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Transmission of Learning in Modern Ilorin: A History of Islamic Education 1897-2012

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Chapter Two

Islamic Education in the Colonial Period: Conquest and Challenges 1897-1960

Introduction

The encounter with colonialism at the end of the nineteenth century changed the course of history of Ilorin. As noted in the previous chapter, the nineteenth century was the foundational period for the establishment of Ilorin emirate and for the consolidation of her Islamic identity. Emerging from the multi-ethnic settlements under the leadership of Fulani clerics into an Islamic city;¹ the city's legitimacy, power and prestige was derived from this Islamic identity, military strength and alliances of the various groups that formed Ilorin. By the end of the nineteenth century it was both a regional military power and the leading light of Islam among the Yoruba.² This sense of power eventually led to a bitter encounter with the superior military might of the British colonialists already well-established at the coast in Lagos.³ This will have implications not only for its political and military rulers but also for Islamic education as the regenerative agency of the Islamic identity of the city.

This chapter will examine the methods of traditional Qur'anic education, some of which have changed in the course of the twentieth century, some obsolete because of adaptation of new methods and devices. An example is the tri-lingual method of imparting the knowledge of reading the Qur'an. These have been replaced by simpler standard modern Arabic methods. It will also examine the coming into contact of Ilorin, and thus all its Islamic heritage, with the western world and ideas through the British conquest and imposition of colonial rule. Not having enough personnel to run her new territories, the British introduced indirect rule, latching on to the administrative structure of the emirate already on ground.⁴ But the new order

¹ Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah, *Africanity, Islamicity and Performativity-Identity in the House of Ilorin* (Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies, 2009). This work explores the multiple strands of the identity of Ilorin people.

² For works on this early part of Ilorin history see Danmole, 'The Frontier Emirate' 104-107; Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteer*; Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*; Al Iluri, *Lamahat al Ballur*; Thaqafi, *Tarikh li Adab*, 23-24.

³ For the military expedition, see C.F.S. Vandeleur, *Campaigning on the Upper Nile and Niger* (London: Geographical Society, 1898), 283; Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteers of Ilorin*, 72-74. Starting with Abdulsalami, the first emir, the emirs spent most of the nineteenth century in entrenching Islam in the city, attracting Muslims, scholars and laymen from Yoruba region as well as Hausa region and Borno and even returning slaves from Sierra Leone. As they were consolidating the political and religious structure of the town, they also had to contend with the irredentists of the old Oyo Empire who were scheming to reclaim Ilorin from the Fulani dynasty.

⁴ Rhodes House Mss Afr. 1358. W.L. Hogan 'Development of Education in Northern Nigeria 1920-1952'.

needed people who would run such a structure according to a system that suits its own ideas and who therefore must be exposed to the western educational system of the British. This system had Christian origins and influences and the first advocates of the system among the people of Ilorin were Christian missionaries who had earlier been subtly rebuffed before the conquest.⁵ This, including the bitter encounter with the colonialists, fellow Europeans like the missionaries, made the people of Ilorin to reject the western system of education, in continuity of resistance to British hegemony.⁶ To douse Muslims' fears and anxiety, the colonial authority, apart from discouraging Christian missionaries from Muslim territories, also made efforts to appropriate Islamic education, which it considered as lacking a proper structure,⁷ along lines it considered enlightened, under its secular education program for Muslims. Even this would take time and perseverance before the confidence of some Muslims could be won for it.

Conquest of Ilorin

The Ilorins, deriving vitality from the fraternity of a newly established state anchored in religion, the Muslim faith, the first of its kind among Yoruba speaking people, were able to repulse the waves of Yoruba armies sent against it and in the process, emboldened by their success, subjugated Yoruba towns one after the other until checked by the equally new town of Ibadan. In the process, there emerged a powerful warrior elite class who were also the emirs' chiefs and who derived gains from the raids.⁸ Earlier in the century the emirs were powerful and had empowered the Baloguns but towards the end the century the tide had turned against the emirs who increasingly came under the influence of the Baloguns.⁹ This military aristocracy which had given Ilorin its military power was also responsible for making her vulnerable to British conquest, by being against the pacific moves of both the emir Momo (1891-1896) and the British, already well-established in Lagos.¹⁰

The hostility and rivalry between Ibadan and Ilorin especially after the Jalumi war¹¹ (1878) in which Ilorin suffered a great loss and the subsequent Offa war (1886) eventually drew the British into Ilorin affairs. The British were by this time well

⁵ Danmole, 'The Frontier Emirate,' 106-109.

⁶ Danmole, 'The Frontier Emirate,' 137.

⁷ NAK 'Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools.' Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936.

⁸ Rhodes House, Dwyer's Report 958 'Extracts from April 1902'.

⁹ Rhodes House, Dwyer's Report 958 'Extracts from June 1902 and July 1904 reports'.

¹⁰ See NAI CSO 278/1918. 'Letter of Carter to Emir of Ilorin, dated 8 November, 1894.' For events leading to the conquest of Ilorin, see Johnson, *History of the Yoruba*, chapters 30-32.

¹¹ See, Johnson, *History of the Yoruba*, 427-434; Jimba, *Iwe Itan Ilorin*, 159-164; Jimoh, *Ilorin, The Journey*, 119-121, for details of the war and events leading to it.

established in Lagos, having colonized it in 1861.¹² From 1889 when Major Macdonald visited Ilorin to resolve the differences between Ilorin and Ibadan, the British began to have some active say in Ilorin affairs. Emir Aliyu (1886-1891) was reigning at this period. When the peace envoys of Governor Carter visited Ilorin during the Offa war in April 1886, the emir was not particularly warm to the peace envoys. They were jeered at and the crowd called them *anasara*, meaning Nazerenes or Christians. The emir told the envoys that the Ilorins were the assailed parties in the conflict and that the Ibadans were the party to be entreated to call off hostilities.¹³

Captain Ferryman made efforts to resolve the impasse after the visit of the envoys from Lagos but the emir was handicapped by the war commanders. Emir Abdulsalami II Momolosh (popularly referred to as Oba Momo (1891-1895), who succeeded him was even more pacific in nature than his predecessor and welcomed Governor Carter of Lagos who came with Captain Bower in 1893.¹⁴ The Baloguns were opposed to all these attempts at peace. They derived their power and wealth from the wars, giving them leverage over the emirs. As patron of scholars, they had the support of the scholars against the emir. When the clerics heard of the proposed visit of the governor, they requested from Oba Momo some money and bullocks with which to make charms and prayers that would prevent the *anasara* (Christians) from entering Ilorin. Though the emir was not in agreement with their aims, he nevertheless obliged them.¹⁵ The emir had referred to the Europeans as his brothers.¹⁶

After the visit of the governor, who had assurance of mutual friendship from the emir, the emir had asked the clerics the outcome of their efforts. He told them he knew the futility of their mission and had obliged them so they would not have cause to blame him afterward for the visit of the governor, since they would have blamed him for not providing the means for the prayers necessary to prevent the

¹² For British conquest of Lagos see Obaro Ikime, *The Fall of Nigeria* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1977), 93-101; Toyin Falola, *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 4.

¹³ Johnson, *History of the Yoruba*, 516.

¹⁴ Weary of war having seen horrors of war, he made moves to open up the city to trade from the south and exchanged presents with Alafin of Oyo. See Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 67; Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteers of Ilorin*, 72.

¹⁵ Johnson, *History of the Yoruba*, 628.

¹⁶ Johnson, *History of the Yoruba*, 628. The emir felt a pride in racial affinity with the Europeans. Either the Europeans had impressed upon him that they are brothers on account of Fulanis being light complexioned or he had harkened back to his pristine Fulani root and considered the Europeans as his brother with whom he can deal with favourably but this does not appear to have impressed the Baloguns either way.

Governor from coming to Ilorin. He thereafter asked them to be more honest in their dealings in the future. The emir earned the ire of the scholars who thereafter leant their support to the Baloguns.¹⁷ Subsequently the emir was isolated and his brother Alege was tricked to intrigue against him with the false hope he will be made the emir after Momo would have been deposed.

The emir finally committed suicide when he was besieged by the supporters of the Baloguns in his palace. He is said to have blown up himself together with his head slave. His retort to the clerics may have been responsible for the largely negative image of the emir in the popular lore of the people of Ilorin.¹⁸ The disapproval of the clerics would have been communicated to the populace who look up to them for popular opinions. The scholars had been supportive of the rebels since he had subtly snubbed them. The rebels portrayed him as failing in his duty to defend the city as a Muslim town against unbelievers.¹⁹ His early demise was not unconnected with his attempt at some independence from the Baloguns through his peace initiatives which goes contrary to their belligerent motives. He had been recalled from the Offa war camp to become the emir and Balogun Gambari Karara with whom they were together in Offa was supportive of his becoming the emir, though both later fell apart. Karara died on his way back to Ilorin from Offa camp, perhaps to call the emir to order.²⁰ The horrors of war may also have influenced his pacific instincts. His brother, Alege was thereafter told he was unfit to be the emir, having betrayed his brother. Emir Suleiman succeeded Momo as the sixth emir and it was under him that the forces of the Royal Niger Company eventually conquered Ilorin in February 1897.

Governor Carter of Lagos had stationed a unit of constabulary at Odo-Otin to prevent Ilorin raids to the south. In 1894 Captain Bower representing the Governor of Lagos and Captain Lugard of the Royal Niger Company fixed a boundary

¹⁷ Johnson, *History of the Yoruba*, 628; Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteers of Ilorin*, 72. Alluded to the fact of his relation to the Yoruba through his mother, as being responsible for his pacific stance toward the Yorubas.

¹⁸ See Isiaka Aliagan, *Oba Momo- A Historical Play* (Ilorin: NNI publisher, 2001). Aliagan's play portrays him as a misunderstood peace seeking emir. In popular lore he is presented as a wicked ruler who would ask that a pregnant woman be disemboweled so he could see the baby inside or have people impaled in the market square. When an emir dares the clerics, they fight such an emir with prayers and their influence on people's opinion, believed to be their strongest weapon, since they have no material power over the emir except spiritual power. The opinion of the scholars after this incident must have been negative and this must have been communicated to the populace, thus the popularity of the image of a wicked and unkind emir. See also Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 67 and Jimba, *Iwe Itan*, 93.

¹⁹ Danmole, *The Frontier Emirate*, 150.

²⁰ Jimoh, *Ilorin, The Journey*, 8. Karara had thousands of soldiers on horseback and foot escort him from the war camp in Offa to Ilorin to assume the throne as the new emir.

between the spheres of influence of both Ilorin and Ibadan.²¹ This had encouraged some Ilorin vassals to stop paying tributes to Ilorin. By 1896 Ilorin Ajeles (Residents) were chased out of Awtun, Ishan, Ikole and Aiyede (all vassals of Ilorin). When Ilorin troops under Balogun Gambari Adamu, son of Karara, tried to recoup these territories, help of the constabulary was sought by these towns and a crushing blow was dealt on Ilorin forces at Erinmope in Ekiti territories to the south. The Balogun Gambari, Adamu lost his life and Ilorin forces retreated but not before burying the dead Balogun.²²

Meanwhile the commercial interest of the Royal Niger Company had been threatened by the slave raids of Nupes from Bida and those of Ilorins who sometimes have joint slave raids of the Kabba regions along the commercial routes of the Royal Niger Company. Bida was first visited and from there, the forces of the Royal Niger Company under Tubman Goldie marched towards Ilorin crossing river Niger at Jebba.²³ The city was shelled from Apata Yakuba (a settlement on the outskirts of the town). Most of Ilorin army had been away at Erinmope and a hasty recall was of no help. Ilorin's eight to ten thousand strong army, including a cavalry of eight hundred horsemen were no match for the better equipped forces of the Royal Niger Company.²⁴ The emir's quarters was especially focused, the bombardment setting it ablaze and the surrounding settlements. There was pandemonium, no less aided by shells that exploded prematurely in the air.²⁵

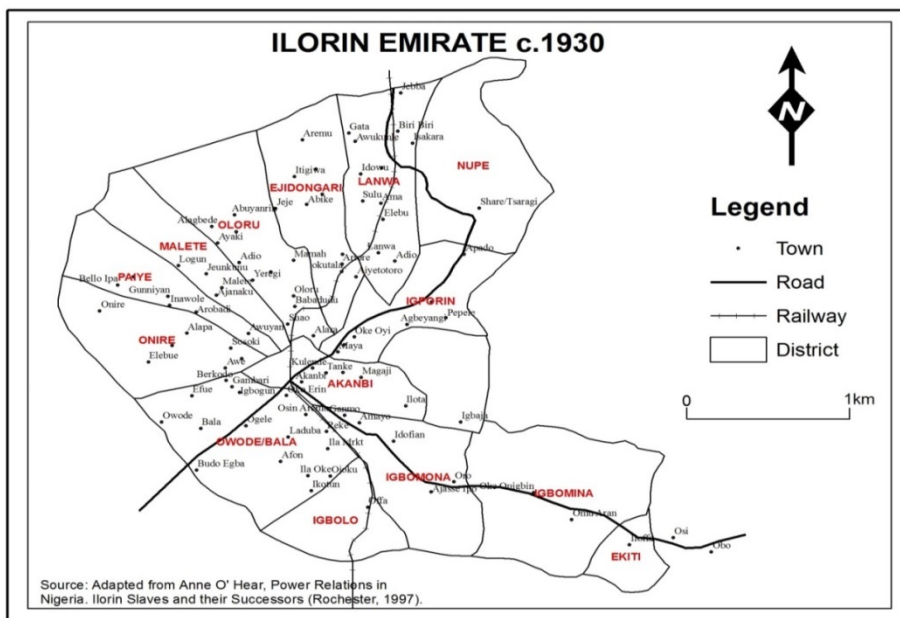
²¹ NAK Iloprof 3575/1917 'Early Exploration and Administration and Military Expedition'.

²² Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteers of Ilorin*, 74.

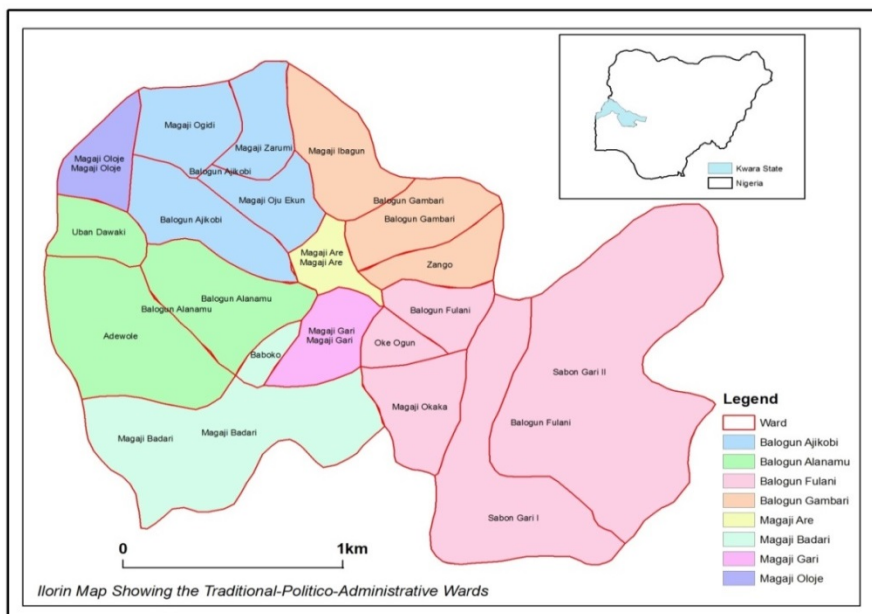
²³ Ilorin was also a source of rivalry for the commercial interests between the government in Lagos and the RNC.

