

The Impact of the Iranian 1979 Iranian Revolution on the Creation of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria

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"It all started with a copy of the Holy Quran that Imam Khomeini gave me personally in 1979. That day, after our meeting, dear Imam asked me to return to my own country in order to call Nigerians to this Quran." [1]

After the recent release of Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaki, leader of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) unjustly detained since 2015 by the Nigerian state, a new chapter is now opening in the political life of Shiites in Nigeria. This fact motivated us to carry out, in this article, a comparative study on the historical genesis of the IMN which seems to be inspired, in its ideology and in its methods, of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The tactics of civil obedience and the rejection of violence, the impact of the doctrine of Mahdabiyah and the recourse to events related to the Shiite calendar especially the ceremonies of mourning for Imam Hossein constitute some of the similarities between the revolutionary methods of the Islamic movements in Iran and in Nigeria. d Nigeria. The Islamic movement of Nigerian Shiites threatened in Nigeria by pro-Saudi Wahabi tendencies such as the Salafist group Ezalatolbidaa, today has an indisputable role in the defense of the Shiite school of Ahlulbayt and the political interests of Iran in the West African region.

Keywords: Islamic Revolution, Islamic mouvement in Nigeria, Iran, Nigeria, Ibrahim Zakzaki, Africa, Islam

Introduction

Ibrahim Yaghub Zakzaky (born in Zaria in 1953) first heard the name of Imam Khomeini at Ahmadu Bello University where he was studying economics. From that day on, when his professor compared the soft power of the Imam based on the will of the people with the tyrannical power of the Shah resulting from the armed force, the great name of Rouhollah Khomeini did not cease resounding in the spirit of this young Nigerian Muslim in search of truth and justice. He was at

the time vice-president of international affairs for a major Nigerian Islamic student association called the Muslim Students Society (MSS). As a political activist within the framework of these student activities, he had already adopted pro-Islamic commitments. Zakzaky had a leading role in organizing the major protests of 1978 and 1979 by Nigerian Muslims calling for the inclusion of Islamic law in the new constitution of Africa's most populous country. In the ideological chaos of the 1970s and 1980s and when the world was torn apart by the conflict between Soviet communism and Western liberalism, Ibrahim Zakzaky and the young Nigerian Muslims around him found a third path which they saw as the alternative approach and the way of righteousness. This path is open to nations oppressed around the world by the Islamic Revolution of Iran, which in 1979 presented Islam as a means of resistance as well as a political school better suited to guide humanity on the threshold of the third millennium.

These young people led by Ibrahim Zakzaky founded the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) in 1980, almost a year after the Iranian Revolution. But originally, this movement is rooted in the long tradition of Islam-inspired claims in Africa. This movement shows, by several factors, great formal, existential and functional similarities with the thoughts, positions and methods of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. This article seeks to highlight these points of convergence between the two Islam based movements. Is the Islamic Movement in Nigeria a result of the Revolution's export policy, which was very famous in Iran of the 1980s? Or is it just a historical coincidence? Is the creation of the IMN comparable to the genesis of Hezbollah's Islamic Resistance Party in Lebanon? We must certainly avoid falling into the traps of clichés disseminated by the Western media which want to convey an Iranophobic interpretation of Islamic movements in the Middle East and Africa. The Islamic Movement of Nigeria should not be reduced to a confessional Shia party, because that is exactly the false idea that the enemy media are propagating. These media, in order to deflect the purely Islamic claims of this movement, thus argue that the Shias of Nigeria are only a minority within the community of Nigerian Muslims, and they are therefore not legitimate to carry out political activities of such magnitude. Recall that when they talk about the demands of the Shia majority in Bahrain, these same media prefer to side with the absolutely minority clan of the Khalifah! Dealing with the social aspirations of Nigerian Muslims, these media reports that Sheikh Zakzaky, leader of the Shia minority, is considering founding an Islamic republic on the model of that of Iran. And unfortunately, even in Iran, some experts unconsciously come to strengthen the camp of the enemies of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria by repeating the same media fantasies. As always, the print and broadcast media of the imperialist camp seek to sow the seeds of division in the heart of the Muslim community. The truth is that the leaders of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria have never claimed such a denominational cause. Sheikh Zakzaky's relatives and even his enemies approve of his strong patriotism towards his dear homeland, Nigeria. The truth is that this movement, contrary to the extremist and Salafist orientations of certain Nigerian groups like Boko Haram and Izala Society [2], has as a priority

