

Effects of Industry, Indolence and Corruption on the People of Ilorin Emirate: Retrospect and Prospect

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Abstract

Indeed, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was an exemplary character who served as a mirror to the Islamic societies. He was a perfect model. This can be ascertained from the kind of governance and administration he put in place in the heterogeneous community that he led. He successfully built a politically vibrant and economically viable community in which the citizens learnt impeccable values. Particularly, if the prophet's community model is to be followed, an Islamic society should be one that its citizens should strive to be peaceful, industrious and productive alleviating poverty thereby preventing acts of corruption. It is with this in mind that this paper analysed the development of industry in the Muslim community of Ilorin Emirate since the last century. The paper argues in retrospect, that at a certain period, the Ilorin Emirate community members were ambitious and diligent fending for themselves and by so doing they became relatively buoyant. The paper further argued that in later years, because of changes in orientation, the community members abandoned their values culminating into widespread poverty and acts of corruption. In a concluding analysis, the paper recommended the re-orientation of the community members' attitudes to hard work as an antidote to the current plight. The use of oral interviews and other primary and secondary written sources were used extensively in writing this paper.

Introduction

Ilorin is the capital of Kwara State in the North Central Nigeria. Ilorin city is the administrative and political headquarters of Ilorin Emirate. Ilorin was the frontier emirate of the Sokoto Caliphate to the south. It has a population of 777, 667 by 2006 Census and by 2011 its estimated population is 908, 490. It covers a total area of 765 square kilometres.

Apart from this, the climate of the Ilorin favours agricultural practices. The climate is shared between two seasons, wet and dry seasons. It is a transitional or middle belt climate which is sandwiched between forest and savanna zones.¹ It is from this vantage point that the emirate and its people played significant roles in the political economy of the Sokoto Caliphate and that of Nigeria as a nation.

This paper attempts a review of the economic engagements of the people of Ilorin minding the changes over time. It compares the economic acumen of the people in the past with what is trending at the present not isolating some peculiar value characters of industry and corruption.

Conceptual Clarifications

Industry: It connotes being characterised by hard work and perseverance while pursuing means of livelihood. Muslims are decreed to embark on permissible occupations and are forbidden from certain ones. The permissible occupations are *halal* while the forbidden ones are *haram*. *Halal* and *haram* are so categorised because the end result of the former on the individual and the society most certainly is positive while that of the latter is negative. The Qur'an chapter 2 verse 275 (Q2:275) said, "Allah has permitted trade and has forbidden interest ..." To earn a lawful means of livelihood, in Q4: 29 Allah commanded, " O you who believe, do not consume your property among yourselves wrongly, but let there be trade by mutual consent and do not kill yourselves ..."

Muslims are obliged to earn their livelihoods through permissible means *viz*: agriculture, trade, industry and any other profession or mode of employment as long as it does not involve doing, supporting or propagating any acts of *haram*. Prophet Muhammad was reported to have enjoined Muslims to commit to hard work when he said, "it is better that a person takes a rope and brings a bundle of wood on his back to sell so that Allah may preserve his honour, than he should beg from people, (regardless of) whether they give to him or refuse him."²

Indolence: Connotes the act of being lazy especially when avoiding work. An indolent person is generally lazy and is usually disinterested in working to earn a continuous source of income. It is not permissible in Islam for a Muslim to avoid working for a living on the

¹ A. Ore, (2009). Women and the Transformation of Ilorin Economy 1967-1999, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, p.17.

² Imam Bukhari, (2010). Sahih Imam Bukhari, Vol. 2, Hadith 1256, Cairo: Darul Al Maktabatus-Shamila, p. 186.

pretext of devoting his life to worship or trust in Allah as food and essential commodities he may need do not fall from the sky. It is not also permissible for a Muslim to depend on charity while he is capable of earning what is sufficient for his own family's needs through his own efforts. Prophet Muhammad said, "Charity is *halal* neither for the rich nor for the able bodied."³ In addition, the Prophet also said that, "anyone who begs from people in order to increase his wealth will have his face scratched on the Day of Resurrection, and will eat burning stones from hell; so let him reduce it (his punishment) or let him increase it as he pleases."⁴

