

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND STUDENTS' UNION POLITICS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, 2011-2013¹

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***Abstract:** The frequency, dynamics and huge human and material losses that always follow the outbreak of religious conflicts in Nigeria have incited the interest of scholars to research into religious conflicts in the country. However, scholars of religious identity conflicts in Nigeria have always under-looked the use of religious identity at the micro level and the tension that always greet it. Meanwhile, this has serious implications for the magnitude of religious identity conflict in Nigeria. In order to bridge this gap, this study looks at the use of religious identity for political campaigns among the students of University of Ibadan, Nigeria.*

Keywords: Religious Identity, Politics, Students' Union Government, Nigerian Tertiary Institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Great philosophers have propounded the worthlessness of religion in the face of advancement in science and education. They based their assertion on the argument that the popularity of religion is heavily based on social hardship which is endemic in the society and that once that is taken care of, religion will become irrelevant in modern societies. Karl Marx, one of the greatest social thinkers, is one of the proponents of this proposition. He popularly asserts that "religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world...the opium of the people". He opined that religion is illusory to the happiness of the people and therefore canvassed for its abolition in modern societies. In support of the position of Marx above, Voltaire, one of the 18th Century French Philosophers, maintained that in the future, all education will be based on human reasoning rather than on divine revelation, and that the age of enlightenment would

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displace the authoritarian religious leaders². Similarly, Marcel Gauchet cited in Danjibo observed that:

Religious belief is ceasing to be political. It is abandoning its time-honoured involvement in the form taken by human communities... This emancipation from the initial framework that contained the agreement about our world ushers us into a new age of politics and, more broadly, historical action³.

Based on this thinking, therefore, the theory of secularization which demystifies religion and promotes rationality and neutrality over religious affairs became prominent and played crucial role in reducing the potency of religion in modern society. Thus, for a long while, scholarship did not pay adequate attention to the study of religion due largely to its relegation to the private sector⁴.

However, since the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, potency of religion has risen and it has begun to play a prominent role in World Politics. Thus, more than ever before, individuals, groups, states and nations continue to manipulate the instrumentality of religion to achieve certain goals and objectives that are intrinsically political, and this is not without its own problem. Thus, Beckford and Wallis cited in Danjibo observed that:

Today, however, it often appears that we have a different problem: rather than there being too little religion, it may be said that there is too much...⁵

The implication of the statement above is that religion has crossed its boundaries from exclusively private realm into public sphere, and this has been responsible for most of the intractable conflicts in the world today.

In Nigeria, religion plays a major role both in public and private affairs. Danjibo observed that:

In Nigeria especially, religion plays a very vital and influential role in the society that has manifested itself as a potent force in the political development of the Nigerian state from pre-

² See Joshua Olusegun Bolarinwa. 2010. Clash of Cultures: Muslim-Christian Violence in Nigeria and Its Implications for Political Stability in I.O. Albert and O.N. Olarinde (ed). *Trends and Tensions in Managing Conflicts*. Abuja: Society for Peace Studies and Practice. Pp. 64

³ Danjibo, D.N. (2009). Islamic Fundamentalism and Sectarian Violence: "The Maitatsine" and "Boko Haram" Crises in Northern Nigeria. Paper Presented at IFRA Conference Organized in Zaria. Pp.2

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ *Ibid*, Pp. 3

independence to post-independence. Hardly can the Nigerian state be talked about without reference to religion⁶.

Therefore, there is a huge body of literature on the role and relevance of religion in Nigeria society and many of these literatures have concentrated on pointing out how religion is used to influence politics and distribution of resources and the destructive effect of such in the Nigerian society. However, scholars have not given much attention to how religion is used at the micro-level in the Nigerian society.

Educational institution, especially higher institutions of learning, is one of the agents of political socialization where children and youths are being socialized into the political culture (either good or bad) of any society. In schools, children and youths coming from all walks of life disparate in terms of ethnicity, religion, personal attitude, etc meet one another. Furthermore, there interaction with the older members of the society who try to create a divide among them in the school as an instrument to attain political power also strengthens division among this vulnerable group who constitute the future of the any society. Unfortunately, one of the places where scholarship has not contemplated the relevance of religion is in Nigeria's higher institutions of learning, especially among students in Nigerian universities, and yet, religion plays major role especially in the conduct of elections in these places largely in an attempt to secure the highest political seat in favour of their adherents.