²⁴ NAI CSO 278/1918. 'Sir Carter Chamberlain Notes, 6-12-1895'; Paul E. Lovejoy and Jan S. Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery -the course of abolition in Northern Nigeria 1897-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 18.

²⁵ Vandeleur, *Campaigning on the*, 7; Jimoh, Ilorin: *Ilorin, The Journey*, 186; NAK Iloprof 3575/1917 'Early Exploration and Administration and Military Expedition'; Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteers of Ilorin*, 74-75.



Map 4. Ilorin Emirate under colonial rule.



Map 5. Traditional-Political and Administrative Wards of Ilorin.

The town walls were thereafter destroyed, no doubt to prevent future resistance.²⁶ The resistance had been feeble; no loss of life was mentioned on the side of the Royal Niger Constabulary but Ilorin forces lost about 200 horsemen and many dwellings caught fire as a result of the shelling.²⁷ The RNC left without a detachment, confident their military display had left enough impression in the minds of the people of the power of the invading force to discourage any future rebellion. In 1898 a detachment of West African Frontier Force (WAFF) was stationed in Ilorin under Captain Somerset. With the power of Ilorin broken, the Ekitis who were vassals of Ilorin revolted and encouraged by the Ibadan Resident, the Ekitis formed a council with the Ore of Awtun as president.²⁸

Effective occupation of Ilorin began in November 1898 when Lieutenant F. H. Ruxton marched into Ilorin to relieve the West African Frontier Force. He was granted civil powers as Senior Executive Officer. The first Resident of Ilorin, D.W.Carnegie, was appointed in 1900. When he arrived in Ilorin, he found that the real wielder of power was the senior Balogun, of Alanamu, the emir largely a puppet in his hand and the other Baloguns. Balogun Alanamu was bitterly opposed to the new British regime and warned the people that the new regime would be short lived and anyone who opposed him would pay a price then. There was a general state of insecurity, daylight robbery and murder was rampant. Caravans were not allowed to pass down to Lagos nor were traders from Lagos allowed into Ilorin. A detachment was called in from Jebba and some normalcy returned. Some of the towns that had thrown off allegiance to Ilorin returned their allegiance.²⁹

The emir finding himself backed up by the Resident gradually regained his confidence and power as the ruler of Ilorin especially as the new regime insisted on the payment of tribute to the emirate. The power of Balogun Alanamu was whittled down. He was eventually tried publicly outside the emir's palace as unfit to continue to hold his position and was deposed, stripped of his farm and exiled to Ogbomosho where he lived till his death in 1910.³⁰ Subsequently the powers of the emirs were bolstered and those of the Baloguns whittled down and by the time Nigeria gained independence in 1960 the balance of power had tilted largely in favor of the emirs against those of the Baloguns, the opposite of what obtained in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

²⁶ Today all signs of the wall had been obliterated except some obscure portions. Unlike older cities like Kano, the walls were probably not fully developed, hence it was easy to obliterate.

²⁷ Vandeleur, *Campaigning on the Niger*, 292-295.

²⁸ Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteers of Ilorin*, 76.

²⁹ Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteers of Ilorin*, 77.

³⁰ Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteers of Ilorin*, 77.

While the British were making preparations for the occupation of key northern cities of Kano and Sokoto, a message arrived from Sokoto asking Ilorin to cause some diversion. The authorities in Sokoto must have had some inkling about the intention of the British and were hoping to buy time. The emir, however, refused and the messenger chased out of town.³¹ The scholars were not happy about this event and it may have been among the events that built up into the conflict of 1913, with the scholars actively involved.³² The reinstatement of the lost powers of the emir must have informed his loyalty to the British rather than to Sokoto whose power was not as decisive as that of the British.

The conquest of Ilorin and later that of Kano and Sokoto were key conquests that brought the caliphate under British rule. Ilorin was the frontier emirate of the caliphate; the easy capitulation of Ilorin (and Bida just before Ilorin) made the other conquests less difficult and bolstered the confidence of the British who despite their military superiority were cautious and tactical in their conquests. The diversion Sokoto wanted was not forthcoming and it was a matter of time before the British attacked Sokoto, the capital of the caliphate. After Ilorin, it was Kano, the commercial power of the caliphate that was targeted. This was followed by Sokoto, the spiritual heart of the caliphate.³³ With these three cities captured, the remainder of the caliphate would have to surrender to the British power, one after the other. Had Ilorin given a stronger resistance, the conquest of the caliphate might have taken a different turn.

Islamic Education: Challenges and Implications of Colonial Conquest

Colonial conquest as primarily an economic agenda might not have directly targeted Islamic scholars and their educational institution, but the Islamic educational system was greatly affected by the implications of the colonial imposition. By subjugating the political and military authorities of the city, every other group under these two were implicated by the consequences of the conquest. Introduction of indirect rule made direct contact with the colonial authority limited, thus the scholars had mainly the emir to contend with. As a group supportive of the political agenda of the emir and the military affairs of the aristocrats, the subjugation of these two created a problem of loyalty for many of the clerics. The surrender of the emir and his warlords to the British was seen by many of the scholars (and some of the warlords) as a betrayal of their trust and responsibility as protectors and guarantors of the

³¹ Rhodes House, Dwyer's Report 958, '1904 Annual Report'; Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteers of Ilorin*, 78.

³² Danmole, *The Frontier Emirate*, 150.

³³ On the conquest of these emirates of the Sokoto caliphate see Ikime, *The Fall of Nigeria*, 76-77, 119-29, 190-209.

Islamic essence of the town.³⁴ Although not all the scholars saw the actions of the rulers as an anathema, many kept their distance by way of protest.

Although Islamic education existed as an informal institution with no designated administrative apparatus, specifically designed for it in the pre-colonial period, the scholars as the pivot of that informal setting greatly relied on the patronage of the emir and the military aristocracy, whom they also supported as advisors and providers of magical-therapeutic service to them. While colonial conquest did not completely alter this relationship, it affected the context of this relationship. Those scholars who kept their distance looked elsewhere for patronage. While one cannot argue that the patronage of the emirs and the aristocrats wholly sustained the system, since not all scholars were connected to them even in the pre-colonial period, there is no doubt that the leading clerics benefitted from the patronage.

The legitimizing role of the scholars was partly circumscribed under the indirect rule system since the emir, now greatly empowered by the colonial authority, had the colonial authority as the most important source of his power. The power of the military aristocrats and the scholars to check on the powers of the emirs was greatly reduced. This decreased power of the scholars and the military aristocrats led to a number of incidents in the colonial period between the emir and the aristocrats, backed by the scholars, such as the 1913 tax riots, used as an opportunity to protest their loss of relevance.³⁵

One of the consequences of colonial rule in Ilorin was the introduction of taxes from where the salaries of the emirs and his chiefs were paid and parts of it used for the administration of the province. The scholars were against this because the British colonialists were foreigners and non-Muslims who have usurped the powers of Muslims. The argument of the ulama was that it was the people of Ilorin, as Muslims, who should be collecting such *jizya* (capitation tax) as they were now being subjected to pay. The *zakat* (poor dues), one of the five pillars of Islam, was what the scholars believed in and preferred. They argued that the capitation tax is not in the Qur'an; only *zakat* is allowed by Islam.³⁶ This argument does not appear to have been tabled before the colonial authority, though it is probable they argued like this before the emir or the Chief Imam to whom they had access.

The Ilorins, a military power among the Yoruba before the conquest, were accustomed to collecting tributes from vassals, some of which must have flowed in the way of the clerics, as a class dependent on patronage of the elite, especially the

³⁴ Rhodes House, 'Dwyer's Report 958, Extracts from January 1904'.

³⁵ Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteers*, 79.

³⁶ Al Iluri, *Lamahat al Ballur*, 15.

military aristocracy, who in turn depended on the clerics for prayers, amulets and charms believed to be crucial to success in war and in life generally.³⁷ These clerics were the conscience of the society and could influence society's thinking or opinion in favor or against an individual or group. Colonial imposition put some dent on this power of the clerics, hence their negative disposition to colonial affairs.

The reversal of fortune under Christian British sovereignty was anathema to the rulers and the clerics. Economic and political powers of the emirs and the military aristocrats derived from tributes paid by vassals conquered by the Ilorin forces.³⁸ These sources of power now came under the supervision of the colonial regime; not only foreign but also non-Muslim. While indirect rule assured the continuation of vassals' deference to Ilorin and payment of taxes,³⁹ the equation of this power was reworked to favor the emir who until then had depended on favors of his war chiefs. The military aristocrats resisted the new regime by instigating civil disobedience which was quickly brought under control by the colonial authority. While this had little to do with educational praxis of the scholars, they were affected in so far as their patrons were affected, hence both united in the 1913 tax riots.⁴⁰

For the emirs, for noncooperation with the new authority, they had a throne to lose.⁴¹ Most chose to cooperate, especially since it gave them new powers.⁴² The implication of the new arrangement was a muffling of critical acts of the Baloguns who had hitherto been checks on the emirs and prior to the conquest had been the one controlling the emirs towards the end of the nineteenth century.⁴³ Although the scholars had no direct loss of revenue like the aristocrats, the symbiotic relationship between the two meant the loss of power of the aristocrats led to a reduction in the patronage available to the scholar as well. Unlike the emirs and the Baloguns who could be deposed,⁴⁴ the scholars had no throne to lose and were thus freer to

³⁷ Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 8.

³⁸ Rhodes House, 'Dwyer's Report 958, Extracts from April 1902.'

³⁹ Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 82.

⁴⁰ Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteer of Ilorin*, 77-79.

⁴¹ Muhammad S. Umar, *Islam and Colonialism: intellectual responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria to British colonial rule* (Leiden: Koninklijke BV, 2006), 157.

⁴² This was particularly true for Ilorin. Vandeleur mentioned the relief of emir Sulaiman and his party when they were recalled to Ilorin after the bombardment and they found out that the only price they have to pay is obedience to the new overlords. The emirs of Ilorin generally cooperated with the colonial authority. In return the colonial authority tilted the balance of power in favor of the emirs against those of the Baloguns who had been more powerful. Vandeleur, *Campaigning on the Niger*, 368.

⁴³ Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteer of Ilorin*, 74.

⁴⁴ Balagun Alanamu, who was recalcitrant towards the new order was deposed in 1900 and exiled to the Ogbomoshos and Balagun Ajikobi was deposed in 1907 as deterrence to others. See Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteer of Ilorin*, 77-78; Danmole, *The Frontier Emirate*, 201.

manoeuvre their acts against the new order. They could choose not to have dealings with the emirs but the emirs could not ignore them because the emirs' prestige and authority over the people partly derives from recognition and service from these scholars. They could criticize the emirs in their sermons and most importantly, they could, as many did, refuse to accept colonial innovations such as western education or working for the regime's bureaucracy.⁴⁵

Al Iluri narrated how the scholars led by the imam of Omoda⁴⁶ ward led other scholars to protest against the Native Authority, ostensibly to protest against the new tax regime but perhaps more importantly venting their anger at the loss of relevance the new order had subjected most of them.⁴⁷ He narrated how one of the protesting scholars was arrested, leading to a protest led by one Abdul Rahman bn Bello. The poetry chanted in protest by the scholars has remained a popular poem among the scholars and al Iluri has translated the poem into Arabic.⁴⁸

When colonial administration began, many of the scholars distanced themselves from the administration of the emir under the British. The British, however, still needed their service for administration, especially as qadi of the newly created sharia courts and as scribes.⁴⁹ This forced the British to seek the emir to ask the scholars to assist with administration. Some of the scholars accepted and helped with government administration and some refused to work for the government.⁵⁰ This refusal to work for the government also meant some of the scholars would have nothing to do with western education and warned their children against having anything to do with it. This was the case in Ile Gbagba, where the scholars have had close relations with the emirs since the time of emir Shitta.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Al Iluri, *Lamahat al Ballur*, 16.

⁴⁶ He was found out by the colonial authority as the brain behind the protests in 1913 against paying of taxes and was abducted from his house in the night by the colonial police officials. It may be this incident that Al Iluri is referring to. See Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteer of Ilorin*, 80.

⁴⁷ In 1907, Balogun Ajikobi Biala was deposed and in 1913 a tax riot broke out, all of which had the scholars actively involved. The involvement of the scholars no doubt has much to do with the loss of their relevance to the emiral authority relative to the pre-colonial period and the perception of the emir as a tool in the hands of the colonial authority.

⁴⁸ Al Iluri, *Lamahat al Ballur*, 15.

⁴⁹ Danmole, 'The Frontier Emirate,' 179.

⁵⁰ Al Iluri, *Lamahat al Ballur*, 16.

⁵¹ Discussions with Alhaji Muhammad Shafii (Chief Imam, Ansarud-deen Society Ilorin), 17-5-2012; at the scholarly family of Omo-Iya in Gambari ward, similar scenario occurred. See Kalli Alkali Yusuf Gazali, *The Kanuri in Diaspora- the Contributions of Kanem-Borno Ulama to Islamic Education in Nupe and Yorubalands* (Lagos: CSS Bookshop, 2005), 186.

A *waka* (poetic song) had been composed by one of the scholars in ridicule of the new system

Baba nre kotu, omo nkowe ⁵²
Roman

The Father goes to court, the son writes (in
character)

Omo ina di meji

(now) the two are hell bound

The poet above impugned the two systems introduced by colonial rule; the father scholar is here accused of being complicit to the new judicial system introduced while the son attends the new school system, earning both the hell fire. Even though the court practiced the shariah law, it was generally considered to be a ruse and a subversion of the religion. The corrupt practices associated with the system in its early days contributed to the scholars' derision of the system.⁵³

From among the scholars came the qadis who served as judges of the sharia courts that were established by the colonial authority. Some of the positions include court scribes, a new post created by the British to keep records and they also created the *bait l mal* (treasury).⁵⁴ The scholars who filled the posts included Sheikh Belgore and Sheikh Abubakar Ikokoro.⁵⁵ Younger scholars were appointed into some of these positions as well. Hausa was the first language of administration and this created a problem of communication between the colonial officers and the scholars, who spoke mainly Yoruba. Many of the scholars had only a smattering of Hausa and the colonial officers spoke no Yoruba. With time and training some of the scholars and others trained in the government secular school began to understand English language and gradually the scholars who did not have some western education, where English language was taught, were left out of the administration except in the judicial section, since only the Islamic scholars had the working knowledge of justice according to Islamic principles.⁵⁶

While the reconfiguration of the political and economic powers of the emirs and his war chiefs had no direct bearings on the transmission, indirectly the scholars were

⁵² H.O.A. Danmole, 'Colonial Reforms in Ilorin emirate, 1900-1919' *Odu, A Journal of West African Studies* 26 (1984), 96-98.

