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THE 19TH CENTURY ULAMA' IN ILORIN: EXPLORING QUR'ANIC INSTITUTION AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT

Social interactions amongst people of diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds could lead to integration or disintegration (conflict). Therefore, national integration has been one of the major problems in Africa, particularly in Nigeria. Some writers view this problem as an “inevitability of instability” arising from the diversity of the ethnic groups that form the nations and various social challenges as an obstacle that leads to intergroup conflict which prevents integration of Nigeria into a country of peaceful coexistence since Africans are ethnically diverse and lives in an artificially created modern nations, conflict are inevitable. Therefore, this position has been strengthened by the history of incessant violent, killings and intergroup conflicts in Nigeria and many parts of the world. However, this notion has been put to contest using the justification of the people of Ilorin emirate who have been a people of a multi-ethnic diversity living together for more than a century without major internal conflicts and became an example of non-violence intergroup relations in Africa, which this work attempt to study. The method adopted in achieving this goal is the use of primary and secondary data, through the texture analyses and study of the available literature on Ilorin emirate. Using all these available resources, this study concluded that it would not have been achieved if not for the leadership traits of the 19th century Ulama' in Ilorin, using Qur'anic teachings and institutions as an instrument of socio-cultural integration and stability

Introduction

National integration has been one of the major problems of Nigeria. Some writers view this problem as arising from the diversity of the ethnic groups and various social challenges as an obstacle that leads to intergroup conflict which prevents integration into the country. Social [0interactions amongst people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds could lead to integration or disintegration (conflict).

Nkom in his view adds religion to it with the belief “that the biggest obstacle to political stability and national integration lies in its ethnic and religious diversity.”¹ In the same line of thought, O’Connell put forward the thesis of the “inevitability of instability” in Africa’s ethnically diverse and artificially created modern nations². This line of thought believes that the coming together of people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds would inevitably lead to conflict and intergroup relations. This position has been strengthened by the history of incessant violent intergroup conflicts in Nigeria and many parts of the world. However, the people of the Ilorin emirate are an example of a people of a multi-ethnic diversity living together for more than a century without major conflicts and became an example of non-violent intergroup relations.

Historically, the Ilorin Emirate by the early Nineteenth Century had been made up of people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds such as the Yoruba who settled majorly in the Idiape area, Hausa at Gambari quarters, the Fulani at Isale Aafin quarters, the Baribas at Baruba area, the Nupe at Isale Gambari and extensions, the Kanuri and Kannike at Isale Kannike and Ojagboro axis, the Arabs, Saro and Sudanese at Oke Imale and Agbaji quarters etc. and by 1823 despite the ethnic affiliations for a common goal to form a coalition for the establishment of Islamic government at Okesuna superintended by Alfa Alimi bn Janta and formalized by Sheu Abdulsalami bn Alimi. Therefore, the development helped to put up defenses of their territory from the attack of their hostile neighbours and later helped in the expansion and frontier of the emirate system before the coming of the British colonial government at the tail end of the century. Therefore the architect of this achievement and integration were the *Ulama*’s.

The word *Ulama*’a was derived from the word ‘ilm which means knowledge or learning and those who acquired or possess the quality of knowledge are known as ‘Alim (scholar), the plural of Alim is Ulama’a.³ Moreover, the studies of intergroup relations in Ilorin provoke an example of a situation whereby despite various ethnic categories that made up the Ilorin emirate, there has never been recorded ethnic violence or ethnic conflict throughout the nineteenth century. Therefore, one of the

¹ Nkom, S. (1994), *the Social Basis for National Integration* in Mahdi, A, George, A.K and Mahmood, Y. (eds.) *Nigeria: The State Of Nation And The Way Forward*, Kaduna: Arewa House. Pp 435.

² O’ Connell, J. (1967) “The Inevitability of Instability,” in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 5, No2

³ Afsaruddin, A. (2019), “Ulama” in *Encyclopedia Britannica 250th Anniversary publication*:

major factors that made this possible was the role played by the pivotal Ulamaa and the system of Islamic education introduced.

This study attempts to discuss the role of the *Ulamaa* in the social integration of the Ilorin emirate. the study intends to explain the concept of 'integration' and use it in explaining the religious transformations of the Ilorin, the transformation and transmission of the Qur'anic education system, and how Quranic study and Islamic scholarship adopted by the 'Ulama'a was used in the integration of people of diverse cultures and sociolinguistic groups to form a harmonious society. This study focuses primarily on the traditionally educated Muslim religious scholars during the nineteenth century. The strength of this work lies more in the qualitative research approach which includes content analysis, in-depth interviews with some scholars, Qur'anic school proprietors, Imam, and traditional Titleholders. The use of the oral tradition of Ilorin is applicable, and essential with primary, secondary, and tertiary sources, ranging from journals, software publications, published, and unpublished works found available during the research.

Ilorin Emirate And Social Integration

Ilorin is strategically located along with one of the trans-Sahara trade routes up to Gonja in the Volta region. The geographical location of the emirate, therefore, encouraged a settlement that noticeably emerged in the 18th century. These had an impact on the growth and development of settlement as well as on intergroup relations and influences between the Ilorin people and their northern and southern neighbours such as Yoruba, Hausa, Nupe, Bariba, Kanuri, and so on. The relationship cut across cultural influence, especially in the spread of Islam, the exchange of technology, defences, culture, social interaction, trade, and commerce.

In addition, the Ilorin emirate is geographically located in the middle of the savannah and the forest zone of Nigeria. It consists mainly of lowlands and it enjoys both wet and dry seasons. Ilorin emirate can be described as a miniature Nigeria⁴ because, it consists of many of the major ethnic groups and societies such as Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani, Nupe, Baruba, Kemberi, Gwari also Malians, Sudanese, Arabs, Saro, etc. as illustrated by Fafunwa.⁵ Each ethnic group is with its own culture and tradition before and early nineteenth century; they all have distinct common educational aims and objectives. But the methods differ from place to

⁴ Jimoh, L.A.K. (1994) *Ilorin The Journey so Far*. Ilorin: Atoto press limited.