Therefore, religious identity politics in Nigerian higher institutions of learning deserves scholarly research and investigation not only because they can serve as a vehicle for incubating, disseminating and peddling of religious sentiment in Nigeria due to town-gown relationship, but also because peace and conflict scholars need to be mapping out areas of potentially violent and intractable conflicts for prevention from snowballing into the larger Nigerian Society. The case of religious crisis that greeted the conduct of Students' Union elections of 1988 in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, painfully reminds us of this possibility in Nigeria.

In a June 1986 electioneering campaign to elect Students' Union Executive Council in Ahmadu Bello University, three candidates emerged to contest for the post of president. One was a Christian and the other two were Muslims. The one who was a Christian stood and campaigned on the platform of Christianity, while one of the Muslim candidates did similar thing by campaigning on the basis of his religious affiliation - Islam - while the third person, though a Muslim, stood and campaigned rather on a radical ideological platform. According to Fayokun⁷, it was alleged that the Vice Chancellor of the University

⁶ *Ibid*, Pp. 3

⁷ Fayokun Kayode. n.d. Proliferation of Religious Groups in Nigerian Campuses: Keeping Religious and Educational Interest on Equipoise. www.religiousconflict.com. See also Mohammed A.S. 1986. The Aftermath of the Ahmadu Bello University Students' Crisis of May 1986. *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 37.

then, who was a Muslim, was apprehensive of any radical movement against his administration, and thus supported the Muslim candidate against the two other candidates while many of the Christian staff of the University and students' fellowships rallied support for the Christian candidate.

When the contest became intense, the Muslim community persuaded the third candidate to step down for the sake of his Muslim brother so that the Muslim community would not be divided. This made the contest a purely religious struggle for the heart of Students' Union Government between Christians and Muslims in the University. At one of the rallies held before the conduct of the election, the Christian candidate, whose name was identified as Steven Awobi adopted a campaign slogan which indicated religious contest. He was quoted to have said "a vote for Steve is a vote for Christ".

After the election was conducted and the counting was going on, it became clear that the Christian candidate was going to win. The Muslim students mounted the roof of the building, descended on the electoral officers, and destroyed the electoral materials. Thus, violence broke out throughout in the school and snowballed into a pogrom that occupied the whole of Kaduna state which was already a fragile state awaiting ignition. This is therefore pointing to the salience of mapping religious intrusion into politics in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. Unfortunately, the University of Ibadan is one of the foremost universities in Nigeria. It has produced much of the Nigerian leaders and it continues to be the major choice of potential Nigeria undergraduates. Thus, studying the use of religion in the University is not raising false alarm but is calling for critical measures that will stem the tide that religion is dangerously taking among students in the University.

Therefore this paper investigates how religion has become a viable and veritable instrument of election mobilization since the re-emergence of Students' Union Government in the University of Ibadan and the implication which that may have on peace and social cohesion of Nigerians. This paper will also make recommendations to the University on how debilitating influence of religion on politics among the students can be reduced. This paper uses pure primary methods of data collection. The reason for this is because scholarship on students' unionism has not been considering religion and politics amongst students. They have only been discussing conflict between the union and the school management authority⁸. Thus, publications on this area of scholarship are scanty

⁸ For studies that have been done on this, see Oluremi Ayodele-Bamisaye. 2008. Governance, Conflict and Peace Building in the University of Ibadan Under Two National Political Dispensations. *African Notes*. Vol. 30 Nos 1 & 2; Etadon F.I. 2007. Perceived dimensions of workers' and students' conflicts in selected first generation Universities in Nigeria, PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan; Beckman B. and Ya'u Y. Z. (ed). *Great Nigerian Students: Movement Politics and Radical Nationalism*. Centre for Research and Documentation, Kano and Politics of Development Group, Department of Political Science, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden; Ojo J.D. 1995. *Nigerian Students Unrests: A Legal and Historical Approach*. Spectrum Books Limited and IFRA; Albert I.O. 1995. "The University Students in the

to the best of our knowledge. This therefore forms why this study depends entirely and extensively on primary sources. These primary sources include interviews, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and personal observation of the authors.