⁵³ Rhodes House, Dwyer's Report 958 'Extract from Letter to the Private Secretary, To His Excellency, The High Commissioner, Jebba. Dated 24th April 1902.'

⁵⁴ Al Iluri, *Lamahat Al Ballur*, 16. See also Danmole, *The Frontier Emirate*, 195.

⁵⁵ He wrote the first written history of Ilorin in 1912, titled 'Taalif Akbar Alqurun Min Umara Bilad Ilory.'

⁵⁶ NAK 'Use of Arabic in the Minutes of Native Court Cases. Memo from Secretary Northern Provinces.' File Iloprof 2043/8/1932: Al Iluri, *Lamahat Al Ballur*, 15. See also A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, *Gazetteers of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria*, (London: Frank Cass, 1972), 123.

affected, in so far as patronage of the scholars was affected. Nonetheless the introduction of western system of education had the most important implications for the transmission of learning.⁵⁷ Until the advent of colonialism, the Islamic education system was the only system available for the transmission of learning. As an extension of the religion, it is the most important regenerative agency of the values and ethos of the Muslim society of Ilorin. The scholars who shared a second layer of authority with the military aristocrats are its guardians and thus bore the brunt of the new rival educational system.

Operating informally, the Islamic education system served social and religious purposes in the day to day life of the people. The introduction of western education by the colonial authority was the most disruptive action of the British to the institution of Islamic education; not by directly altering the system or interfering in its operation; rather, the challenges of the newly introduced rival educational system forced the Islamic education system to respond in a varieties of ways, some favorable to its development, some not so favorable. These will be treated in greater details in the third chapter. From then onward the two systems progressed in almost parallel routes but with different strategies, strength and impact on the society. At some points their paths would cross and coalesce into a single system and at others they diverge significantly.

In the early years, the people resisted western⁵⁸ education and many scholars disassociated themselves from the new system, not trusting any good to come from a system that had relegated their cherished system into the background. The system as a 'Christian' colonial instrument was rejected as an extension of the revulsion for the colonial rule over a Muslim territory. For example, the argument of the scholars in Ile Gbagba⁵⁹ during the early colonial period was that anyone who attended western school would work for the government as it invariably was the practice in the early colonial period.⁶⁰ To guard against not working for the government then was not to attend the western school. It was not until the late twentieth century before some took to western education in scholarly households such as Ile

⁵⁷ Although western education began slowly with a few schools even up to the end of colonialism, the power imbued with it for social, economic and even political mobility for individuals is stronger than the more numerous Qur'anic schools mostly tailored towards religious needs.

⁵⁸ Which began only in the second decade after the occupation.

⁵⁹ One of the oldest Qur'anic schools in Ilorin, located in Gambari ward and established from the reign of the second emir Shitta (1842-1860). See Aliy-Kamal, *Islamic Education*, 32.

⁶⁰ It was from among the Islamic scholars that the first adult students of the government school were recruited. They became teachers after a short training and it was almost a given that western education was a certain route to working for the colonial administration.

Gbagba,⁶¹ although others had also early acquiesced to western education within that household.⁶²

Methods of Traditional Qur'anic/Islamic Education

The first duty of any Muslim convert is to learn the rudiments of the rituals of the religion. This includes the call to prayer and the various salutations and recitations accompanying the prayers, ritual of ablution and as well as Qur'anic verses to be used in prayers. These must of necessity be in Arabic, hence religious education begins with these, often an oral exercise and committed to memory. In the early period of Islam in Ilorin as happened in other places as well, Islamic education was not widely conducted nor was it well organized as compared to the modern period of the twentieth century.⁶³ The promoters of the religion at this incipient period were mostly traders who used the opportunity of their commercial engagements to also spread the religion. For example Al-Tahir Solagberu, the leader of the Muslim trading settlement of Okesuna, is known to have been a merchant who had travelled widely in northern Yoruba region.⁶⁴

These promoters of the religion were often on the move from one town to the other in pursuit of their commercial interests. The students themselves were adults who were occupied with their own economic engagements as well. Hence, full attention could not be given to the study at the early period.⁶⁵ This is reminiscent of the first converts to Islam in the time of the Prophet in Arabia who were mostly emigrants in Medina and had to learn the rudiments of the new religion directly from the prophet.⁶⁶ In both instances organized education systems were later developments.

Until the third decade of the twentieth century when colonialism had been well entrenched, Islamic education in Ilorin can be considered as a whole system with different pedagogical techniques rooted in its multi-ethnic composition. In this

⁶¹ This was particularly true for the children of the senior teacher of the school from the 1940s to the late 1980s, Sheikh AbdulSalam Gatimala (d. 2-4-1988). Those who had western education in Ile Gbagba at the early period had it with the Adabiyah School of Shaikh Kamalud-deen, such Alfa Ibrahim Alfa (class of 1943) and Muhammad Shafii (1950s class). Discussions with Alhaji Muhammad Shafii, 17-5-2012.

⁶² This attitude of the clerics is reminiscent of attitude of imam Hambali who loathed scholars to work for the government and fought for the independence of the scholars from rulers during Abbasid's Al-Ma'mun's reign. Hambali fought and won for the ulama the notion that they were the custodian of the truth, as a class obliged to uphold the teachings of Islam, 'to command the good and forbid the evil.' See Ira M. Lapidus, 'State and Religion in Islamic Societies' *Past and Present* 151 (1) (1996), 3-27.

⁶³ Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education,' 36.

⁶⁴ Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 26.

⁶⁵ Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education,' 36.

⁶⁶ Ahmed, *Muslim Education*, 28.

respect it can be seen as one. The coming of the western system of education would gradually engender a new pedagogical cleavage within the system, this time not based on ethno-regional roots but in response of the Ilorin system as a whole to the new rival system of western education. Until then the system remained an informal system based on personal relationship between the teacher and his students. It had no formal structure such as purpose-built schools or fixed duration of studies and strictly planned curriculum. When a scholar had reached a point in his learning and had sought the permission and blessing of his teacher, he could start his own school in the neighborhood mosque, under a tree or in the piazza of his own house.⁶⁷

There was no authority to report his intention to start a school, or to register with. Usually the transition from studentship to that of being a teacher is blurred. A teaching career begins during studentship as assistant to the teacher and helping to teach those at a lower level or mates less intellectually endowed. This fluid nature of teaching and location of school thus makes the starting point in a teaching career less specific.⁶⁸ Teaching could take place anywhere and anytime and indeed have been conducted in working places such as weaving shed or in markets. Partly the religious purpose of this education is responsible for this informal nature of the Islamic school system. Teaching is also considered a religious cum communal service that carries little pecuniary gains. On Wednesdays, the last day of the school week, a token fee is usually given, called *owo alaruba* (Wednesday's dues).⁶⁹ This practice has largely been done away with and replaced with monthly stipends, although many still do not take payments for teaching.⁷⁰

The religion itself spread gradually among the people.⁷¹ Even after the Fulani had entrenched Islam as the state religion, there were still some animists among the Muslims, especially among their vassals in the non-metropolitan areas. In the city, open expression of such belief or practices was rather very limited. Even in the twentieth century, some still practiced these beliefs in the rural areas and in parts of the city itself⁷² and were tolerated since they no longer posed any threat to Muslims

⁶⁷ Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education in,' 45.

⁶⁸ Discussions with Imam Yakubu Aliagan. 12-9-2012.

⁶⁹ Babatunde, 'Traditional Qur'anic School,' 46. This is most likely a twentieth century adaption. In the preceding period, before the monetized economy of the colonial period, foodstuff and other materials would have been the remuneration. See also Ware, *The Walking Qur'an*, 186.

⁷⁰ Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 110.

⁷¹ Thaqafi, *Tarikh li Adab*, 23.

⁷² Such as Oloje and Okelele, hence a dictum '*Ko l'anfani bi mosalasi Oloje* (as worthless as Oloje's mosque)' alluding to the weak status of Islam in these areas. However, this distinction is no longer tenable and the dictum itself would sound pejorative in the twenty-first century.

as can be deduced from the anecdote of Sheikh Adaara.⁷³ Another example is the spectacle of hunters coming to the *eid* praying ground in their regalia and their gunshots salutes at the *eid* praying ground.⁷⁴ In the rural areas of the emirate as well as towns later subjugated by the Ilorins, capitulation was what was mostly required. Thereafter they were usually left with their beliefs once Ilorin supremacy had been accepted.⁷⁵

Also noteworthy is the fact that the earliest scholars in Ilorin were mostly of Hausa, Kanuri and Fulani ethnic background from the north.⁷⁶ The students therefore had to learn the language of their teachers first before studying under them.⁷⁷ There were noticeable barriers to the rapid spread of the religion despite its ascendancy at the early period in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. Aliy-Kamal noted some barriers to the development of Islamic learning: these include a slow progress of conversion, the barrier of language of the teachers,⁷⁸ commercial interest of teachers and students and rudimentary teaching. However, rudimentary teaching could only have been at the primary level of Qur'an reading studies, which targeted the masses.

Before the phonetic pronunciation of the Arabic letters became common place after the reformation of some leading Qur'anic schools to modern *madaris* (sing. *madrasah*) and closer communication with the Arab world, the letters of the alphabet had been given local names by the scholars over the centuries. This was to make it easier for students to understand the foreign Arabic script. This adaptation was done in Borno and Hausa region where Islam has been in existence since the

⁷³ In explaining the sanctity of Agbaji quarters of Ilorin where no drumming is allowed, women are not to wear trousers and move about with head uncovered, he mentioned the story of a masquerade who tried to challenge this sanctity. In the early days, even a dog that strayed into Agbaji would be stoned to death. During the reign of Emir Zulkarnaini Muhammad Gambari (1959-1992), some hunters with *egungun* (masquerades) came to pay homage to the emir during one of their festivals, apparently from some rural area and were told they cannot go near Agbaji. One of them dared the lore and attempted to go there but fell down before he got close to Agbaji. The sanctity of the quarters is believed to be responsible for the masquerade's fall. Discussions with Sheikh Abdulkareem Adaara, Agbaji. 22-7-2012.

⁷⁴ This was done as honour to the emir and was in practice up till end of the twentieth century but has been discontinued. It is now considered un-Islamic, due to the revivalism that could be observed in many Muslim communities towards the end of the twentieth century.

⁷⁵ Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education,' 36.

⁷⁶ Reichmuth, A Regional Centre, 233.

⁷⁷ Babatunde, 'Traditional Qur'anic School,' 39.

⁷⁸ Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education,' 36. There were still remnants of this problem in the early part of the twentieth century though of a minor concern. Imam Yakub Aliagan for example, left one of his teachers because of this language barrier as the teacher could only teach the *ilimi* knowledge in Hausa language, which the Imam had no command of. Discussions with Imam Yakubu Aliagan. 12-9-2012.

tenth and thirteenth centuries respectively. The Fulanis who had settled in these regions also had their own phonetic adaptation. The scholars of these two regions in their trading activities played important roles in the spread of Islam to Yoruba region since the seventeenth century⁷⁹ or even a little earlier but it was not until the nineteenth century and twentieth century that Islam became well entrenched among the Yoruba speaking people, especially after the establishment of Ilorin emirate as a major center of Islam in Yoruba region.⁸⁰ As such the phonetic pronunciation adapted in these two regions was adopted with slight phonological adaptations.

Indices of the multi-ethnic Muslim ensemble that formed Ilorin can be found the language of teaching Qur'an recitation at the lowest level of teaching the Arabic alphabet and syllable formation in Ilorin. Three major languages were used in imparting knowledge at this level, namely Hausa and Fulani, the languages of the early leading scholars and Yoruba- the lingua franca of the town. This system persisted well into the late twentieth century when the use of standard Arabic phonetics of *Qaidat Baghdadi* Arabic primer became the norm and the use of slate barely surviving. Islam had long been established among the Hausas and Kanuris among whom the Fulanis also lived.⁸¹ As such the initial languages of instruction in Islamic education were largely Hausa⁸² and Fulani. Yoruba, the lingua franca in Ilorin, also became a language of instruction after native speakers of the language had become well-grounded in Islamic education and when the Hausa and Fulani scholars have acculturated into Ilorin with Yoruba as their lingua franca especially by the second generation of such scholars who had settled in Ilorin. Even at this, the names of the letters were mainly adapted to Yoruba phonetics from the Hausa originals.⁸³

⁷⁹ R.D Abubakre, *The Interplay of Arabic and Yoruba Cultures in South-Western Nigeria* (Iwo: Daru 'l -'ilm Publishers, 2004), 21; Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam*, 4.

⁸⁰ Al Iluri, *Islam fi Nigeria*, 41.

⁸¹ For history of Islam in Borno and Hausa regions see Mervyn Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (London: Longman, 1984); Levtzion, *Islam in Bilad*, 80-85; J. Spencer Trimingham, *A History of Islam in West Africa*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) section 2 and 3 of Chapter Three.

⁸² Though Islam had an earlier start in Borno, Kanuri never attained the status of lingua franca as Hausa did, outside of Borno. This perhaps explains why Hausa phonetics is prevalent even if the school is run by people of Borno origin such as Ile Gbagba where Hausa is the language of instruction. One must also take cognizance of the fact of ethnic ancestry in Ilorin is well mixed. Hence, an individual usually would have more than one of these bloods in him. The same way, ethnic ancestry does not necessarily determine the language of instruction to be used.

⁸³ In the traditional Qur'anic school, the more technical aspects of Arabic phonetics such as *tanwin* (nunation) resulting from a double vowel and doubling of consonants are not taught, especially as the Yoruba do not have similar linguistic devices in their language. Only in the

In the process of acculturation, the Yoruba adopted the Hausa vowels and gradually replaced parts of the defining phrase with Yoruba words. For example, the Hausa uses *wasali*, from Arabic ⁸⁴ *wasla* for both *fatha* (short a) and *kasra* (short: i) using *bisa* (on top) and *kasa* (below) to qualify them. These were replaced in Yoruba language with *l'oke* (on top) and *nisale* (below). The third vowel is called *rufua* (damma, the short u) from Arabic *raf* meaning pronunciation of the final consonant with 'u'. *Damure* is used in place of *sukun* (resting), the 'o' like symbol that indicates a consonant has no vowel.⁸⁵ Thus *fatiha* becomes *woseli oke* (*wasla* on top), *kasra* becomes *woseli isale* (*wasla* below). *Rufua* and *damure* remained unchanged. With time *woseli* was replaced with the Yoruba word *omo* (meaning mark or sign- literally a child). It thus became *to l'omo loke* for *fatiha* (with a mark on top) or *to lomo nisale* for *kasra* (with a mark below).⁸⁶ *Damure* and *rufua* is used for *sukun* and *damma* respectively. *Alif mad* (long a) becomes *alau beki*.⁸⁷ In the Fulani school the vowels are represented thus: *Masido* (fatha) *masiles* (kasra.) *Tur* (damma). *Oi* stands for (sukun).⁸⁸

In the schools, reflecting the ethnic origin of the founding scholars of such schools, the teaching of syllable formation is done either in Yoruba,⁸⁹ Hausa or Fulani. Some of the letters are also named differently according to the language being used. The Yoruba pronunciation was adapted from Hausa and pronounced to suit Yoruba phonetics. The Fulani had words for some of the letters completely different from the Hausa pronunciation while some are similar. Syllables and words are formed by

advanced class are these taught, if the teacher is also an Arabic language specialist. Alabi, 'Indices of Ethnic Identity.' See Appendix VI for the table of the Arabic alphabet and adaptations across languages in Ilorin.

