



Creation And Sustenance of An Islamic Dynasty in Ilorin Emirate, A Reflection of the ‘Ulamā’ Political and Religious Sagacity

Uthman Mohammed Mustapha Kannike¹ and Yakub Olanrewaju Ayinla²

^{1,2}Islamic Studies, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.
mustapha.kannike@arts.fulafia.edu.ng¹, yakub.ayinla@arts.fulafia.edu.ng²

Abstract

The Emirate of Ilorin, which has its affiliation to the Gwandu axis of the Sokoto Caliphate, was not created till around 1829 CE. Activities of the Muslim scholars, simply referred to as the ‘Ulamā’, that existed in different parts of the town long before this period influenced the Emirate’s creation, though years after some of them had died. In this research, whose objective was to establish the impact of the ‘Ulamā’ on national development by analyzing the political and religious roles they played in creation and sustenance of Ilorin Emirate, it is found that Shaykh Salih Alimi was the most prominent among the pre-Emirate ‘Ulamā’ whose contributions were remarkable in the eventual creation of the Emirate. The paper identified certain other ‘Ulamā’ such as those in Alimi’s group in Oke-Sunnah, Shaykh Ahmad Bī Sani, Shaykh Garba al-Malli and Shaykh Abdul-Mumin Dogo, whose efforts were notable at the point of the Emirate creation. The paper revealed that the surviving ones among these ‘Ulamā’ were joined by the subsequent immigrants to ensure that the created Emirate survived. About twenty-eight immigrants were named in this work as the ‘Ulamā’ who bequeathed their descendants and disciples the struggles towards sustenance of the Ilorin Emirate. The elements of their struggles included teachings, preaching, spiritual healing, establishment of ideal governance and resistance to oppressive persons, authorities or systems, that fought against wellbeing of the Emirate, Islam and humanity. Narrative and analytical methods were selected for these findings, which recommends, among other things, that stakeholders in Nigerian national development should borrow a leaf from the approach of the Ilorin past ‘Ulamā’. The present generation of ‘Ulamā’ should live in replica of the past, where applicable, in the contemporary terrain for an accomplished national development.

Keywords: ~~Election, Violence, Democracy, Development & Nigeria~~

1. Introduction

National development is central in the primal part of Islamic history. Its significance was the catalyst that renewed Prophet Muhammad (570-632 C.E)’s courage, following the experienced showdown at Tāif in 619 C.E, to redirect his migration path towards Yathrib.¹ On his arrival in the year 622 C.E at Yathrib, which subsequently became known as *Madīnah ar-Rasūl* (City of the Messenger of Allah), the Prophet did not hesitate to commence taking steps towards a formidable nation building. Not only that the Madinah became the world stereotype as a Muslim nation, the Prophet was able to unify Arabia territories of Hijaz into a single religious polity with Islamic principles as constitution. With the Prophet’s accomplishment on his mission, he was regarded as the role model and guide by his immediate successors in their efforts towards nation building.² After his death, the first Caliph, Abu Bakr (632-634 C.E) laid the foundation of continuity of nation building with the imperial expansion. During the reign of the Second Caliph, Umar (634-644 C.E), tremendous expansions were witnessed. Uthman (644-656 C.E) and Ali (656-661 C.E), the third and the fourth caliphs respectively, also played significant roles in national development. Within a few decades, Islamic empire had expanded from Hijaz to engulf all of Arabia. The successfully

¹ At-Tabarī Muhammad b. Jarīr, *Ta’rīkh at-Tabarī*, Dār al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyyah, Lebanon, 2008, vol 2, page 11

² Safī-ur-Rahmān Al-Mubārakpuri, *The sealed Nectar*, Maktabah Dār-Salām, Saudi Arabia, page 417



developed nations, that included Persia, Iran, Iraq, Levant, Syria, Egypt, parts of North Africa, and several islands in the Mediterranean, were florescent in all ramifications.³ Prophet Muhammad's stereotype was the torch bearer and guiding principle not only to his immediate successors; he rather remains the same to the subsequent Muslim leaders, particularly the '*Ulamā*'.

'*Ulamā*', an Arabic term whose singular form is *Alīm* or *Ālim*, connotes the scholars who are; erudite in knowledge, cognizant and well informed.⁴ It is used in Islamic context when reference is made to those individuals who are learned in Islamic tenets, language, principles, jurisprudence, tradition etc. The role of the '*Ulamā*' is glaring and evident in both the creation and the sustenance of Ilorin Emirate. Ilorin is the state-capital of Kwara in the North Central Nigeria. According to the 2006 census, Ilorin had a population of 777,667, making it the sixth largest city by population in Nigeria⁵. Following the creation of Kwara State in 1967, Ilorin Emirate is entrenched with a land space that covers the present-day Ilorin East, Ilorin West, Ilorin South, Moro and Asa Local Government Areas. The five local government areas are within the Emirate, and hence, under the control of Emir of Ilorin.⁶ Ilorin City occupies a strategic position in the country as it is situated about mid-way between the north-western and south-western parts of Nigeria. It is; therefore, appropriate to say that it serves as gate-way between the North and the South of the country.⁷

Obviously, efforts of the '*Ulamā*' who lived earlier, before and up to 1829, when Ilorin Emirate was created, precipitated its creation while the survival and sustenance of the Emirate so created is to the credit of the '*Ulamā*' who live since it was created to the present era. Based on the objective to establish the role of '*Ulamā*' in national development, with particular reference to Ilorin, it is considered pertinent in this paper to briefly look into the history of Ilorin land before proceeding to flesh up with subheadings that include, Pre-Emirate '*Ulamā*' in Ilorin, Role of the '*Ulamā*' in the Creation of Ilorin Emirate, Post-Emirate '*Ulamā*' in Ilorin and Role of the '*Ulamā*' in the Sustenance of Ilorin Emirate. A conclusion that consolidates this objective shall be put forward to be followed with relevant recommendations.

2. Brief History of Ilorin

History of Ilorin has gained prominence in the literature produced by various categories of scholars, cutting across epoch, age, disciplines, classes, genders and objectives. Consequently, the date in which Ilorin was founded has attracted different opinions, the most acceptable assertion is that Ilorin was founded in the sixteenth century. Though a school of thought speculated Ilorin to have come into existence since 1450 CE, the source does not attempt to name anyone as part of the founding in the stated year. Such narration can simply be described as that of prehistory period; it is rather logical to acknowledge the prevailing history of the City that has effectively traced the founding to the sixteenth century CE.⁸ On the other hand, a report asserts that Ilorin was founded by a man called Ojo who was originally a hunter from Ilota or Gambe near the present city of Oyo around 1770⁹. Ojo is a popular name in the history of Ilorin but

³ Mustafa Murād, *al-Futūhāt al-Islāmiyyah*, Dār al-Fajr li at-Turāth, Cairo, 2009, pages 256-258

⁴ Cowan, J.M *Arabic-English Dictionary*, The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, Ithaca, Newyork, 1960, page 636.