⁵ Babs gave this example in Nigerian contexts, but it is relative to this study, because Ilorin community hosted many ethnic groups and settlement that later became one entity with the influence of a scholar Sheu Alimi. See Fafunwa, A.B (1974), *History of Education in Nigeria*, p17.

place; chiefly because of social, economic, geographical imperatives, culture and languages.⁶ However, each of the groups in Ilorin lived independently of others' intervention before the establishment of the Ilorin emirate system in 1823.

Indeed, most of the first-generation emirs of the Sokoto caliphate were noted and respected more for their role as learned and religious leaders (hence Mallams) than as rulers.⁷ The Ilorin emirate system came up after the coming of Sheu (Sheikh) Alimi to Ilorin in the early nineteenth century with the establishment of an Islamic government that led to the unification of tribes and leadership was set up in the Okesuna suburb, under the leadership of Sheik Salihu Alimi bn Janta Al-Toronkowa Al-Fulani (Sheu Alimi), who was an itinerant scholar and jihadist who has spent most of his time preaching in most parts of Yoruba land before coming back to Ilorin around 1817 for permanent settlement. Furthermore, after his death, there was a leadership crisis among the followers before they accepted his first son and the new *Amir* who would be deputized by his brother Shitta bn Alimi, which led to the proper establishment of Fulani led Muslim dynasty that was set up in 1823 after exchanging flag from Sokoto. Ilorin became an emirate on the southern marches of the Sokoto Caliphate, with the office of Emir rotating between the descendants of two of Alimi's sons, Abdulsalami and Shitta. From that period, the city rose in fame, power, and prosperity being an important nineteenth-century entrepôt, between Hausa land to the north and Yoruba states to the south. Under the Fulani dynasty, the city was divided into five wards. One was the emir's own supervised by Magaji Ngeri, but the others were placed under four Balogun (also the main military leaders) representing the major ethnic groups in the population. The two largest wards were headed by the Balogun Ajikobi and Alanamu who were Yoruba. Balogun Fulani headed a third ward, which included many of the Fulani residents of the city, while Balogun Gambari controlled a fourth, largely Hausa, Nupe, Kemberi, Kannike, Gobir, etc, and it is the centre of the northern trade,⁸ other ethnic groups scattered and settles within these wards as a unified people under the leadership of de-facto Amiru Ilorin, supported by Ulama.

⁶ Fafunwa, A.B (1974), *History of Education in Nigeria*, London: Urwin and Allen. P.17

⁷ R.A Adeleye ,(1971), *Power And Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, 1804-1906*, London: Longman Group Limited.

⁸ S. Johnson (1921 rev. 2009), *The History of The Yorubas Lagos*: CSS Bookshops Llimited pp228-229. See also, Hear, A.O (1986) "Political and Commercial Clientage in Nineteenth-Century Ilorin" in *African Economic History*, No. 15 (1986), Published by: University of Wisconsin Press, Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3601540>, Accessed: 26-07-2019 00:47 UTC. Pp 69-83.

Ulama'a And The Foundation Of Change In Ilorin Society

Ulamā'a, are those who are versed theoretically and practically in the Muslim sciences, they serve as the religious teachers of the Islamic community, theologians, canon lawyers (Muftis), judges (Qadis), professors and high state religious officials like the *Shaykh al-Islām*, etc. In a narrower sense, '*ulamā*' may refer to a council of learned men holding government appointments in a Muslim state.⁹ Historically, the '*ulama'a*' have been a powerful class, and in early Islam, it was their consensus (*ijmā'*) on theological and juridical problems that determined the communal practices of future generations. Their authority over the community was so pervasive that Muslim governments always attempted to secure their support; in the Ottoman and Mughal empires they sometimes decisively influenced important policies. Although there is no priesthood in Islam, and every believer may perform priestly functions such as leading the liturgical prayer, the '*ulamā*' have played a clerical role in Islamic society.¹⁰

The growth of Islam in 19th century Ilorin and scholarship development has been modelled out from the Sokoto caliphate, being an integral part of the caliphate. In this part of the world Scholarship is principled as 'the foundation of Change'. As observed by Muhammed:

There are consensuses among scholars, classical or contemporary about the interconnectedness of scholarship and change in societies. Particular scholastic traditions culminate in the establishment of particular kinds of societies based on certain recognized principles.¹¹

The jihad leaders were very clear on this. According to Muhammad Bello, one of the key architects of the caliphate, everything has a foundation and the foundation of this caliphate is knowledge.¹² The Sheu Usman bn Fodio himself has captured the place of scholarship. He wrote:

Allah, the exalted, has ordained to send forth, to the ummah, at the end of every century, a scholar who would revive the religion for her. Such a scholar would take upon himself the duty of enjoining the

⁹ Afsaruddin, A. (2019) "Ulama" in *Encyclopedia Britannica 250th Anniversary publication*: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ulama>. google search 3:25 pm, 4/4/2019.

¹⁰ Afsaruddin, A. (2019) "Ulama" in *Encyclopaedia Britanica 250th Anniversary publication*

¹¹ Muhammad, S.S. (2017), "The Role of Scholars on the Jihad Leaders of the Sokoto Caliphate" Published in: *Islam in Bilaadu-s-SudaanTajdiid* on April 17, 2012 at 17:00. The URI to TrackBack this entry is: <https://madanitimbukti.wordpress.com/2012/04/17/the-role-of-scholars-on-the-jihad-leaders-of-the-sokoto-caliphate/trackback/>

¹² Muhammad, S.S. (2017), "The Role of Scholars on the Jihad Leaders of the Sokoto Caliphate"

good and forbidding the evil. He would call for the regulation of the affairs of the people and the establishment of justice amongst them. He would support the truth against falsehood, revive the Sunnah, suppress innovation, and denounce bad customs. As a result of his activities, his conditions will be different from those of the Ulama of his age and he will find himself a stranger amongst them because his qualities are different from their own, and men like him are few...