Corruption: Aptly, for our general discussions here, "Corruption is the intentional non-compliance with the arm's length principle aimed at deriving some advantage for oneself or for related individuals from this behavior."⁵ Arm's length principle in this sense can be regarded as the generally acceptable rules and obligations in the society. Generally speaking, if we agree with Okoosi-Simbine,⁶ scholars are agreed to the fact that corruption ranges from acceptance of money or other rewards for awarding contracts, violations of procedures to advance personal interests, including kickbacks from development and aid programmes or multi-national corporations, pay-offs for legislative support. Other acts of corruption include the diversion of public resource for private use, overlooking illegal and unconstitutional activities or intervening in the justice process, nepotism, common theft, over-pricing, establishing non-existing projects, payroll padding, tax collection and tax assessment frauds, insider trading, name dropping, influence peddling and misappropriation.⁷

Ilorin as an Ancient Industrious Muslim Community

The Emirate of Ilorin was formed as a consequence of and in line with the puritanical principles of the 1804 Sokoto *jihad* led by Usmanu Dan Fodiyo. Therefore, the first Emir of Ilorin AbdulSalam Maituta who ascended the throne in 1823 built its foundations on the *shari'a*. In particular, enterprise and trade was greatly promoted among the citizens of the city not only by AbdulSalam Maituta but also by the subsequent rulers of Ilorin in the pre-colonial

³ Jami'u Ibn Majah, (1998). Sunnah Ibn Majah and Tirmidhi. Vol. 1, Hadith 133, New Delhi: Good Word Books, p.122.

⁴ Imam Abu Daud, (1998). Sunnah Ibn Daud, Vol 6, Hadith 2042, Cairo: Taha Islamic Publishers, p.171.

⁵ Boris Begovic, (2005). "Corruption: Concepts, Types, Causes and Consequences," Washington DC: Centre for International Private Enterprise Online Journal, March 21, p.2.

⁶ Anthonia Okoosi-Simbine (2006). "Democracy and development: Two Heavy Pillars for Nigeria's Greasy Hands of Corruption" in Hassan A. Saliu et al (eds.) Democracy and Development in Nigeria Social issues and External Relations, Volume 2, Lagos: Concept Publications, p.36.

⁷*ibid.*

period. This is in line with the Islamic principle of rulers encouraging their subjects to earn legitimate and permissible livelihoods within their domains.

Ilorin at that period developed a surplus producing economy. Industries of pottery, blacksmithing, textile, leather work, medicine and agriculture existed in the city and were diligently coordinated by the citizens. In the same period, because of its centrality between the savannah and the forest regions, Ilorin developed a highly lucrative entrepot trade. It enjoyed a great deal of advantage through this entrepot trade and its resultant lucrative impact. The same advantage applied to the role its inhabitants played as middlemen between the northern and the southern traders who frequented its markets. Commercial transactions in the entrepot trade provided a variety of jobs for different people and this made them very industrious. There were, among many others, lodging house keepers, brokers, dealers and *mallams* who saw to the needs of foreign merchants, directed them to buyers, helped them find return cargoes and advised generally about the local environment, among other things.⁸

In emphasising the extent, strength and preponderance of the local industries in Ilorin, Jawondo emphasised that names of some compounds, areas and families in the city are direct reflections of their occupations⁹ with many dating back to the pre-colonial times. According to him, *Ile Olokoide* (brass smith), *Ile Alagbede* (blacksmith), *Ile Onikoko* (potters), *Ile Alapata* (butchers) etc. are compounds and families in Ilorin that derived their names from specific occupations they were renowned for.¹⁰ These local industries employed a large percentage of the indigenous population across gender lines in various capacities and specialisations. These industries were also known to have produced surplus products for export trade.

In addition to the above, by nature of Ilorin's climate and vegetation, it is blessed with fertile and arable land which its population put to good use for cultivation. Agriculture to the people, at that period, included both crop production and animal husbandry. A large number of the male population was generally involved in farming, even on part-time basis. The stage was attained of crop production market economy whereby the emirate sufficiently fed its people and also produced surplus for export. Farm produces most especially food stuff such as guinea

⁸ R. J. Gavin, 1977, "The Impact of Colonial Rule on the Ilorin Economy 1897 – 1930" in *Centrepoint: A Journal of Intellectual, Scientific and Cultural Interest*, University of Ilorin, Vol 1, No 1, pp.15-16.