⁵ Ilorin - Wikipedia. Accessed through <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilorin>, on December 5, 2017

⁶ Jimoh L.A.K, *Ilorin the Journey So Far*, Atoto Press Ltd, Ilorin, 1994; p.18

⁷ Badmus A.A., *Spatial Inequalities in the Distribution of Public Facilities. A case study of Ilorin metropolis*. Unpublished Long Essay, submitted to Department of Geography, University of Ilorin, 2000, p.9

⁸ Abdur-Razaq M. B. Solagberu, "Sūfī versus anti-sufī in Ilorin, Nigeria: a Struggle for Supremacy" in *Ilorin: History, Culture and Lessons of Peaceful Co-Existence*, Ed. A.G.A.S Oladosu etal, Unilorin Press, 2013; p.1

⁹ Jamiu, F.O., "Contributions of Ilorin scholars to Arabic and Islamic studies in Yoruba land: Focus on Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Iluri" in *African Journal of History and Culture*, 2014; pp.112-118. Accessed through <http://www.academicjournals.org/AJHC> on December 5, 2017.



the inconsistencies in this report is not only that Ojo had earlier arrived in Ilorin since seventeenth century¹⁰ but also that Ilorin had been in existence before the coming of Ojo Isekuse or Eminla.¹¹ Ojo an itinerant hunter, on his arrival to the town, met a hermit Baruba family at a place near Idi-Ape where he settled and used a rock he met there to sharpen his metal tools.¹² There are many historians who equally mentioned Ojo to have only arrived long after a Baruba man had already, in the sixteenth century, inhabited the area now called Baruba, near which Ojo Isekuse later lived. It was underscored that “from being one Baruba man’s abode, Ilorin transformed into a Yoruba settlement with the incoming of a certain Ojo Isekuse from Gambe near Oyo-Ile and Emila successively in the seventeenth century”.¹³ It was also established that “without doubt, the summation of various interpretation of Ilorin history is that the town had been a very important centre in northern Yorubaland for many centuries before the beginning of the nineteenth century”¹⁴

It is noteworthy that the Baruba quarter, where the Baruba hermit and family lived, and Idi Ape, where Ojo and Emila successively lived and sharpened iron are quite close as they are almost within the same vicinity. This area, popularly called Idi Ape, later formed one of the four quarters of the town where various groups of later settlers were located, based on specific identifications. These were the Yoruba at Idi Ape and the Fulani at *Gaa Olufadi* (Olufadi’s camp). While Gambari quarters comprised of migrants from Northern part of Nigeria (Hausa, Fulani, Nupe, Gwari, Kanuri, etc.) *Oke Suna*, was settled exclusively by Muslims of various origins (Kanuri, Hausa, Yoruba, Fulani, Nupe, Baruba, etc.).¹⁵ With the passage of time, the community became culturally multifarious following the influx of a multiplicity of other cultural and sub-cultural groups. It was a massive influx of people of assorted cultural background. However, the “infectious” Yoruba language became the lingua franca. The consequent submergence of all other languages into Yoruba gives an illusory impression of monolithic culture by obscuring the cultural pluralism inherent in Ilorin, where a substantial proportion of the indigenous population is anthropologically non-Yoruba.¹⁶ Notwithstanding, many of the non-Yoruba families in Ilorin, particularly in Gambari quarters, are exceptional in maintenance of their northern identity. Up to this moment, in religious congregations, educational gatherings and commercial centers, the people communicate freely in Hausa as their common language.¹⁷ Obviously, the dialect spoken in Ilorin is widely characterized and influenced by the languages of both the north and the south; as it contains divergent linguistic elements.¹⁸ From all indications, the present language, spoken in Ilorin, could be regarded as idiosyncratic dialect that

¹⁰Jimoh L.A.K, *Ilorin the Journey So Far*, Atoto Press Ltd, Ilorin, 1994; p.25

¹¹Ikokoro Ahmad bn Abubakr *Akhbār al-Qurūn min Umarā’ Balad Ilorin*, 1912 with commentaries of Al-Ilori Adam Abdullah, Markaz Publication, Agege, 1991, p.23

¹²Jimoh L.A.K, *Ilorin the Journey So Far*, Atoto Press Ltd, Ilorin, 1994; p.26

¹³Hassan A. Salihu and Ibrahim Jawondo, “Ilorin Emirate: Its People and Politics” in Jimoh S.A. (Ed.) *Ilorin: Centre of Learning*, Jimson Publishers, Unilorin, 2006, p.1

¹⁴Danmole H. O., *Religion, Politics and The Economy in Nineteenth Century in Ilorin: Some Reflections*, 1st Annual Public Lecture of the Centre for Ilorin Studies (CILS) of the University of Ilorin given on Wednesday, 12th December, 2012, Pp.6-7

¹⁵Hadi Sa’ad, *The Dynamics of Political Development in a Multicultural Society: The Case of Ilorin During The 19th and 20th Centuries*, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation submitted to Postgraduate School, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2015, p.45

¹⁶Jimoh L.A.K, *Ilorin the Journey So Far*, Atoto Press Ltd, Ilorin, 1994; p.9

¹⁷Hamzah Abdurraheem, “Language Contact and Cultural Diffusion in Ilorin: A Case of Unity in Diversity” in *Ilorin: History, Culture and Lessons of Peaceful Co-Existence* Ed. A.G.A.S Oladosu et al, Centre for Ilorin Studies, Unilorin, Ilorin, 2013; p.313

¹⁸AbdulRazaq M. Katibi, “Arabic and Non-Arabic Elements in the Ilorin Dialect of Yoruba” in Gambari M.B. (Ed.) ... p.30



comprises a fraction Hausa and fraction Yoruba languages, after the latter had developed to lingua franca in the early stage of the formation.¹⁹

Later developments in Ilorin, such as unification of the erstwhile four segmented quarters into one entity named Ilorin, spread of Arabic knowledge, Islamization of the town, inauguration of leadership, establishment of dynasty and creation of the Emirate, are all traceable to the politico-religious roles played by the '*Ulamā*', particularly under the leadership of Shaykh Sālihu Ālimi bī Janta (1740-1820 C.E).

3. Pre-Emirate '*Ulamā*' in Ilorin

It is, indeed, from the beginning of Ilorin history that the existing Muslim scholars were numerous in the town. Al-Ilori (1917-92) identifies seventy scholars by their names and indicates the information he got from a number of historians that prior to arrival of the British in 1910, the '*Ulamā*' in Ilorin were more than one thousand.²⁰ These notable scholars, who belonged to diverse backgrounds, lived in different ages and locations. They were versed in various disciplines of learning. While some of them remained in Ilorin, others decided to travel southwards to teach Islām. Some of the '*Ulamā*' were in existence since 1714 C.E, before the arrival of Shaykh Sālihu Ālimi who later became the most popular. Some of the '*Ulamā*' in this era were at a Hamlet called Okesuna, about forty years before Ālimi. During this era, some Muslim scholars equally existed in Gambari area with Shaykh AbdulMumin Dogo as the most prominent and some were in Fulani quarters (*Gaa Olufadi*) including Shaykh Ahmad Barki and Shaykh Muhammad Isalekoto. The scholars of Okesuna were referred to as the first Muslim educationists in Ilorin and Okesuna, their Settlement, as the first Centre of Islamic scholarship in Yoruba speaking areas²¹. *Lamhāt* of al-Ilori identifies six of these scholars as: Shaykh At-Tahir Solagberu from Borno, Shaykh Tsansaini (wrongly referred to as Sansiny or Shādhily)²² of Baruba origin, Shaykh Muhammad Yanbu (corrected as Yunabbau) with his wife (Āsiyah) both were Hausa, Shaykh Sanusi, progenitor of Imam Matashe from Bama (Borno), Shaykh Thāniy Kanuri (from Borno), the progenitor of Bashar Adangba (d.1956)²³. Three other names contained in the list provided by Jimoh are Shaykh Salihu Ojibara (d.1870) from Borno, Shaykh Onagun of Ita Egba from Borno and Shaykh Salihu Munabau, a Fulani of Oke Okuta whose mosque, the Munabau Mosque, was once used as the city's Central Jumat Mosque²⁴. Similarly, Imam-Sahban's work discloses three more names to this group: Shaykh Ahmad (Alfa Iwo) from Borno, Shaykh Onipepeye from Borno and Shaykh Ahmad Maikabara, also, from Borno. The work indicates that the latter died early at Okesuna²⁵.