In conformity with the above, Shehu Uthman b. Fodio undertook a jihad, which transformed the early 19th-century Hausa land and saw the establishment of the *Sakkwato* (Sokoto) caliphate. The Sokoto jihad of the early 19th century was preceded by important intellectual as well as political and social developments. Therefore it might even be argued that the intellectual pre-history of the revolution has been crucial to the course it has taken.

Like many African societies, the specific date for the coming of Islam to Ilorin is still in obscurity, maybe because it was not properly documented or because it was populated by the Adherents of African Traditional Religion before the 19th century. The earliest Muslim group was located in *Okesuna* (Hilltop of Sunnah) a Ribat; this settlement became a necessity to avert conflict between African traditional worshippers and *Elesin Imale* (Muslims),¹³ who were then minorities. The leader of the Muslim settlers at Oke Sunna was Attairu Sholagberu an Islamic scholar of repute who migrated from Bama in the Bornu Empire and travelled far Yoruba land before settling in Ilorin at an exclusive hilltop of Sunna. It was this community that hosted the coming of Sheu Alimi and other scholars to Ilorin after the Sokoto jihad of 1804. His coming bolstered the place because of his intellect and erudition. This development as observed by Jimoh “welcomes the reputation of scholastic achievement and articulate advancement of Islam in this part of the world”.¹⁴ Therefore, the reputation made *Okesuna* not just an Islamic educational Centre but of faith and this made different people from far and near troop into Ilorin to search for Islamic knowledge, hence, social-cultural integration emerged.

Ilorin's new settlement of Okesuna became the fountain of Islamic scholarship in sub-Saharan Africa, with particular reference to the growth of Qur'anic education and the role of Ilorin Ulamaa (scholars) in the spread of Islam and scholarships in the southern part and beyond as internationally acknowledged. As observed by

¹³ Elesin imale means “the practitioner of Malian religions”. This is due to the fact that Malians were the first to introduce Islam to the Yorubas. This, has established by T.G.O. Gbadamasi, (1978) *The Growth of islam among the Yorubas, 1841-1908*. Bristol: western printing press

¹⁴ Jimoh, L. A. K. (1994), *Ilorin: The Journey So Far*, Ilorin: Atoto press Limited. P 419.

Zaman: What makes the ‘Ulama of the modern world worth studying is not merely that they have continued to lay claim to knowledge and self-consciously represent a millennium-old tradition of Islamic learning but as he observed:

Their larger claim on our attention lies in the ways in which they have mobilized this tradition to define issues of religious identity and authority in the public sphere and to articulate changing roles for themselves in contemporary Muslim politics. Moreover, the ‘Ulama’s tradition is not a mere inheritance from the past, even though they often argue that that is precisely what it is. It is a tradition that has had to be constantly imagined, reconstructed, argued over, defended, and modified. All this has entailed highly significant changes in the world of the ‘ulama, and it is some of these changes which constitute a critical part of the history of modern Islam,¹⁵

Furthermore, what provoked the Ilorin Ulamaa to play a significant role in this changing environment and promote the preaching and act of integration can be understood from the work of Danmole when he says:

the desire to preserve the Muslim states and Muslim law and to project legitimate political and commercial interest; the unwillingness to surrender *Dar-salam* to *Dar- el Harb* and the resistance to the penetration of non-Muslim religious preaching certainly had great weight in the minds of Muslims in Ilorin as well.¹⁶

Scholarship and Islamic Education: The role of Ulamaa in 19th Century Ilorin Emirate.

Scholarship and education are somewhat interchangeable because something *scholastic* has to do with schools; teaching and learning i.e. educating. Scholasticism is a medieval theological and philosophical system of learning based on the authority of St. Augustine and other leaders of the early Christian Church, and on the works of Aristotle. It sought to bridge the gap between religion and reason, i.e. it is narrowly traditional learning or adherence to traditional educational

¹⁵ Zaman, M.S. (2007) *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*: published by Princeton University Press and copyrighted, © 2007, by Princeton University Press.

¹⁶ Danmole, H.O. (1980), *The Frontier Emirate: A History of Islam in Ilorin*, an unpublished Ph.D. Thesis submitted to Birmingham university. Pp 137

methods.¹⁷ Furthermore, education has been defined in many ways by scholars; According to Jekayinfa the word “Education” is derived from the Latin word *Educare* meaning to bring up, to lead out, to raise, and to educate. In its original sense, to educate means acting to lead out fully all the potentialities of an individual. In others, it means the process of helping society to which he has been to live, work, and die. I.e. Education is the process of cultural transmission and renewal. Therefore, it is a three-way process of cultural transmission and renewal, that is the process of inheriting a culture, changing that culture for better or for worse, and passing it on to the younger generation”¹⁸. In Oladosu’s view, education has three basic points in common: education has the process; it has content, and it has method. In other words, Education is a process by which values of a society are transmitted across generations through a well-defined method, such as values that include knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, etc.¹⁹

However, In many instances education is used as a mechanism for social promotion, Concerning tolerant and open societies, members of minority groups often use social integration to gain full access to the opportunities, rights, and services available to the members of the mainstream of society with cultural institutions such as churches (mosque in this context) and civic organizations, Mass media content also performs a social integration function in mass societies.²⁰

Oladosu defines Arabic and Islamic education as the process by which the values spelt out in the Holy Quran and the tradition of Prophet Mohammed (S.A.W) are handed over from generation to generation.²¹ For centuries scholars have realized that Arabic as a language and Islam as a religion have contributed substantially to world civilization and culture. Wherever Islam goes the rudimentary knowledge of Islam, the Holy Qur’an, Hadith, and Shari’ah (canon law) began to be taught to the adherent of the religion,²² and Ilorin is not an exemption. Most Qur’anic schools began as part of the Mosque. It’s popularly acknowledged in Ilorin that first, the

¹⁷ “scholastic” Microsoft® ENCARTA Dictionary 2009. © 1993-2008 :Microsoft Corporation.