⁸⁴ The vowels in Hausa (of Ilorin, see next note) are called *wasali bisa* (fatha-top diacritic), *wasali kasa* (kasra-bottom diacritic) and *rufua* (damma). *Damure* is used for (sukun), the symbol in Arabic that a consonant is carrying no vowel. This is often taught as vowel though it is not.

⁸⁵ Nasiru, 'Islamic Learning,' 83.

⁸⁶ Aliy-Kamal. 'Islamic Education in,' 50: Discussions with Alfa Saidu, Oko Erin. 91-6-2012.

⁸⁷ This was derived from Hausa *alifu baki* (black alif). This was derived from textual practice of using colour to denote certain letters. When alif is written with the red ink on paper, it is called *alifu ja* (the ja has double meaning. It means red and also lengthening at the same time, indicating a long vowel). Personal communications with Mallam Usman Muhammad Modibbo. 25-4-2013.

⁸⁸ Personal communications with Mallam Usman Muhammad Modibbo, 25-4-2013.

⁸⁹ In the traditional Qur'anic school, the more technical aspects of Arabic phonetics such as the *tanwin* (nunation) resulting from doubling of a vowel sign were not taught since Yoruba does not have such linguistic devices. Only in the advanced classes were these taught.

saying the relational position of the consonants and the (diacritical) vowels in a word.⁹⁰

These would be written on a slate before the printed Arabic *Qaidat Baghdadi* became the popular primer. It is to be noticed that the old Hausa traditional syllable formation method employs between five to nine words to explain what sound the consonants and the vowels would give for a syllable. The Yoruba spelling uses about six words to pronounce a syllable in the long form or four in the short form. The Fulani spelling uses an average of four to five words while the (modern) standard Arabic pronunciation makes use of an average of three or four words, thus shorter than the Hausa, Fulani and Yoruba methods of spelling.⁹¹ The Fulani schools also began their lessons at the syllable formation stage unlike the Hausa and thus Yoruba that began theirs with alphabet pronunciation. The alphabet is learned together with the syllable formation in Fulani schools.

In the early period the teaching and learning materials were not sophisticated. A wooden slate (*walaa*⁹²) was the writing material for learning to read the Qur'an. They are of two types, one is white and the other is dyed black, usually of hard wood. The white slate is used for learning purposes and come in different sizes. The second type is dyed dark and has a smooth surface.⁹³ The wood of the following trees are used for making the slate; agan-o (*Khaya ivorensis*), ayan (*prosopis africana*), Afara (*terminalia superba*). Wood carvers (*ogbena*) used to make the slates but it has since become part of woodworkers' or carpenters' repertoire. The advent of printed Arabic primer especially *Qaidat Baghdadi* has gradually phased out the *ile kewu wala* (slate Qur'anic school) in most parts of Ilorin by the end of

⁹⁰ Arabic vowels are not part of the alphabet and the position of the diacritical vowels either at the top or bottom of the letter determine their sounds. At an advanced level, though, Arabic could be read without the vowel signs. See Appendix VI for a sample of tri-lingual teaching of syllable and word formation. For a somewhat similar adaptation of Arabic into a local dialect in Bosnia, see Azra Gadzo-Kasumovic, Education- Beginning and Development of the Ottoman-Islamic Literacy in the Bosnian Eyalet- Ali Caksu (ed.), *Learning and Education in the Ottoman World* (Istanbul :The Research Centre for Islamic History, Art And Culture (IRCICA, 2001), 219.

⁹¹ Towards the end of the twentieth century most Qur'anic schools have adopted the modern pronunciation and the old system is gradually being forgotten. Respondents who had been trained with this system but had since adapted to the modern system had slight recollection slips, due to non-usage.

⁹² Wala (derived from Hausa *allo*, from Arabic *lahw*) is a rectangular carved slate of various designs and sizes. Some have handles at the longer sides but all have a 'T' like top handle, the cross usually curved like an inverted crescent.

⁹³ Some would bury the slate for seven days by the riverside to attain the dark colour. This is used in writing verses of the Qur'an and symbols for magico-therapeutic purposes. This writing is then washed with water into a bowl and drunk. Sometimes rain or spring water or dews, considered pure, are used. Discussions with Alfa Zakariya Yahaya. 20-4-2013.

the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century. Only a few could still be found.

The ink (*tadawa* or *tadaa*) is made from boiling the young leaves of *oori* (*vitex doniana*) tree.⁹⁴ The bark of the tree is also used for this. Mostly done by women, the water is boiled for up to three days till it thickens and becomes dark before it is ready for use⁹⁵. The leaves are also eaten as vegetable. For the ink for the white slate, potash is added, but it is not included for the ink meant for the dyed slate. The one with potash is called *oku* (dead) and the other one without potash is called *aye* (alive). Red pepper is ground and added to achieve the red colour used in writing the diacritical marks and for decoration on texts written on paper.⁹⁶

Sometimes in the second half of the twentieth century, boiling of sugar was improvised. Sugar is boiled till it becomes a dark liquid. This is used mainly for the darkened slate. The pen is made of either sliced bamboo stem or guinea corn stalk. This is sharpened with knife to a tapered end. The tapered end is sometimes sliced in half to retain some ink. With this, the lessons are written on the *walaa*. After each lesson had been mastered, the student is given leave to wash the slate. This is done with water and dried. The surfaced is then smoothened with leaves of *ipin* tree (*ficus asperifolia*). In modern times sandpaper is also used. A thin film of pap is then rubbed on the surface of the slate to prevent the ink blotting the surface.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *Tawada* in Hausa. Reichmuth, *Literary Culture and Arabic Manuscripts*, 47

⁹⁵ Discussions with Alhaji Mahmud A. Bello Ahmadu and Alhaji Muhammad Sani Ibrahim (Islamic book sellers) 31-10-2012; Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education,' p.48.

⁹⁶ Nasiru, 'Islamic Learning,' 82.

⁹⁷ In Gbagba Qur'anic School chalk (*efun*) is rubbed on the surface. This gives a sharp contrast to the dark ink.



Fig. 1. *Ile kewu walaa*. Qaidat Baghdadi primer could be seen with some of the pupils. Picture taken by researcher, 2014.



Fig. 2. One of the few surviving *Ile Kewu Walaa* (slate Qur'anic School) opposite Darul Uloom, Isale Koto. Pictures taken by the researcher in 2014.

In the nineteenth century and into the early part of the twentieth century, books were a rarity, especially as the religion was just making a foothold and paper was scarce. The papers were of European make that found its way down through the trans-Saharan trade.⁹⁸ Before the printed Qur'an became common, when a student had advanced in his studies, he copied the lessons from the master copy with the teacher at the rate of about two pages per lesson.⁹⁹ Some developed the special ability as calligraphers through this means. Some made a living writing verses of the Qur'an on paper, and selling in the market.¹⁰⁰ In the first half of the twentieth century, the practice of hand copying of the Qur'an and other texts was still popular and some would not even touch or use printed Arabic books when they first began to appear.¹⁰¹ The advent of printing eventually rendered the practice obsolete. Hand written Qur'ans are considered sacred and cherished heirloom. Derisive songs were even composed against the use of printed Qur'an when they first made their appearance.

larubawa mu oti tan, ote itekute the Arab got drunk and printed nonsense¹⁰²

Time for lessons especially for Qur'anic studies include morning, late noon and night. The prevalence of western education in the second half of the twentieth century has made many of the Qur'anic schools mostly afternoon and night schools when most of the students would have returned from the western schools. Only those who do not attend western schools continue to study in the morning and they form a small percentage.

Until the modernization of Qur'anic schools into *madaris* began in the twentieth century, a major feature of the process of learning in the Qur'anic School is teaching through a devolvement method.¹⁰³ Usually there is only one teacher to a school, the population ranging from less than a dozen to several dozens of students.

⁹⁸ Reichmuth, *Literary Culture*, 18.

⁹⁹ Discussions with Imam Yakub Aliagan. 12-9-2012. There is the anecdote of Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Al Iluri of having copied the Arabic dictionary by hand early in his career. See 'Sheikh Buhari Musa, Bowo Agba- Respect elders' www.youtube.com. Accessed 4-2-2015.

¹⁰⁰ Discussions with Sheikh Suleiman Dan Borno. 28-12-2012. For contemporary preoccupation with manuscripts in Timbuktu See Shamil Jeppie, 'Making Book History in Timbuktu' -in- Caroline Davis and David Johnson, *The Book in Africa – Critical Debates* (Hampshire, Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 44-64.

¹⁰¹ Murray Last, 'The Book Trade and the Nature of Knowledge in Muslim Northern Nigeria' -in- Graziano Kratli and Ghislaine Lydon (Eds), *The Trans-Sahara Book Trade manuscript culture, Arabic literacy and intellectual history in Muslim Africa*, (Leiden: Koningklijke Brill NV, 2011), 184.

¹⁰² Discussions with Sheikh Ahmad Adisa-Onikoko. 21-6-2012.

¹⁰³ The practice is still extant but has largely reduced. It will always be part of the Islamic education system because of the informal and social nature of the system.

In the absence of strict grading of students into classes, all students sit in a semi-circle round the teacher, within the reach of his cowhide with which to ensure discipline of his students.¹⁰⁴ Because each student progresses at his/her own pace, it is impossible for the teacher to pay equal or enough attention to all the students. As a result, the teacher teaches the most senior of the students after which they are released to assist the teacher in attending to other students. Though all the students are attended to by the teacher at one point or the other, a student usually receives a considerable amount of his learning from the senior students.



Fig. 3. A night Qur'an class at the home of Imam of Ita-Ajia Mosque. No slate, instead Qaidat Baghdadi is used here. Picture taken by researcher, 2014.

As each student moves up the ladder, he too passes on his knowledge this way to those behind him. However, only the more serious and promising students are assigned such tasks. Such student assistants sometimes have special time devoted to them by the teacher outside of the normal school hours and from this category of students the teacher would mentor prospective teachers of the future. Usually this is the beginning of the teaching career of a scholar.¹⁰⁵ This practice is still very much part of the Islamic education system especially in the Qur'anic schools, but also

¹⁰⁴ Shafii, 'Taalim Lughatul' 46. This system can still be observed in mosque circles where learning takes place.

¹⁰⁵ Discussions with Imam Yakubu Aliagan. 12-9-2012.

some of the *madaris* make use of the most senior students to assist in teaching the lower class. However, this practice is on the decrease, largely because the *madaris* have churned out large number of students, many of whom had gone to acquire diplomas and degrees and are ready to assist their alma mater even without remuneration. This decline, in the use of senior students as teaching assistants, seemed to have occurred between the late 1980s when this was observed¹⁰⁶ and the first decade of the twenty-first century.

In the Traditional Qur'anic School, when students have read the Qur'an to certain stages, ceremonies, called *wolima*, were devised to mark the stages. Latching onto the Yoruba penchant for celebrations, the early scholars devised these ceremonies to encourage the pupils and entice those who were not in school to join the school. Al Iluri said this was also used to win many non-Muslims into the religion in the early days of the religion among the Yoruba.¹⁰⁷ The 114 chapters of the Qur'an are divided into thirty parts; each part is called a *juzu*. Half of a *juzu* is called a *hizb* (called *yisu* or *eesu* in Yoruba). Sixty *hizbs* thus makes a whole Qur'an. A *hizb* is further divided into four parts; each called a *thumnu* (pronounced by the Yoruba as *summu*).

These divisions help Muslims to measure their recitations of the Qur'an whether for spiritual purpose or for educational purpose. To encourage the students in their studies;¹⁰⁸ when a pupil has reached *Suratul Fil* (chapter 105) the parents will prepare a feast of beans.¹⁰⁹ This will be brought to the school to be shared to the pupils. This serves to encourage the celebrant as well as those lagging behind their studies or the truants. At *Suratul A'la* (chapter 87), the first *hizb*, a chicken is killed and shared the same way, the teacher also taking his own share. At *Suratul Rahman*, the 7th *hizb* (chapter 55), a meal of *oka*¹¹⁰ is prepared. After this, for every *hizb* reached a certain amount is paid till *Suratul Yasin*, the 15th *hizb* (chapter 36).¹¹¹ In some schools, at *suratul yasin*, the reading will begin at the fifth verse, the preceding verses, especially the first verse considered too sacred to be read before the *wolimat* has been performed. The next *wolimat* is at *Suratul Tauba* (chapter 9).

¹⁰⁶ Muhammad, 'A Study of Selected' 144.

¹⁰⁷ Al Iluri, *Al Islam fi*, 142.

¹⁰⁸ For the sequence of these symbolic ceremonies see also, Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 111.

¹⁰⁹ Nasiru, 'Islamic Learning among' 61; Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education,' 53: Discussions with Imam Aliagan. 12-9-2012.

¹¹⁰ *Oka* is staple diet made from dried yam ground into flour. This is then prepared with boiling water into brownish or darkish mound taken with soup.

¹¹¹ At some point it used to be a kobo, most probably in the 1970s. Discussions with Imam Aliagan. 12-9-2012.

Here a sheep would be slaughtered. The other students would follow the student home singing:

Enyi ti ko kewu eku iya those of you who have not studied the Qur'an are suffering (in error)

Awa n jaye kalamu we are enjoying the grace of the pen

...mani aliafu nasiran ...they will know who is weaker in helpers

wa akalu adada and less in numbers.

Salamu kaola min rabi Peace! A word from a merciful lord¹¹²
rahimi

When the students have reached the last chapter (actually the second chapter in the arrangement in the Qur'an) they are made to seat separately from the remainder of the students and are given assignments to monitor and teach the junior ones. Here, like in *Suratul Yasin*, they are made to start reading from the eighth verse; the first seven verses are reserved for recitation at the grand *wolimat*, usually left till the wedding feast of the student.¹¹³ These practices, however, have changed substantially especially in the last three decades of the twentieth century. The stages are no longer strictly marked with the feasts mentioned. However, charities in the form of edibles continued to be brought to these schools as alms by parents and members of the community. Biscuits, fruits and cooked foods are common edibles brought to the schools.