Some '*Ulamā*' joined Shaykh Ālimi on his way to Ilorin; most prominent among them was Shaykh Yusuf al-Malli while most prominent among the scholars who arrived shortly after Ālimi's arrival in Ilorin was Shaykh Ahmad Bī Sani. Others who migrated to Ilorin around this period included Shaykh Abubakr Tajidni, father of Isma'īl and grandfather of Habibullah Tajidini (d.1985) and Shaykh Adam Alanamu (d. 1840), who is similarly reported to be one of the companions to Shaykh Ālimi during his sojourn in parts of Yorubaland before they all finally settled down in Ilorin.²⁶ The individual and joint roles played by these '*Ulamā*' gave birth to the formation of an emirate in the city of Ilorin.

¹⁹AbdulRazaq M. Katibi, "Arabic and Non-Arabic Elements in the Ilorin Dialect of Yoruba" in Gambari M.B. (Ed.) ... p.32

²⁰ Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori, *Lamhāt al-Balawry fī Mashāhīr 'Ulamā Ilorin*, ...1982:18-75

²¹ Aliyu, Sakariyau Alabi (2015), *Transmission of Learning in Modern Ilorin* ... :38

²² *Tsansaini* means a devoted person in Baruba Language (*al-Wāri'* in Arabic). The name was strange and hard to the non-Baruba speakers. Thus, they called it in the ways possible to them

²³ Al-Ilori A.A. (1982), *Lamhāt al-Balawry fī Mashāhīr 'Ulamā Ilorin*: 18-75

²⁴ Jimoh L.A.K, (1994) *Ilorin the Journey So Far*, Atoto Press Ltd.,: 421.

²⁵ Imam Sahban A. J. (2017) *Nabdhah 'an Ta'rīkh ba'd 'Ulama ...*: 30,36 and 48

²⁶ Ishaq I.M. Akaje, "Ash-Shaykh Adam Alanamu" in Jimba M.M. (ed.) (2015), '*Ulamā ul-Imārah* ... :108



3.1 Role of the Pre-Emirate ‘*Ulamā*’ in the Creation of Ilorin Emirate

The ‘*Ulamā*’ that existed in Ilorin before and up to the time an emirate was created were the players whose roles resulted in creation of the Emirate and hence a typical Islamic nation building. The roles played by these Muslim scholars were in different dimensions, using diverse tools and aiming various targets. About seven apparatus, put in place by the ‘*Ulamā*’ to ensure a successfully created emirate and Islamic state are discussed below.

3.1.1 Formation of Muslim Ummah

An example of the prophetic establishment of Ummah when he arrived at Madinah is made in the case of Ilorin. Having understood from the Madinah’s case that no nation can be successfully built without having formed a community (Ummah). when the Prophet arrived at Madīnah, he created a unique brotherhood between Makkans who migrated with him and the Madīnah who assisted him with warm reception. He brought all the warring tribes together; particularly he settled the age-long tribal disputes of the Aws and Khazraj of Madīnah²⁷. Similarly, upon the arrival of a league of ‘*Ulamā*’ under the leadership of Shaykh Ālimi, the hitherto scattered areas of Ilorin were brought together to become one.

The ‘*Ulamā*’ amalgamated the Yoruba residents of Idiape under the leadership of Afonja, Hausa residents of Gambari under the leadership of Bako, Fulani residents of Gaa under the leadership of Olufadi and multiethnic Muslim residents of Okesuna under the leadership of Solagberu²⁸. The outcome of this amalgamation resulted in the entity called Ilorin-*Garin Ālimi* in a semblance manner with *Madīnatul-Rasūl*, meaning the City of the Messenger of Allah.

When Shaykh Ālimi and his entourage of ‘*Ulamā*’ arrived, there was no unified Ilorin; the existing four quarters were scattered as semi-autonomous in nature. Idi-Ape where Yoruba descendants resided was initially under the leadership of Emila who came from Ikirun and later under Afonja who came from Oyo Ile; the Fulani quarters comprising the pastoral Fulani group had Olufadi as their head; the Gambari quarters was the settlement for Hausa, Kanuri, Nupe and Baruba with Mallam Bako as their *Sarki*. On the outskirts of the town was the fourth settlement called Okesuna which was an exclusive Muslim quarter with Solagberu as their head²⁹. It is important to note the distinguishing factor that raised the ‘*Ulamā*’ above leaders of these respective quarters who were earlier migrants. Available evidence tends to suggest that each of the leaders of the settlements was concerned and exclusively responsible for his peculiar domain. None of the Afonja, Olufadi, Bako and Solagberu made a successful attempt to bring together these disjointed settlements. It was, however, to the credit of Shaykh Ālimi and his ‘*Ulamā*’ entourage that the settlements are subsequently united and became one very big but single entity known as Ilorin. This was because prominent members of the Shaykh’s entourage that arrived with him from different parts of Yoruba land; Oyo Ile, Ogbomoso, Ikoyi and Kuho, where he had visited and stayed, were lodged and settled, upon entering Ilorin, with their fellow cultural groups already resident in the four existing areas³⁰. Shaykh Ālimi integrated into Ilorin the newly created Oke-Imale, which before his arrival was sparsely populated until it became inhabited by some Yoruba migrants who accompanied Shaykh Ālimi to Ilorin under the leadership of Usman (a dignitary from Iseyin) and Se`eni (a dignitary from Kuho) who subsequently became Balogun Ajikobi and Balogun Alanamu respectively.³¹ This fact paved way for the ‘*Ulamā*’ under Shaykh Ālimi to automatically earn followers in every area and that made it easy for them that they subsequently contributed with no measure in the unity of the inhabitants of those hitherto separated areas. Apparently, Shaykh Ālimi’s

²⁷Rahim A., *Islamic History*, Islamic Publication Bureau, Lagos, 2001, p.25

²⁸Uthman Mohammed Mustapha, *A Study Of The Emergence And Activities Of Jama`ah Ahl As-Sunnah Li Ad-Da`Wah Wa Al-Jihad(Boko Haram) In Northern Nigeria (2002-2012)*, Unpublished, submitted to Postgraduate School, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, 2012, p.8

²⁹Jimoh L.A.K, *Ilorin the Journey So Far*, Atoto Press Ltd, Ilorin, 1994:52

³⁰Ahmad Tijani Adisa Onikoko, *A short History of Ilorin Emirate*: 8-9

³¹Jimoh L.A.K, *Ilorin the Journey So Far*, Atoto Press ... 1994: 50, 52 and 366



arrival with cooperation of other ‘*Ulamā*’ changed totally the course of Ilorin history with the formation of the Muslim Ummah.