THE RISE, FALL AND RE-EMERGENCE OF THE STUDENTS' UNION IN UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

In 1925, Ladipo Sholanke, a Nigerian studying in London, founded a students' union body for the West African students in the diaspora. This organisation was known as West African Students' Union (WASU). This Union brought together numerous students' associations that were formed during World War I. It campaigned against colonial exploitation, political repression, racism and social inequalities in all West African colonies using major strategies like dialogue, petition, book publications and newspaper articles, news magazine, public enlightenment programme, among others⁹. Through the effort of this union, several achievements were attained in West African colonies. For example, it was through the effort of the union that constitutional reforms were carried out in British colonies in West Africa, which led to political independence in the 60s for most of the colonies. However, with this organisation serving as an umbrella body for all other students' union bodies in West African region, there were many other local students' bodies in West Africa.

In Nigeria, there were students' union organisations in Federal Government Colleges in Lagos (King's and Queen's Colleges), Government Colleges in Umuahia and Ibadan, Yaba College of Education, among others. However, the first full-fledged Students' unionism in Nigerian university started in University of Ibadan and this was composed of students who were formally in the four colleges in Lagos, Ibadan and Umuahia and the Yaba College of Education in Lagos¹⁰. The establishment of the first students' unionism in the University came because the university was the first in the country, and it came up in 1948¹¹. It was founded at the very beginning of the University's history¹². Until 1959 when the Union moved to its permanent site which is named after one of its past Presidents – Kunle Adepeju –, it used to occupy a large room in the basement of Tedder Hall¹³.

Politics of Structural Adjustment in Nigeria: Between Liberalisation and Oppression" in T. Mkandawire and A. Olukoshi (eds). *The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa*. Dakar: CODESRIA.

⁹ Olaniyi, Rasheed. 2012. "Nigeria is not a Banana Republic": Students' Unionism and Police Brutality in Nigeria, 1978-1998" in I.O. Albert (ed.). *A History of Social Conflict and Conflict Management in Nigeria: A Festschrift for Professor Biodun Adediran*. Ibadan: John Archer Publishers Limited.

¹⁰ Chinua Achebe. 2012. *There was a country: A personal History of Biafra*. London Penguin Books.

¹¹ See Biobaku Saburi. 1985. *University Educational Development in Nigeria (1948-83): Have the Academic Failed the Nation?* Institute of African Studies Occasional Publication No. 35. University of Ibadan. See Also Akinkugbe O.O. 1998. *University of Ibadan at 50: Time for a Paradigm Shift*. Convocation Lecture delivered at the University of Ibadan on Monday 16th November, 1998 on the Occasion of the 50th Foundation Day Anniversary. Ibadan University Press

¹² Obaro Ikime. 1973. "Problem of Student Welfare" in J. F. Ade-Ajayi and Tekena A. Tamuno (ed.) *The University of Ibadan, 1948-1973: A History of the First Twenty-Five Years*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

¹³ *ibid*

According to Mellanby, the students of the University reflected the regional distribution of Nigeria in the early days of the establishment of the University. He observed that as at 1951 the total number of students in the University was 338. Out of this number, the Western Region had 43% of the students, Eastern Region had 48%, Northern Region, Cameroons and Non-Nigerians were 3% each. By 1956, the number of the students had increased to 563, but the proportion from the different regions remained basically the same. This ethnic distribution of the population of students has not really changed now, even when Universities have permeated Nigeria. University of Ibadan still maintains students that cut across ethnic and religious affiliations.

The Regional Distribution of University of Ibadan in 1951

Region	Tribe	Number in 1951	Percentage in Each Group
Western Region	Yoruba	118	43%
	Itsekiri	8	
	Beni	14	
	Urhobo	6	
	Total	146	
Eastern Region	Ibo	109	48%
	Efik	11	
	Ibibio	20	
	Ijaw	15	
	Others	7	
	Total	162	
Northern Region	Total	10	3%
Cameroons	Total	11	3%
Non- Nigerians	Gambia	1	3%
	Gold Coast	2	
	Sierra Leone	6	
	Total	9	