⁹ I. A. Jawondo, (2006). "Traditional Education in Ilorin Emirate" in Jimoh, S. A. (ed.) *Ilorin: Centre of Learning*. Ilorin: Jimson Publishers, pp. 26.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

corn, maize, yams, locust beans, beans etc. were cultivated in large by the enterprising people of the emirate which further led to food security in the emirate. Thus, Ilorin became a food terminus serving both the savannah and the forest regions.¹¹

Some Changes and Developments witnessed in the 20th Century Ilorin

The coming of colonial rule in 1900 had adverse effects on Ilorin indigenous local industries. It equally greatly diminished the economic importance of the entrepot trade of the city.¹² Notwithstanding, the people of Ilorin continued to exhibit their enterprising capabilities in new forms and were not daunted by the colonial policies. For example, while some continue to reinvigorate the old local industries like pottery and blacksmithing, others learnt and developed newly introduced British trades and occupations like carpentry and tailoring. Colonial archival records as exemplified in Table 1 below succinctly prove this development.

¹¹ S. L. Yittametu, (2014), *Indigenous Markets in Ilorin Metropolis 1960-2000*. M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Ibadan, pp. 32-37.

¹² See Z. S. Sambo, (2009) "Small Scale Industries in Ilorin: A Historical Analysis of their Technological Capabilities" in Olayemi Akinwumi et al (Eds.) **Technology, Knowledge and Environment in Africa: A Perspective From Nigeria**. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, pp.60-61.

Table 1: Income Distribution in Ilorin Town 1922

Occupation	Men			Women		
	Number	Average Income	Gross Income of group (£)	Number	Average Income	Gross Income of group (£)
Bead Makers	851	£24	20, 424	263	24/-	315
Blacksmiths	372	12	4, 464			
Silversmiths	8	18	144			
Brewers	2	90/-	9	3	48/-	6
Butchers	353	£20	6, 240	352	24/-	422
Calabash Makers	92	96/-	441	7	48/-	168
Carpenters	60	£10	688			
Cloth Beaters	72	96/-	345			
Dish cover makers	8	96/-	38			
Dyers	1	?	n.a	1116	72/-	4018
Girdle Makers				797	24/-	956
Labourers	122	96/-	586	71	48/-	170
Leather workers	302	96/-	1, 450			
Mat Makers	31	96/-	149	7	48/-	16
Potters				1051	72/-	3784
Rope Makers	66	96/-	317			
Tailors	2078	£6	12, 790			
Spinners	44	96/-	211	4413	24/-	5296
Weavers	2041	96/-	9, 796	5832	72/-	20995
			(£)58, 092			(£)36, 146

Source: NAK IloProf. 117/149/1922 Assessment Report, Ilorin Town 1922, by Capt. H.E. Priestman

The table revealed that a sizeable number of the populace were engaged in occupations which they inherited as well as those introduced by the British colonialists. It also revealed that both the male and female populace of Ilorin at that time partook in the enterprises.

Worthy of note among the industries which the populace engaged in is the weaving industry. A sizeable number of the citizenry were engaged by the flourishing industry even as recent as the eve of independence. The British colonial government recognised the role and impact of the weaving industry in the city and the nation at large such that it conceived a textile centre and established it in Ilorin to fulfil a dual purpose of training and research. According to Olaoye;

Under a five-year development scheme for textile industry in Nigeria, the British colonial government was to give priority to Ilorin. This is because of the historical position of the city as a prominent weaving area in Nigeria

*and the fact of the city's peculiar location as a gate-way between the northern and southern regions of the country.*¹³

The above, of course, testifies to the fact that the people of Ilorin of that time were industrious and productive. That was one of the main reasons why the city was to be found worthy of choice in the nation.

Moreover, just as it was obtainable in the past, the people of Ilorin also engaged in agricultural production in the colonial period. Banwo, in analysing the Ilorin economy of that time, explained that fortunately, the colonial economic policy did not significantly hinder food production in Ilorin Province. The sale of food produces to other provinces became a prominent feature of Ilorin Colonial economy as from 1908.¹⁴ Food items such as guinea-corn, maize, yams, yam flour, cassava, beans, locus beans, melon (*egusi*) and sweet potatoes were amongst the produces involved in the inter-territorial trade from Ilorin. Likewise livestock production with the rearing of series of birds like fowls, guinea fowls, turkeys etc. was embarked on commercial scales. Archival records in Table 2 below also sheds light on this development.