the unity of the Muslim community of Nigeria and essentially aspires to remain the voice of the voiceless layers of the great Nigerian nation. And it is for this reason that the IMN is on the one hand, a victim of the hostilities of heretical and Wahhabi militants in Nigeria, and on the other hand, the target of the attacks of the Nigerian regime influenced by the external powers, especially by the Americans. The movement founded by Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky is Islamic in nature and not just Shia. The Sheikh and his followers pray in Maliki mosques as well as those of other branches of Islam in Nigeria. Usman Dan Fodio [3], the historical Nigerian hero whose political and cultural heritage is so admired by the IMN, was not a Shia leader but a Sunni Muslim. The movement led by Sheikh Zakzaky cherishes the memory of this Nigerian Sunni leader so much that he even baptized his religious schools called Fudiyyah after Fodio's name. [4] Even the title of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria emphasizes its Islamic character rather than its Shia identity. It seems important to us to mention that in general in Africa, Islam is understood as a very monolithic religion. African Muslims do not really recognize the divisions between the different currents and sects of Islam so classified among Muslims in the Near and Middle East. Still limited by Christianity as the religion of the colonizers, African Islam was thus forced to keep its unity in order to survive external threats [5]. In order to better illuminate the philosophical and religious principles of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, we will briefly discuss the history of the political aspirations of Nigerian Muslims.

1. The History of Islamic Movements in Nigeria

Islam entered the African continent as early as the 7th century, that is to say from the first century after the revelation of the Holy Quran. This religion then spread to northern Africa from the first decades of the Islamic Caliphate of Medina. As far as sub-Saharan Africa is concerned, it was mainly Muslim traders who initiated the African people of these regions to the Islamic faith. Islam thus entered Nigeria, ruled at the time by local and tribal kingdoms. During this period, Islam was able to coexist peacefully with the traditional religions of Africa. But from the 15th century and with the start of colonialist interventions by Europeans and more directly from 1851 [6] and the official occupation of Lagos by the British Navy, the colonialists imposed their religion on the Nigerian people and sowed the seeds of interfaith and interfaith conflicts in Nigeria. However, in the 19th century, Usman Dan Fodio, a Muslim spiritual leader, was able to establish a very popular Islamic caliphate in northern Nigeria. This Islamic government whose laws applied on the basis of the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Prophet Mohammad survived through the sons and grandsons of Usman Dan Fodio until 1905, when he was overthrown by the colonial forces of the British kingdom. This era is considered the golden age of Islam in Nigeria, which after English colonization could never relive this era of prosperity. The British colonizers divided the country into two administrative and geo-religious parts; the north populated more by Muslims, and the south where Christians were in the majority.

During British colonization, we can already see that the southern and neighboring towns benefited from much more advanced industrial and economic development than those in the north. This unjust and discriminatory policy is continued, even after Nigeria's independence, by westernized and militarist governments. Even the relocation of the political capital to Abuja, in the center of the country, in 1991, has not changed anything. Nigerian Muslims endowed with financial means and with investment capacities prefer to base their commercial and industrial activities in the Christian south (especially at the port of Lagos) in order to take better advantage of state facilities. These types of socio-economic injustices and this favoritism of the Nigerian governments before and after independence are considered by political analysts as one of the reasons for the emergence of extremist or even terrorist movements like that of Boko Haram in the north of Nigeria. These fanatic groups are above all financially and logistically supplied by certain foreign countries which do not want Nigeria, this major oil exporter with its large economic and mining potential, to stabilize and prosper. In such conflicting conditions, the Islamic Movement of Nigeria was founded in 1980 in the town of Zaria in the northern state of Kaduna. At that time, Marxist ideas sometimes tinged with militia's orientation was seen as the only way to resist the socio-economic injustices of the capitalist system. Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky and his supporters, following the peaceful and democratic approach of Imam Khomeini, are thus embarking on educational and humanitarian activities aimed at improving the way of life of the inhabitants of northern Nigeria. Like Imam Khomeini who, during his exile in Paris, gave gifts to his French neighbors for celebrating the Christian holiday of Christmas, Sheikh Zakzaky established friendly and reciprocal relations with the Nigerian Church. Like Imam Khomeini who works to bring together the different religious schools of Islam (which in reality differ only in a few details in terms of jurisprudence), Sheikh Zakzaky also respects the disciples of other Islamic branches and condemns the acts terrorists, terrorist groups that threaten the cohesion of the monolithic community of Nigerian Muslims.

