but one does not derive the benefit that comes with slow recitation and which leads to reflection.<sup>150</sup>

On Thursdays evening, some of the *Bases* organize praise sessions to glorify Allah and eulogise the Prophet in a melodious manner and this they termed as *Jalaala*. This practice seems to be getting on well with the youth. The program is usually held for an hour or more. One person leads the chanting while others repeat after him. Unlike most *Maulid*, in this kind of praise singing or eulogy, drums are not beaten. This phenomenon also raises questions about Muslim youth and entertainment. As far as I know, there are no entertainment avenues for the Muslim youth in Ghana and this leads them to follow, more

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<sup>148</sup> Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *The Tijaniyya: A Sufi Order in the Modern World*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 51

<sup>149</sup> *Zawiya* is a place where Sufi litanies are recited

<sup>150</sup> Abdallah Sami Maikano is the deputy Imam and Muqaddam of Adamu Mosque, Interviewed on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2015 at Accra New Town

often, entertainment programs that are *Shariah* non-compliant. The devotional activities on the other hand, have to a great extent transformed the conducts of most youth; and have served as a check mechanism for the threat of secularization. However, I observed that many of the members do not sit at the Sufi circles even though they claim to be members of the Order. This means they are sympathizers rather than practitioners of the Sufi Order.

Additionally, on the last Wednesday in the month of *Safar*, the *Bases* organize prayers in the communities. It is believed that, all the calamities that will befall someone the whole year will be brought down on the last Wednesday of *Safar*. Hence, a prayer session is organized and the necessary supplications are said. During this research, the day fell on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2014. I realized that, there was an already existing formula for the prayers. This is the performance of four units of supererogatory prayers (*nafila*), and in each unit, they recited *suwar* (chapters 1, 108, 112, 113 and 114); al Fatiha-1, al Kauthar-17 times, al Ikhlas-5 times, al Falaq and An-Nas-1 (*muawazatain*). On completion of the *nafila*, the following are also recited: *Wallahu Gaalibun ala Amrihi walaakinna aktharan nas laa ya'lamun*-360 times (Quran 12:21) “And Allah has full power and control over His affairs but most of men know not”. After this, salutations are invoked for the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). This is done annually to ask for Allah’s protection. It is obvious that, this tradition was handed over to the youth by the Sufi practitioners in the *Zongo* communities. There is also the organization of *lailatul qadr* devotions in the last ten days of Ramadan.

Again, Qur'anic recitations to seek for Allah's guidance is ubiquitous. Some of the *Bases* do it weekly, some do it fortnightly, others do it monthly or quarterly. There is the general one which is done annually by all *Bases* to usher in the New Year of the Gregorian Calendar.

Allah says in Qur'an (35: 29), "*Verily those who recite the Book of Allah, and perform As-Salat and spend (in charity) out of what We have provided for them, secretly and openly, they hope for a (sure) trade-gain that will never perish.*"

According to Chief Osman Musah, the *Bases* to a large extent have turned away from activities that are detrimental to their development, so they have become useful to their families and the community at large.<sup>151</sup>

#### **4.3 CLEAN UP EXERCISES**

The *Bases* in various communities organize clean up exercises to rid the community of filth. For instance, members of the Accra New Town Failah Youth Association in collaboration with the Accra New Town keep Fit clubs undertook a clean-up exercise in the community on Saturday 14 February, 2015. The members desilted gutters and swept the streets. This was to improve sanitation in the community and to prevent the breeding of mosquitoes. The Prophet is reported to have said, "Cleanliness is part of faith"<sup>152</sup>. The researcher took part in the exercise. The Kubura Base also provided garbage bins free of charge in order to stop people from littering and dumping refuse indiscriminately.

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<sup>151</sup> Osuman Musah is the Frafra Chief of Accra New Town, Interviewed on May 01, 2015 at his residence

<sup>152</sup> Sahih Muslim Hadith No. 403

The maintenance of cemeteries is another challenge of the Accra Metro Assembly (A.M.A). The Awodome cemetery in particular rarely gets cleared of the weeds that are taking over portions of the burial grounds.<sup>153</sup>

The cemetery is divided into two, the Christian and the Muslim portions. And it is the Christian portion that normally overgrows with weed. The Muslim portion is taken care of by the *Bases* in contemporary times. The groups tidy the Awodome cemetery weekly and sometimes fortnightly depending on the situation. There is a particular group known as *Musahiduun Base*<sup>154</sup> that has been assigned that duty while others contribute financially to provide equipments and food for the members.

#### 4.4 COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE

In an attempt to unite the youth and move the agenda of developing the community, the youth *Bases* in Accra New Town came together to form the Accra New Town Failah Youth Association (A.N.T.F.Y.A). This Association is registered with the Registrar General's Department in order to formalize its existence. The Association serves as the mouth piece for the *Bases* in the area. Their objectives include:

- To ensure unity and orderliness in the activities of the Muslim youth.
- To help restructure and strengthen the existing *madaris* (Islamic schools) in the communities.

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<sup>153</sup> <http://www.Ghanaweb.com>, accessed on June 4, 2014

<sup>154</sup> Musahidun is one of the Bases in Nima, located close to the Nima post office

- To help bright but needy students and to seek the welfare of Islamic Teachers

According to Ismail Khalid, the need for the Muslim youth to wake up from their slumber necessitated the formation of the Association.<sup>155</sup> As asserted by Tabatabai in Chapter One that, it is as a result of man's countless needs, which can never be fulfilled by him alone, that he recognizes the possibility of fulfilling them through the help and cooperation of others.