¹⁸ Jekayinfa, A.A. et al (2010), “conceptual Background to the History of Education in Nigeria” in *Perspective On The History Of Education In Nigeria*, a publication of Department of Arts and social sciences Education university of Ilorin. Ilorin: Bamitex printing and pub. Ent. P 3-6.

¹⁹ Oladosu, A.G.A.S (2010) “Arabic and Islamic Education in Nigeria” p202.

²⁰ Adopted from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_integration#Definition_of_integration.

²¹ Oladosu, A.G.A.S (2010) “Arabic and Islamic Education In Nigeria” p 202.

²² Fafunwa, A. B (1974), *History of Education in Ngeria*, London: Allen and unwinn. P.50

Islamic Center in Ilorin was the “Okesuna centre”. Afterwards, Qur’anic education began to move out of the mosque and be carried on mostly in the Teacher’s house, usually called an *Imamu*, *Alfa*, or *Maalimu*. (*Mu’alim*).

By longstanding tradition, Ulamaa is educated in religious institutions (*madrasas*). The Quran [Word of Allah (The God)] and Sunnah [authentic Hadith (narration)], are the sources of traditional [Islamic law](#). A typical Qur’anic education centre in Ilorin looks like this: A *Mualim* or *Alfa* (teacher) is seated under a tree or *Saure* (his parlour, or verandah, or his porch) surrounded by copies of the Qur’an and other Islamic books, with a *tI`adawa* (ink) and a *qalam* (pen). A little farther off, but near enough to be within the reach of the teacher, is a long cane and some 10-40 pupils or more squatting in a semicircular form around the teacher with most of their bodies shielded by *Walah* (a broad wooden slate). They proudly hold the slate or books before them, chanting and reciting different verses of the Qur’an. In some cases, the teacher is assisted by one of the pupils who is either the brightest or the oldest or both.

Al-Ilory describes the 19th-century Ulamaa of Ilorin in his work and concludes that “These scholars divide their time of teaching into three periods, which cover morning, afternoon and night periods. In the morning between *Subhu* and *Zuhur* (6 am – 1 pm) they teach Qur’anic recitation, memorization, Islamic text or literature, while in the afternoon between *Zuhur* and *Asr* (2 pm – 4 pm), they teach the students embroidery, arts and crafts, and *Bayha wa Shuarau* (buying and selling). They also sometimes send them to the market between “*Asr* and *Magrib*” (4 pm – 7 pm). The *Ile Kewu Ale* (night class) comes up after *Ishai*”.²³ This serves as students acquiring knowledge, skill acquisition and entrepreneurship integration, depending on the ethnicity or professions of the Mallam.

The qur’anic education system in Ilorin is in two, it is called by several names depending on the language of the recipients. The first is *Ile Kewu Walah* by Yoruba, *Makaranta Alo* by Hausa *Makaranta Kurani* by Nupe, and all are equal to tablet school in the English language. The second page is *Ile Kewu Tira* in Yoruba or *Makaranta Ilimi* (advanced Qur’anic school) by others. The former is for learning how to recite and memorize some portions of the Qur’an, it takes a child several years ranging from age 3 to 10 to master the reading of the Qur’an. The pupils of this stage learn only through repetition and by rote the shorter chapter of the Qur’an.

²³ Al-Alory, A.A. (1970), *Lamuatul Libalaori Fi Masaun Ulamau Bilad Ilurin*, Lagos Alsakofatul Islamiyah, Agege. P.9

At this level, pupils are expected to commit one or two of the chapters to memory, often beginning with the short chapters which may be useful for their daily prayers. Therefore, the pupils have to copy out each portion they are reading on a wooden slate (*Walāh*) using black edible ink (*tada*) with *Qalam* (pen) made locally and sold at the *Emir* market (*Oja Oba*) or somewhere else in Ilorin. Furthermore, the pupil moves to the next stage at which he learns and recognizes letters or the Arabic language, the consonant sounds, the vowels, and the signs that differentiate them. This is called *Ajitu* or *aaditu* this lasts between 6 or 8 months depending on the proficiency or intelligence of the pupil, before moving to the *Ologere* stage, where he will learn the spelling patterns, and once correctly grasped, enables the pupil to read off-head any text written in the Arabic language. It is usually the final stage of the acquisition of reading skills.²⁴ Afterwards, he will start learning the writing of Arabic characters by himself, up to the time he will finish the 114 chapters of the Holy Qur'an.

In the second segment called *Makaranta* "*Ilimi*" or "*Ile Kewu Tira*", the student begins the acquisition of Islamic knowledge in which the curriculum is wider in scope. He first learns the rudiment of Islamic theology, Jurisprudences, Hadith Texts, Islamic History, Qur'anic Exegesis, Arabic Grammar, Arabic Literature, Mathematics, and Logic. At this stage, a student may learn from one Mallam to the other because of proficiency and it is at this stage that the student of the Qur'anic system of education chooses his area of specialization. These stages have somewhat been remodelled now as *Ibtidaiya* (primary), *Idadiya* (junior secondary), and *Thanawiya* or *Taowjihiyah* (senior secondary). This often marks the beginning of higher learning up to the university level.²⁵

Generally, the school week starts on Saturday and ends on Wednesday, while the session starts after Ramadan and ends before the following Ramadan (*Tashi*). There is no fixed amount for school fees; the payment varies from one Mallams' to another. The Teacher collects fees from the pupils for writing their new lesson on wooden boards at the end of their school week, and the *Tashi* fee at the end of the section. The fees are paid in kind and cash.²⁶ It is significant to note that students

²⁴ Interview with Sheikh Uthman Sulyman Erubu, age 72, an Islamic scholar and proprietor of Markazil fuhumi walimaani Erubu Ilorin, at his residence. Erubu area Ilorin. On 20th October 2012.