Source: Kenneth Mellanby, 1974:224

The artificiality of the Nigerian state and the religious and regional difference often give rise to troubles amongst the students, but these are often subtle. Mellanby (1974:223) observed that

There were from time to time quarrels which had a tribal or regional basis...and the differences of opinion which appeared to reveal tribalism often had a political or religious origin¹⁴ (Mellanby, 1974:223-224)

He went on to say that:

¹⁴ Kenneth Mellanby. 1974. *The Birth of a Nigerian University*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. Pp: 223-224

The small number of students from Northern Nigeria, particularly those that were moslims, often felt that they were isolated. There was a serious complaint that they were persecuted, and one student complained that he had been threatened with a beating up if he did not attend Christian Chapel Service¹⁵. (Mellanby, 1974:224)

Ikime, reinforcing the view of Mellanby above observed that three basic issues plagued the union in her first twenty-five years and these were: manifestation of ethnicism at the union election, mismanagement of funds and general lack of enthusiasm for union activities on the part of the majority of the students¹⁶. Among all these, the problem of ethnicity in the union elections was the most marked and it followed the national nomenclature¹⁷. Obaro Ikime noted that:

...as Nigeria moved closer to regaining her independence, ethnic rivalries began to feature in union elections. This trend became even more marked when, during the Nigerian crisis, most of the Ibo students withdrew from Ibadan, leaving the Yoruba an undisputed majority¹⁸.

He concluded by warning that:

In a sense, what is happening at Ibadan is no more than a reflection of what is happening in the wider society of Nigeria. Yet there is no doubt that this is an aspect of students' unionism which needs to be carefully watched¹⁹.

Despite these differences and challenges which always mirror the entire Nigerian society, the relationship among the students still went on well as the students formed themselves into a formidable force/group to fight unpopular colonial policies and joined the nationalists to fight for the country's independence. They did not only form themselves into a formidable group, they also joined other students' union organisations in the colleges and WASU to engage in nationalist activities that finally gave independence to Nigeria. After independence, they continued to be relevant by vehemently opposing any policy that supported Nigeria's continuous attachment to the colonial masters. For example, the students' union of University of Ibadan, then known as University College Ibadan, led other students from other colleges to protest against the decision of the

¹⁵ *Ibid*, Pp: 224

¹⁶ Obaro Ikime, op. cit. pp. 250.

¹⁷ The reason for this manifestation of ethnicism in the Union elections was because in the early years of the Union in the University, elections to the Union Executive and Students Representative Council (SRC), a legislative body of the Union, were held on the basis of party politics which were formed based on the national political parties and since the national political parties were ethnic, party politics in the union was also ethnic. This introduced acrimony of party politics into the union and the university as a whole. For details, see Obaro Ikime in J.F. Ade-Ajayi, 1973.

¹⁸ Obaro Ikime, 1973: Pp. 251.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.

Nigerian government to enter into Anglo-Nigerian defence pact with the British Government in 1961²⁰.

However, since the late 1960s and early 1970s, the students' unionism in the University of Ibadan took a different and dangerous dimension. The menace of cultism started and climaxed into a significant level that it began to affect the academic activities of the university which attracted the attention of the Federal Government. According to Awe cited in Ayodele-Bamisaiye (2006), the intervention of the Federal Government in 1989 gave the University Governing Council of the University of Ibadan and other Universities the power to proscribe any unlawful society. However, this had little or no effect as campus cultism in University kept increasing and disrupting academic activities in the university. Between 1995 and 1999, about 983 students died due to cultism²¹. Apart from this, other issues such as inadequate power supply, operation of the campus cab, among others were some of the issues that always have brought the university management and the students' union at loggerhead. This led to the kidnapping and arrest of the Vice Chancellor, Professor Omoniyi Adewoye by a group of students who believed that his rulership of the university was authoritarian. Upon his release, he disbanded the students' union organisation on March 2, 2000; three weeks to the end of his tenure. However, the union was yet to be disbanded until when Professor Omoniyi Adewoye left office and handed over to Ayodele Falase. Thus, professor Falase inherited the problem and through court order, sustained the disbandment of the Students' Union body²². Thus, for a decade (2001-2011), the students' union of the University of Ibadan was disbanded and no election was held to constitute a new students' union except the Students' Union Transition Committee (SUTC) which replaced the students' Union body.