However, it came to light during the field work that, the Chicago *Base* has withdrawn from the Association on the grounds that, some principles has been compromised. According to Mustapha Mohammed<sup>156</sup>, the Association has failed to enforce the disciplinary code. The cause of the fracas is that, one of the sons of the late Sheikh Abdallah Maykano known as Amaanullah, mounted a platform and unreservedly made direct derogatory remarks and attacked the personality of Mallam Ridwan Sulaiman. The Chicago *Base* therefore expected the Association to call Amaanullah to order since the venue was within their jurisdiction. As discussed in the first chapter, Mujtaba postulates that, certain characteristics and unwanted habits weaken the ties of love and sometimes break up excellent relationships. But the Association argued it was not their program but that of an individual who is not a member of the *Bases*.

Having said this, the Association had on a number of occasions sent emissaries to persuade and plead with the aggrieved *Base* to rescind their decision but to no avail. Consequently, the Association has boycotted the activities of the Chicago *Base* pending a change of mind.

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<sup>155</sup> Ismail Khalid is the Coordinator of the Association, Interviewed on April 15 at Accra New Town

<sup>156</sup> Mustapha Mohammed is the General Secretary of the Chicago base, Interviewed on 12<sup>th</sup> of April, 2015

Allah says in Qur'an (49:9-10)

And if two parties of the believers quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allah's command; then if it returns, make peace between them with justice and act equitably; surely Allah loves those who act equitably. The believers are but brethren, therefore make peace between your brethren and be careful of (your duty to) Allah that you may receive mercy.

In spite of the general sanction against the Chicago *Base*, the groups continue to work hard to resolve the impasse.

In pursuance of their objective of helping to facilitate teaching and learning of Islam, the ANTFYA on the 1st of November 2014 donated a number of exercise books and desks to the various *madaris* in the community. The beneficiaries included *Nurul Islam* (Mallam Atta), *Nuriyah Islamic school* (Third World), *Ansarudeen Islamic School* (Paradise), *Rashad Islamic School* (College), *Hamdaniyyah Islamic School* and *Wataniyyah Islamic School*. The group is also in constant touch with the *Bases* in Nima and Mamobi and is impressing upon them to emulate the model. In another occasion, the Association donated One Thousand Cedis to the *Ansarudeen Islamic School* on the 11th of April 2015 for the renovation of the school.

However, the Tijjaniyyah at the national level has no centralized authority and therefore, individuals continue to pledge allegiance to individual *Shuyukh*; and the rivalry that exists among the *shuyukh* finds its way to the grassroots. This development has balkanized the Tijjaniyyah front into several factions, notably the Jallo Tijjaniyyah led by Khalifah Abul

Faidh, Cisseyy Tijjaniyyah headed by Sheikh Abdul Wadud and Uthmaniyah Tijjaniyyah under the leadership of the National Chief Imam-Sheikh Uthman Sharubutu. What is interesting is the fact that, if one is not satisfied with a group, he switches allegiance. This has made reconciliation and unity a mirage to the fraternity. The latest disturbance is that of Mallam Ali Mohammad Jallo (Imam of Akweteman) who switched to the Jallo camp after a fallout with the National Chief Imam, Sheikh Osumanu Nuhu Sharubutu. According to my interlocutor, the cause of the fracas bothered on the distribution of inheritance which Mallam Ali effected and which generated controversy.

Some heirs who were not satisfied with the sharing of their inheritance resorted to the law courts for redress where the secular principles override any other law in Ghana. This is a result of lack of education and also dishonesty on the part of some distributors in some cases. Islamic Law did not remain immune from malpractices within its own sphere of application, such as bribing of *Qadis*<sup>157</sup> and witnesses.<sup>158</sup>

Subsequently, Mallam Ali attempted to soil the name of the Chief Imam (Sharubutu) by making derogatory remarks about the Imam to people though in private. He also encouraged some youth who are aligned to him to withdraw their allegiance to the National Chief Imam amidst other insinuations. Some of the youth particularly the Ahmadis *Base* in Mamobi bought into his scheme. This development really cracked the youth front.

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<sup>157</sup> Qadi means Judges

<sup>158</sup> Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 200

Similarly, Abul Faidh, the *Khalifah* for Jallo, invariably attacked indirectly the personality of the National Chief Imam at any given opportunity. He therefore served as the mentor of the Ahmadis *Base*.

However, in recent times, Mallam Ali has reconciled with the National Chief Imam and has begun to espouse and propagate the virtues of the Imam. The Ahmadis *Base* felt disappointed, deceived and misled after disrespecting the National Imam. The group therefore transferred their irresponsible acts onto Mallam Ali, and would never accommodate his presence at any function. This behavior alarmed the other *Bases* who then began to isolate the Ahmadis *Base* for gross indiscipline. For instance, the ANTFYA has ostracized the Ahmadis *Base* from any youth activity within Accra New Town. This is because unity had eluded the groups for a very long time, and if an opportunity for such has availed itself, there is the need to seize it with all alacrity.

Consequently, during a *Maulid* celebration organized by an individual in the New Town vicinity, the Ahmadis *Base* came with weaponry, having heard that they would be sent away whenever they arrive. This led to the skirmish that the Daily Guide news paper captured and captioned, “Man Stabbed During Islamic Celebration.”<sup>159</sup> The youth at the grassroots are trying to unite their members and to do away with factionalism in order to build a solid community for the development of Islam in Ghana.

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<sup>159</sup> Daily Guide, Friday, January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014,( issue001/14), 6

#### 4.5 MOSQUE RENOVATION

Prayer in congregation is considered to have more social and spiritual benefits than praying alone. The mosque is therefore ideally, the center for congregational prayer. In addition to being a place of prayer, mosques have also become a focal point in the Muslim community. People meet and greet one another, receive news about the community and children come to learn. The mosque is therefore the central point for growth and development of the Muslim community. Part of the aim of the Ghana Muslim Youth Movement was to take control of various mosques; however, it was done militantly in some cases and incurred the displeasure of the elderly. For instance, the Abossey Okai Central Mosque was forcibly taken by the youth during the early part of 1990. This gave grounds for some *Bases* to sever ties with the Movement.