The traditional slate Qur'anic schools have largely given way to new semi-formal Qur'anic schools. These are usually manned by young graduates of the *madaris*, unlike the traditional Qur'anic School where the teacher is usually a fully grown man or an old man. Unlike in the past when scholars, whether as teachers or spiritualists are old men, increasingly young men are taking up these roles, helped by the accelerated mode of learning available in the *madaris*.¹¹⁴ Benches and blackboards are used and students use exercise books for some of the lessons. The

¹¹² The first two lines are in Yoruba. The last three lines are verses from the Qur'an 72: 24 and 36:58 respectively. Discussions with Imam Aliagan. 12-9-2012. See also Abubakr, 'Zumratul Mu'minina (makondoro),' 18.

¹¹³ These chapters, like some others in the Qur'an start with letters, considered sacred, the meaning of which only Allah knows.

¹¹⁴ Stefan Reichmuth, 'Islamic Learning and "Western Education" in Nigeria: Concepts and Conflicts' -n- Riesz János and Hélène d'Almeida (eds) *Échanges Franco- Allemands sur l'Afrique* (Bayreuth African Studies 33, 1994), 175-184.

Qaidat Baghdadi has replaced the slates for teaching reading skills. Some of these schools have introduced some formal organizations into the schools such as using admission forms, attendance register and uniform wears and some form of fees. These schools operate mostly in the evening since most of their students are also in the western schools running in the morning. The traditional songs heralding the end of each day's lesson have also either been abandoned or replaced with new ones their teachers have learnt in the *madaris*.¹¹⁵

Depending on the population of the school, there could be two or more teachers and the school divided into different classes. Group teaching is privileged though individuals could progress at their own paces. The teachers sometimes were students pursuing their own higher studies in some *madaris*, colleges or universities or they may be engaged with some other vocations. Because of this, the students are also introduced to some Arabic language studies, hadith and introductory books of eschatology; subjects the young teachers learnt in the *madrasah* system.¹¹⁶

The grand *wolimat* signaling the completion of the Qur'an studies, now takes place as a group event, sometimes on a yearly basis, depending on the school. Certificates are awarded to the students. Parents pay certain amounts of money for this final ceremony as decided by the teachers and parents. Some schools include provision of food for the teachers during the ceremony. These grand ceremonies are about the only time the teachers could gain some substantial financial reward for their teaching efforts. Ceremonies are photographed and from the 1990s, video recording of the events have become the norm. If the school does not have enough space, a larger space is sought out nearby. The teachers invite their peers to witness the occasion. Families and well-wishers would follow the celebrants to the occasion.

Various gifts items; hand fans, exercise books and calendars with photographs of the celebrants and various items are shared out as gifts. It is interesting to note that private western schools that have proliferated in the last two decades have also copied this money spinning ceremonies from the Qur'anic schools.¹¹⁷ The Qur'anic schools charge some monthly stipends that are usually not strictly paid and thus look forward to these ceremonies as some form of compensation. Students are called out individually and families and well-wishers are encouraged to spend

¹¹⁵ See Appendix III for sample of some popular songs in the Traditional Qur'anic School.

¹¹⁶ In the past these used to be left till after the completion of Qur'an recitation study.

¹¹⁷ In mostly low fee paying western nursery and primary schools, pupils moving from pre nursery to nursery, nursery to primary and final year students are celebrated and parents are made to pay fixed amounts apart from what they would be made to pay publicly during the ceremonies. The western schools have actually learnt to raise more money through this means than most of the Qur'anic schools.

lavishly. Usually an invited scholar is given the role of reading the first chapter of the Qur'an and the first seven verses of the second chapter to the graduates in a ceremonial final instruction and the graduates would then recite in unison the same.

The *ilimi* schools are for students who have finished the Qur'an recitational studies and wish to study the meaning of the Qur'an and the other books of jurisprudence and allied subjects such syntax, morphology, astronomy, history e.t.c. This would lead the student to become a well learned scholar and play such roles as qadi, imam, scribes and advisers to the rulers. Here, the books to be studied are varied and on different subjects. This often meant studying different texts with different teachers. Before printed texts became popular, the student had to copy a book from a teacher who has such a book. They were therefore held very sacred and jealously guarded.

Time for lessons at this stage is more flexible. Usually the lessons are held very early in the morning before the Qur'anic students arrive or late in the morning after the Qur'anic students have departed. This is necessary as lesson is about meaning of words which are translated phrase by phrase and a quieter environment than the loudly chanting environment of the Qur'anic School is preferable, though sometimes both take place at the same time. At other times the *ilmi* lessons could take place in the afternoon or in the night, when the Qur'anic School is on break. These times allow for the mature students to attend to their livelihood or if it is a young teacher, before his own Qur'an students arrive for their own lessons. In the past lessons were also conducted in workshops such as the *ofi* weaving sheds.¹¹⁸ The method at this stage is translation of texts 'phrase by phrase'. The student reads out and the teacher translates. Usually one student is attended to at a time, at most a few if they are studying the same text.

While the texts of studies, especially the Qur'an and some of the canonical texts for the advanced studies have not changed, new texts have been introduced in the course of contacts with the rest of the Muslim world, the same way the methods and means of imparting the knowledge in them have changed and are continuously being adapted with changes in the society. This is true both in the traditional *Ilimi* school and especially so in the *madaris*. Study period, materials and culture around learning have all been adapted to current situations. 'Traditional' may no longer be applicable to some these Qur'anic schools. While the learning maybe traditional, the methods are getting more and more modern. In the foreseeable future, electronic devices are likely to be adapted to learning. Although the technology is available, financial constraints have not yet allowed for these to be deployed to Qur'anic education or in large scale in the *madaris*.

¹¹⁸ Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic education,' 45.

Classification of Islamic Education: Changing Dynamics around an Immutable Core

A most important feature that distinguishes the Islamic education system is the immutable root of its episteme. All knowledge must be rooted in the Qur'an. While this core is confirmed and unchangeable, the process of disseminating the knowledge (including content and social functions) is dynamic and responds to the dynamics of locale and history. The continuous adaptations around the immutable core through the learning process make the dynamics of the process less obvious. However, over time, the process had undergone changes enough for some of the processes to have become obsolete and even getting eroded from the collective memory of the people. This section examines the processes and methods of transmitting Islamic knowledge.

Stages of learning: In the absence of a formal structure of the system education, Islamic education at the beginning of the twentieth century and even earlier can only be reconstructed through an examination of the praxis of Islamic schools, some of which have not changed much up till toward the end of the twentieth century or even in the twenty-first century. Islamic education across time and regions has always been open ended. As in the other parts of the Muslim world, Islamic education can be categorized into mainly two stages in Ilorin; the elementary Qur'anic education (*Ile kewu wala*)¹¹⁹ and the advanced religious sciences (*kewu ilimi*) education.¹²⁰ The basic Islamic education is concerned with the knowledge of the basic tenets of the religion and praxis of the rituals of the religion. This knowledge can be attained with or without literacy. Where the religion was new, this knowledge was often passed on orally since learners were usually adults who have converted to the religion. They learned the basic ritual salutations in Arabic and a few verses of the Qur'an with which to practice the rituals of the religion.¹²¹

Where the religion has been well established, this basic knowledge acquisition is done with some literacy and is mostly suited to young children, though no adult would be denied the knowledge should he or she wants to start from this humble beginning. Most Muslims would go through this basic knowledge acquisition as part of socializing into the society. By far the most numerous and noticeable schools are the elementary Qur'anic schools. These piazza schools are to be found in every

¹¹⁹ Mahmud Muhammad Babatunde, 'Traditional Qur'anic School in Ilorin' (M.A Thesis: Islamic Studies-Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 2006), 32.

¹²⁰ *Kewu* is the generic name Yoruba have given to Islamic learning. The advanced form is called *ilimi*, derived from Arabic *ilm* meaning knowledge.

¹²¹ Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education in Ilorin,' 36.

locale.¹²² Literacy here is done in Arabic character. Basically the students are taught the Arabic alphabets, the formation of syllables and words from this for the primary purpose of recitation of the Qur'an. Here, pupils are taught the reading and writing of the Qur'an without understanding the meaning.¹²³ The sound and the inherent power in them as believed by the Muslims are sufficient at his stage for the meaning not to be necessary. At the end of this stage, the student should be able to read any portion of the Qur'an, some of it by heart, for use in the rituals of the religion.

Children from the neighborhood are brought to the school to begin their acculturation into the Islamic world.¹²⁴ Often learning begins as toddlers coming to school on the back of their elder sisters but only quiet toddlers are tolerated.¹²⁵ When the children begin to speak, they are kept in a separate part of the school where an older student teaches them the recitation of the alphabet in unison without using any writing material. Memorization, which is one of the hallmarks of Islamic learning begins at this very early stage. Here, the pupils begin acculturation into the Islamic education system.

From this class they graduate to learning to read the alphabet written on the slate for them by the teacher or any of the older students. It is an exciting moment for the pupils who get promoted from this chanting class to the slate class when announced by the teacher. A pupil could spend between some months to over a year in this class, depending on the age of entrance or aptitude.¹²⁶ In this class, it is usually the older students who handle the class on behalf of the teacher, though the teacher pays attention from his corner and sometimes assist in teaching the younger pupils. Usually they are taught three or more of the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet at a time. A pupil progresses at his/her own pace and may not progress to the next stage with his/her peers if the performance of such a pupil is not satisfactory to the teacher.

After learning the alphabet singly, the student begins to learn to recognize the letters in conjunction with other letters different from its arrangement in the alphabetic order. Usually the words of the shorter verses of the Qur'an are written without the vowel notations and the pupil will learn this for months or over a year depending on

¹²² Shafii, 'Taalim Lughatul Arabiyyah fi', 41.

¹²³ Albert Ozigi, *Education in Northern Nigeria* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), 8; NAK 'Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools' Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936.

¹²⁴ Ware III, *The Walking Qur'an*, 16.

¹²⁵ Discussions with Alfa Jubril Gbagba, Teacher at Gbagba Qur'anic School. 11-6-2012.

¹²⁶ Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 105-7; Discussions with Alfa Jubril Gbagba, Teacher at Gbagba Qur'anic School, 11-6-2012.

his ability. This stage is called *ogere* (straightforward-implying without the notation). The verses of the Qur'an, usually a few at time, are written without the diacritical marks either by the teacher or the senior students for a token fee. This token forms part of the earnings for the teacher and the senior students, some of whom may be living with the teacher. The letters are read out and the words pronounced by the teacher in example to the pupils. This is done without reciting the relational position of the consonants and the vowels. The student reads out what the teacher has written and pronounced before him/her to show he/she has grasped the teacher's rendition and returns to his/her sitting position where he/she would continue chanting the verses along with other pupils till he/she has memorized them. No silent reading done.¹²⁷

This chanting aloud of the verses thus marks out the Qur'anic School. Any passerby could always know a Qur'anic school is nearby by the chanting that could be heard forty or more meters away. This stage is usually done reading from chapter one hundred and fourteen to eighty-seven in ascending order, comprising 1/60th of the Qur'an. However, the first chapter (*Suratul Fatiha*-the opening) is included, being the most important chapter used for ritual prayers. Here, memorization of these shorter verses of the Qur'an is the target of this stage. These form the most easily memorized part of the Qur'an for Muslims that comes handy for use in prayers. A student is tested by being asked to read out what he/she has learnt. If he/she satisfied the teacher as having learnt the reading correctly, he/she would be instructed to go and wash (*fo*) the slate in preparation for the next portion to be written and studied. When a student is observed to have slackened in his studies, he/she would be taken back to the previous lessons to repeat them until his/her reading is good.

¹²⁷ Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 105-7; Discussions with Alfa Jubril Gbagba, Teacher at Gbagba Qur'anic school, 11-6-2012; Discussions with Alfa Saidu Oko Erin, 19-6-2012 and Imam Ahmad Yahaya Maisolati, 16-6-2012.



Fig. 3. Pupils and a teacher at Gbagba Qur'anic School in the early 1970s. Note the uniform dress of the pupils, attempts at some formalization. Picture from the personal Collections of Imam Ita-Ajia.

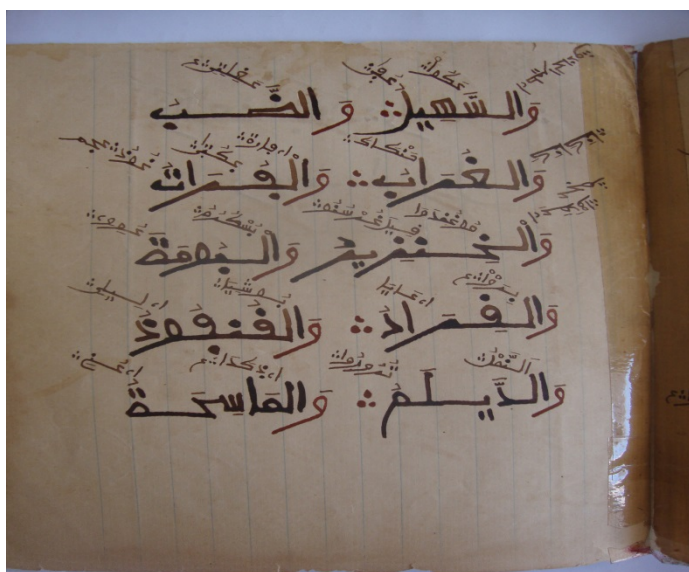


Fig. 5. A page of a tri-lingua text mentioning names of animals. The main text is in Arabic, the slanting notes are Hausa and Yoruba translations of the Arabic. Source: From the researcher's family collection from early twentieth century.

This is then followed by the *ajitu* stage.¹²⁸ This is where the student will learn to unravel the relationship between the vowels and the consonants in giving out the sound of the written word. At this stage writing (*hantu*- from Arabic *khatt*) skill is acquired. There is no special training for this. It is acquired by observation and practice. This aspect of learning has largely faded out in the Qur'anic schools with the ascendance in the use of Qaidat Baghdadi primer for reading exercise instead of the slate.¹²⁹ This is particularly true from the late 1980s. Many now go through the Qur'anic School without using the slate at all, having little or no practice of the writing exercise. At this stage the writings are done with the diacritical marks. The student here learns to pronounce the words of the verses, starting from *Suratul fatiha*, the first chapter of the Qur'an and then reads the remaining chapters in ascending order from 114th chapter to the second chapter, which marks the end of the recitational study of the Qur'an. The arrangement is such because the shorter chapters are at the end according to its arrangement in the Qur'an and are therefore easily memorized for ritual purposes.

The advanced Islamic education stems from the basic knowledge of Qur'an recitation. Not many would go into this. Students are first introduced to short elementary treatises of a few pages dealing with faith, eschatology and the technicalities of the religious rituals before delving into more advanced theological books.¹³⁰ Students are also introduced into Arabic language and its many subdivisions. Mostly people aspiring to hold religious positions such as imams, qadis or teachers of the religious sciences go into advance studies. However, some out of religious interest also follow this path.