RELIGION AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN AFTER THE DEMISE OF STUDENTS' UNION

Religion is a strong force in any society to the extent that academic institutions such as the universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, among others are not insulated from its influence. In fact, academic institutions are always a recruiting avenue for religious leaders and therefore, virtually all religions and their various denominations have their representative associations and parish in universities, colleges of education and polytechnics. For instance, in University of Ibadan, virtually all Christian denominations have their students' wing. There are such Christian fellowships like Student Christian Movement (SCM); Ibadan Varsity Christian Union (IVCU); Christ Apostolic Church Students' Association (CACSA) representing the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC); The

²⁰ Aluede O.O. et al. 2005. Student Unrest in Nigerian Universities: Looking Back and Forward. *Journal of Social Science*. Vol. 10, No. 1.

²¹ Etadon F.I 2007. Perceived Dimensions of Workers' and Students Conflicts in Selected First Generation Universities in Nigeria. PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

²² Oluremi Ayodele-Bamisaiye. 2008. Governance, Conflict and Peace Building in the University of Ibadan Under Two National Dispensations. *African Notes* Vol. 30, Nos. 1 and 2.

Apostolic Church Students' Association of Nigeria (TACSFON) representing The Apostolic Church (TAC), Believers' Love World fellowship representing Pastor Chris Oyakilomah's Believers' Love World also known as Christ's Embassy, Christ Ambassadors Student Outreach (CASOR) for Assemblies of God. Other religious denominations that have their representative in the University are Celestial Church of Christ, Cherubim and Seraphim, Ansarudeen Society, *Nasrul-Lahi-l-Fatih* Society (NASFAT), Catholic, etc. In most departments and faculties, mainstream religions like Christianity and Islam always have their separate association of students. Thus it is very common to see such associations as Christian Association of Faculty of Arts Students (CAFAS), Christian Association of Philosophy Students (CAPS), Muslim Law Students' Society (MLSS), etc. All these religious associations which are scattered all over the faculties, department within universities, colleges of education and polytechnics always have severe influence on the political activities in these units.

In University of Ibadan, the two mainstream religions - Christianity and Islam - have separate associations that coordinate the activities of their various religious organisations across all the denominations. For all Christian fellowships and associations, it is Amalgamated Union of Campus Students Fellowships (AUCSF) while the Muslim associations and fellowships are coordinated by Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN). These coordinating students' religious associations always play a major role especially in students' union elections in the University before the students' union was disbanded in 2001. The first obvious manifestation of this reality came up in the 1999/2000 University of Ibadan academic session when AUCSF and Students' Christian Movement (SCM) unanimously endorse the candidature of Mr. Solomon Ben, a Christian, for the post of President of the union and urged every Christian to vote for him against his rival candidate who was a Muslim. This religious mobilization led to the unanimous election of Solomon Ben by all Christians and his emergence as President of the University of Ibadan Students' Union Government. However, the continuous occurrence of this development at the level of students' union was put to a halt by the disbandment of the Union in 2001. The development quickly resurged in the elections at the various halls, departments and faculties of the university. Two examples will suffice here.

Mellamby Hall is a premier hall in the university. Political activities in the hall had been noted to be very calm until 2007 when hall executive election was to be conducted. During this period, three students contested for the post of Hall Chairman. One of the candidates was a Christian, another a Muslim, and the third candidates' religious identity could not be ascertained²³. However, the third candidates whose religious identity could not be identified seemed to be the most popular of the three candidates. Earlier, before

²³ According to a key informant interview, the name of the candidate was Matthew Wasiu. Thus, his religious identity could not be ascertained because his names reflect both Christianity and Islam.

the election, a conflict had ensued between the Christian community and their Muslim counterpart in the hall over the early morning preaching always embarked upon by the Christians during which, on one occasion, a Muslim cleric in the hall slapped a Christian preacher for disturbing his peace by preaching very early in the morning. This turned to a religious conflict as the Christian community also alleged the Muslim of disturbing their peace with their early morning call for prayers in the hall. This led to the cancellation of all religious activities in the hall. This did not go down well with the Muslims community who felt that if they had had a Muslim as the Chairman of the hall, he would have kicked vehemently against the hall management's decision to cancel all religious activities in the hall. They therefore sought to produce the next Hall Chairman to help fight what they considered as persecution against them. As soon as the Christians noticed the move of the Muslim community, the political contest became a religious tussle between the Christian and the Muslim communities to elect their religious adherent as the Chairman of the hall. At the end of the day, the candidate, whose religious affiliation could not be ascertained, was eventually returned elected as the chairman.