In view of this, the *Bases* have taken it upon themselves to renovate old structures and also refurbish the interior decor of some mosques. For instance, the Wawa Road *Base* renovated and refurbished the Adamu mosque. The Angola fraternity also renovated and refurbished the Aisha mosque in the community. The Paradise *Base* did same to the Alhassan mosque. In all cases, a complete overhaul was done and the architecture transformed into a modern place of worship. The scenario is no different at Mamobi and Nima except where the mosque is so huge like the Kardor and Galadimah mosques in Nima and New Town respectively. In such cases, external help was sought but with the *Bases* providing labor.

Allah says in Qur'an (9:18):

The mosques of Allah shall be maintained only by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, perform *As-Salat*, and give *Zakat* and fear none but Allah. It is they who are on true guidance.

“It is indeed encouraging to see the youth taking their rightful position in the scheme of affairs in the Muslim community. This was what I initiated and stood for, however, the youth ought to liaise with the elders in order to be guided. We trained the youth to take over from the elders and I am glad it is yielding positive results.”<sup>160</sup> As discussed in chapter two, when the youth relegate the advice of the elders to the background, it takes away their ethical capacities. However, when the youth tap from the experiences of the elderly, they gain insights into the intricacies of life, which may help them make informed decisions.

It is worth stating that, the funding for various projects are internally generated and there are no ties or affiliation with any foreign country. Therefore, the threat of a foreign militant ideology creeping into the Muslim community in Ghana is kept at bay. Also, the doctrinal differences which was entrenched in the past due to allegiance to one foreign country or the other, is gradually waning.

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<sup>160</sup> Sheikh Mahmud M. Geddel, Founder of the defunct Ghana Muslim Youth Movement and also Secretary to the Council of Muslim Chiefs, Interviewed on May 10, 2015 at McCarthy Hill

#### 4.6 SYMPOSIUMS

The *Bases* are currently involved in the social and spiritual life of their community. This means that, communal problems are tackled as a team rather than the individualistic initiatives that characterized the *Zongo* communities in the past. The groups therefore organize symposia to enlighten the masses on Islamic standpoint concerning certain issues that arise. For instance in November 2014, the Wawa Road organized a forum to educate the community on the threat of Lesbians who are unsuspectingly recruiting Muslim girls for their acts. The community was therefore alerted and counseled.

Also during rites of passage, for instance child naming ceremony, the groups converge and open a discussion on religious issues. Sometimes it takes the form of a debate on various standpoints. This exercise also enlightens the youth. Sheikh Anyars Idriss says “I have had the experience of sitting at the *Base* as a guest, because as a Muslim cleric I deem it worthwhile to know the welfare of fellow Muslims within my domain. Anytime I visited, there was heated arguments on various perspectives with regard to certain texts, either from the Qur’an or Hadith and I am always amazed at the level of knowledge of the discussants. This has been the case often at the Wawa Road *Base* even though sometimes, sports issues are also discussed.”<sup>161</sup>

Again, prior to Ramadan, the *Bases* organize a forum to remind the Muslim community on the essence and conditions of Fasting. Some also organize preaching sessions weekly, for instance the Sanusiyyah *Base* has institutionalized this program. I had the opportunity of

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<sup>161</sup> Anyars Idriss is the Imam of Nuriya Mosque and a Teacher at thee madrasa, Interviewed on May 11, 2015 at New Town

participating in the climax of *Tafsir* which was organized by the Adabul Failah *Base* on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2015. This was to draw the curtain on weekly *Tafsir* and to allow the resource person to prepare for Ramadan which has a wider audience.

Again the ANTFYA in conjunction with Wawa Road *Base* has instituted a Ramadan *Tafsir* at the Wawa Road *Base* and the *mufassir* (exegete) is one of the *Base* members.

It can be argued that, the exponential increase of educated Muslims at the *Bases* is really shaping the direction and focus of their activities. This crop of Muslim youth with secular education is conscious of their religious duties, committed to hold on to their religious practices and ready to fight for their rights. This partly accounts for the recent agitations of freedom of worship of Muslim students in Christian Mission schools.

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#### **4.7 COMMUNITY SECURITY**

Provision of security to people and property has become part of the duties of the *Bases*. Some members stay out very late in the night to ensure that, nothing onward happens to the peace of the community. For instance the *Ashaddu Haya'an Base* in Nima has been licensed to partner with the Police to help maintain the security of the populace. Consequently, sometimes the group arbitrates in conflict whenever it erupts and also finds an amicable solution to such situations in order to promote peaceful coexistence.

There has been an instance where the group combed the community off any miscreant and even extended their activity beyond the community into other jurisdictions, particularly

Mamobi and Accra New Town. Whoever is found to be a threat to public peace is handed over to the police for further action. This phenomenon has relieved the communities of unusual disturbance from non conformists. Allah says in Qur'an (8: 25):

*“And fear the Fitnah (affliction and trial) which affects not only those of you who do wrong (but it may afflict all the good and the bad people), and know that Allah is Severe in punishment.”*

In line with the above, Shariati postulates that forbidding what is wrong is an independent and equally significant obligation as discussed in Chapter One.

#### **4.8 FORSTERING UNITY AND INTRA RELIGIOUS RELATIONS**

In an attempt to cement the relationship of Muslim groups, the *Bases* have taken it upon themselves to invite various Muslim doctrinal groups during their functions. In some cases, representatives of the various doctrinal groups are given the opportunity to address the audience. Although a Tijjaniyyah program but the youth see it as a general Muslim program. For instance, during a *Maulid* at Alajo, Sheikh Suallah<sup>162</sup> was given a topic on education and he efficiently delivered it to the admiration of all.