3.1.2 *Islamic Formidable Influence*

It was an essential catalyst in the creation of the emirate the fact that the ‘*Ulamā*’ worked hard to attribute a formidable influence to Islam in Ilorin City. The influence of Islām in Ilorin became so prominent that the ethnic identity of the people is largely underscored more by the religion than by the language, which simply lumps the people of Ilorin with the Yoruba of the South West. The circumstances of its history and socio-political experience and affiliation have made identifying with Yoruba ethnically difficult if not impossible³². Instead, Islam their main religion, more than anything else, is the rope binding all Ilorin people together. This is an indication of the most prominent position enjoyed by Islām in Ilorin, which aided the creation of the Emirate.

It is important to note that beside Okesuna, which was purely inhabited by Muslims from the onset, the Core-Ilorin comprised of Idi-ape, Gambari, Fulani and Okemale quarters (as the areas became known later). There was no paganism in any of the quarters, namely, Okemale, Gambari and Fulani. It existed only in the Idi-ape quarters. Even then, it was wiped out, with the death of Afonja, after which the core-Ilorin became a wholly Islamic community. It may, therefore, not be impossible that there was little remnant of these practices in Idi-ape or Dada/Okelele till the reign of Emir Zubayr (1861-1869). It is also reported that there was paganism in some parts of the outskirts of the city such as Oloje and Dada and in the districts especially, in the Moro Area. It was in those areas that the first three Emirs of Ilorin, particularly the Third (Zubayr, 1861-1869) waged war against paganism, the remnants of which the “Mukondoro sect” wiped out in the 1960's and early 1970's³³. More so, the popularity of this eulogy of Ilorin among the Yorubas which is as old as Ilorin itself must also be considered:

*“Ilu to yi ko le' egun; Ilu to yi ko l'oro;
Esin le' egun won; Oko l'oro be!”*

Meaning of the above:

How come that a town as big as this has neither cults nor fetish;
The horse is their cult; and the spear is their fetish!

There was no impediment when the emirate was created because an Ilorin indigene identifies him or herself first as a Muslim before any other indices of identity. This is the situation till the present time. An Ilorin indigene who converts to another faith will gradually lose the identity of Ilorin, since his participation in communal activities would reduce. He would be socially ostracized and such a person cannot identify him/herself in isolation. For this reason, no other religion outside of Islam can serve as identity marker for an Ilorin indigene. Religion, together with history and ancestry forms a tripod of identity markers in Ilorin.³⁴ Hence, this phenomenon as ensured by the ‘*Ulamā*’ contributed in no small measure in the creation of the Emirate

³²Ibrahim Abdulganiyu Jawondo, *Islam in Nigeria Since Independence: A History of Mosque Administration in Ilorin Emirate, 1960-2010*” in Journal of Islam in Nigeria, 2015, Vol, 1 No 1, Accessed through www.unilorin.edu.ng on July 10, 2018

³³Danmole H. O., *Religion, Politics and The Economy in Nineteenth Century in Ilorin: Some Reflections*, ... 2012, Pp.45-46

³⁴Aliyu, Sakariyau Alabi, *Transmission of learning in modern Ilorin: a history of islamic education 1897-2012*, 2015. Accessed on through <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/35802> on August 5, 2018



3.1.3 *Acquisition of Valuable Knowledge*

The intellectual history of Ilorin, for which the town has been exceptionally renowned, has enjoyed the attention of numerous researchers, especially in respect to how the acquired knowledge has helped the 'Ulamā' in not only creation of an emirate but complete islamization of the city. While some researchers describe Ilorin as the haven of Islamic and Arabic scholars because it has contributed and still contributing in no small measure to development of Islamic and Arabic studies, not only in Yorubaland but also in Nigeria and beyond³⁵, The magnificent recognition of Ilorin in the Islamic World scholarship has made scholars assert that "apparently Ilorin was so enigmatic in the imagination of ancient Muslim scholars across the Sahara and this could be seen in the number of those from near and far in West Africa who chose to come to Ilorin and settle"³⁶. The foundation laid by the leadership of the Emirate for the spread of Islam and Islamic learning prepared the ground for the prominent positions Ilorin continued to enjoy in Yorubaland and elsewhere up till this day. Many Ilorin clerics also moved out of the emirate to preach and found Islamic schools as well as encourage Muslims in search of knowledge to come and study the Qur'an and other aspects of Islamic studies in Ilorin. The available record which describes Ilorin as a foremost centre for the learning of Islam and Arabic language quotes Fafunwa to declare that Ilorin was the centre of Islamic learning before any other place in Yorubaland.³⁷ This points to the time when the emirate was not yet created.

It may not be too easy to ascertain the actual level of Islamic scholarship in the early years of the Emirate, but it has been severally claimed that learning which engenders the Islamic scholarship predated the establishment of the Ilorin Emirate and indeed assisted 'Ulamā' in actualization of the emirate. It has also been indicated that by the seventeenth century, immigrant Borno scholar traders have started settling in Ilorin. One of the reports emphatically states; "some learned scholars and 'Ulamā' came to Yorubaland from part of Kanem Borno and Hausaland through Ilorin"³⁸. Equally, in the process that precipitated the creation of the Emirate, there was display of scholarship. Correspondence in Arabic between Emir Abdul Salām b. Ālimi of Ilorin (1820-36) and Emir Muhammad b. Abdullah of Gwandu (1829- 33) is an attestation. Similar correspondence in Arabic language, between the Emirate and other rulers were found from the same Emir Abdul Salām to Emir Ibrahīm b. Ya'qūb of Bauchi (1843-79), from Emir Shu'ayb Bawa (1915-19) to Oba Esugbayi of Lagos and from Emir Abdul Qādir (1919-59) to Oba Falolu of Lagos in 1942.³⁹

3.1.4 *Building of Mosque*

Construction of many mosques is evidence of the existence of Islam in a town. Shaykh Ālimi surrounded his residence with different mosques. The *Masājīd* (Mosques) that Shaykh Ālimi ensured their existence in Ilorin include Ago Mosque; it was the first to be built by the Shaykh in Ilorin and it was in it that he firstly

³⁵Jamiu F.O., "Contributions of Ilorin scholars to Arabic and Islamic studies in Yoruba land: Focus on Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Iluri" in *African Journal of History and Culture*, 2014, Pp.112-118. Accessed through <http://www.academicjournals.org/AJHC> on December 5, 2017, Pp.112-118

³⁶Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah "Like Timbuktu and Sokoto, Ilorin, in theory and practice, is leading in Scholarship" Foreword in Jimba Moshood M (Ed.), *'Ulamā al-Imārah*, Centre for Ilorin Manuscripts and Culture, Kwara State University, Malet; p.8

³⁷Yahya Eliasu "A Historical Overview of Islam and Islamic Scholarship in Ali-Agan Quarters in Ilorin" in Oseni ZakariyauI. etal. (Ed.) *Ilorin as a Beacon of Learning and Culture in West Africa*, Centre for Ilorin Studies, Unilorin, Ilorin, 2015 p.57