Table 2: The Food Crops Railed from Ilorin to other Provinces 1933-1941

Year	Yam (Tons)	Maize (Tons)	Yam Flour (Tons)	Locust Beans (Tons)
1933	2833	23	251	-
1934	1606	46	534	230
1935	819	43	195	20
1936	1356	42	212	327
1937	1121	45	415	249
1938	969	12	228	195
1939	1110	19	229	217
1940	1007	03	198	230
1941	706	67	36	259

Source: NAK, Ministry of Agriculture File (KAD MINAGRIC) A. M. 2000 Vol. 11 Agricultural Development Internal Trade-General.

¹³ R. A. Olaoye, (1999). "The British Colonial Textile Development Scheme in Ilorin: A Conflict of Interest in the Textile Industry (1950 – 1960)" in *Ilorin Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, No. 1, December, p.110.

¹⁴ See A.O. Banwo, (1998). "Ilorin and Its Dependencies in the 19th Century" in *Centrepoint: A Journal of Intellectual, Scientific and Cultural Interest*, University of Ilorin. Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 74-96.

The British also introduced many other economic opportunities to the Ilorin Emirate members. According to Lawal;

The colonialists brought about other forms of job opportunities particularly, following the introduction of the full-time western style of administration either in the form of indirect rule or direct administration of the colonies. Schools and hospitals were built, the formal judicial administration was introduced, native authorities were created, tax administration was modernized, infrastructures such as railways, waterways, airways, road transportation, etc were either introduced or modernised. Recreational activities such as clubs, sports, theatre were formally created. All these brought about new employment opportunities. Teachers, judicial officers, prison officials, policemen, soldiers, tax officials, administrators, sanitation officials, medical staff, rail workers, waterways officials, road maintenance staff, and many others were trained and engaged in full employment. Jobs were there for the taking. No one was left out. Everyone had a job to do.¹⁵

With Nigeria's attainment of independence, however, the economy of Ilorin witnessed a sudden and dramatic change. In 1967, Ilorin was made the capital of old Kwara State. This implied that it assumed the responsibility of hosting more diverse and larger population not only from the newly created state but also from all other parts of the nation and outside. The new status made Ilorin to gradually become a large administrative unit, a political capital, a commercial nerve center and a bustling metropolis. The Federal, State and Local governments' presence in terms of infrastructure, logistics etc. made this possible. So were indigenous private initiatives like the establishment of private businesses etc.¹⁶

The informal sector of the economy undoubtedly in this period was the most prominent sector and the highest employer of labour in Ilorin. This is because the sector employed the literate, semi-literate and non literate Ilorin people. In this informal sector can be found a large number of small scale industries that supported numerous citizens from the lower to the middle classes. These industries, among others, included those of motor vehicle repair, transport services,

¹⁵Yusuf Lawal (2018). "Ilorin Emirate: Tackling Youths Unemployment and Crime Control", November 11. <https://economicconfidential.com/2018/11/ilorin-emirate-youths-unemployment/> Accessed 26/11/2018.

¹⁶ Oral Interview conducted with Alhaji Dauda Idigba, Idigba, Ilorin, July 2011.

aluminium construction, computer training services, tailoring, barbing and photography. Others included welding, printing and publishing, audio and video recording services, patent chemist, bakery, house painting, brick laying, electrical and electronic works, carpentry/furniture making as well as petty trading etc.

In the case of the formal sector, there was an appreciable number of white collar jobs in Ilorin. This is because the civil service (federal, state and local government) absorbed the people making them become salary earners. There were also many professional firms and institutions like banks, hospitals, law firms, pharmacies and accounting firms whose economic activities cannot be down played and who, though to a lesser extent compared to the civil service, offered salary employment to the people of Ilorin. It need to be stated that with all these abundant economic opportunities presented to Ilorin by the new acquired status, its indigenes remained industrious and participated actively in the economic developments.

Recent Changes and Developments

From the above analysis, one can conveniently posit and generalise that the immediate past generation of Ilorin indigenes were industrious as were the other generations before them. By the twilight of the 20th century, however, especially owing to the return to civilian rule in 1999, a very dangerous development of indolence is gradually noticeable among the people. Indeed, this new trend of indolence became practically driven by corruption and its related practices and consequences.

The period of the return to civilian rule (1999 to date) for Ilorin indigenes became a watershed. This is because it enable them not only to control the political affairs of the Emirate on the one hand but also presented them with the opportunity of ruling Kwara State at the helms on the other hand. It was at this period that the politics of “clientelism” or “patronage” was introduced and permanently entrenched into the community. The patronage politics, therefore, became a system of conducting and participation in party politics in the community. Primarily this patronage system of politics involves Ilorin political office holders and party leaders using their political and monetary influence to provide benefits to their supporters. The supporters in turn reciprocate their leaders’ gestures by rendering all sorts of services to them most especially ensuring the leaders’ perpetuation in power.