The activities of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria took place mainly at the Hosseyniyeh Baghiyatollah, before this religious center was demolished by the Nigerian army in December 2015. It is in this Hosseyniyeh that Sheikh Zakzaky gave his weekly sermons on ethics Islamic. In this Islamic center, the Sheikh gave lessons on Quranic exegesis as well as on the commentary on Nahj-ol-Balaghah, a book containing the words of Imam Ali, the first Imam of the Shias. All these speeches were in Hausa, the indigenous language spoken by African Muslims in several countries of this Sahel region. Sheikh Zakzaky speaks also in Arabic, a language he learned at the School of Arabic Studies in Kano. The Hosseyniyeh Baghiyatollah was also the basis for the organization of the ceremonies for the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hossein, the third Shia Imam (martyred in October 680). The IMN is also creating a large network of Islamic schools called "Fudiyah schools". These schools do not only give theological lessons; at the same time, they train young girls and boys in Nigeria in applied

and theoretical sciences, in full accordance with the national education curricula of that country. This movement also has an informative Hausa-language newspaper called Al-Mizan. [7] The activities of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria are not limited to religious or educational fields. In the field of humanitarian and voluntary activities as well, this movement offers medical services to the underprivileged sections of Nigerian society. He is also interested in cultural, artistic and cinematographic activities and manages a filming location directed by Zeynab Ibrahim, wife of Sheikh Zakzaky. The leader of the IMN plans to produce historical films and series about the time when the territory of northern Nigeria, ruled by an Islamic government, proudly shone and brought together a large part of the Muslim community on the African continent.

2. Points of convergence between the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Islamic Movement in Nigeria

Before addressing these points of convergence, let us recall that the Islamic Movement of Nigeria is an independent Nigerian organization which operates while respecting federal laws and the various provisions of the Nigerian Constitution. The leaders of this movement always express their firm attachment to the national cause of the Nigerian people. The IMN has always said no to any foreign interference in the internal affairs of the sovereign country of Nigeria. Conversely, we observe that camps hostile to the Islamic Movement, such as the Wahhabi group of Izala Society, are supported financially, with logistical support, by certain foreign countries.

Shia religion, the keyword of Iranian-Nigerian Islamic interaction

After his meeting with Imam Khomeini in 1979 in Tehran, Sheikh Zakzaky converted to Shiaism and thanks to him, hundreds of thousands of Nigerians also converted to Shiaism while respecting the other branches of Islam present on the ground Nigerian [8]. Although the Movement created by Sheikh Zakzaky has a whole program to support the entire Muslim community in Nigeria without distinction between the different Islamic schools, the Shia aspect of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria is a key element in the formation of the Iranian-Nigerian friendship between the followers of the Sheikh Zakzaky and the Iranian people. During the pro-Zakzaky protests from 2015, the Iranian people pioneered the campaign supporting the oppressed Shias in Nigeria. The Lebanese Shias in Africa also showed great sympathy for the IMN. The Sheikh himself has traveled to Iran and Lebanon several times. [9] The Shia identity therefore appears to be the first unifying element between the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the Islamic Movement of Nigeria.

Sheikh Zakzaky, a Nigerian Khomeini

The personal charisma of the founding guide of the Islamic Revolution of Iran is cited by historians as one of the essential elements in the creation and in the victory of this Revolution. The Islamic Movement of Nigeria owes, also, its success to Sheikh Zakzaky's great personal popularity among the Nigerian people. This element is another particularity shared between these two Islamic movements. Indeed, by studying the path traveled by Sheikh Zakzaky and meditating on the secrets of his success, we observe that this African leader was largely inspired by the popular methods of Imam Khomeini. As we study the impact of the Islamic Revolution of Iran on the genesis and rapid expansion of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria, we need to highlight the personal influence that Imam Khomeini exerted on the personality of Sheikh Zakzaky. Indeed, in Africa, the name of Iran is closely linked to that of Imam Khomeini. [10]