²⁵ For details on higher institutions after Thanawiyah see, Oseni, Z.I. (2006), "Arabic and Islamic scholarship in Ilorin" in *Ilorin: Centre Of Learning*, A Publication To Mark The 11th Installation Anniversary Of HRH. Alh (Dr) Ibrahim Sulu Gambari CFR. Emir of Ilorin. Ilorin: UNILORIN press. P 48-54

²⁶ For detail information on fees paid see Jimoh, S.A (1972), "A Critical Appraisal of Islam Education with Particular Reference to the Relevant Happening in the Nigerian Scene" in *Nigerian Journal of Islam*. vol. 2,

in all these schools came from all ethnicities irrespective of the ethnicity of the Mallam represented; this has promoted not only intergroup relations but proficiency in many languages among the people of Ilorin.

THE IMPACT OF ILORIN ULAMAA AND QURA'NIC SYSTEM ON THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND CULTURE OF ILORIN

Reichmus describe Ilorin Ulamaa as bearers of the hegemonic culture because religious scholars continued to play a key role in the courts and within society at large. As court scholars, administrators, and judges they belonged to the state apparatus; as Imams, teachers, religious advisers, and healers they were closely linked to their respective urban or rural constituencies whose interests they sometimes came to express even against the state and its policies. The ambiguous position of the religious scholars, as forces of hegemony as well as of opposition, has continued well into the colonial and postcolonial periods of northern Nigerian history.²⁷

Moreover, scholars have been playing a detribalize role in the integration processes in Africa, for instance, Adams observed thus

What is distinctive and historically important about Moslem pedigrees over much of Africa is that the prestigious ancestors who are claimed, whether real or fictitious, were foreign to the ethnic groups which claim them. For this reason, it seems probable that Islam, and more particularly its ethnohistorical requisites, have been an immediate and an important detribalizing influence”.²⁸

Therefore, what provoked the Ilorin Ulamaa to play a significant role in this changing environment and promote the preaching and act of integration can be understood from the work of Danmole when he says, the desire to preserve the Muslim states and Muslim law and to project legitimate political and commercial interest; with the unwillingness to surrender *Dar-salam* to *Dar- el Harb* and the

No. 1 published by conference of Muslim Lecturers and Administrative staff of Nigeria universities Ibadan: Abiodun printing works. P38-40.

²⁷ Reichmuth, S. (1995), A Sacred Community: Scholars, Saints, And Emirs In A Prayer Text From Ilorin in *Sudanic Africa*, Vol. 6.: Brill, Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25653265>. Accessed: 26-07-2019 01:20 UTC. pp. 35-36

²⁸ W. Y. Adams (1969) "Ethnohistory and Islamic Tradition in Africa" in *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Autumn, 1969), pp. 277-288, Published by: Duke University Press, Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/480964> , .Accessed: 13/07/2011 18:29/ . pp. 282

resistance to the penetration of non-Muslim religious preaching certainly had great weight in the minds of Muslim in Ilorin as well.²⁹

Al Alory believes that before 1910CE, there were more than one thousand Ulamaa in the Ilorin emirate; he established that “these erudite scholars were versed in various discipline of learning; while some of them remained in Ilorin metropole others decided to travel southwards to teach Islam and allied sciences. One striking feature of these scholars was their vibrancy, bravery, and the possession of *karamat* (mystical power) this in measures added to their successes and in the propagations of Islam”.³⁰

Apart from Okesunna Ulama led by Sheikh Attair Sholagberu al Barnawi (Kanuri), Among the first generations of scholars in Ilorin that gave Ilorin inspiring fame were: Sheikh Imam Muhammad bn Sanni al Fulani (1st chief imam of Ilorin), Sheikh Garba Yusuf (1st imam Imale), Sheikh imam Abdul Baki (1st imam Gambari), Shaykh Abubakar Bube (Gobir), Sheikh Abdulla Na Karatu (Hausa), sheikh Ibrahim, sheikh Mahmud bn Shitta (Fulani), Sheikh Ibrahim baba Bature (Kanuri), Sheikh Badamasi bn Musa al Agbaji (Sudanese), etc they form the first generation of Ulamaa as a contemporary of Sheikh Alimi. Others include sheu Maliki, Sheu Amodu Bariki, Alfa Maliki, Seikh Muhammad Takuti, Sheikh Kubundi Karatu (Baruba), Sheikh Ibrahim Bature Al Akidaz (Agadez), Sheikh Musa Atere (Yoruba), Sheikh Ahmad Bn Elgore (Gwandu), Sheikh Abdulai Badende Baruba (Baruba), Sheikh Muhammed Li Awal Bn Mahmud Alfa Erubu Agba (Fulani) Sheikh Muhammad Tukuru Asunnara (Fulani), Sheikh Omo Hidiru Sarumi, Sheikh Taj El Adab (Malian), Sheikh Waziri Bida (Nupe), Sheikh Omo Ikokoro And Alfa Salman Ake, Sheik Abdulsalam Akomonikewu fagba (Fulani) Etc.³¹

The scholars fall into three categories those before the arrival of Sheu Alimi, his contemporaries, those who emerged after Sheu Alimi, and those who sustained the legacy after Sheikh Alimi's death. Therefore, the most urgent task that preachers and scholars were confronted with was the task of how to spread and increase the influence of the religion. Furthermore, the preachers were making efforts to re-invigorate Islam (*tajdid*) and eliminate anti-Islamic practices among Muslims in

²⁹ Danmole, H.O. (1980), *The Frontier Emirate: A History of Islam in Ilorin*, an unpublished Ph.D. Thesis submitted to Birmingham university. Pp 137

³⁰ Al Alory, A.A (1982) *lamahat al ballawr fi mashahir Ulama'* Ilorin min 1200AH ila 1400 A.H, Jamamiz: maktabat al-adab, pp 78.

³¹ An interview with Mallam Alfa Baba Eleku at his residence ile Eleku, center Igboro area of Erubu quaters, Islamic scholar, age 100+, august 2017. See al alaory (19820, jimoh LAK (1994) and oseni 2006 for detais of their names.