Classification of Islamic Schools

Shafii in his study on the teaching of Arabic language in Ilorin has classified the Qur'anic schools into three categories. Though the concern of the study is mainly on the study of Arabic as a language, Arabic cannot be divorced from Qur'anic education, for the study of Arabic as a language is essentially to facilitate the understanding of the Qur'anic sciences. The two are inseparable as far as Islamic

¹²⁸ Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 105-7. This is called *Aditu* (lit. tied and untied, meaning unraveling) among the Yoruba of south west Nigeria. In Ilorin, it is called *ajitu*. See Wahab Oladejo Adigun Nasiru, 'Islamic Learning among the Yoruba (1896 to Modern Times)' (PhD thesis: University of Ibadan, 1977) 82, for explanations of this learning method among the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria.

¹²⁹ Kuranga Muritala Yero, 'An Investigation into the Preferred Method of Teaching in Qur'an Schools in Ilorin Metropolis' (BA.ed Long Essay, University of Ado Ekiti, 2004), 21.

¹³⁰ Stefan Reichmuth, Literary Culture and Arabic Manuscripts in Nineteenth-Century Ilorin –in-Graziano Kratli & Ghislaine Lydon (eds), *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2011), 217; Discussions with Sheikh Abdulkareem Adaara, Agbaji. 22-7-2012 and Sheikh Imam Yakub Al-agna. 5-11-2013.

education is concerned. In the first category are Qur'anic schools to be found in any Muslim society, whether it is in the rural areas or urban centres, because it is central to the practice of the religion.¹³¹ In this basic school, recitational study of the Qur'an is the main preoccupation. Children are sent to these schools from around the age of three or four until they are well into puberty. For most Muslims this is only form of formal Islamic education they would get. With knowledge acquired in this form the basic rituals of the religion could be observed. A Muslim therefore does not need to have the kind of knowledge the scholars have to practice the religion. After the acquisition of the basic knowledge of the religion in these schools, such pupils move on to learn a trade or craft from within their family or outside the family. Some of these crafts like weaving and trading were favored by the scholars.¹³²

These Qur'anic schools can be found under trees, in mosques or the piazza of the houses of the teachers. Because the teachers in these schools are always close to the mosques, the schooling usually takes place there.¹³³ Such schools require only basic study materials and as such could be set up almost anywhere, the most important requirement being the availability of teacher and the students to conduct studies. Mats either of straw materials or animal skins, usually from skins of animals slaughtered during the *eid-al-adha* festivals are used for sitting. The teacher has a volume of the Qur'an with him though most teach without much recourse to it except for students who have advanced up in the Qur'an studies.¹³⁴

Before printed Qur'an became common, the whole Qur'an was studied using the slate and well into the twentieth century, some schools like that of Sheikh Abubakar Omo Iya and Gbagba Qur'anic schools still kept this tradition.¹³⁵ However, with the availability of printed Qur'an in the latter half of the twentieth century, especially the 1/30th (*Juz amma*) and the 5/30th excerpts of the Qur'an, there first began a reduction of parts studied with slate. In most schools when a student has reached *suratul aala* (1/60th) he is allowed to *gbe* (carry) the Qur'an and stop using the slate.¹³⁶ The Qur'an is considered too sacred for children to carry as whole. At this stage he can start reading from the pages of the Qur'an. Even so the whole Qur'an is still not allowed, he is allowed to take a few pages of the loose sheets he would

¹³¹ Muhammad Shafii, 'Taalim Lughatul Arabiyah Fi Ilorin' (B.A Thesis, Department of Arabic, University of Sokoto, 1982), 41.

¹³² Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 78; Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education,' 45.

¹³³ Shafii, 'Taalim Lughatul Arabiya' 41

¹³⁴ Badmas Olanrewaju Yusuf, 'An Examination of Qur'anic Learning in the Ilorin Emirate of Nigeria' *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* Vol.12 December, 1995.

¹³⁵ Discussions with Sheikh Suleiman Dan Borno (Mukadam Agba of Ilorin). 28-12-2012.

¹³⁶ As would be shown later, the slate would be done away with in most Qur'anic Schools in later years.

study at a time. These are kept between hard covers made from cartons or even plywood and are wound together with a leather strap or a rope.

In the second category are the *ilm* schools known locally as *ile kewu ilimi* (advanced school). Only when a student has undergone the primary stage are they able to advance into this stage. Usually those who aspire to hold religious positions such as imam, qadi or teacher delve into this. Subjects taught in this stage include Arabic language with all its sub-divisions, exegesis, jurisprudence and non-religious subjects such as logic, arithmetic and literature that are considered helpful to the study of the religious sciences. The teachers of the *ilm* schools are more knowledgeable than the teachers of the Qur'anic school because of the advanced nature of the studies concerned.¹³⁷ Not all Qur'anic school teachers are capable of giving lessons in the advanced class but most advanced schools have Qur'anic schools serving as a feeder and from which scholars can always cut their teeth as assistant teachers.

In the third category are the modern Islamic schools. Lumped together in this category are the modern privately owned Arabic schools generally called madrasah and government schools where Arabic and Islamic studies are taught. The privately owned madrasah system (pl.*madaris*) is the result of scholars' efforts in rising to the challenge western education poses to traditional Muslim educational system. These schools are generally organized like the western schools, having their own curriculum. The schools are specifically built for learning with classrooms using tables and chairs unlike the traditional system of sitting on the mat or floor. In the government own schools, certain period of lessons are allocated for the study of Arabic or Islamic studies as part of the general secular education provided by the government.¹³⁸

Shafii's classification is largely based on the methods, levels and organization of learning. Classification of Islamic education, however, is a little more complicated especially in the period covered by this research. In addition to the indices used in his classification can be added the contents of learning and purpose of acquisition of knowledge in the different modes available. The coming of western education and civilization has been the most important challenge Islamic education has had to face and this had largely determined the various ways Muslims have devised to cope with this challenge. Western education came with and infused in its flag bearers enormous power and reduced Islamic education to the background, though not an insignificant background. It has resilience such that western education with all its

¹³⁷ Shafii, 'Taalim Lughatul Arabiya' 40.

¹³⁸ Shafii, 'Taalim Lughatul Arabiya,' 40.

socio economic and political power cannot but reckon with it to a greater or lesser extent.

For the purpose of this research, Islamic education in the period understudy would be classified into two main categories, based on proprietorship, namely: privately run Islamic education and Islamic education in western institutions, with particular attention to the privately run Islamic schools, where in its truest sense Islamic education can be had. The privately run Islamic schools is further classified into Qur'anic schools and *madaris* (sing.madrasah). Subsumed in this categorization are other indices such as purpose of the system, method, duration of study, funding, subjects taught and organization etc. this categorization has been chosen because these are the two systems which most Muslims in Ilorin in modern times have to go through; the western system of education and Islamic system of education. In both systems Islamic education can be gotten to varying degrees.

The privately run Islamic education is the system where Islamic education in the classical sense of it can be gotten. This system is itself divided into two. One is old traditional system, informal in its arrangement but has also metamorphosed into some semi-formal mode in the last thirty years. The second, a twentieth century phenomenon, is the madrasah system (Islam-Arabic schools) formalized along some of the organization methods of the western educational system. Indices of this system include; private ownership, strictly for Muslims, language of scholarship is vernacular and Arabic and the primary purpose of establishment is religious. Islamic education in western institutions (private and public) is a subject among other subjects. At the primary and secondary school levels it is called Islamic Religious knowledge. At the post-secondary school level it is called Islamic Studies. It is a minor subject, not essential to the system. Here, the language of instruction is English with some Arabic, though vernacular is used at the primary school level.¹³⁹

At the primary and secondary school levels, the amount of knowledge acquired is hardly sufficient for the practice of the religious rituals which must necessarily be in Arabic. The time allocated is also not enough. This has root in the colonial period when religious education was introduced as an accommodated subject, primarily to win the confidence of Muslims.¹⁴⁰ In the wake of Islamic revivalism around the Muslim world starting from the 1990s, many Muslim owned private western institutions have tried to increase the amount of Islamic knowledge that can be gotten in the schools, more than in the conventional public schools.

¹³⁹ Imtiaz Ahmad, 'Teaching Islamic Studies in the non-Arab World: With or without Arabic', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 21:3(2001), 272-285.

¹⁴⁰ NAK 'Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools' Iloprof file No. 3196/3/1936.

The impact of Islamisation of knowledge could be seen at work in these Muslim run private schools. Some bear Arabic names or names suggesting Islamic culture and generally promote Islamic social norms. At the post-secondary school level, Islamic knowledge can be acquired with minimal knowledge of Arabic. Here also, the language of instruction is in English. However, at the turn of the millennium some government higher institutions have introduced education courses in Arabic medium in addition to the Islamic studies with English as medium of instruction.¹⁴¹ This is helpful to those who are crossing from the private Arabic medium madrasah to western higher institutions. These classifications then help our understanding of the possible routes to attain Islamic education in Ilorin.

Colonial Authority and Islamic Education in Ilorin

Ilorin differed from other emirates of Northern Nigeria, in that there was no strong and long established political tradition or institution to replace or build upon. Rather, the Fulani-led Muslims competed with other emerging powers within Ilorin and in the end emerged as the ultimate winner, suppressing and bringing other powers under its control. In Ilorin, the political system was built by the Fulani led Muslims almost from scratch. The Landers had been told in the 1830s there were twelve rulers in Ilorin, each no more powerful than the others.¹⁴² This would relate to the time of the first emir when the political structure of the new emirate was being set up and its geographical location among the Yorubas ensured a different power structure compared to other emirates of the Sokoto caliphate.

Next to the emir are the warlords and as Reichmuth observed, scholars together with the warlords are on that second layer of authority. They both exercised considerable power over the emir in the nineteenth century.¹⁴³ This was Ilorin's strength as well as a weakness. For most of the nineteenth century, Ilorin had to fight other Yoruba states to maintain its independence. This gave the Baloguns (the warlords) great power, so that by the end of the century they literally controlled the emirs.¹⁴⁴

Despite this, military resistance to the colonial conquest was feeble; as such resistance was largely non militant. Because of this, western education and ideas

¹⁴¹ Nasir Muhammad Baba, 'Islamic Schools, the Ulama and the State in the Educational Development of Northern Nigeria' *Bulletin de L'APAD* 33 (2011).

¹⁴² Stefan Reichmuth, A Regional Centre of Islamic Learning in Nigeria: Ilorin and its Influence on Yoruba Islam –in- Nicole Grandin & Marc Gaborieau (eds) *Madrasah La Transmission Du Savoir Dans Le Monde Musulma* (Op editions: Arguments, 1997), 233.

¹⁴³ Reichmuth, Literary Culture, 214.

¹⁴⁴ Aliyu S. Alabi, 'Indices of Ethnic Identity in a Multicultural Society: An Appraisal of Ilorin's Ethnic Identity,' *FAIS Journal of Humanities*, Vol.4 No.2. (2010), 1-29; Adisa-Onikoko, *A History of Ilorin*, 17.

were loathed in Ilorin, seen as something of Christianity or even *shaitan* (devil).¹⁴⁵ This attitude was not peculiar to Ilorin alone; it was the same wherever Muslims were to be found under colonial rule. Nevertheless Muslim resistance to western education was less at the coast than further north as Muslims there were quicker in acquiescing to western education with the encouragement of the colonial authority. In Ilorin, when the British introduced western type schools after the consolidation of the conquest, the people were suspicious and remained aloof. When the colonial authority requested from the rulers to send their children to school as an example to others, some of the aristocrats sent the children of their slaves or servants as guinea pigs for the new system, not trusting any good to come out of the system of the conquerors.¹⁴⁶

At the coast, the Muslims were quickest to realize the benefits to be derived from western education. The rulers did not derive their legitimacy from Islam, even if they were Muslims, compared to the north where Muslim polities have been in existence for centuries.¹⁴⁷ Ilorin, positioned geographically and cultural mid-way between the Hausa region and Yoruba region up to the coast was quicker than the emirates in Hausa region but slower than the rest of Yoruba region in acceding to western education. The intensity of resistance could thus be linked to the span of time Islam had been in existence in all the Muslim regions. Resistance was fiercest in Hausa region where it had been in existence for centuries. Though Islam had been in Yoruba region since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was largely peripheral. It was with the emergence of a Muslim dynasty in Ilorin in the nineteenth century that eventually Islam took a strong root, first in the Ilorin in the

¹⁴⁵ It is important to note that this does not represent the whole spectrum of attitudes towards the new order. It may be the more dominant attitude but there were also people who accepted the new situation such as traders to the south who could see the implications of the new system for social mobility. Also in this category are scholars who were familiar with the south west. The emir, Abdulkadir and his chiefs were also at the forefront of the promotion of western schooling. See NAK 'Proposed Classes for Koran Teachers' Iloprof file No. 2276; Peter Kazenga Tibenderana, 'The Emirs and the Spread of Western Education in Northern Nigeria, 1910-1946' *Journal of African History*, Vol.24. No.4 (1983), 517-534.

¹⁴⁶ Aliyu S. Alabi, *Voices After the Maxim Gun: Intellectual and Literary Opposition to Colonial Rule in Northern Nigeria* -in- Sa'idu Babura Ahmad and Ibrahim Khaleel Abdussalam (eds) *Resurgent Nigeria-Issues in Nigerian Intellectual History* (Ibadan, University Press Plc, 2011), 124-144; Discussions with Alhaji Saka Aleshinloye (Baba Isale of Ilorin) November, 1997. See also A.M. Kani and Gandhi, *State and Society in the Sokoto Caliphate* (Sokoto: UDUS, 1990), 239. Despite this the emir, Abdulkadir was enthusiastic and the colonial records shows him as encouraging its development. See NAK 'Proposed Classes of Koranic Teachers', Iloprof file No. 2276; Leith Ross, 'Female Education in Ilorin Province' NAK file 89/1928/Vol.1. See also Tibedenrana,, 'The Emirs and the Spread.

¹⁴⁷ Danmole, *The Frontier Emirate*, 154.

nineteenth century and then the rest of Yoruba region towards the last half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century.¹⁴⁸

The colonial government assured the emirs that survived the imperial onslaught that the colonial enterprise had not come to disrupt the religious system. If this explanation partly satisfied the emirs, the Muslim intellectuals were not convinced. To the scholars, the emirs thereafter became agents of the colonial interest and less as custodian of Islam, the pivot of which the scholars are the guardians. In the Hausa region, the people resisted western education, calling school *makarka* (diversion), the education as *boko* (fake) and the teaching as *kafirchi* (unbelief).¹⁴⁹ As in other Muslim societies, resistance to the colonial order in the post-conquest period was championed in Ilorin by the Muslim scholars, most visible in resistance to western education.