³⁸Kalli Alkali Yusuf Gazali, *The Kanuri in Diaspora*, CSS Bookshops Limited, Lagos, 2005, Pp.174-175

³⁹Amidu O. Sani *The Story of an Autochthonous Scholarly Network: Ilorin and the Making of Modern 'Ulama' in Nigeria*. 3rd in the Lecture Series of the Centre for Ilorin Studies, University of Ilorin. Unilorin Press, Ilorin, 2015, p. 9,

Check also Jimoh L.A.K, *Ilorin the Journey So Far*, Atoto Press Ltd, Ilorin, 1994; p.278



performed Jum'at prayer with congregation. Other 'Ulamā' who were also in Ilorin then contributed to the development of Islam and eventual creation of an emirate through building of mosques. Apart from Shaykh Ālimi's mosques, different other mosques built by some 'Ulamā' within Ilorin town under the auspices of Shaykh Ālimi, all of which still remain in existence. They include Makana mosque, Shaykh Isale Koto Mosque, Shaykh B. Sani Idiagbon (Darni) mosque and Idi isin mosque. Mosques were also reportedly constructed in different Yoruba territories that Shaykh Ālimi visited such as Kuho, Igboho and Ikoyi.⁴⁰ It is important to emphasize that among other 'Ulamā' that built mosques were Shaykh Bi-Sani, the first Chief Imam of Ilorin after Shaykh Ālimi, Shaykh Agaka, Shaykh Muhammad Isalekoto, Shaykh Māliki al-Fulāny, Shaykh Makana, Shaykh 'Umar Yaro and Shaykh Ahmad Barki (or Barkindo). It is interesting to note that the seven scholars mentioned here got the foundation of their mosques being laid by Shaykh Modibbo Ālimi and the mosques being built with his full support. The existence of the mosques served as proof for prominence of Islam and hence paved way for successful creation of an emirate.

3.1.5 Effective Da'wah System

Da'wah was one of the major functions of Shaykh Alimi and other 'Ulamā' which contributed immensely during the creation of the emirate. Da'wah had great impact on the people of Oke-suna and by extension, the entirety of Ilorin City. The new converts discovered the beauty of Islām; that after few years of emergence of *Tafsīr*, Islam became the major identity markers in Ilorin.⁴¹ The methodology applied by Shaykh Ālimi in his *Tafsīr* classes, which took place during Ramaḍān, was slightly different from the public lecture he had outside Ramaḍān. He made difference between the one that involved exclusively the students and scholars who possessed elementary and advanced knowledge respectively, and another that involved the public, including the new converts who ran with their new faith to get shelter at Oke-suna and those who just embraced Islām and followed the 'Ulamā' after getting the guidance through them at their respective places.⁴² The most emphasized topics of the pre-emirate public preaching can be established from a source that itemizes Shaykh Ālimi's areas of focus thus:

فإن موضوع، الإسلام وقواعده وأركانه،... والأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر ومكارم الأخلاق، وطلب العلم لمعرفة الله، والتقوى والزهد والورع كلها هي أماكن دعوته الرئيسية

The theme (of Shaykh Ālimi's preaching) was al-Islām; its principles and pillars, commandment to the virtues and forbidding from the vices, high morals, searching for knowledge to know Allah, piety, asceticism and godliness. All of these are his (Shaykh Ālimi's) areas of focus of preaching in most cases.⁴³

It was effective to the point of creation of the emirate because the crowd use to gather around the 'Ulamā' who preached while they enjoined the people on righteousness, forbade them from immoralities, guided them to the right path, dissuaded them from the path of fantasy and directed them to Islām. Thus, those whom Allah destined to embrace Islām through him did embrace.

3.1.6 Diplomatic and Military Struggles

A combination of diplomacy and military struggles was also used by the 'Ulamā' to pave way for creation of the emirate. Among many threats and wars that the 'Ulamā' damned as part of Jihād, it suffices to mention the threat of a new installed Alafin Oyo called Maku who directed the Shaykh Alimi to send Afonja to Oyo so that the latter could be punished. Shaykh Ālimi was threatened that should he failed to surrender Afonja, the lives of both Afonja and the Shaykh shall be the price. But due to the hope that Afonja

⁴⁰El-Gambari Aminullahi Adamu "Ash-Shaykh Sālih (Ālim b Janta) al-Fulāny at-Tūrūdy" in Jimba Moshood ... p.54

⁴¹A. S. Alabi, *Transmission of learning in modern Ilorin: a history of islamic education 1897-2012*, 2015. Accessed on 5th August, 2018 through <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/35802>

⁴² El-Gambari, "Ash-Shaykh Sālih (Ālim b Janta)al-Fulāny at-Tūrūdy":39-40

⁴³ El-Gambari "Ash-Shaykh Sālih (Ālim b Janta) al-Fulāny at-Tūrūdy":49



would one day accept Islam, the Shaykh with the support of other ‘*Ulamā*’ protected him. The war ensued where the ‘*Ulamā*’ delegate was led by Aliyu Mai Sango, a native of Katsina at the war. Alafin Maku was killed and his head was buried under the ground, the portion which later became frontage of the Emir palace.⁴⁴ Though it was to the contrary that Afonja did not accept Islam, the events were in favour of Islam that the emirate was created and the Islamic state was founded.

3.1.7 Power Separation

The roles and functions were distributed among the ‘*Ulamā*’ and that indeed ensured their unity especially towards creation of the emirate. During the *Tafsīr* session, Shaykh Ālimi engaged the services of two renowned scholars in recitation: The first reciter was Shaykh Yusuf al-Mallī (al-*Malawy*), an elderly Fulani Malian who was reported to have joined the Shaykh from Kobayi and continued to relate passionately with him after their arrival in Ilorin. The second reciter was Shaykh Ahmad b. Sāni, a Fulani scholar who later arrived from Birni Kebbi together with Abdus Salām, the first son of the Shaykh. The two reciters were very popular Islamic scholars and both rendered the services sincerely as the first and second *Ajanasi* respectively.⁴⁵ The record is also very clear about Shaykh Ālimi’s relentless efforts on propagation of Islām even at his old age. The Shaykh engaged his son, Abdul Salām to attend, on his behalf, to administrative matters brought to the Shaykh’s attention for adjudication or advice as the *Amīr al-Mūminīn*. Consequently, Abdul Salām took up political responsibilities and after the death of Shaykh Ālimi; he became the first Emir (1820-1836) to retain his father’s leadership status. Shitta, Abdul Salām’s brother became the second. Consequently, a dynasty was formed.⁴⁶ This is almost the most prominent factor that assisted the first Emir to champion the course of emirate creation with the support of the existing ‘*Ulamā*’.