As we have already mentioned, Sheikh Zakzaky became acquainted with the revolutionary ideas of Imam Khomeini in 1978. At that time, Imam was still in France and the media were broadcasting his speeches and interviews. Young Zakzaky one day finds an image of Imam Khomeini published in a foreign newspaper. He photocopies this portrait of the Imam and distributes it among Muslims in Nigeria. Ibrahim Zakzaky's pro-Khomeini activities in Nigeria were so effective that when, after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, people approached the Iranian Embassy in Nigeria to request a photo of Imam Khomeini, Iranian diplomats were telling them that the only photo they had then was a photo copied and distributed by an unknown Nigerian student! Inspired by the revolutionary methods of Imam Khomeini and opposed to the corruption and injustice of the Nigerian state, Sheikh Zakzaky, in the company of a group of young Nigerians, launches into a fight to create a Movement Islamic similar to the Revolution unleashed in Iran. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Ibrahim Zakzaky went to Iran and met directly with Imam Khomeini.

The figurative elements concerning the leaders of the Islamic Revolution are omnipresent in the Hosseyniyeh Baghiyatollah where the portraits of Imam Khomeini and his successor Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the current Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, are hung on the wall just nearby from Sheikh Zakzaky's minbar. On the movement's website (www.islamicmovement.org), portraits of these two politico-religious figures of the Iranian Revolution are displayed alongside the image of Sheikh Zakzaky. However, the philosophical attachment of the IMN to the socio-political doctrines of the Islamic Revolution does not boil down only to a personal relationship between Sheikh Zakzaky and Imam Khomeini. In fact, the partisans of the IMN also are motivated by the revolutionary dynamism of the ideas of Imam Khomeini.

The dynamism of revolutionary Islam

The political reading of the religion of Islam and the liberating nature of the revolutionary interpretation of Islam that Imam Khomeini preached have deeply appealed to the oppressed peoples of Africa. The idea of believing in the potential of Islam in order to inject new energy and dynamism into the Muslim community to face the colonialist and imperialist powers fascinated young Nigerians, including those around Ibrahim Zakzaky.

The methods of popular and civil resistance

Regarding popular resistance, the methods adopted by members of the IMN show a strong analogy with the revolutionary steps taken by the Iranian people in the years 1978-1979. Some similarities in resistance strategies include, for example, the use of civil disobedience, national strikes, massive marches, peaceful demonstrations, the condemnation of any violent act, and the avoidance of all violence or armed confrontation in general. This model of civil and peaceful resistance is also comparable with the methods practiced by the South African, Nelson Mandela and the Indian, Gandhi.

The anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist commitment

One of the great similarities between the ideas of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria and those of the Iranian Revolution concerns the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist positions of these two movements. Nigerian Muslims view British colonialism as the disruptive element that ended the former Islamic government in northern Nigeria and caused the systematic backwardness of Muslim regions in the north of the country, as well as tragic conflicts like the civil war of the 1960s. The anti-colonialist conduct of the IMN is defined within the framework of the pan-African concept of anti-colonialism, a commitment more or less shared by the peoples of this continent. This Nigerian Movement sees Islam as a means of resistance against neo-colonialism after Nigeria's independence in 1960. The Islamic Movement of Nigeria claims that colonialism and its socio-economic consequences are one of the main causes of the problems of the African continent. And it is for this reason that Sheikh Zakzaky's call for justice is so valued by the Nigerian nation.

Pro-Palestinian positions

Imam Khomeini began his pro-Palestinian campaign even before the victory of the Islamic Revolution, in the early years after the illegal establishment of the Zionist regime in 1948. It was Imam Khomeini who established the international day of Ghods (Jerusalem) in the calendar of Muslims. Today, around the world,

on the last Friday of the month of Ramadan, Muslim demonstrators are marching to demand the release of the holy land of Palestine. Nigerian Muslims are also organizing massive pro-Palestinian protests in the country's ten major cities. The surprising scale of these anti-Zionist protests has raised concern among the leaders of the Zionist regime who have called on their allies in the Nigerian military to respond violently to these peaceful gatherings. Under pressure from the Zionist state, on July 25, 2014, in the middle of the month of Ramadan, 35 fasting Muslim civilians were massacred by Nigerian regime soldiers. The blood of these African martyrs strengthened the strong ties between Iranian and Nigerian Muslims in order to defend the Palestinian cause and to condemn the occupation of the holy land of Palestine. But above all, let us note that unlike anti-Shia propaganda, this position taken by the IMN should not be interpreted as an anti-Semitic gesture. The leaders of this Movement have great esteem for the faithful of the monotheistic religion of Judaism and for the holy character of the prophet Moses so revered in the Koran. Criticisms of this Islamic Movement concern only Zionist politicians who, according to reports by international UN organizations, violate continually human rights and commit crimes against humanity.