After successful introduction of the indirect rule system,¹⁵⁰ the scholars were not deceived by the controlled authority of emirs. They could see where the real power was. This ensured appropriation of surplus without the presence of much British personnel. Muslim resistance was championed by the scholars and when all military resistance failed, it was the intellectual resistance that lasted through the colonial period and even beyond.¹⁵¹

Western education was introduced gradually and Muslims resisted it as an extension of the resistance to its promoter, the colonial order.¹⁵² Not having enough personnel

¹⁴⁸ See R.D Abubakre, *The Interplay of Arabic and Yoruba Cultures in South-Western Nigeria* (Iwo: Daru 'l -'ilm Publishers, 2004) and Danmole, *The Frontier Emirate*, for this history.

¹⁴⁹ Abubakar Mustapha, 'Sabotage in Patronage: Islamic Education under Colonial Rule in Nigeria' *Journal of the NATAIS*, Vol.6, No.1 (2001) ; NAK 'Arabic and Religious instructions in Schools' Iloprof file No. 3196/3/1936.

¹⁵⁰ See Claude Ake, *A Political Economy of Africa*, (London: Longman Limited, 1981), 43-45; J. Ihonvbere and Toyin Falola, *Colonialism and Exploitation –in- Toyin Falola, Britain and Nigeria- Exploitation or Development?* (London: Zed Book, 1987), 19-24.

¹⁵¹ Alabi, 'Voices After.'

¹⁵² As mentioned earlier, there were supporters of the new order especially from the aristocrats and upper class. Another reason people in the lower class may not have taken to western education is the issue of fees. Education under colonial rule was never free unlike the attempts by Nigerian nationalist leaders in the Self-Government era prior to independence as well as the post independence government to provide free education. For Muslims struggling to pay tax and used to their own educational system where there were no formal fees, the payment of fees would also have counted against sending children to the new schools. For the aristocrats and the traders, especially familiar with the south, they were able to see it as a means for social mobility and so pushed their children to attend the new schools and were even disappointed and withdrew their children when they realized English language was not being taught at the school in the early days. NAK 'Proposed Classes of Koranic Teachers',

on ground, the colonial authority needed to train some Africans who would administer its bureaucracy. The colonial authority anticipated Muslim resistance and tried to ameliorate Muslim resistance by not allowing Christian missions into Muslim areas and started its own secular schools.¹⁵³ The colonial authority was also not too keen on promoting western education in Northern Nigeria, because in the southern protectorate where it has had experience for close to half a century, the effects of largely mission-provided education had begun to tell in educated southerners fighting for emancipation from colonial stranglehold through media such as newspaper and quasi-political organizations that western education had fostered among educated southerners.¹⁵⁴ In Northern Nigeria, the spectacle of western education became one of an unwilling or halfhearted master and a reluctant or disagreeing servant. The result is the imbalance in education between southern and northern Nigeria that has survived to the twenty-first century, though the gap has been closed considerably in the post-independence period.¹⁵⁵

Frederick Lugard, the High Commissioner of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria had interest in protecting the north and by extension the colonial order from corrupting influences of the western educated elements in Lagos and southern Nigeria. This is one of the geneses of the imbalance between the education in the north and the south as well as between the Muslim and non-Muslim areas of the Northern Nigeria. Lugard did not allow Christian missions in Muslim areas, ostensibly to protect interest of Muslims, but it was also in self-interest of the colonial order.¹⁵⁶ Christian missions in Muslim areas would have deepened Muslim resistance to colonialism, for which the British were very alert and avoided as much as possible. The missions were only to be allowed into regions which Lugard can guarantee their safety, to avoid drawing government into conflict. Government concern was mainly avoiding conflict smarting Muslims could give when missions come to their regions.¹⁵⁷ When Lugard supported Dr Miller of Church Missionary Society's (CMS) plan to undertake provision of education on behalf of government, he did so only because the government had neither the fund nor personnel to undertake the venture.¹⁵⁸

Iloprof file No. 2276; NAK 'Annual Report Education Department Ilorin Province', Iloprof file No. 3/1 0433/1928.

¹⁵³ Eliasu Yahaya, 'The Establishment and Development of Western Education in Ilorin Township 1900-1960,' (MA thesis: Department of History University of Ilorin 1998), 35.

¹⁵⁴ Ozi, *Education in Northern Nigeria*, 40.

¹⁵⁵ Ozi, *Education in Northern Nigeria*, 17.

¹⁵⁶ Ozi, *Education in Northern Nigeria*, 17.

¹⁵⁷ Sonia F. Graham, *Government and Mission Education in Northern Nigeria 1900-1919* (Ibadan: Ibadan University press, 1966), 7-8.

¹⁵⁸ Ozi, *Education in Northern*, 19.

Following a successful experiment of teaching the Roman characters, Dr Miller submitted a proposal to Lugard in 1906 which guided future educational policy of the colonial authority in Northern Nigeria. He proposed two different schools; one for selected mallams in all the emirates and another for sons of chiefs from all the Muslim areas of the north. Although Dr Miller agreed not to antagonize the religion of the pupils, he hoped to use the ambience of the school, which would be boarding, to subtly open their minds to the world of Christianity,¹⁵⁹ which he believed has better values than the religion of his pupils. The mallams' schools aimed to teach them Hausa in Roman characters in addition to English language, arithmetic and geography. The Boys' School would aim to train them to be patriotic, loyal and honest to the British.¹⁶⁰ Lugard left in 1906 before the plan could be put into action and his successor Percy Girouard was not supportive of the missionaries. The CMS went ahead with the school but because of its overt and covert conversion objectives, the mission accepted its failure by 1910 and converted its school into a regular mission school based on religious instruction. The government had to start its own secular education program.¹⁶¹

The work of planning and running a government system of education was put in charge of Hans Vischer, a Swiss naturalized British citizen, recommended for the job by Lugard. Vischer visited Cairo and Khartoum and the Gold Coast in 1909 to assess the educational system being run in these places. In Egypt, he felt the education was too European in nature and not rooted in the people's culture. In Khartoum, he found the system more suited to his ideas.¹⁶² In Accra where there were many mulattoes in the population who had adapted to European style of education, he felt that the system though good would not be suited for the northern region where the Muslim populations are to be found. It appears he was concerned with any system that best works for a region, whether it is a strictly European system like in Accra or European system grafted on a local system like he saw in Khartoum.¹⁶³ In the end, the Sudan model most appealed to Vischer and as policies would later show; his ideas is discernible in the educational policy pursued in Northern Nigeria.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ See the article by K, Education as a Mission Agency, Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record, January 1884. Vol. IX No.97.

¹⁶⁰ Ozig, *Education in Northern*, 20.

¹⁶¹ Ozig, *Education in Northern*, 21.

¹⁶² Rhodes House Mss Afr. 1358 W.L. Hogan 'Development of Education in Northern Nigeria 1920-1952', 13; Graham, *Government and Mission*, 68.

¹⁶³ Graham, *Government and Mission*, 72.

¹⁶⁴ Graham, *Government and Mission*, 74.

Vischer's educational plan, approved by the Secretary of State for the Colonies had the following objectives:

1. Develop the national and racial characteristics of the natives on such a line as will enable them to use their moral and physical forces to the best advantage
2. Widen their mental horizon without destroying their respect for race and parentage
3. Supply men for employment under the government
4. Produce men who would be able to carry on native administration in the spirit of the government
5. Impart sufficient knowledge of western ideas to enable the natives meet the influx of traders and others from the coast, with the advent of the railway, on equal terms
6. Avoid creating a 'babu' class
7. Avoid encouraging the idea, readily formed by the natives, that it is more honorable to sit in an office than to earn a living by manual labour, by introducing at the earliest opportunity technical instruction side by side with purely clerical training¹⁶⁵

Secular government education in the North began with the Nasarawa School in Kano in 1909 under Vischer. Vischer wanted the people to learn from Europe without losing their essence, the multiple identities, drawing on his own background in Swiss, German and British education systems. His educational ideas were analogous to Lugard's political indirect rule policy, which official caution and economic expediency had made a pragmatic option. There was a convergence of ideas of both officials. Like Lugard, Vischer's ideas were in favour 'craft' education against scholasticism, local rather than liberal. This could be seen in the building used for the school.¹⁶⁶ From inception the schools were built along class lines, one for the children of chiefs and another for the commoners. Subjects taught include arithmetic, geography, hygiene, Hausa and law. English was not taught at the primary level. By 1913, Ilorin had six pupils on its register.¹⁶⁷ It was from the Nasarawa School that mallams were trained to be used in opening provincial schools in other provinces, which the emirs had requested to be opened in their provinces.

On 22 February, 1915 a provincial school was established in Ilorin, largely to provide personnel for the Native Authority administration. It was started by Mr

¹⁶⁵ Ozigi, *Education in Northern*, 43; Graham, *Government and Mission*, 76

¹⁶⁶ Graham, *Government and Mission*, 77.

¹⁶⁷ Eliasu Yahaya, *The Establishment and Development*, 35-37.

H.H. Annetts (Assistant Director of Education Northern Provinces) and Mr S.L. Price. The Yoruba reading sheets were prepared by mallam Ibrahim and Mr Annetts. Western education started with the training of teachers in what was called a Normal class. Ten mallams were selected by Annetts and from the onset they were being prepared to assume the role of teachers in the near future. Eight of these were appointed to the newly opened provincial school.¹⁶⁸ The school had thirty-nine pupils all from Ilorin town and two mallams¹⁶⁹ manning a class each of the four classes. With the exception of mallam Musa, all the other teachers had been coopted from the normal class where they had been prepared for this role. By the end of the year the population had risen to eighty-one.

The school was not popular among the Ilorins despite the interest of the emir and his chiefs (who were noted to be sending the children of their slaves and servants instead of their own children).¹⁷⁰ The pupils were jeered at and attempts were made to burn down the school.¹⁷¹ Religious instruction for the pupils began on the 7th of March 1915, in town, not in the school. Here, a separation of the secular and religious studies had begun from inception. The emir appointed a *liman* (also *lemamu* prayer leader/teacher) who teaches five times per week, an hour daily.¹⁷² This may have served to douse Muslim apathy to western education, but the British also believed in the separation of both and had only allowed it to show the British had nothing against the religion of the people.

The following year in 1916, the population had increased when Nupe students joined the school. Until then, it was (an all-boys) day school. A residential building was built two miles from the town.¹⁷³ The pupils received instructions in the Qur'an daily except on Fridays. They were taught by mallam Muhammadu Isa. Mallam Sulai also taught twelve of the pupils and the teachers *Risala* and other theological works such *Zakkaki*, *Hukami*, *Shriniya* and *Zuhud*.¹⁷⁴ A school committee consisting of the Resident, the Emir, Waziri and two others nominated by the emir, Kure and

¹⁶⁸ NAK 'Report on Ilorin Provincial School' Iloprof File No. 44/1916/1.

¹⁶⁹ The British used the term 'mallam' somewhat to refer to different categories of teachers. It was used to refer to teachers of Qur'an in the traditional system, teachers of religious studies in the government school as well as teachers of secular subject. The term is a Hausa word meaning teacher, derived from the Arabic word *mualim* and among the Hausa has come to serve as the equivalent of 'Mr' in addition of the original meaning. Ilorin, Alfa is name given to the scholar of Islamic education.

¹⁷⁰ NAK 'Report on Ilorin Provincial School' Iloprof file No.44/1916; Discussions with Alhaji Saka Aleshinloye (Baba Isale of Ilorin, d. 2007), November 1997.

¹⁷¹ Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteer of Ilorin*, 255.

¹⁷² NAK 'Report on Ilorin School' Iloprof file No. 234/1915.

¹⁷³ Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteer of Ilorin*, 255.

¹⁷⁴ NAK 'Provincial School Annual Report' Iloprof file No.163/1917. See Appendix IV for the school's time table.

Magaji Ajanaku (sub-chiefs to the emir) was constituted to oversee the school. They inspected the school fortnightly, assisted in the collection of school fees and selection of new pupils.¹⁷⁵ Hausa was the language of instruction but by 1918, it had been substituted with Yoruba, the lingua franca of the town. Hausa had been used all the while because Ilorin province was a part of the north where Hausa is the lingua franca. Ilorin was the only Yoruba speaking province in the north and the early African teachers were Hausa speaking and there were few European officials who had working knowledge of Yoruba.

class	Number of pupils	Average Age
1	23	15
2	88	11
3	39	11
4	19	9
5	47	8
total= 216 ¹⁷⁶		

Table 1.¹⁷⁷ The composition of the Provincial School in 1916. Source NAK 'Report on Ilorin school' Iloprof file No.641/1916

By 1925 the response to western education had improved. The opportunity for employment in the Native Authority is a factor in this response but also proximity of the province to the coast. By 1929, ninety of the former students of the school had been employed by the Native Authority. Records show that forty-six percent (46%) of the pupils were relatives of the staff of the Native Authority (most aware of the benefits to be derived from the school), thirty-one percent (31%) children of the peasants, sixteen percent (16%) children of mallams (Muslim scholars) and seven percent (7%) those of traders.¹⁷⁸ Most of the early students were adults and were children or wards of aristocrats and their protégés, who had to attend a boarding school with their wives and servants. In a note to the Superintendent of Education, the Governor General indicated the undesirability of pupils to be married. He wanted the keeping of personal servants to be discouraged though not forbidden. The colonial authority had to tolerate these personal appendages of the

¹⁷⁵ NAK 'Report on the Ilorin Provincial School for the half-year ending 30th June 1916', Iloprof file No.641/1916.

¹⁷⁶ These include 54 Nupe pupils. The average age of the Pupils was 12 years.

¹⁷⁷ As can be seen from the table the classes were arranged in descending order with the most senior pupils in class one.

¹⁷⁸ Yahaya, 'The Establishment,' 42.

early scholars, though undesirable, since it was literally begging the emir to provide the students.¹⁷⁹

The emir was able to recruit pupils for the elementary school mostly from his relatives and workers. The school fee was 6d per student. The Qur'an and Arabic were being taught in a *zaure* (piazza) like in a traditional setting. Subjects taught in the school included writing, arithmetic, geography, hygiene, drawing and crafts. The standard of Qur'an and Arabic was considered low and the emir visited the school several times by way of encouraging the development of education.¹⁸⁰ By the second decade of its establishment, the school had gained some popularity in town, indicated by the enquiries the teachers received from the town about vacancies for new students. The authority also began to think of the possibility of opening another school in another part of the town. People wanted their children to be in the elementary school but were disappointed English was not taught there and day boys were not allowed in the primary school, so that they dropped their requests.¹⁸¹ At this time no mission school was yet available for the children of Christians and southerners living in Ilorin, to serve as an alternative.

A scheme was conceived of in the Northern Provinces with the aim to train the Qur'an teachers in the three Rs with the hope that they can return and teach these in their Qur'anic schools, thus serving as a bridge to those who may want to enter the elementary school. To attract these teachers to come to the school, the authority decided on providing some subsistence allowance for them. A subsistence allowance of 6/6d to one Pound a month was paid to the mallams in the course of training in 1930/31 by the Ilorin Native Authority but the payment was discontinued because the mallams thought the payment should continue after the training rather than see it as an incentive.