3.1.8 Creation of the Emirate

The first Emir; Abdul Salām, who championed the course of the emirate creation, did not mount the saddle of leadership without any hurdles. He had various challenges ranging from competition for the office of the Emir to the impediments encountered while trying to establish pristine Islam and the Emirate. Among the threatening outbreaks was his final clash with the hitherto leader of Okesuna, Solagberu (d.1931), and most importantly the enemies of the Emirate from the Old Oyo Kingdom that were ready to liquidate the Emirate⁴⁷. Mallam Bako, the Sarkin Gambari also expressed interest to be elevated to Sarkin Ilorin in view of his advance age and longtime status⁴⁸. As an astute political and religious leader, Abdul Salām (1820-36) quickly designed means to consolidate his authority and therefore took the first step of seeking for legitimacy from the Sokoto Caliphate through Gwandu, which he received. Emir Abdul Salām reportedly wrote a letter to Gwandu which unfortunately has not been recovered to date but the reply to his letter as written by Emir Muhammad b. Abdullahi of Gwandu in 1829 is available at Arewa House, Kaduna.

Ilorin became an emirate and integral part of the Sokoto Caliphate following the reply from the Emir of Gwandu which was titled *Risālah Ilā Amīr Yarbā Abd al-Salām b al-Sālih* (A Letter to Emir of Yoruba

⁴⁴El-Gambari Aminullahi Adamu “Ash-Shaykh Sālih (Ālim b Janta) al-Fulāny at-Tūrūdy” in Jimba Moshood M. (Ed.) ‘*Ulamā al-Imārah*, a publication of Centre for Ilorin Manuscripts and Culture, Kwara State University, Malete, 2015, Pp.52-53

⁴⁵ U.M.M. Kannike, “Identifying the Tradable Aspects of Nigerian *Ulama*’s Services in the Face of Economic Recession and Dignity of the Profession” in Makinde A.K. (Ed.), *Arabic and Islamic Studies Solutions to Global Recession* (Proceeding of 35th National Conference of NATAIS, Lagos, 2017).108

⁴⁶Hassan A. Salihu and Ibrahim Jawondo, “Ilorin Emirate: Its People and Politics” in S.A. Jimoh (Ed.) *Ilorin: Centre of Learning*, Jimson Publishers, Unilorin, 2006, p. 12

⁴⁷Danmole H. O., *Religion, Politics and The Economy in Nineteenth Century in Ilorin: Some Reflections*, 1st Annual Public Lecture of the Centre for Ilorin Studies (CILS) of the University of Ilorin given on Wednesday, 12th December, 2012, p.21

⁴⁸Jimoh L.A.K, *Ilorin the Journey So Far*, Atoto Press Ltd, Ilorin, 1994; p.69



Abdul Salām son of al-Salih) The text of the reply (*Wathīqah* or letter) was a lengthy one⁴⁹. In this *Wathīqah*, Abdul Salām was recognized and acknowledged as “Emir of Yoruba” and assured of support by the Sokoto Caliphate. Thus, Abdul Salām was *de facto* Emir of Ilorin from the time of Shaykh Ālimi, he became the Emir *de jure* following the death of Shaykh Alimi (in 1820) and in 1829 his emirate got incorporated through Gwandu into the Sokoto Caliphate⁵⁰. The incorporation was proven by the Gwandu when support was needed in Ilorin; even-though it was after the demise of Emir Muhammad b. Abdullahi (1829-33) who presided over the incorporation, his successor Emir Ibrahim Khalil (1833-60) of Gwandu, without any hesitation, assisted Ilorin militarily. Ilorin defeated the combined forces of the Old Oyo kingdom and the Borgawa in the famous Battle of Ilorin, partly through the military support of Gwandu. This battle marked the final collapse of the Old Oyo kingdom in 1835/36.⁵¹

However, it is instructive to add that the letter that guaranteed the Caliphate’s support for Ilorin Emirate also included the instruction that the Emir should not deviate from the goals of spreading Islam. Incidentally, all the Emirs of Ilorin in the nineteenth century as well as subsequent ones without any exception paid considerable attention to the uplift of Islam in various ways which has kept Ilorin as a living Emirate till the present time. This also gave Islam in Ilorin multiple figures ranging from religious to cultural, a feature that is carefully guarded in Ilorin till the present time. Interestingly, after Islamic governance had been firmly established, through the emirate system 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 factor.

4. Post-Emirate ‘*Ulamā*’ in Ilorin

After the Emirate had been created in 1829, Ilorin witnessed arrival of many more Muslim scholars and that indeed provided the infant Emirate survival through sustenance that transformed to growth and development. Currently, about two hundred years down the line, the ‘*Ulamā*’ whose arrival occurred or prominence noticed in Ilorin after the Emirate was created, have been too numerous. A work, by the present author, has grouped the departed among them into four categories: First Category (1820-1880) comprised eighteen ‘*Ulamā*’, second category (1880-1920), as produced by the former were thirty four ‘*Ulamā*’, third category (1920 to 1960) indicates forty one ‘*Ulamā*’ and fourth category (1960-2019) were about fifty ‘*Ulamā*’.⁵² It should, however, be noticed that no subsequent generation is independent of the preceding one as every generation was always the product of the immediate past by birth, tutelage or both.

The uniqueness in the first generation of Post-Emirate ‘*Ulamā*’ in Ilorin was not only that they produced the subsequent generations but also that each of them arrived with knowledge and did not come to Ilorin to study under any scholar as a beginner. They arrived in Ilorin at different time but, not later than the reign of the fourth Emir of Ilorin, Emir Aliyu son of Emir Shitta.⁵³ The list of the foundation ‘*Ulamā*’ goes thus: Shaykh Abubakr Isalekoto (d.1916), Shaykh Hasan Gbodofu (d.1888.), Shaykh Bukhari Manbaba Gbodofu (d.1908.), Shaykh Ibrahim Bature (d.1848), Shaykh Sa‘eed Alfa-Alore (d.1854.), Shaykh

⁴⁹The reply from Gwandu to the letter of Emir AbdulSalam is available with the author who obtained it Centre for Ilorin Studies, University of Ilorin. It is also available at Arewa House, Kaduna, Nigeria.

⁵⁰Jimoh L.A.K, *Ilorin the Journey So Far*, Atoto Press Ltd, Ilorin, 1994; p.77

⁵¹Danmole H. O., *Religion, Politics and The Economy in Nineteenth Century in Ilorin: Some Reflections*, 1st Annual Public Lecture of the Centre for Ilorin Studies (CILS) of the University of Ilorin given on Wednesday, 12th December, 2012, p.23

⁵² Kanneke Mustapha U.M., *Multifaceted Categorization of Muslim Scholars in Ilorin Emirate*, A Ph.D. Seminar Presentation Paper II to the Department of Islamic Studies, Bayero University, Kano, September, 2019, Pp. 7-27

⁵³ Kanneke Mustapha U.M., *Multifaceted Categorization of Muslim Scholars in Ilorin Emirate ...* p.10



Abubakr Bube (d.1858), Shaykh Muhammad Takuti b. Abubakr (d.1900), Shaykh Abdullah Rufogo na karatu (d.1905), Shaykh Busairy bn. Shaykh Badrudeen Oloyin (d.1915), Shaykh Aliyu Oloyin Ajikobi (d.1885), Shaykh Ibrahim *Qabrul 'Ulûm* (Kunburin karatu) (d.1916.), Shaykh Ibrahim Baba Turare (d.1888), Shaykh Muhammad bn Ahmad Belgore al-Fulany (1831-1913), Shaykh Abdullah Badende al-Barbawiy bn Ahmad Ramaḍan (1739-1921), Shaykh Badmas bn Musa Agbaji (d.1891), Shaykh AbdulQadir al-Barghawiy (Baruba) (d.1898.), Shaykh Musa Atere (d.1900) and Shaykh Muhammad Hashimiy Arikewuyo (d.1907.).⁵⁴

4.1 Role of the Post-Emirate '*Ulamā*' in the Sustenance of Ilorin Emirate

A number of steps and activities were embarked upon by the '*Ulamā*' to ensure the created emirate does not collapse. Some of these valuable steps are hereby examined.