Independence Hall is another major hall in the University. The hall is noted to be one of the most political in the University not only for students' union election but for its own internal politics. The year 2010 witnessed a very tough and tensile election which took religious dimension in the hall. The election went religious not only among the contestants but also among the hall residents. The major contest was between a Christian and a Muslim. The Christian contestant had once held the post of Public Relations Officer of the hall during which he had carved a niche for himself with a famous song he composed that he always sang before addressing residents of the hall. This very song had created a different popularity for him even beyond the shores of Independence Hall to other adjoining halls like Nnamdi Azikwe Hall and Idia Hall. The song sang thus:

*Awa loni Indy²⁴ hall ko le baje,
awa loni Indy Hall kole baje oooo,
Oooh greatest Katangite Indy Hall lawa wa,
a mo ara wa*

Meaning

We are the owners of Indy Hall, it will never be destroyed
We are the owners of Indy Hall, it will never be destroyed
Oooh greatest Katangites, we are in Independence Hall
we know ourselves.

This very song composed and always sung by him, gave him the popularity beyond Independence hall and the idea of composing a song for the hall was borrowed from him

²⁴ "Indy Hall" is a short pronunciation of "Independence Hall".

by other hall residents. For example, Mellamby Hall also composed a song almost verbatim as it was composed for Independence Hall.

In 2010, when ban on politics was lifted, he decided to go a bit above the position of PRO he had held to contest for the post of Hall Administrator-General²⁵. His candidature was accepted to the people beyond the shores of Independence Hall to other adjoining halls, but his ambition of becoming the Administrator-General of the hall had a great impediment in the candidature of another contestant, who was a Muslim adherent. As the contest became intense, the Christian candidate reportedly said in one of his campaigns after going through the roll of honour of the hall that the Administrator-Generals that had been in the hall were all Muslims, therefore, the Muslim community should also allow the Christian to produce the next Administrator-General²⁶. Obviously, he was using that statement to justify why he must emerge as the Administrator-General of the Hall in the election. This statement ignited the interests of the Christian community in the hall who had remained passive in the previous elections before and constitute a significant population in the hall but infuriated the Muslim community who had significantly low population. Thus in protest, the Muslims backed out of the election as contestants and as well as voters. Therefore, those who voted and contested in Independence election in 2010 were all Christians with no Muslim. This singular act in the hall affected all other elections in departments, other halls and faculties throughout the University as the Christians became political and wanted to make use of their number to outweigh the Muslim community in the University. The Muslim community also became aggressive and wanted to vent their anger on the school management with the staging of protest after a Christian lady reportedly disguised and went into one of their Friday prayers to "preach the gospel".

The corollary of the point being made here is that before the disbandment of the Students' Union body in University of Ibadan, the use of religion as a motivating factor by student-politicians had existed. However, after the disbandment of the union, the political use of religion went to various sections of the students gathering where politics is also played and became a major campaign issue amongst the students.

RETURN OF THE STUDENTS' UNION POLITICS AND THE POLITICAL USE OF RELIGION

For more than a decade, politics at the level of Students' Union was put on hold. It was rather run by some students who constituted Students' Union Transition Committee (SUTC). This committee was composed of elected chairmen/chairpersons and presidents of halls and faculties and membership of the committee was renewed at the end of every

²⁵ While other halls has the headship of their hall named as "Chairman", only Independence Hall names her own as "Administrator-General" as a mark of distinction. This also follows the belief that Independence Hall is not just a hall but an "Independent republic". This is why the Hall is also nicknamed "Katanga Republic" and the residents are called "Katangites" instead of "Independites".