Again at Nima, Sheikh Abdul Mumin (a Shi'ah) was given a topic to discuss on the virtues of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) during a Tijjaniyah *Maulid*. What is encouraging is the fact

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<sup>162</sup> Sheikh Suallah is a former Deputy Chairman of the Ahlussunna wal Jama'a (a salafi group)

that, the Tijjaniyyah youth also grace the climax of Ramadan *Tafsir* at the Islamic Research Centre (Headquarters of the Salafis). Allah says in Qur'an (8:46) :

*“And obey Allah and His Messenger and do not dispute (with one another) lest you lose courage and your strength departs, and be patient. Surely Allah is with those who are patient.”*

It is undeniable that the Muslim community is in dire need of unity. According to Ali Hudu, Islam has not forced its followers to follow a specific religious school of thought, rather, each Muslim is allowed to follow any religious school which has been narrated genuinely and has authored its rules in specific books. This comprehension is necessary to help us foster unity among Muslims. “I was therefore highly elated to see the likes of Sheikh Suallah at the *Maulid* grounds.”<sup>163</sup>

#### **4.9 MAULID CELEBRATION**

The commemoration of the birth anniversary of the Prophet has become an integral part of the activities of the various *Bases*. For instance every *Base* that is under the lens of this research celebrates *Maulid*. The commemoration of *Maulid* has had its controversies in terms of its legality or permissibility as an Islamic rite. The various Muslim groups in Ghana however, affirm the celebration except the *Salafis*.<sup>164</sup> *Salafism* is to be viewed as primarily

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<sup>163</sup> Ali Hudu is the deputy Imam of the Green Mosque and also a Radio Host on Marhaba FM, Interviewed on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2015 at Kpehe

<sup>164</sup> Hajara Mohammed, “Maulid Celebrations in Ghana : An Intellectual Festival”, Unpublished Thesis presented to the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana-Legon 2010

manifesting itself in the belief that, the historical legacy of the Prophet's embodiment of the Quran, as it was understood by the most eminent authorities belonging to the first three generations of Muslims is normative, static, and universalistic in nature; hence it is literally to be adhered to and imitated in a contextual vacuum across all space and time by the subsequent generations of Muslims.<sup>165</sup> Therefore, since the Prophet has not sanctioned the commemoration, it becomes illegitimate.

Yunus Dumbe contends that, the basic idea embodied in *salafism* is that, it teaches a return to the study of the basic sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* and rejects *taqlid* (blind imitation) and accepts *ijtihad* (individual interpretation of the law).<sup>166</sup>

Speaking at the Islamic University College of Ghana, Sheikh Seebaway Zakaria, examined the debate on *Maulid* Celebrations. His speech sought to present the various arguments put forward by different Islamic doctrinal groups in support or against the celebration of the Prophet's birthday. Seebaway posited that there are two positions on the celebration of the Prophet's birthday. The first position, which is held by Shi'ah and Sufi Muslims, is that *Maulid* of the Prophet is lawful and more rewarding in Islam. Those who hold this view argue that some traditions in the authentic book of Bukhari suggest that the Prophet used to fast on Mondays in honour of the day of his birth. This group also argues that almost all the rites of pilgrimage (Hajj) in Makkah are observed symbolically to mark the practices and experience of Prophet Ibrahim and his family. And that the fact that the experiences of a

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<sup>165</sup> Adis Duderija, Islamic Groups and their World -views and Identities: Neo Traditional Salafis and Progressive Muslims, *Arab Law Quartely*, Vol 21, No. 4,( 2007),347

<sup>166</sup> Yunus Dumbe, The Salafi Praxis of Constructing Religious Identity in Africa: A Comparative Perspective of the Growth of the Movements in Accra and Cape Town, *Islamic Africa*, Vol. 2, No.2 (2011), 89

past Prophet and his family remain part and parcel of the pillars of Islam implies celebrating the life of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) is in harmony with the Shariah.

Sheikh Seebaway intimated that contrary to the position of the Shi'ah and other Sufi groups, the *Salafi* or *Ahlu-Sunnah* do not endorse *Maulid* celebrations. They argue that the Prophet did not celebrate his birthday; hence, it is not part of his *Sunnah* to celebrate *Maulid*. Having objectively examined the claims of the proponents and opponents of *Maulid*, Sheikh Seebaway came to a conclusion that celebrating the birth of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) is an act of worship which attracts lots of rewards as well as spiritual and material benefits to the celebrants and the Muslim *Ummah* as a whole.<sup>167</sup>

What is usually done at the grounds of the celebration is the recitation of the Qur'an and the *Ahadith* of the noble Prophet and finally crowned with reading of the *Sira* (biography of the Prophet). Though the pattern remains the same, the build up to *Maulid* varies from one group to the other. In the area of Accra New Town, the build-up starts on Wednesday if the program is to be executed on a Friday or Saturday. I observed during the celebration by the Angola as well as the Wawa Road *Base*, there was a football match between the elders in the *Base* and their younger counterparts in the community who also operate a subsidiary *Base*. This was to strengthen the unity amongst them. Subsequently, there was another match the following day between the celebrating *Base* and the Accra New Town *Faila* Youth Association. This was to ensure cooperation among the various *Bases*. The next activity was the *Damba* dance (traditional) where cultural skills were displayed. I must point out

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<sup>167</sup> Sheikh Seebaway Zakaria, speaking at the Islamic University College, Ghana on Saturday, February 21, 2015 under the theme “**Celebrating the Life of The Prophet: Panacea for Global Peace**”.

that;*Damba* is a traditional dance of some people of the Northern and Upper West Regions. However, some of the *Bases* who travelled to Prang in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana, to celebrate *Maulid* with the Jallo Tijjaniyyah group, copied and exported the program to Accra. I also have to point out that, I have witnessed *Damba* in Prang and that, what happens in Accra is a mockery of the real *Damba*. Back at prang, the activity was limited to people of the Northern Region, particularly the *Dagbamba* ethnic group.<sup>168</sup>

However, as a program for the *Bases*, everybody participates and some youth were seen to be exhibiting or displaying their magical prowess. Louis Brenner argues that since Sufism functions in society, it will be subjected to the numerous forces of social dynamics. And often of course, social dynamics and individuals being what they are, various activities proceed under the name of Sufism which has little or no relation to the essential spiritual teaching.<sup>169</sup>

I observed that majority of the Muslim youth ranked celebration-based activities with a socio-cultural element as the most preferred activities, whereas learning-based activities were ranked as the least preferred activities. However, there is an awakening and the *Bases* are taking the necessary steps to ensure that, learning based activities gain supremacy.