The commemoration of holy days in the Islamic calendar

By studying the various revolutionary methods of the Islamic movement in Iran, one understands that the religious ceremonies and the days of ritual commemoration in the Islamic calendar play a major role in the genesis and the continuation of the Islamic Revolution. The critical speech of Imam Khomeini on Ashura Day in 1963 in Qom and the great Ramadan Aid prayer in Tehran in 1979 by Ayatollah Mofatteh are two examples of this tendency. We observe that the same approach exists in the programs of the IMN which, in various occasions such as Islamic holidays and especially the day of Ashura, the tenth day of the month of Muharram according to the lunar calendar, organizes large gatherings for its members. The massive ceremonial demonstrations by members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria on the occasion of Ashoura and the revolutionary speeches of Sheikh Zakzaky on the occasion raise the concern of regional and international enemies of the Shia axis of the resistance. Even in 2021 and after the release of Sheikh Zakzaki, during the ceremonies of Moharram, the followers of the IMN were victims of security forces violence and crimes in Nigeria.

The celebration of mourning for Imam Hossein and the culture of martyrdom

The Islamic Revolution of Iran, in its formation and in its survival, has always been identified with facts relating to the history of the Shia Imams. Imam Khomeini and the other leaders of this Revolution insisted on the revolutionary and uncompromising aspect of the political action of Imam Hossein, the third

Imam, highly revered among the Shias. Iran's Islamic Revolution has been inspired by this culture of Shia martyrdom during the Revolutionary Riots and the 1980-1988 war imposed by Saddam's Ba'th regime. In Nigeria also, the ceremony to commemorate the mourning of Imam Hossein on the occasion of Ashoura has become an annual demonstration of great magnitude for the IMN. On this occasion, several hundred thousand followers of Sheikh Zakzaky gather in the city of Zaria to celebrate this emblematic day in the Shia tradition. They dress in black and raise flags and banners with the names of Shia saints such as Imam Hossein and his brother, the venerable Abbas. On this day, members of the Movement sing religious hymns, make long mourning marches and stage a religious theater called *ta'ziyeh*, an artistic performance of Persian origin symbolically representing the events of the day of Ashura that took place in October 680 in Karbala. Shias often identify with the martyrs of Ashura, and this has always been a leitmotif for resisting against tyrannical authorities in the history of Shiaism. Even during the Zaria massacre in 2015, the heroism and sacrifice of the Nigerian Shias, who had no weapons, demonstrated this strong attachment of members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria to the principles of the culture of martyrdom in the face of barbarism of army soldiers equipped with automatic machine guns. The IMN has thus established a "Martyrs Foundation" to commemorate the memory of the martyrs and to care for the families of African Shia martyrs.

The Shia doctrine of Waiting for the occulted Imam

The question of the expectation of the occulted Imam (Imam Mahdi, the twelfth Imam of the Shias) is a central theme in the doctrine of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. In a way, one can say that the theory of *Velâyat-e Faghih* (the sovereignty of the Master of Shia jurisprudence), which is the basic idea in the creation of the Islamic Republic, is anchored in this thought making Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution a provisional representative of Imam Mahdi during his occultation. As we have seen, the Hosseyniyeh of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria is called "*Baghiyatollah*", which is one of the main titles of Imam Mahdi. In his speeches, Sheikh Zakzaky always alludes to the apocalyptic doctrine of the waiting for the occulted Imam, a Messiah liberating the oppressed peoples.

The role of women in the Islamic Movement of Nigeria

Another concern for Imam Khomeini was the improvement of the living conditions of Iranian women who, before the Islamic Revolution of 1979, were marginalized by the westernized authorities of the old regime and suffered from traditional stereotypes as well as misinterpretations of the Islamic principles. The same concern also exists with Sheikh Zakzaky, who is firmly attached to this duty of improving the lot and role of women in Nigerian society. He thus created

"Sisters Forum" for this purpose. Zeynab Zakzaki, wife of Sheikh Zakzaky, plays a big role in these cultural activities for Nigerian women. During the Zaria massacre in December 2015, many women were among the Shia martyrs of this tragedy.