4.1.1 Appointment and Diplomacy

The Emir engaged different '*Ulamā*' with different assignment as duties. Shaykh B. Sani was designated Imam al-Fulani, and the positions of Imam al-Imale and Imam al-Gambari were also created. Imam Imale was accorded the right to lead the congregational Jumat prayer in the absence of Imam Fulani and in the absence of both of them; Imam Gambari would lead the prayers.⁵⁵ The main function of these Imāms was to lead the Muslim congregation of the Emirate in weekly *Jum'ah* prayers in the central mosque and of course to lead annual '*īd al-Fitr*' and '*īd al-Aḥḥā*' prayers. Other services that were later incorporated include leading other '*Ulamā*' if they are present in occasions like *tasmiyah* (naming), *walimah* (banquet) for completion of the Qur'ān, *aqdu an-nikah* (marriage) and *janāzah* (funeral) prayers.⁵⁶ It is noteworthy that conducting/coordinating of *Tafsīr* Circle at the Emir's palace takes prominent position among the functions of the foremost three Imāms and their successors.

The imams became the palace *Mufassirūn* and *Mufassirūn* of Gambari were merged with palace. It is, therefore, instructive while studying the *Mufassirūn* of the Central *Tafsīr* Circle at this point, to indicate their status as the three principal Imāms in the Emirate. This is because while the Imām al-Fulānī and the Imām Imale (al-Malawī) are directly responsible, the Imām al-Gambarī is indirectly responsible for the duty of *Tafsīr* in the Emir's Palace. The appointment of these *Mufassirūn*/Imāms and their background, as well as methodologies of their *Tafsīr* are among the relevant studies before the investigation into the contemporary trends of the *Tafsīr* at the Central *Tafsīr* Circle.

Similarly, on royal appointment, Hamzah highlights that when AbdulSalam was enthroned as the first Emir of Ilorin, he considered Yoruba greatly while forming a broad-based administration, which accommodated all varying linguistic groups in Ilorin⁵⁷. In reference to chieftaincy titles; while *Waziri*, *Daudu*, *Galadima*, *Sarkin Fada*, *Sarkin Salama*, *Sarkin Dogari* are Arabic, Hausa, Nupe, Fulani etc, they were used side-by-side with Yoruba title names: *Balogun*, *Baba Isale*, *Magaji Are* etc Hamzah indicates that this all-encompassing political arrangement entrenched a sense of belonging that accommodates all the ethnic groups in Ilorin, which further promotes solidarity and loyalty to the ruling house.⁵⁸ Thus, inter-

⁵⁴ Kannike Mustapha U.M., *Multifaceted Categorization of Muslim Scholars in Ilorin ...* Pp.7-10

⁵⁵ Jimoh L.A.K, *Ilorin the Journey So Far*, Atoto Press Ltd, 1994, p. 468

⁵⁶ Kannike Uthman M. Mustapha, "Identifying the Tradable Aspects of Nigerian *Ulama*'s Services in the Face of Economic Recession and Dignity of the Profession" in Makinde A.K. (Ed.), *Proceeding of the 35th National Conference of Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, Lagos, 2017, p.108

⁵⁷ Hamzah Abdurraheem, "Language Contact and Cultural Diffusion in Ilorin: A Case of Unity in Diversity" in Oladosu A.G.A.S et al (Ed.), *Ilorin: History, Culture and Lessons of Peaceful Co-Existence*, a publication of Centre for Ilorin Studies, Unilorin, Ilorin, 2013, p.323

⁵⁸ Hamzah Abdurraheem, "Language Contact and Cultural Diffusion in Ilorin: A Case of Unity in Diversity" ... p.323



ethnic rivalry and tension which snowballs into ceaseless bloodshed and carnage as experienced in some parts of the country is absent in Ilorin due to the spirit of togetherness and unity of purpose exhibited by the people.

4.1.2 *Brotherhood and Cooperation*

As part of efforts to sustain the created emirate, robust brotherhood was established as the community life was standardized with improved knowledge about Allah, high moral standard and piety.⁵⁹ Above all, the effective and sustainable nature of the methodology of Shaykh Ālimi's moral teachings caused it to be inherited by the succeeding generations of scholars who had always continued with this methodology up to the present time. People of Gambari were also invited and accommodated by the Emir. Composition of Gambari quarters, of the migrants who arrived from Northern parts of Nigeria (Hausa, Nupe, Gwari, Kanuri, etc.) and the eminent status with leadership that gave Mallam Ibrāhīm Bako the recognition with the title of *Sarkin* Gambari, from time immemorial, were parts of the background of the emirate. Among the scholars that had arrived at Ilorin before Shaykh Ālimi was the progenitor of Imām Gambari's family. He was Shaykh Abdul-Mūmin Dogo. The Emir made him part of the three principal imams of the Emirate for unity, cooperation and brotherhood.⁶⁰ This paid off that the present time there is no discrimination between one part of Ilorin and another. This had helped greatly in sustaining the created emirate.

4.1.3 *Sustenance of the Dynasty*

The spiritual leadership of Shaykh Ālimi, turned administrative and royal during the reign of his son, AbdulSalam, was later inherited by Shitta (1836-1861) who was AbdulSalam's immediate brother. The descendants of these two Emirs formed the lineages that inherited the Ālimi Dynasty and between the two, the emirship has been rotational till the present time.⁶¹ The famous Ilorin dynasty of Shaykh Ālimi, which started around 1820 with Shaykh AbdulSalam as the first Emir. This famous dynasty has covered a period of two centuries during the reign of the eleventh and current Emir, Shaykh Ibrahim Zulu Gambari. As further clarification to this, it is pertinent to present the list of the past and the current Emirs of Ilorin, all of whom were descendants of Ālimi, as follows:

- i. Emir AbdulSalam son of Shaykh Ālimi from 1820 to 1836
- ii. Emir Shitta son of Shaykh Ālimi from 1836 to 1861
- iii. Emir Zubayr son of Emir AbdulSalam from 1861 to 1869
- iv. Emir Aliyu son of Emir Shitta from 1869 to 1891
- v. Emir AbdulSalam II (Mama) son of Emir Zubayr from 1891 to 1895
- vi. Emir Sulayman son of Emir Aliyu from 1895 to 1915
- vii. Emir Shuayb Bawan Allah son of Emir Zubayr from 1915 to 1919
- viii. Emir AbdulQadir son of Emir Shuayb Bawan Allah from 1919 to 1959
- ix. Emir Alhaji Dhul-Qarnayn son of Muhammad Gambari son of Emir Shuaibu Bawan Allah from 1959 to 1992
- x. Emir Mallam Aliyu son Emir AbdulQadir from 1992 to 1995
- xi. Emir Alhaji Ibrahim son of Emir Dhul-Qarnayn Gambari from 1995 till date.⁶²