On the eve of the *Maulid*, which is a Friday, the groups will congregate and perform *Hailala* or *Tahlil*<sup>170</sup> together in solidarity with the celebrating *Base*. This is symbolic of the

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<sup>168</sup> Although *Damba* is a *Dagbamba* Cultural festival, it is celebrated in the month of *Maulid* to commemorate the birth of the Prophet

<sup>169</sup> Louis Brenner, "The Sufi Teaching of Tierno Bakar Salif Tall" in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. VIII,(Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 212

<sup>170</sup> *Hailala* is the saying of *Lailaha illallah* repetitively, which means no deity worthy of worship except Allah

level of cooperation existing amongst the *Bases*. In the case of Angola *Base*, the *Maulid* for the kids (*wassan makaranta*) takes place after the *hailala and Isha* prayers followed by the group's *Maulid* the next day. The Wawa Road *Base* however holds the kids *Maulid* on the Twelfth of *Rabiul Awwal* but the date for the group's *Maulid* varies with time.

Mumuni Sulemana identified three types of *Maulid* in Ghana: *Wassan Makaranta* (i.e. *Maulid* by Islamic schools), *Maulid* by Islamic organizations and *Maulid* of the *Aimma* (Imams) and *Ulama*. According to Mumuni, the *Wassan Makaranta* form of *Maulid* used to be a common practice among the Islamic schools in the country and the school children were trained to display their talents through the recitation of the Qur'an and *Ahadith*, storytelling or theatre performances during the celebrations. He explained that *Maulid* organized by Islamic organizations were in the form of lectures, recitation of the Qur'an and eulogizing the Prophet and saints of Allah. The third type of *Maulid* is the one being celebrated by the National Chief Imam and other prominent scholars in the country.<sup>171</sup>

The groups in Accra New Town and Nima in particular are trying frantically to revive the kids' *Maulid* which has stalled for some time now. This is attributable to the adoption of secular courses in the various Islamic schools which keeps the pupils busy and left with no time to rehearse; and also many *makaranta* have collapsed.

In the area of Accra New Town, the various *Bases* came together on the day that the Angola *Base* held its celebration and in the evening after *Asr* prayers, the masses took to the street in a procession with the various *Base* leaders mounting on horses amidst chanting praises to

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<sup>171</sup> Mumuni Sulemana, 'Maulid Celebrations in Ghana', in *The Pen*, Volume 6, No.1, (2014/2015), 32-33

Allah and eulogizing the Prophet while announcing to the world the birth of the Prophet. Some held placards with various inscriptions advertising the virtues of the Prophet. All and sundry were dressed in white clothes and the community was decorated thoroughly with white pieces of cloth to signify a celebration. It was therefore conspicuous that an activity was taking place even if one did not ask.



Fig 4: One of the *Base* leaders on a horse during the *Maulid* procession at Accra New Town

After all is done, the participants would go home and prepare for the *Maulid* gathering itself. The current trend is that the program starts at around eleven in the night and begins to take

shape around midnight. This is very worrying because, many elders have effectively been alienated from the celebrations because of its late take off and closes at dawn around Four O'clock. It is therefore the youth and the resource persons who hang on. This phenomenon makes the time specified for preaching reduced as music interlude is frequently employed. For instance the *Maulid* at Wawa Road and Angola *Base* continued till Eight O'clock in the morning. Participants prayed *Fajr* at the *Maulid* grounds.

On the issue of music and dance during *Maulid*, there have been several arguments from the Muslim community on its appropriateness in the scheme of *Maulid* celebrations. According to Tulia Magrini, Islam does allow singing without musical instruments within prescribed circumstances and that, the performer be of the same gender as the audience.<sup>172</sup> Hence, dance is permissible for women within a female only environment and is often performed at celebrations.<sup>173</sup> In this light, some are also of the conviction that, dancing is prohibited for men.<sup>174</sup>

Therefore, it can be classified that, dancing can be between women, between men, or mixed between both sexes. It is allowed for women to dance together unless it involves revealing any of the woman's *`awrah* (parts of the body) in front of other women. It is also allowed unless the dancing means that mandatory obligations will not be carried out or if it coincides with unlawful acts.

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<sup>172</sup> Tulia Magrini, *Music and Gender Perspectives for the Mediterranean*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005), 270

<sup>173</sup> Mark B. Beverly, *Muslim Women Sing : Hausa Popular Song*, (Indiana: Indiana university, 2004), 4

<sup>174</sup> Sowle Lisa Cahill and Farley Margaret, *Embodiment, Morality and Medicine*, (New York : Springer, 1995), 43

Contributing to the discourse, Suad Salih asserts that, Islam is a religion of moderation; it does not prevent singing and dancing, but it forbids anything that stimulates people's desires, whether it is among men or women. Women are supposed to observe good manners if they dance in front of other women. They should not exceed the limits by doing anything that stimulates desires and incites evil. There are many cases where women are tempted by other women. However, if a woman dances in front of her husband, then there is no restriction, as it is a way of cementing relations between spouses – and this a key pillar of establishing the Muslim family.<sup>175</sup>

In a related development, Ahmed Salamah intimates that it is permissible for women to dance and sing as long as there are no males around. In addition, the words of the song should be free from any foul words or vulgarity. Thus, as long as the words of the song are pure and clean and there are no males, there is nothing wrong in dancing.