²⁶ Focus Group discussion conducted among eight residents of Independence Hall on August 23rd, 2013.

session. However, one major thing about this committee is that it lacked the popularity and support of the students because students perceived the members of the committee as the stooge of the University management who, the students believed, deliberately scuttled Students' Unionism on campus in order to have a smooth, hitch-free and "unchallenged" administration. Thus, there were at least two views on why students' unionism was put on hold in the University of Ibadan. On the one hand are some who shared the view that it was a deliberate attempt by the university management to curtail the excesses of the students and to have a regime that is free from their threats. Among those who share in this view are the students, past students' union members and other pro-students activists. On the other hand are people who believed that the school management was not directly involved in the disbandment of the students' union but that the students themselves were the architect of their own misfortune. People, most especially members of the university management authority, who shared this view are of the opinion that the injunction passed by the court as a result of court case on the 2001 election held in the Union was responsible for the disbandment and the inability of the Union to hold election for a decade²⁷. However, through the effort of the Pro-chancellor and chairman of University of Ibadan Governing Council—Mr. Wole Olaonipekun, ban on politics was eventually lifted in 2011.

In the contest for the post of President of the union were two persons. One was Adeola Adelabu aka "Labsy". He was of the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry and a resident of Tedder Hall. He was said to have attended International School, Ibadan (ISI) and his father was also said to have been a lecturer in University of Ibadan. This factor made him to be seen as would-be stooge of the University management by the students. In-fact, in one of his interviews prior to election, he was reported to have reinforced that "the university management is composed of our fathers and mothers" and that therefore, he did not see any reason why we must go against their decisions²⁸. However, he was a Christian. On the other hand is Tokunbo Salako A²⁹ a.k.a. "T Cool". He was a student of the Faculty of the Social Sciences, Department of Sociology and a resident of Nnamdi Azikwe Hall; one of the most prominent and politically conscious halls in the university. Furthermore, he is a devout Muslim but deliberately silenced his religious affiliation³⁰ although the silencing of his religious identity did not just start when the election was to be conducted.

Religion became an instrument for political campaign in the election when a group of supporters of one of the two contestants was reported to have made leaflets on behalf of Tokunbo Salako A. which reads "Tokunbo Salako is a fellow Muslim brother, vote for him" and spread them at strategic places in the University³¹. Later it was reported to have

²⁷ Ayodele-Bamisaiye, *op.cit*, 2008.

²⁸ Gbenga Ojo, Interview conducted at Abadina Quarters, University of Ibadan.

²⁹ The "A" here means Al-Rauf but he decided to silent it.

³⁰ Kayode Bello, Interview conducted in Bello Hall, University of Ibadan on August 18, 2013

³¹ Ibid.

been masterminded and carried out by supporters loyal to Adeola Adelabu to secure electoral victory for Adelabu. Two things could have made the supporters of Adelabu to do this. First and foremost was the decrease in the popularity of Adeola Adelabu as a result of the pro-University management perception of his candidature by the students and secondly, the ravageous campaign of the Nnamdi Azikwe Hall residents for Tokunbo Salako. As earlier noted, Nnamdi Azikwe Hall where Tokunbo Salako resided has a strong reputation for political consciousness in the university. During the period of the disbandment of the Students' Union Government, the Hall had organised series of seminars, lectures, protests and demonstrations calling for the unbanning of Students' Union Government. Thus, when the ban on politics was finally lifted, residents of the hall and other halls believed that anybody that will be President of the Union must be matured and strong enough to resist the hegemony of the University management. Furthermore, residents of the Nnamdi Azikwe Hall had thought that since they were always at the vanguard of unbanning Students' Union in the University, they should be given the benefit of producing the first president of the Union³². Thus, most of the residents of Nnamdi Azikwe Hall participated in the campaign for the election of Tokunbo Salako and the idea that the hall should produce the first President of the Union was gradually being accepted by residents of other halls because in him, they saw a pro-Students Students' Union President because not only due to the fact that he was coming from Nnamdi Azikwe Hall but also because he was not seen to be affiliated to the management like his rival; Adeola Adelabu. Thus, in order to form a strong force against the all-ravaging campaign of the Nnamdi Azikwe Hall residents, they decided to play the card of religious identity since there are more Christians among the students of the university than the Muslims.