Ilorin. This was the fundamental traditional role of the Ulamaa throughout West Africa and Ilorin is not an exception³²

Before the introduction of Islam, most social and cultural practices like wedding and naming ceremonies, the transition of death, and all other social activities were performed in line with the African tradition or of the tribes or ethnic (ATR) that are dwellers of the area later form Ilorin. Since the adoption of Islam as a religion in the 19th century, most of the cultural practices are centred on Qur'anic culture. For instance, when a child is born, the first thing is the call to prayer with the recitation of some portions of the Holy Qur'an to his ears and make a call to prayer to his earing, to tell the child when he grows up this is his duty. Moreover, the mother must chant *Lailaha ila Allahu, Muhammadu Rasulullah* to him, till the time the child knows how to pronounce it, up till the time he starts going to Qur'anic school.³³

Ilorin Ulamaa device is a means of inculcating the knowledge of Islam into their pupils with ease and religio-cultural celebration of *walimat*, By this, the most important aspect of Qur'anic learning in Ilorin is started from *Surat Fatiha, Nas, Falaq, ikhlas* to *Surat fi'il*, which covers chapters 1, 114, 113, 112, 111, 110, 109, 108, 107, 106, 105 of the Holy Quran. This process comes in three forms, the first is a rote form which must be memorized by the students, The second form is *Ajitu and Wazeli* (Alphabets and signs) e.g. *Alif, Lam, Mim, Dal, Alifi Toni wazalieh loke nin Je haa* (*alif* that has *wazali* signed up is called "ha") up till *Alamu tarakaefaa* (*surat li fil*, Q.105). The last form is *Ologere* which is the stage of spelling and pronouncing patterns. Once grasped and memorized correctly, it will enable the pupils to graduate stage one and qualify him/her to read off-head any texts written in the Arabic language. This is usually the final stage of reading skills and this warrants *Wolimat Alamutarakefa* (*Suratul filli* graduation) which only *Ewa* (beans) will be cooked and shared³⁴ among his colleagues in the school and at home. This is unique all over the emirate of Ilorin and beyond because most of the scholars are

³² Danmole, H.O. (2012), "Religion, Politics And The Economy In Nineteenth Century Ilorin: Some Reflections", In *The First Lecture Series Of The Center For Ilorin Studies(CILS)*", University Of Ilorin, Ilorin 12th December 2012: Unilorin press

³³ Interview with Alhaja mualimat Afusat Alago Erubu, age 65, a muslim scholar, at her residence, Erubu community Ilorin. On 1st January 2013.

³⁴ Interview with Alh. Aminu Yahaya (seriki zango Ilorin), age 68, an Islamic scholar and Imam, in his office shababul Muslim central mosque, Katsina. On 16th February 2013. And Interview with Sheikh Uthman Erubu. Repeat.

relatively related in either teaching or student of each other, which has helped in the cultural integrations.

Furthermore, the pupil will be promoted to the next class which covers six classes. This process of graduation and celebration continues until the completion of the whole Quran. This process is illustrated below:

Stage one: *Wolimat ewa Alamtatrkaefa* is the first stage of the graduation processes in the classification of Islamic schools in Ilorin, the qualification for this is the writing, reading and understanding of ten *Surat* (chapters) of the holy Quran which are chapters 105-114 (*Surat Fill to Nas*), to mark this the parent of the grandaunts will cook *ewa* (beans) for the school, which all the student and the teacher will eat it all and pray for him or her, it may usually be in group or individual.

Stage two: *Wolima Adie sebi* (hen graduations), the stage covers chapters 87-104 (*surat li A'la to alhamzat*). At this graduation, it is symbolic to slaughter a hen and cook it for the students and teachers to eat and pray for the graduating students.

Stage three: *woilmat akuko tabaraka* (cock graduation). The stage also covers the understanding and writing of the Qur'anic chapters of Surat 67-87 of the holy Quran.(Al-Mulik to Al-Tarik), at this stage, a cock was prepared for the *Mallams* and students.

Stage four: ***Wolimat Oruko Yasin*** (He goat graduating scenario). The stage also covers the chapters of Quran 36-66 (***from surat Al-Yasin to At Tahrir***), at the stage He-goat were killed and prepared for the school to mark the graduation/

Stage five: *wolima agbo bara* (Ram), the stage covers chapters 9-35 of the Qur'an 9 (*Al taubat to Al fatir*), at this particular stage a big ram is killed to symbolize the graduation, this follows the same process as the previous stages.

Stage six: *Wolima Malu Ipari* (cow). This is the last stage in these categories and it covers Chapters 1-8 of the Holy Quran (*Al Fatihat, Al baqorat to Al Anfal*). This is the last stage of the classes and cows were killed for this stage, unlike the previous this cow will not be eaten by the students and Mallam alone rather family, friends and the larger community will be invited to the final celebration of the Qur'anic institution. It is interesting to note that the feast for the completion of the learning of the

Qur'an is often merged with the wedding banquet for which the word *walimat* is more aptly used in Ilorin. So, the parents of the graduands usually postpone the *walimat Khatami Qur'an celebration* to the day of the graduates' wedding ceremony. Hence, one of the factors that qualify an individual for marriage in the Ilorin tradition is graduation from the holy Quran.

The stages of *walimat* are generally adopted in Ilorin and integrated into the socio-cultural milieu and the impacts are:

- The final stage is a means of integration and social gathering for all and sundry.
- It serves as a medium to check and evaluate the student's performance.
- It improves student's commitment and encouragement to religious knowledge because there will be a public lecture by Ulama
- It serves as a social class and seniority measure among the pupils of the same peer.
- the items for celebration serve as sadaka (alms) or sacrifices to God for the protection of the pupil from the beginning until he finishes the remaining chapters.
- It also serves as social integration, for instance, marriage does later occur amongst the students who admire each other, and it is sometimes multi-ethnic
- It proffers a show of kindness, appreciation, celebration, and appreciation to the teacher and community.