By analogy, men are allowed to dance together as long as they cover their *awrah* (the parts of the body between the navel and the knee) and there is no fear of temptation.

Men and women dancing together is absolutely *haram* in all cases, except when a wife dances in front of her husband. The reason behind this prohibition is that, with mixed dancing bodily contact is close and improper sexual desires are aroused. This has been strictly forbidden by Islam in an attempt to block the way against evil. If men and women were permitted to dance together, a lot of *haram* acts could occur. That is why mixed dancing is not allowed.<sup>176</sup> The criticism against some aspects of the *Maulid* bothers on this

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<sup>175</sup>[http:// www.onislam.net/singing](http://www.onislam.net/singing) and music/175634-dancing.) accessed, 8<sup>th</sup> may 2015 at 12 noon

<sup>176</sup>[http:// www.onislam.net/singing](http://www.onislam.net/singing) and music/175634-dancing.) accessed, 8<sup>th</sup> may 2015 at 12:30PM

thorny issue, though the *failah* adherents have been defensive for a long time, it seems presently the youth are gradually backsliding on the dancing spree. For instance, all the *Maulids* I participated, only a few young males danced and the women stayed glued to their seats. At worst, they stood in front of their seats to dance and they were also few. Unlike some years back when dancing became a major component of the commemoration and the sexes jammed up. This is an indication that, the criticisms are yielding positive results and also the youth are beginning to wise-up.

I also witnessed an innovation of cake cutting at the *Maulid*. The organizers provided a huge cake designed in the pattern of a mosque for a symbolic birthday gift to the Prophet.



Fig 5: Sheikh Tawfiq Jamal Baba and Sheikh Mutawakkil Iddris cutting a cake at a *Maulid*

Additionally there were fire crackers shot in the air as soon as the resource person pronounced the birth of the Prophet. At the Third World *Base Maulid*, a Muslim medical nurse was among the resource persons and she educated the participants on health issues including Diabetes and Cardiovascular related diseases. These are illnesses that are common with the aged in the *Zongo* community. Therefore it is appropriate the youth are counseled to take precautionary measures and to be aware of the consequences of certain life styles.

The *Maulid* celebration is one of the Tijjaniyyah programs that had contributed immensely to the development of Islam in Ghana because it served as a platform for the adherents and Muslims at large to renew their relationship with Allah and to further strengthen their love for the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W).<sup>177</sup> During the celebration, the virtues of the Prophet are espoused and the participants are expected to emulate these virtues as much as they can. Additionally, it encourages intra religious dialogue and peaceful coexistence. This is because, members from other communities commute to various locations to join the celebration and thereby creating a window for dialogue. For instance as discussed earlier, some members of the *salafi* orientation participate in the *Maulid* and therefore help consolidate the existing cooperation.

Mumuni Sulemana indicated that, politicians such as ministers of state and members of parliament are invited to *Maulid* functions and Muslims take advantage of their presence to

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<sup>177</sup> Kassim Mohammed Amin, “Contributions of the Shi’a Community to the Socio-Economic Development of Muslims in Ghana” Unpublished Thesis Submitted to the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana-Legon, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Award of Mphil, June 2014, 34

express their views on some national policies. Thus, *Maulid* is not only useful for the spiritual awakening of Muslims but also it brings politicians to their door steps.<sup>178</sup>

For instance, during the field work, I observed at every *Maulid*, the major political parties, particularly the National Democratic Congress (N.D.C) and the New Patriotic Party (N.P.P) were present and presented their donations. At Accra New Town, the Member of Parliament for Ayawaso Central, Henry Quartey, was present in the *Maulid* within his constituency and pledged Five Thousand Cedis from his Common Fund to help the ANTTFYA in their educational drive. The special aide to the President of the Republic of Ghana, Honorable Baban Lami said, he has held preliminary discussions with members of parliament in the Accra New Town area and would push the agenda of the youth on education to the next level in order to expedite the *Zongo* development agenda.

#### **4.10 CONCLUSION**

The chapter addressed the major research objective which rests on investigating the socio-religious activities of the *Bases*. The chapter employed the theological method to examine the activities of the *Bases* under thematic areas and this includes, devotional acts, mosque renovations, cooperation and intra-religious relations.

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<sup>178</sup> Mumuni Sulemana, ‘‘Maulid Celebrations in Ghana’’, in *The Pen*, Volume 6, No.1, (2014/2015), 32-33

It was found out that the *Bases* have embraced additional devotional activities such as *dhikr* and they are therefore found around the Sufi circles. They also organize the yearly devotional acts like the one in the last Wednesday of *Safar*.

It was also found out that Qur'anic recitation weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly or annually is ubiquitous among the *Bases*. Each and every *Base* falls within one of these specified times.

It was also found out that, the *Bases* are making frantic efforts to unite their ranks and to pursue developmental projects in the community. In the light of this, various Islamic schools in the community have been assisted with books and desks. Some have received cash donations for construction works.

Also, community mosques have been rehabilitated, renovated and or refurbished by the *Bases*. This is done with internally generated funds.

Furthermore, it was found out that, the *Bases* organize clean up exercise in order to rid the community of filth and to improve the sanitation status of the *Zongo*.

Additionally, the *Bases* organize symposia to enlighten the community on religious and social issues. They also organize *Tafsir* weekly and annually (during Ramadan). It can be argued that, the *Bases* have contributed to the development of Islam in the *Zongo* community and by extension Accra.

It was also found out that every *Base* under the lens of this research organizes a *Maulid* celebration in one way or the other. It came to light that, some of the *Bases* have borrowed

the *Damba* traditional dance and incorporated it in their build up to *Maulid*. I observed also, the proliferation of “spiritual consultants” among the youth. Some claiming to have antidote to spiritual malaise.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Summary

This chapter presents the final report of the research by summarizing the major findings, drawing concluding thoughts from the research findings and making some recommendations for policy making and further study.