Attention to disadvantaged sections of society

The two Qur'anic notions of *mostaz'afan* (oppressed) and *mostakberan* (oppressors) are the basic elements of the socio-political paradigm of the Islamic Revolution. Indeed, this Revolution is thought to be the revolt of the Oppressed against the Oppressors and the realization of the divine promise of the final victory of the oppressed peoples of the planet. [11] This theme is always mentioned in the speeches of the Iranian authorities. The popularity of Sheikh Zakzaky in Nigerian society is largely due to his way of dealing with the oppressed and underprivileged layers of the society. Like Imam Khomeini who, unlike elitist political leaders, relied on the oppressed mass of society, Sheikh Zakzaky also takes the same direction by addressing the Nigerian people who very favorably welcome the egalitarian and fraternal message of the Islam.

3. The Zaria Massacre and Its Consequences for the Islamic Movement in Nigeria

Since the beginning of his political activities in the 1980s, Sheikh Zakzaky has been repeatedly arrested and imprisoned by Nigerian governments which, under pressure from ex-colonizing countries and some anti-Shia countries, could not tolerate appeal for justice from the leader of the IMN. But each time, without being able to prove anything against him, the authorities were forced to release this figure so popular with Nigerian Muslims. Since the beginning of his politico-religious career, Sheikh Zakzaky has spent nearly 19 years of his life in captivity in various prisons in the Nigerian state. The most famous prisons in which Sheikh Zakzaky has been imprisoned are Enugu Prison (1981-1984), NSO Interrogation Center in Lagos (1984-1985), Port Harcourt Prison (1987-1989 and 1996 -1997), and Kaduna prison (1997-1998 and 2015-2021). Since the illegal arrest of Sheikh Zakzaky in 2015, this venerable guide to Nigerian Muslims has suffered both physically and psychologically in an uncertain detention situation. It reminds us of the lives of great African heroes like Nelson Mandela who spent many years in the prisons of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Despite so many repressions, Sheikh Zakzaky continued down the path he set out. He founded a large network of Islamic schools to educate the new generation of Nigerian Muslims. Sheikh Zakzaky thus created a *Hosseyniyeh* in Zaria and organized there weekly speeches in order to sensitize and train thousands of faithful to the Shia cause. Sheikh Zakzaky's meetings become a place to recruit new disciples. He thus enjoys growing popularity among the Muslim and even Christian community.

Respected by all, his popularity and his significant successes in the expansion of his religious and political ideas arouse great hostility on the part of anti-Shia countries and certain political and military leaders of the Nigerian government, still attached to the colonialist heritage and in the service of the imperialist powers. Yet between 1980 and 2015, the IMN experienced a great expansion in Africa's most populous country. But the culmination of the repression of the Nigerian regime led by President Buhari, ex-general of the army, took place in December 2015. Already, in 2014, on the occasion of Ghods (Jerusalem) day, the army of Nigeria massacred 35 Nigerian civilians including three sons of Sheikh Zakzaky during a peaceful and democratic protest. But on December 12, 2015, the army generals under the influence of foreign regimes adopted another strategy orchestrated by the Islamophobic powers: they attacked the religious ceremony of the disciples of Sheikh Zakzaky in Zaria. During this disproportionate act of barbarism which lasted three successive days, several hundred Shia worshippers were massacred by the army. The army's mercenary soldiers had no mercy on those injured in the assault, and in a secondary attack, they burned the wounded and disabled Shia hospitalized to death. Sheikh Zakzaky's sister was among the wounded burned alive by the Nigerian army. The army demolished the Hosseiniyeh Baghiyatollah and set fire to Sheikh Zakzaky's residence. Army soldiers even went so far as to desecrate and degrade her mother's grave.