⁵⁹ A. A. as-Salāty, *Dawr-ul-Ulamā ul-Qādiriyah fi ash-Shi'r al-'Arabī aṣ-Ṣūfī Bi Imārah Ilorin an-Nijīriyyah*, (Ilorin: el-Mubarak Print Ltd, , 2019). 56

⁶⁰ Imam, *The Life, Works and Lineage of Imam Gambari Descendants:3*

⁶¹Hassan A. Salihu and Ibrahim Jawondo, "Ilorin Emirate: Its People and Politics" in S.A. Jimoh (Ed.) *Ilorin: Centre of Learning*, Jimson Publishers, Unilorin, 2006, p. 12

⁶²El-Gambari A.A. "Ash-Shaykh Sālih (Ālim b Janta) al-Fulāny at-Tūrūdy": 54-55



4.1.4 *Establishment of schools*

The first notable learning circles in Ilorin were recorded in reference to the earlier mentioned scholars of the first category after the creation of the Emirate. The foremost among them was the one founded by Shaykh Abu Bakri Bube (d.1858) who reportedly founded a school in Gambari quarters during the reign of the second Emir. Apart from Bube, Shaykh Takuti an-Nafawi (d.1900) who reportedly arrived in Ilorin in the 1840s also established a learning Centre in the town. These scholars and others who followed their path had students who also became prominent in Islamic learning.⁶³ Among other foremost founder of reputable schools, mention must be made that the school established by Shaykh Muhammad Belgore (1831-1913) and Shaykh Abdullah Badende (1739-1921) became more popular throughout Yorubaland for the study of Fiqh, *Tafsir*, Hadith and *Lughah*. The two scholars who joined their contemporaries lately became highly respected teachers and authors in the opening years of the twentieth century.⁶⁴

It is important to note that those who started the teaching without having studied under any scholar in Ilorin are regarded as forerunners. The scholars who had received their Islamic education from these forerunners also established schools and have students of their own. For instance, Shaykh Ahmad b. Abubakr Ikokoro (1870-1936), a prominent student of Belgore and Shaykh Abubakr Omohiya b. Mustapha Soro (1865-1988) were vibrant teachers who, through their individually established schools, produced numerous intelligent students. Through this process, Islamic learning continued to gain ground in the Emirate. Some of the scholars who took over from the above and passed the knowledge to succeeding generations improved on the knowledge they received as time demanded. Shaykh Yusuf Hamdaniy Adaara Agbaji (d.1968), who founded az-Zumrah al-Mu'minin, Shaykh Muhammad bn Habibullah bn Musa nicknamed Kamalud-deen (1907-2005) who founded al-Adaby institutes of Nigeria and Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilory (1917-1992), who founded Markaz at Abeokuta in 1952 and later transferred it to Agege in 1955 were among the reputable founders of Madaris.

4.1.5 *Specialization in Knowledge*

The '*Ulamā*' of Ilorin have been classified into four groups. These are itinerant preachers, Islamic teachers and ascetics, who devote all their time to worship and Sufism. The fourth group involves spiritual healers who solve people's spiritual, psychological, political, social and economic problems by means of special prayers, herbs and astrology. In another perspective, the '*ulamā*' can be broadly classified into two groups; those who occupied political or formal office and others who operated on private initiative. The first group comprised Imams and Judges (*alkalai*) while the second comprised teachers or preachers. Apart from those early Ilorin scholars who versed in Islamic law, there were many other *Shari'ah* judges before the Alkali courts were changed to Native Courts; prominent among them were *Alkali* Mahmud Belgore, *Alkali* Saliu Fodie, *Alikali* Sa'adu Okubiyi and *Alikali* Ile Galadima Gegele. Apart from those who were political officers, there were independent numerous scholars who were neither Imams nor office holders but versed in various disciplines of learning⁶⁵. As many Islamic schools were established, there was opportunity for students to have specialist training from one school before moving to another. This is a traditional feature of the acquisition of Islamic education. Some scholars specialized in Arabic grammar, its lexic and literature, some specialized in *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) and its fundamentals, some specialized in '*Ulūm al-Qur'an*' (Science of the Qur'an) and *Tafsir*, some specialized in '*Ulum al-Hadith*' (Science of Hadith) and its interpretation while some scholars were specialists in preaching.⁶⁶

The scholars who specialized in Arabic grammar and its literature included Shaykh Muhammad Salihu Ojibara (d.1870), Shaykh Muhammad Tukur (Yanbu), Shaykh Ahmad Yanma bn Mahmud bn Shitta

⁶³ H.O. Danmole, (2012) *Religion, Politics and The Economy in Nineteent ...*:13

⁶⁴ H.O. Danmole, (2012) *Religion, Politics and The Economy in Nineteent ...*:18-19

⁶⁵ Amidu O. Sani (2015) *The Story of an Autochthonous Scholarly Network*: 9

⁶⁶ El-Gambari A.A. "Ash-Shaykh Sālih (Ālim b Janta) al-Fulāny at-Tūrūdy" in Jimba M.M. (ed.) (2015) ... 39



(d.1922.), Shaykh Abdul Qadir Alik, Shaykh Bube (d.1858), Shaykh Takuti (d.1900), Shaykh Ibrahim Bature (d.1836), Shaykh Abubakr al-Fulany and others. The scholars who specialized in *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) and its fundamentals included Shaykh AbdulQadir Baruba (d.1898), Shaykh Muhammad Belgore (1831-1913), Shaykh Abdullah Badende (1739-1921), Shaykh AbdulRahman Alabidun (1834-1947), Shaykh Salahudeen (Alemuny) Olosan, Shaykh Salih Tajul-Abideen, Shaykh Ahmad bn Zaruq Agbaji, Shaykh AbdulQadir Otula Ayunre (d.1906), Shaykh Muhammad Kuranga Omoda among others. Among the scholars who specialized in *Hadith* and its science was Shaykh Abubakr Alore (d.1910). The scholars who specialized in ‘*Ulum al-Qur’an*’ (Science of the Qur’an) and *Tafsir* included Shaykh B. Sani, Shaykh Abubakr al-Mali, Shaykh Abdul Mumin Gambari, Shaykh Hassan Gbodofu (d.1888.), Shaykh Mahmud bn Shitta (d.1869) and the scholars who were specialists in preaching include Shaykh Muhammad Ajongolo (1825-1919), Shaykh Kokewukobere (1799 -1931), Shaykh Badamasi Agbaji (d.1890), Shaykh Muhammad Amin Agaka, (d.1942) Shaykh Mukhtar Abubakr Isalekoto (1860-1957) and Shaykh Maliki bn Abas Ode-Alausa among others (d. 1942)⁶⁷.

5. Conclusion

In the study of the past, inspirations are usually deduced especially when investigating the factors that aided a given society to flourish or to perish. The present work does not only shed light on the flourishing nature of the Arabic and Islamic knowledge in the historic city of Ilorin but presents the Emirate as model for a city that is intended to develop or sustain virile scholarly structure for its present and future generations.

⁶⁷ Al-Ilory A.A. (1982), *Lamhāt al-Balawry ft Mashāhīr ‘Ulamā Ilorin*: 18-75