The Almighty Allah (Q3: 110) describes Muslims as the best *Ummah* (community) among human kind on the basis that they promote righteousness and discourage evil in the society. It is in light of this that the Quran (5: 2) enjoins Muslims to help one another in virtue and righteousness but not in sin and transgression. One may deduce from these verses that Muslims are encouraged to form constructive groups or partner one another to work in the collective interest of the community. Therefore, from the *Zongo* perspective, the establishment of *Bases* is perceived as a calling for cooperation among Muslim youth.

Some opinion leaders and scholars in Ghana are of the view that *Bases* promote negative attitudes and conduct in the Muslim community. They argue further that, activities at the *Bases* increase the level of crime in these communities and also encourage laziness and discourage the pursuit of education. For instance, Rabiatu Ammah is of the conviction that *Bases* seem to be one of the factors that breed poverty in Muslim communities. These views criminalise the phenomenon and seek their abolition in Muslim communities.

On the contrary, other opinion leaders and scholars, think that *Bases* contribute in one way or the other to the security of the community. They serve as mouthpieces for the youth of *Zongo* community. Additionally, they give the people a sense of identity and a feeling of belonging. They also contribute to the religious and social life of the community. This is done by organizing symposia for the education of the community on Islamic issues.

It is an emerging reality in contemporary times that, *Bases* are being transformed into religious groups and for that matter any *Base* that does not fall in line with this transformation risks irrelevance in the scheme of *Zongo* youth affairs. There is a paradigm shift as well as cooperation and collaboration among various *Bases* in inculcating positive attitudes and conduct in their members. In spite of this paradigm shift, some people still relegate the religious contributions of these *Bases* to the background. It is against this background that the research was done to investigate the socio religious activities of the *Bases* and their contribution to the development of Islam in Accra.

The study was guided by four objectives. These objectives were addressed in five chapters using the functional and the theological approaches in tandem with the theory of *amr bil ma'roof wa nahy anil munkar* (enjoining virtue and forbidding indecency).

In an attempt to achieve these aims and objectives, the researcher in the first chapter of the study provided a general introduction by stating the research problem, question, objectives, theoretical framework, scope and sample, methodological approaches and methods of data collection and review of relevant literature. The chapter also dealt with the limitation,

organization and relevance of the research, which is a pioneering one in terms of its contribution to scholarship.

In the second chapter entitled *Islam and the youth*, the discussion centered on the constructive roles expected of youths as outlined by the primary sources of Islam. The challenges facing the Muslim youth vis a vis unemployment, pluralism and secularism were also discussed.

Needless to say, Islam as a complete code of life provides a guide in every aspect of human development. It has therefore laid down the right conduct for the young as well as the old. It would be appropriate to say, youth is a time of challenge offering many opportunities for one to build a sound and a happy future; but also has a number of pitfalls which can affect one's future wellbeing.

The period of youth is crucial because it is the period that generally determines the way in which a person's life is spent. If this period is spent in tune with Islamic principles and associating with the pious, ethically and morally upright people, then it is hoped that the rest of one's life will be spent in the same way.

It was also discussed that, in man's existence on earth, he is surrounded by certain necessities which hold a tight grip on him from birth. Necessities such as food, clothing and shelter are basic and the preservation of life depends on them. However, one ought to satisfy these needs in a lawful manner. Differently put, he/she ought to earn a living legitimately.

Consequently, the chapter has stated the Islamic perspective, role expected of youth and their behavioral patterns. It has also expressed that, the only way the youth could succeed is through education and endurance. The duties and responsibilities of parents in nurturing children have also been discussed. It was argued that the effect of conduct and action of a parent is far greater than that of conversation and speech in the nurturing of children.

Chapter three is devoted to the *emergence and structure* of the *Bases* and thus tracing the origin of the phenomenon as well as trajectories and the profile of the membership. The chapter discussed the genesis of the various *Bases* and their sociological orientation prior to switching to religious activities. It was found out that, most *Bases* were established to help themselves only in times of need. However, this objective began to shift in the latter part of the 1990s due to the influence of some Muslim clerics in the communities.

The socio-religious activities of the *Bases* were therefore highlighted and the evidence gathered indicates that the youth are deeply involved in the religious activities of the communities. The revivalism experienced in the *Zongo* community is grounded among youngsters, many of whom are well educated. This resurgence is motivated by a rejection of excessive westernization. The *Bases* have therefore become instruments of Islamization.

It was established that, with the increase in cooperation, collaboration and surge in Muslim youth initiatives, the communities have seen the emergence of religious *Bases*. The set of religious principles upheld by the youth at the *Bases* serve as a defense mechanism against the challenges of an increasing secularized way of life. The *Bases* also display an activist

stance towards social change as they attempt to transform their environment in order to bring it in line with Islamic concepts.

The fourth chapter is titled; the *Impact of the Bases on the Zongo Communities*. The chapter examined the religious activities of the *Bases* and its impact on the community. Interest in the question of youth and Islam in Ghana stems from the overwhelming demographic weight of youth and their relatively recent incursion into the public domain; as well as wave of Islamic revivalism that is currently happening in the *Zongo* community.

## 5.1 MAJOR FINDINGS

- It was found out that the *Bases* have embraced additional devotional activities such as *dhikr* and they are therefore found around the Sufi circles. They also organize the yearly devotional acts like the one in the last Wednesday of *Safar* and *Lailatul Qadr*.
- It was also found out that Qur'an recitation weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly or annually is ubiquitous among the *Bases*. Each and every *Base* falls within one of these specified times.
- It was also found out that, the *Bases* are making frantic efforts to unite their ranks and to pursue developmental projects in the community. In the light of this, various Islamic schools in the community have been assisted with books and desks. Some have received cash donations for construction works.