Western media have tried to justify this crime against humanity by broadcasting falsified versions of the facts. But some international human rights organizations, especially Amnesty International, admitted that during those three days the Nigerian army had committed a crime against humanity. Hundreds of bodies of women, children and men were found in mass graves dug by the military as they tried to bury evidence of their crimes. For several days, they blocked access to this area to wash away blood, collect cartridges and erase traces of their barbaric acts. The IMN has presented a list of 700 people missing in the violent assault by the Nigerian military. So far, 350 bodies have been discovered. Many women and children are among the martyrs of this tragic event which will certainly mark the history of Islamic claims in Nigeria. Experts on political issues in Nigeria and newspapers in that country have recognized the programmed character of this attack. Indeed, the conscious choice of this precise day when the ceremony of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria and of this particular zone of Zaria was taking place to pass the convoy of the Chief of Staff of the Armies who wanted, it seems, attending a recruiting parade in an army depot (a military event of secondary importance and devoid of urgency), shows that this massacre was planned in advance. Why did General Tukur Yusuf Buratai's convoy choose such a route in such an area (the stronghold of the Islamic Movement) where the religious ceremony of the disciples of the Movement was taking place? And why did Nigerian soldiers retaliate with live ammunition at civilians who had gathered to practice their religious rites? The military's unjustifiable act clearly violated Nigeria's constitution and internationally recognized human rights declarations. But where does the shameful silence of the Western media come from in the face

of this manifest genocide by the Nigerian Shias? These army generals who, instead of serving the Nigerian nation and fighting Boko Haram terrorists, rush to serve foreign countries; should they not go before the courts of the International Criminal Court (ICC) for this crime against humanity and for this religious discrimination?

Since this dark day of December 12, 2015, Sheikh Zakzaky has been imprisoned without any verdict. Even the federal court in Nigeria officially declared in 2016 the innocence of the leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria and called for his immediate release. In Iran, as well as in other Muslim countries, numerous protests were organized to condemn this tyrannical and criminal act of the Nigerian military. In Nigeria, Nigerian Muslims have continued to demonstrate peacefully to demand his release, but have yet to face backlash from the Nigerian armed forces. For example, on October 27, 2018, during one of these peaceful and democratic demonstrations, Nigerian soldiers again slaughtered 45 unarmed Nigerian civilians in Abuja. This violent act by the Nigerian military, described as intentional homicide, has once again been condemned by Amnesty International. [12] The main guide of this religious organization was in captivity and in critical physical condition. And finally, Sheikh Zakzaki was liberated in 2021.

The Nigerian regime, by changing its strategy, has tried to deflect the peaceful vocation of the demands of the IMN by infiltrating some of its agents into the ranks of this movement in order to push it to trigger riots. The assassination of one of the preachers of Izala Society, a Wahhabi entity enemy of this Movement, carried out by the Nigerian and foreign intelligence services, shows this diabolical plan of the ex-colonizers who plan to arouse interfaith violence within of the Nigerian Muslim Brotherhood community. Fortunately, the intelligence and foresight of the leaders of the IMN thwarted the ploys of these enemies of Islam. Currently, in the phase of military repression, what future can we foresee for the Islamic Movement in Nigeria? The cultural centers, the Hosseiniyeh of this movement, and even the Sheikh's residence are shattered. Some leaders of this Movement, like Sheikh Touri, the number two of the IMN, have fallen like martyrs. The Nigerian regime has put this Movement in an unprecedented stifling situation. The results of the activities of the IMN since 1980, over the past four decades, are very positive. Today Nigeria is the African country with the largest Shia population on the continent. Among the young students of Sheikh Zakzaky are some brilliant personalities who will shape the future generations of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria. Some of Sheikh Zakzaky's students trained in Shia theology in Qom, the cradle of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The religious motivation and systematic discipline of this new generation of members of the IMN, who enjoy four decades of the experience of political-religious resistance allows us to be optimistic about the future of this African Muslim Movement. Thanks to its wide popularity in the north of the country, the Islamic Movement