Furthermore, In Ilorin culture, the most important day is the day of *walimat* which is celebrated as one of the activities marking a couple's wedding ceremony, The graduate takes his slate to his Teacher who designs it for him. One side of the slate will be chapter one of the Holy Quran *surat ul Fatiha* and the other side will be the first five verses of chapter two, carefully and boldly written with some geometrical pattern, which he must bring along to the *walimat* venue where his teacher, his family, and friends will witness and grace the occasion. Moreover, the traditional attire of *Babar Riga* called *agbada etu* in Yoruba will be worn by a male, while; the female will wear *aso ofi sanyan* (a Yoruba special attire) and *iborun* (hijab) to match. It is usually the first time to wear them in their life. The *obinrin ile* (women in the family) will follow behind with songs of cultural praise and dance thus:

Barikaa re, Barika re oo he x2

Barika re

*Omowakewu ja, ose wolima. Barika re*³⁵

Meaning

Congratulation, congratulation to you, x2

Our child has finished recitation of Quran today

And we are celebrating the wolimat.

After graduation, the graduate will tour the house of his Teacher, his in-laws, his parents, and relatives for recitation and proof of his maturity in the entourage of friends and families. At each station, he reads the two chapters to convince his listeners that he truly completed the Quran. At the end of every recitation, he will be given presents. Also, the *wolimat* cow bought by the parents will be slaughtered at the Teacher's house. The Teacher could take as much as half of the slaughtered animals and other gifts.

Afterwards, the graduate must not be called by his first name again except with the inclusion of *alfa* especially if he continues to toe the line of Islamic knowledge to his name and the woman in the house must from that day desist from sending him on an errand. Also, if it is a female, they must add *Mualiimat, Iya ewe, or Iya kewu* (female teacher, mother of younger ones, custodian of Arabic knowledge) to her name. However, after marriage in her husband's family house, even as a junior wife, she must be respected and allowed to lead in any affairs related to Islam. For instance, she must lead the prayer *waka* song during ceremonies. During mourning, she must lead others in condolence visits and chanting as follows:

Subhanallah, Waliamdu Lilah

Walaila illa Alla, Allahu Akbar

Allahu Akbar, Walahaola Walakuwata

Ila billahi Lialiyu Liazim

Hee! Hee!! Hee!!! hum!! hum!! him!!! (crying formula)³⁶

³⁵ Interview with Alhaja Aishat Abdulsalam Fagba, age 85, a scholar and trader, at her residence Fagba Emirs palace compound Ilorin. On 25/12/2012.

³⁶ Interview with Alh Aminu Yahaya and Alhaja Aisha Abdulsalam. repeat.

In addition, the Qur'anic education system acts as an agent of stability and integration of peers in society, as the child grows up under the system; he gradually learns to fit himself into his adult roles. The system thus, contributes to making Islam what it is, a way of life. Also, truly educated Muslims must match their knowledge with their conduct, this way Quranic education ensures a smooth transition from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. The basic aim of the Quranic education system is to make its recipients good Muslims as being a good Muslim is synonymous with being a good citizen. As the child grows up he comes to understand the right modes of behaviour and develops it from his Teacher's examples and percepts for instance: the faculty divorces badly from the good, because the environment places a premium on the virtue of Quranic education.

Moreover, the objective of the Ulamaa Quranic education system is to train the rulers and leaders of tomorrow, for instance, all the Emirs of Ilorin from the onset up to the present are products of this system. Besides, most of the foremost Islamic scholars in Ilorin went through, for example, Sheikh Alimi (the leader of the 19th-century jihad in Ilorin, that later spread to southern Nigeria), Sheikh Belgore, Sheikh Mahmud Muhammed li Awwal Alfa Erubu Agba (an astute Quadriya movement leader in Ilorin) Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Al-Alory (the founder of *Markazil Taalim* Araby, Agege), Sheikh Kamaldeen Al-Adabiy (the founder *Ansarul Islam* society worldwide), Justice Abdulkadir Orire (the first Grand Khadi of Kwara state), Justice Alfa Belgore (former Chief justice of the federation), Justice Ahmad Belgore (presiding judge, Federal Court of Appeal) dons, academics, jurists, politicians to mention but few who made Ilorin proud today as "city of Islamic scholars" mostly pass through this process.

Ilorin Ulamaa also use the Qur'anic education system as a manifest in the tradition and administration of Ilorin, upon the recognition of Ilorin by the Gwandu authority, some religious and political appointments were made to consolidate the religious and political gains of the nascent emirate, therefore the three Imam was appointed from among the Fulani (Chief Imam), from among the Malians (*Imam Imale*), from among the mix grills³⁷ at Gambari Gobirawas (*Imam Gambari*) they were charged with the responsibility of the emirate and the Chief Imam will be among the Kingmakers.³⁸ Other Traditional Titles have religious inclinations like

³⁷ The people of Gambari are migrants from different ethnics and dialect in Hausa land and Borno empire, they became known as Gambari because the language of Hausa unified them and they mostly settled in Gambari ward due to its closeness to the major Gambari market in Ilorin

³⁸ Saliyu, H.A. et al (2006) "Ilorin Emirate: Its people and Politics" in *Ilorin: Centre Of Learning*, A Publication To Mark The 11th Installation Anniversary Of HRH. Alh (Dr) Ibrahim Sulu Gambari CFR. Emir of Ilorin. Ilorin: UNILORIN press.

Ajanasi Agba (the chief Quranic reciter), *Ladani Agba* (the chief callers to prayer), *Alfa Rabana* (chaplain for closing prayers), and the *Mufti* of Ilorin (honourably reserved for the most knowledgeable in Islamic jurisprudence and affairs of emirate), etc. While the most seasonal *Mallam* (scholar) will be acknowledged and honoured with the open preaching *waasii* in the presence of Emir Ilorin during the last day of Ramadan.³⁹ All of these emanated from Islam culture through the Quranic education system in Ilorin.