- Also, community mosques have been rehabilitated, renovated and or refurbished by the *Bases*. This was done with internally generated funds.
- Furthermore, it was found out that, the *Bases* organize clean up exercise in order to rid the community of filth and to improve the sanitation status of the *Zongos*.
- Additionally, the *Bases* organize symposia to enlighten the community on religious and social issues. They also organize *Tafsir* weekly and annually (during Ramadan). It was also found out that every *Base* under the lens of this research organizes a *Maulid* celebration in one way or the other. It came to light that, some of the *Bases* have borrowed the *damba* traditional dance and incorporated it in their build up to *Maulid*. I observed also, the proliferation of “spiritual consultants” among the youth. Some claim to have antidote to spiritual malaise
- Although the orientation of majority of the *Bases* is the Sufi Tijjaniyyah, the youth are working hard to address the challenges that doctrinal differences bring in its wake by promoting intra religious cooperation and tolerance. There is no gainsaying that, the *Bases* have contributed to the development of Islam in the *Zongo* community in recent times and by extension Accra.
- Again, it was found out that the *Bases* as religious groups are not politically affiliated though individual members are actively involved in politics and some of them hold executive positions in various parties at the community level. Members of these *Bases* are usually between the ages of eighteen and forty, more or less fitting the definition of youth in Islam.

- Additionally, there is a leadership structure and most of the groups are formally structured with a constitution and an established power structure; For instance, President, Imam, Secretary and Treasurer among others. It was also found out that indiscipline is not countenanced among various *Bases* and there is a threat of expulsion for consistent deviance.

## 5.2 CONCLUSION

Several scholarly works have been done on Muslim groups and organizations in Ghana. However, a review of these works revealed that none has investigated the activities of the *Bases*. For instance Osman Bari only mentioned that, the youth in the *Zongo* were preoccupied with the formation of social clubs known as *Bases*. Therefore, this work is a pioneering one and the overall objective has been to investigate the socio-religious activities of the *Bases* and their contribution to the development of Islam in Accra. Having employed the functional and theological approaches in tandem with the theory of *amr bil ma;roof wanahy anil munkar*, the research concludes that:

The *Bases* are being transformed into religious groups and they also contribute to the development of Islam in the communities. Also, there are well learned and educated personalities amongst the members of various *Bases*.

This conclusion shows that the research question has been adequately answered. Answering the research question has not only addressed the specific research objectives but also has expanded the body of knowledge in the field of Muslim organizations in Ghana.

However, it is worth mentioning that, the current study does not claim to be conclusive on *Bases* in Muslim communities. Therefore some recommendations are hereby made for policy making and further studies.

### 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- In order to foster unity and expedite development within the community, there is the need for the *Bases* to cooperate at all times. Their unity should not be seen only during religious activities but also in all endeavours, especially economic ventures to raise funds for programs sustainability.
- The mode of appointment of leadership should also include moral rectitude as a key requirement.
- Education should be reinforced and the study recommends that Islamic schools should promote critical thinking and expand curriculum that would broaden students understanding of other cultures.
- The *Bases* should be in constant touch with Muslim scholars so as to get the necessary guidance on religious issues.

- The study recommends Muslim entrepreneurs to operate businesses in the *Zongo* to offer more employment opportunities to the youth by creating jobs and enable the youth to attain economic independence.
- The study recommends that, since the youth are able to build mosques, they should also convert some of the internet café outlets in the community into a computer training center to equip the youth with information and communications technology skills.
- The *Bases* should introduce entertainment programs that are shariah compliant during Eid and other national holidays in order to curb the influence of secular entertainment.
- The youth should be careful and not to meddle in conflicts involving Muslim clerics but rather find a way of reconciling them.

#### **5.4 SUGGESTED AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

- The emergence and activities of Women *Bases*.
- The activities of Muslim Youth Spiritual Consultants.

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## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE BASES

- 1) Name of Base:.....
- 2) Date of formation:.....
- 3) Number of members: .....
- 4) Number of members working:.....
- 5) Number of members schooling:.....
- 6) Number of members unemployed:.....
- 7) Eldest (age) :.....
- 8) Youngest age:.....
- 9) Source of funding:.....
- 10) Activities  
:.....  
.....  
...
- 11) Affiliation:.....
- 12) Time of meeting; Day.....Night.....Anytime.....
- 13) Relationship with the community  
:.....  
.....  
..

14) Criteria for choosing

leaders:.....  
.....  
.

15) Eligibility of

membership:.....  
.....  
...

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW GUIDE TO SEEK INFORMATION FROM LEADERS IN THE COMMUNITY ON THE EMERGENCE OF THE BASES IN ACCRA.

- 1) What are the factors that led to the formation of the  
Bases?.....  
.....  
....
- 2) What is their (Bases) relationship with the  
community?.....  
.....  
....
- 3) What is their (Bases) impact, socially, economically and religiously in the  
community?.....  
.....  
.....
- 4) Would you encourage the phenomenon of  
Bases?.....  
.....  
....

5) What is the way

forward?.....

.....

..

## APPENDIX C

### QUESTIONNAIRE TO SOME SELECTED MEMBERS OF THE BASES.

- 1) Level of education: Primary.....Secondary.....Tertiary.....Drop out.....
- 2) Marital status:.....
- 3) Sect: Tijaniyyah/ Shia/ Salafi
- 4) Children.....
- 5) When do you sit at the  
Base?.....  
..
- 6) How often.....
- 7) What is your contribution to the  
base.....
- 8) What do you derive from the  
base.....
- 9) Are you employed? Yes.....No.....
- 10) If yes, where and  
what.....
- 11) Your relationship with other Bases  
.....  
.

12) Your relationship with the

community.....

.....

..