In the second election of the students' union, the contest was between three contestants; two are Christians and one a Muslim whose name was identified. However, the University staff-led electoral committee disqualified the candidature of the Muslim contestant. The disqualification left the all the candidates contesting for the post of president Christians and although inadvertently, prevented what would have otherwise turned to a religious contest between the Christians and the Muslims. The fact of this was seen in the majority of the Muslim brothers who joined the demonstration that led to the closure of the university main gate in protest. They did that in solidarity with their Muslim brother who was disqualified by the university management. In fact, interview conducted among the students suggests that some Muslims brothers were of the view that the university deliberately disqualified the candidature of the Muslim brother to make a way for a Christian to emerge as the president³³ even when the Chairman of the electoral committee was a Muslim³⁴. The corollary is that the disqualification of the Muslim

³² This view was shared by members of the hall during a Focus Group Discussion held among the residents of the Hall on July 13, 2013.

³³ This view was shared in a number of interviews and FGDs conducted among the students.

³⁴ The chairman of the electoral committee was Mr. T.I. Musa. As at this time, he was a Deputy Registrar.

candidate by the university management prevented the religious dimension of the election.

The third election which was held in February, 2013 had three candidates contesting for the post of president of the Union out of whom two are Christians and one, a Muslim. Out of the two Christians, one was a female while the other one was a male. An interview with a key informant suggests that on the day of manifesto night which usually determines who will eventually win the election, the lady did not only display confidence, she also stole the show with brilliant presentation of her manifestos but according to the informant, the decision from some quarters of students has it that their religion (Islam) does not allow a female to lead the people, thus, "however brilliant and good her manifesto is, they will never vote for her"³⁵. In order to appeal to the Muslim students, the female candidate decided to seek the service of a Muslim friend to stand in for her as her agent for the election with the belief that such a gesture may influence the decision of some Muslim voters to vote for her. However, this was not the case as not even the female Muslim students would vote for her based on the tenet of their religion (Islam).

At the end, the Muslim candidate won the presidency with 1812 votes while the lady ran-up with 1315 votes. However, the third candidate got a total of 958 votes.

Position Contested For	Name	Religious Affiliation	Total Vote Garnered	Names of Agents
President	Babatunde Olamide Badmus	Muslim	1812	Assa Oluwabunmi
President	Oladehin O. Enoch	Christian	958	Aiyegbusi A.S.
President	Osadua Gbemisola	Christian	1315	Wahab, D.T

Source: University of Ibadan Students' Union Executive Council Election Result Sheet, 2013.

Thus, what can be observed is that religion is becoming a very potent tool for politicking amongst the university students. This did not only start from the time when students' union was reinstated, it had started long before in halls of residents, faculties and departments. However, the return of Students' Union Government has heightened the use of religion in politics amongst the students in the University.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

One particular thing with the Students' Union politics amongst the students of the University of Ibadan is that religious affiliation of contestants is strongly becoming a determining factor that determines who wins or loses election and seekers of offices have also continued to use it as weapon. This trend has been observed before the return of the students' union politics specifically in various halls of residents, faculties and departments. However, the return of students' union government in the university in 2011 has increased the tempo of the use of religion in political campaigns. This kind of

³⁵ Interview of Key informant conducted on August, 3, 2013 at the Students' Union Building.

manifestation is not only peculiar to the students of University of Ibadan; it is common in all higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. The fact is that we seem not to be interested in investigating the politics of identity and taking concrete steps to curb its negative influence because we think that the crop of students who are admitted into higher institutions in Nigeria are juveniles who are still largely immature. With time, however, and as maturity sets in, they will change. Far beyond this, however, what we have seen is that these values are being steadily transmitted into the larger society and this breeds violent social conflict. Thus, there is a need for concrete steps to be taken. Therefore, the following recommendations are made to the university management team.

1. Religious activities should be regulated in the university. One of the ways by which the University management can do this is to cancel all religious activities in the hall of residents and refer them to designate religious centres like the mosque and the churches.
2. The university needs to monitor the electioneering campaign of the students during elections to make sure that there is minimal use of religious content in campaigns, and that whoever is found using religious issues for campaign should be banned from political activities of the Union for the rest of his/her studentship in the university.

In conclusion, the management team of the University should take urgent steps to curb this before it degenerates into a chaotic situation that will further disrupt academic calendar in the university.