of Nigeria can no longer be ignored in political calculations and in Nigeria's presidential and legislative elections. We think that the release of Sheikh Zakzaki in May 2021 may open a new chapter for the IMN activities in western Africa.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to present a comparative view of the creation and expansion of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) and the Islamic Revolution of Iran. We first dealt with the history of the presence of Islam and the political demands of Muslims in Nigeria. We then studied the common points and the axes of convergence between the two Islamic movements in Iran and Nigeria. Finally, we saw the aftermath of the Zaria massacre in 2015, as well as the new phase of resistance that is opening up for the Islamic Movement in Nigeria after this killing. From all of these elements, it can be concluded that the impact of the Islamic Revolution of Iran on the IMN was rather of an ideal, spiritual and methodological nature. Relying on Soft Power, popular strength and becoming a voice of opposition for the disadvantaged sections of Nigerian society was a Khomeinist policy which was followed by Sheikh Zakzaky. Unfortunately, the barbarity of the Nigerian army and the genocidal act of the Nigerian authorities in the face of the democratic demands of the Nigerian Muslim people have blocked, for the time being, the path to the realization of the progressive and humanitarian ideas of the Islamic Movement. The Nigerian government, manipulated by countries like Saudi Arabia, Israel and the United States, has blocked the democratic, peaceful and civil path that the IMN is following. But finally in 2021, the popular manifestations and international condemnations push the Federal Court of Nigeria and regional court of Kaduna to acquit Sheikh Zakzaky of all charges. These crimes committed by Nigerian state and his Western, Zionist and Saudi supporters against the IMN followers show clearly the concern of the colonizing and imperialist powers over the emergence of a new Khomeini on the African continent. Although the enemies of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria may have temporarily blocked the path of this Islamic revolution of the Nigerian people, like what happened in Iran, God's will certainly prevail despite the plots and the strategies of the enemies of Islam. The seeds that Sheikh Zakzaky sowed in the fertile soil of Nigeria will soon yield fruitful results. As the Holy Quran assures us:

"They plan to extinguish the light of God through their mouths, but God will complete His light, despite the dislike of the disbelievers." [13]

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Notes

[1] Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky revealed this passage in an interview with an Iranian documentary filmmaker. The two-part 40-minute documentary film “Blood of Jone” was made about the Islamic Movement in Nigeria by cleric Mojtaba Rezvani. This Persian-speaking film is available on the Internet at this address: <https://www.aparat.com/v/BSrDT>

This interview with Sheikh Zakzaky can also be found in another documentary film titled Ibrahim. This 50-minute film is available on the Internet at this address: <https://www.aparat.com>

These two films were broadcast by the Documentary channel of the National Television of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

[2] *Jama'at Izalat-ol-Bed'ah wa Ighamat-os-Sunnah*, "The Society for the Suppression of Heresy and the Restoration of Tradition", is an extremist and anti-Shia Wahhabi organization with close ties to Arabia Arabia. By taking advantage of its large financial sources and its vast means of propaganda, this Salafist organization is playing an important role in organizing the recent violent repressions against the Islamic Movement in Nigeria.

[3] <https://www.britannica.com>

[4] The word Fodio means "scholar" in the Hausa language.

[5] Certainly, the true Christianity based on the saving mission and the peaceful messages of Jesus Christ has nothing to do with the barbaric acts of the European colonizers who instrumentalized this holy monotheistic religion in order to humiliate and metamorphose the peoples colonized from Africa.

[6] The presence of European colonizers in Nigeria dates back to the 15th century, but it was in the 19th century and precisely in 1851 that the British began directly their vast military intervention in order to occupy and colonize all of Nigerian land. They create administratively in this country a protectorate in the south and a protectorate in the north. This vicious division is considered to be one of the root causes of the North-South conflict which continues to exist even after Nigeria's independence in 1960.

[7] Some followers of Sheikh Zakzaky have cooperated with the Iranian International Broadcasting Service, which recently created a Hausa language channel.

[8] Some estimates speak of the very astonishing figure of 10 million supporters of Shiaism in Nigeria, but not all of these people officially join the Islamic Movement. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with a population of 212 million.

[9] It should be noted that in order to follow his cultural and scientific objectives, Sheikh Zakzaky makes numerous trips to foreign countries such as the United States of America, England, Saudi Arabia, Russia, 'South Africa, Sudan, etc.

[10] This reminds us of this historic phrase from Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution: *"The name of the Islamic Revolution would not be known anywhere in the world without the name of Imam Khomeini."*

[11] This promise exists in the quranic verses. For example verse 5 of sura 28 which says: *"And We willed to give Our support to those who were oppressed on the earth and to make them rulers, and to make them heirs."*

[12] [https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/news/2018/10/nigeria-security-forces-must-be-held-accountable-for-killing-of-at-least-45-peaceful-shia-protesters /](https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/news/2018/10/nigeria-security-forces-must-be-held-accountable-for-killing-of-at-least-45-peaceful-shia-protesters/)

[13] Saint Quran, Sura 61, verse 8