The political leaders of Ilorin deceitfully devised a strategy of maintaining the patronage system. They periodically dole out food, cheap clothing and meager amount of money to their hundreds of supporters at specific locations. Notorious among these locations are Ile Arugbo, Admiralty Villa, Olorunsogo, Mandate House and State Banquet Hall.¹⁷ A couple of these places have witnessed avoidable stampedes in the course of the struggle for getting handouts resulting in bodily injury and deaths. This trend has become a sort of culture of alms-giving by the political leaders to the people.¹⁸ Indeed, the culture is persisting and turning the people into needless subservient followers that hopelessly look up to the political leaders for survival.

It needs to be stressed that the actions of the political leaders are thriving and they continue to exploit the political patronage in the community to attain and maintain relevance in government. The leaders survive by symbolically using the platform to access power and perpetuate in it. This in itself is a sign of bad governance which festers corruption across the so called “camps” of the Ilorin community political leaders. This is particularly true because maintaining and sustaining political patronage involve huge financial expenses which may lead to political office holders to engage in acts of corruption. It can also be argued that this is largely at the root of the bad infrastructural development of the Emirate. This is because money meant for the provision of basic social infrastructure are either embezzled or diverted to run political patronage. It is as a result of this that some prominent Ilorin political figures who engage in political patronage are being accused of corruption and bad governance while in government. One of the most recent example of Ilorin political leaders was a former Chairman of the Governing Council of Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin. He was arraigned in court by the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC). The Commission said it filed an eight-count charge of corruption against him in a Kwara State High Court for allegedly taking a bribe in 2015 while holding political office.¹⁹

The implication of the above is the fact that whereas the political class is doing well with their alleged corrupt-laden wealth, the bulk of the populace is suffering in abject and self-induced poverty. To buttress this point, the Ilorin Emirate Descendants Progressive Union (IEDPU), which is the apex socio-cultural organisation of Ilorin Emirate indigenes at home and in the

¹⁷ Oral interview conducted with Moshood Alaye, Pakata, Ilorin, January 2012.

¹⁸ Incidences of deaths of people were recorded at some of the venues in 2010, 2011 and 2013 as a result of stampede while jostling for the handouts.

¹⁹ <https://www.thecable.ng/alanamu-ex-icpc-nominee-goes-trial-n182m-fraud/> Accessed 22-12-2017

Diaspora, raised the alarm over rising poverty level in the community, saying that over 70 per cent of indigenes "are trapped in poverty and starving."²⁰ According to the National President of the organisation, the indigenes of Ilorin are not "at the centre and thick of the booming economic activities" of the city.²¹ This is, indeed, as a result of the abandonment of their age long industriousness which is *halal* and their present penchant for indolence and corruption which is *haram*.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has examined the changing trends in the industry and enterprises of the Ilorin community members since the 19th century. It has analysed that the culture of active enterprise and hard work has always been practiced by the members of the community and that the trend only got to change drastically at the beginning of the 21st century. This change was prompted by the introduction of party politics which enable some Ilorin indigenes to control means of governance not only in Ilorin Emirate but Kwara State at large. It is the findings of the paper that the Ilorin community that was once a food terminus and which was highly industrious in different occupational engagements in the years past is now bedeviled with indolence and poverty. The able bodied men and women who are suppose to engage actively in farming, trade and other entrepreneurial activities are now engaged in patronage politics and this has been detrimental to the larger society. This is because the control of the economy of Ilorin is dangerously slipping out of the hands of its own indigenes. The findings revealed that perhaps in the entire history of Ilorin Emirate, there is no period in which acts of corruption by both the rulers and ruled have been so widespread leading to the abandonment of age-long values of industry and enterprise as the present period.

It is desirable that the people should change their value orientations for self reliance and legitimate earning. The corruption trials and travails faced by some political leaders in the community may break the chain of political patronage entrenched in the society. Hopefully, in the absence of the patronage, the people may revert back to their age-long industry and enterprises.

²⁰ Alhaji AbdulHamid Hadi, Chairman's Opening Address, Annual Almanac Launching Ceremony of Ilorin Descendants Progressive Union, Emir's Palace, Ilorin, 25th December, 2015.

²¹ *Ibid*.

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