Furthermore, on ceremonial occasions such as *Idei-el fitir Kabir*, *Maulud nabi* (Prophet's Birthday anniversary), and *Lailatul-Quodri*, the pupils commonly present some dramatizations based on the life of the Prophet. Both in theme and texture, these plays are very similar to the Roman liturgical plays of the Middle Ages and the Medieval miracle plays that succeeded them.⁴⁰ However, during the month of Ramadan, the grandaunts and the well-versed, older pupils will accompany their teacher to his preaching ground, which is usually a busy or conspicuous part of the street. There, they have to get the place lit and the chairs arranged and treat the audience to melodious songs and poems either in praise of Allah or Prophet Muhammad such as:

E jade wa, e Jade wa x 2

Eyin ti enife Muhammad, ejade wa

Meaning:

Come out en masse, x 2

If you know you are a lover of Prophet Muhammad

Come out and witness this.

Whatever alms given to them will be kept for their teacher who may share part of it or pray for them as *owo Alubarika* (blessed money).

Lastly, it was a massive influx of people of assorted cultural backgrounds, after Islamic governance had been established that conditioned the demographic size composition, and texture of Ilorin. With the resultant ethnic and cultural heterogeneity, Islam became the common denominator and the only unifying

³⁹ Interview with Alh. Alabi Ola Sulyman (prince) the Daudu Fagba of Ilorin and Head Shitta Rulling House, at his palace, age 65, on 2nd August 2012.

⁴⁰ Jimoh, S.A (1972), "A Critical Appraisal of Islam Education with Particular Reference to the Relevant Happening in the Nigerian Scene" p 41

factor.⁴¹ The Ulamaa who are the harbinger of this faith facilitated the intermingling, socialization, and integration among the various groups of people through preaching, teaching, learning, administering, adjudicating, admonition, and military prowess through jihad. The Ulama of Ilorin enjoys their role and becomes proud of it as such, a poem is generally recited in all Islamic centres and Islamic programs as an instance:

Kewu wu wa ke lake kewu oo x2

Eniti kewu bawu ke oo ko ka re Ilorin

E ko oko wa, ki e ko oko asho

Ki ema ba ki bosi ebii.

Meaning:

Islamic knowledge is attractive to us that is why we love to learn it

Anybody who love Islamic education should come to Ilorin

You should come with hoes and weaving tools

So that you will not clamour for hunger

Conclusion

Ethnicity like politics is a universal phenomenon, nearly all countries are multiethnic and in nearly all is ethnicity often mobilized to the advantage of the sociopolitical elite. It's therefore, obvious that one of the world's most enduring human problems today is anchored on ethnicity, maybe this is why Conflicts based on ethnic, religious, and racial differences continue to erupt around the world. The history of Africa was written to look indifferent and in a negative perspective as if conflict and ethnicity are central to intergroup relations in Africa alone, forgetting the prosperous and harmonious Africa despite decades of co-existence. Ilorin, therefore, offers a good example of a peaceful and harmonious society. Despite its themultiethnic, multicultural, and multilinguistic nature of African society, Islam was believed to be the unifying factor and the Ulama'a were at the centre of this harmonious unification. The Ulama'a of Ilorin are those who possess the quality of 'ilm, (learning, Islamic knowledge) in its widest sense. Most of these notable Ulama'a are versed theoretically and practically in the Muslim sciences, some are religious teachers who own private schools in the Ilorin community, others are

⁴¹ Jimoh, L.a.K . (1994) illorin: The Journey So Far, Ilorin: Atoto press Limited. Pp.9 see also A alory lamuatul li Balaory and omo ikokoro for details of the plurality.

theologians, canon lawyers (muftis), judges (Qadis), professors, and high state religious officials like the shaykh al-Islām. In addition, Ilorin Ulama'a are a council of learned men holding government appointments in a Muslim state e.g., Emir, Waziri, Mufti, Sheikh li Islam, or Imam, etc. Historically, the ulamā'a in a theocratic setting has been a powerful class, and in early Islam, it was their consensus (ijmā') on theological and juridical problems that determined the communal practices of future generations. Therefore they played the role of a unifier, an administrator, warlords, and commercial gurus through knowledge, sagacity, administrative skills, and acumen. This guild of scholars took Ilorin to the pinnacle of fame as the centre of excellence using the traditional Islamic education system.

Furthermore, the Islamic education system is the process by which values spelt out in the Qur'an and the tradition of the prophet Muhammed are handed over from generation to generation, after the establishment of Ilorin as an Islamic enclave, the value was added to the Islamic education, and at one time or the other, Ilorin people are blessed with a rare, dynamic, and regal culture. Sequels, to the acceptance of Islam by the people, most of the cultural practices are now reflections of Islamic culture, and background, which led to remodelling a new cultural heritage, starting from Qur'anic education. However, the basic aim of the system in Ilorin is to make its recipients good Muslims as being a good Muslim is synonymous with being a good citizen. As the child grows up he comes to understand the right modes of behavior and develops it from his teacher's examples and percepts for instance: the faculty for divorcing badly from good, because the environment places a premium on the virtue of Quranic education. Therefore, the Ulama'a acted as an agent of integration and stability in society. Moreover, the massive influx of people of assorted cultural backgrounds and works helped the city to develop after Islamic governance and centres had been established which conditioned the demographic size composition, and texture of Ilorin. With the resultant ethnic and cultural heterogeneity, Islam became the common denominator and the only unifying factor and as such, there is social and cultural integration. The Ulamaa who is the harbinger of this faith facilitated the intermingling, socialization, and integration among the various groups of people through preaching, learning, and admonition. As the child grows under the system, he gradually learns to fit himself into adult roles. The system thus contributes to making Islam not just a creed, but a comprehensive way of life and "a way of life in Ilorin" and a life to live in Ilorin, hence the popular rhyme in Ilorin *eyin ti e kewu eku iya, awa njaye kalamu* (it's a

pity for those who did not attend Qur'anic school because we that that are enjoying the benefit of Muslim's pen).

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