As the British foresaw, the opportunity for employment in the NA was what attracted the few Qur'an teachers that were interested in the scheme.¹⁸² The British assumption that the Qur'an teachers should be able to teach the subjects they learnt when they return to their schools was rather simplistic. At the time, the merit of any western education in most Muslim scholars' view could only serve the interest of the colonial order and they would not do it and it would have been resisted by the people. Any Qur'an teacher who tried such innovation risked being ostracized by the community and his fellow scholars.

¹⁷⁹ NAK 'Waive of Pupil Teachers Rules', Iloprof file No. 390/1920.

¹⁸⁰ NAK 'Annual Report Education Department Ilorin Province', Iloprof file No. 3/1 0433/1928.

¹⁸¹ This interest must be the influence of contacts with educated Yoruba of southern Nigeria.

¹⁸² NAK 'Proposed Classes of Koranic Teachers', Iloprof file No. 2276.

The British attitude toward Islamic education was rather ambivalent. While it claimed it did not want to interfere in the religious belief of the people, it did not appreciate the importance of the Muslim education system to the people; the attitude towards it at times patronizing. It also wanted some modifications especially in method and organization but was not ready to give it the needed support to do so nor did the colonial authority considered the opinions of the Muslim scholars relevant in such venture. Attempts by the British to develop Islamic education or tailor it to its taste did not take into consideration the feelings of the people still smarting from an imposition of authority the people considered an aberration. In the government school, the teaching of Arabic was not considered as part of the school curriculum as such but more like a bait to lure Muslims to the school or douse their apathy to the school. For example, the two Arabic teachers were paid out of NA non-education vote unlike the other six teachers, setting the tone for discrimination against the Arabic teachers in the scheme of things, which continued in the post-colonial period.¹⁸³

The official lukewarm attitude towards religious and Arabic education was perhaps responsible for the poor performance of the subject in the school. There was complain, for example, that out of about a hundred pupils, only fourteen completed the Qur'an course of instruction under the NA school. The students, like some others in the town where English was becoming popular, could see the power in the education provided through the medium of English. Like others too, they had little faith in the colonial school providing Arabic education. As it was also not examinable, they had little incentive to take it seriously. No doubt the influence of close contact with the southwest is also important in Ilorin. Government was interested in development of what it called secular Arabic but was not willing to fund such provision. In the school, the instruction in secular Arabic was still at an elementary level, because the idea was in its infancy and the need for it peripheral.¹⁸⁴

The British understood the teaching of the Qur'an as that "which the children are taught uncomprehendingly to write and uncomprehendingly to recite. They are taught neither grammar nor even the meaning of words and it is at this stage that majority of the pupils at a Koran school complete their learning." Those who go further attach themselves to a mallam; " Here again the teaching is more or less parrot like- the pupil reads only one book with each mallam of which he learns by heart the translation phrase by phrase, only a few could use a dictionary or read an

¹⁸³ NAK 'Provincial School Annual report' Iloprof file No.163/1917.

¹⁸⁴ NAK 'Annual Report of Ilorin Provincial Schools' Iloprof file No. 285/1918.

unknown book.”¹⁸⁵ The NA is considered incapable of providing improved Arabic studies along enlightened Arabic lines.

While the British observation was correct in some respect, it failed to go deeper. For the Muslims, understanding the meaning of the Qur'an is desirable but not necessary, and this does not diminish its utility for the observance of religious rituals.¹⁸⁶ To the British, however, this was not education, but something short of gibberish. By equating it with secular education where meaning is important, it failed to grasp this aspect of Muslim education. Even this supposed weakness of the Qur'anic education is largely to be found at the elementary stage of Qur'an recitation study. During this period, some of the scholars in Ilorin, like Tajul Adab were already advanced in their scholarship but the colonial authority was not aware and if it was aware, mistrust between the two educational systems prevented any cooperation towards improved Islamic and Arabic studies.

The official policy of the British also impeded some officials who showed some interest in the problem. The official policy stated that “the teacher of religion is nominated by the emir and the subject and method of teaching are at his discretion alone. There should be no interference with him at all in his teaching, save that the superintendent of education arranges the hours of instructions to suit the daily timetable of the classes and insists that the classes are conducted in an orderly manner. The emir, or his representative, not ourselves, sees that proper instruction is given and due progress made.” This ambivalent posture of non-interference and a desire for improved system made intervention difficult for enthusiasts among the colonial officials.¹⁸⁷

By the end of 1929, it was decided that two new schools should be established in Alanamu and Ajikobi wards, with the hope that situated close to the people, it will help reduce the people's resistance to colonial education.¹⁸⁸ The first school had been situated out of town and there had been attempts to burn it down.¹⁸⁹ The fortunes of Qur'anic education in the government school continued to regress and by 1936 it was considered impractical to continue to pay a man ‘to teach nothing but the Qur'an’. It was believed that the trained mallams (who were also Muslims) could as well give the instruction and it recommended for the Qur'an instructors to

¹⁸⁵ NAK ‘Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools’ Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936.

¹⁸⁶ Ozig, *Education in Northern*, 7. In personal discussions with European scholars, they have compared this rote learning to the position of Latin in European curriculum even to the first half of the twentieth century.

¹⁸⁷ NAK ‘Kaduna College Accommodation for Pupils’, Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936

¹⁸⁸ NAK ‘Ilorin School Committee Minutes’, Iloprof file No.3604 Vol.1/1928.

¹⁸⁹ Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteers of Ilorin*, 255.

be dismissed. They were restored back the same year because the secular subject teachers were not sufficiently qualified to teach the subject. Moreover, the economy of the dismissal was minimal. The emir had agreed to the dismissal believing the Muslim teachers could do the job, but like others in the school committee, found that his judgment was wrong. The British ideas were determined by economic consideration but the emir and his chiefs were more concerned about the social implications of policies. This reflected in their deliberations on education in the province, over quality or expansion of education. The British favoured limited but quality education while the Africans favoured expansion of opportunity.¹⁹⁰

The plan of spreading mass literacy through the Qur'an mallams of the 3 Rs was discontinued in Ilorin province, the thinking being that adult classes would be a better line of action. There was widespread desire of the people to learn in Ilorin and some have done so privately through clerks, ex school boys and southern traders who traded with Ilorin. There was hope in official quarters that the Qur'anic schools could still be an avenue for the spread of the 3Rs as some of the Qur'anic teachers were expected to attend the adult classes to be conducted by the elementary school teachers after school hours for which the teachers (of the elementary schools), it was suggested should be paid. The emir expressed support for the program, the Provincial Superintendent of Education, however, felt the elementary school teachers should take the job as social service without extra pay and the pupils should be able to give something in cash or kind like in the traditional system. The emir, however, favoured a small cash fee. In the end the teachers were not paid any fee.¹⁹¹

By the mid-1930s, the colonial authority had decided that 'Qur'anic school teachers' should no longer be treated separately but as a part of the general adult education program. There were three types of adult education in the northern provinces: one, a class of Qur'anic teachers who were given some stipends; two, a class for NA workers, Qur'anic mallams attend these in some provinces and three, two mallams were selected at a time and trained at nearby elementary school.¹⁹² The second type of adult education was adopted for Ilorin with some success. The plan was started in 1930 of holding a year's classes for the Qur'anic mallams or their assistants, that they might learn the 3Rs in vernacular with the hope they will impart these to their pupils back in their schools and thus serve as a bridge for some of the pupils to enter the elementary schools and generally increase literacy. Subsistence allowance of 6/6d to one pound a month was paid to the mallams in the

¹⁹⁰ NAK 'Ilorin School Committee Minutes', Iloprof file No.3604 Vol.1/1928.

¹⁹¹ NAK 'Proposed Classes of Koranic Teachers', Iloprof file No. 2276.

¹⁹² NAK 'Proposed Classes of Koranic Teachers', Iloprof file No. 2276.

course of training by the NA during 1930/31 period but thereafter discontinued because the mallams thought the payment should continue after the training, which was not the official stand.

The scheme was not very successful in most of the Northern Provinces. This, the British officials believed was due to, first, the conservative attitude of the people, secondly, the mallams losing touch with their pupils who have gone elsewhere for the Qur'anic education. (The British thought this was because no arrangement was made for a substitute mallam, but it is more probable people withdrew their children from such schools at the instigation of other scholars who still loathe the colonial authority and its rivaling education system) and thirdly because of the issue of allowance. In trying out these schemes, it was only in Bida that some success was achieved, but in the other provinces it did not work out as planned, many of the mallams hoping they would be employed by the Native Authority and when this did not materialize, they lost interest.

In Katsina Province for example, when this did not happen, the mallams did nothing to impart their new knowledge in their schools. No doubt the possibility of employment with the NA was the motive behind the attendance by these Qur'anic teachers, for they all know the near impossibility of teaching the 3Rs in their schools.¹⁹³ Salaried work was an innovation that most appealed to the people who had no such practice in their culture. They could see the power and prestige of the NA workers, some of whom had come from among the scholar class. The new economic order had disempowered them while at the same time putting new monetary responsibility on them in the form of taxes. Salaried work then would have been a relief.

The British officials were still unable to understand Muslim aversion to western education. This dilemma could be summed up thus: the British thought was that western education was the best thing they had brought to the Africans, the opportunity of which should be grabbed with both hands. The Muslims on the other hand were not fully satisfied with or trust the aims of the British, the unsavoury experience of the colonial encounter very much in their mind. A people who had conquered them by force cannot be trusted to do any good. When the Resident of Kano wrote to the Secretary of the Northern Provinces, he noted that 'The schools were not viewed with respect and appreciation and was called "kafirchi" (unbelief).'¹⁹⁴ The British officials were wondering the cause of this. Was it insufficient attention to religious instructions or teaching religious instructions in

¹⁹³ NAK 'Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools', Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936.

¹⁹⁴ NAK 'Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools', Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936.

the same venue as European subjects or objection to children being taught any European subject at all or the people just being abusive? Enquiry showed the absence of religious teaching as the root of the discontent. The British noted that African NA workers were anxious that religious instructions be taught in these schools but took no practical step in this direction.

However, not all of the NA workers were indifferent to the situation and more so the African NA workers realized the limit of their power. Bello Kagara, one of officials at the regional headquarters in Kaduna, for example examined the problems associated with the study of religion in government schools and wrote a report to his British superior in this regard. He noted that; 'little attention is given to religious education in these provincial schools and that secular education is likely to make demand for Arabic most insignificant. Most of the pupils in the secular elementary and middle schools were not taking religious instruction seriously with most having mastered only the first , second or third of the sixty divisions of the Qur'an, even though there were Qur'anic teachers in all these schools. Pupils go through school without much Islamic education and go on to work for the NA.'

This, he observed, was the cause of the discomfort of the mallams. Since it was part of the curriculum, it should be supervised and examined too, he argued. The need to increase the time allocated to it was also important. Most students also did not complete the Arabic syllabus. A mallam should be attached to the boarding establishment to help interested students. He advised that the teachers of Arabic should draw a schedule and methods of teaching to be harmonized. The teachers should also keep a record of work done and individual report of each students be kept. He also advocated for corporal punishment to keep the students disciplined. He then made suggestions of how a new syllabus should be drawn and actually drew one in this respect. The British officials did not agree with everything suggested by Kagara, especially the increase in time or extra lessons and the idea of a whip to keep the boys disciplined.¹⁹⁵ Kagara's superiors only accepted what they considered important from his recommendations; even though it is discernible he had been objective and had written his report with insights of a northerner familiar with traditional thinking and western methods.

Some of the British officials made interesting observations. Mr Baldwin's (Principal Superintendent of Education) view was perhaps the most Qur'an education friendly view of the British officials. In his opinion, stagnation in Islam is due to lack of contact (with the rest of the Muslim world) rather than inherent sterility. He felt that most colonial officials and missionaries had wrong views that

¹⁹⁵ NAK 'Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools', Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936.

that Islam is static. He saw the problem as lack of contact; that Islam in northern Nigeria was a veneer i.e nominal and that Islam is unlike Christianity which is concerned with faith and morals. A comparison with the Arab Muslims is discernible in his statement.¹⁹⁶ He saw Islam as more like a polity, more like Judaism. He posited three possible attitudes toward Islam: one, hostility, two, outward respect but actual neglect with the hope it will eventually die and three, frank partnership. No one, he believed, would advocate the first and the second was unwise. His previous analysis was to urge the third option.¹⁹⁷

He observed that Muslims did not accept the British at their own valuations and thought themselves higher than the British. Northern officials were envious of the progress of education in the south but he pointed out gloomy events in the south, no doubt referring to nationalism raging there and which was undesirable to the colonial order. Real partnership, he advocated or else, it would lead to a dichotomy of educated Muslims against the masses. His solution to the dilemma was to train people who will be grounded in both systems of education such as the Sudanese Sheikhs at the Kano Law School, open to western ideas yet carrying on their traditions.¹⁹⁸ He then suggested having the Sudanese Sheikhs to draw a syllabus for Arabic for the elementary and Middle Schools with texts to be used. These, he argued, should be well taught and the Europeans were to show real interest and not see it as a side show and it should be given attention like all other subjects.¹⁹⁹ He acknowledged the difficulty of Arabic not being a vernacular in Nigeria except in a part of Borno but this should not deter efforts to develop the subject, he argued. All these, he felt are in line with the declared policy of making the best of native cultures.²⁰⁰

Superintendent of Education P.G.S.Baylis, a British official of the Education Department agreed with Baldwin's views. His take on the problem summarized what the problem was. He noted that harmonization was thought of at the beginning of efforts in northern Nigeria to intervene in Islamic education but increased

¹⁹⁶ Despite his positive views, he as well erred in some of his assumptions. There were contacts with the Arab Muslim world and Islam is also very much concerned with morals. Ware III, *The Walking Qur'an*, 19. Faulted such European assumption of 'correct' Islam as synonymous with Arab

¹⁹⁷ NAK 'Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools', Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936.

¹⁹⁸ His ideas here were similar to Vischer's earlier ideas.

¹⁹⁹ The Resident of Kano in letter to the Secretary of the Northern Provinces had made similar suggestion. NAK 'Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools', Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936. This attitude toward religious education would continue along this trend even to the post-colonial trend. In the new curriculum of education proposed begin in 2015; religious education is going to be replaced by Civic education.

²⁰⁰ NAK 'Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools' Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936.

acceleration and higher standard in later times in government secular schools had led to the believe that Arabic was a waste of time to which lip service is to be paid, or neglected to the point it will fizzle out. His statement confirmed the situation as it existed unlike Baldwin who was thinking in terms of possibilities. Increased secularization of schools had led to the production of alienated Nigerians who could not reconcile their new status with their background, just as Bello Kagara had lamented in his report.²⁰¹

Another British official, Nicholson added his voice to the debate. He opined that Arabic should be regarded as part of religious instruction. He did not see much responsibility for the Principal Superintendent of Education with regard to the subject except with regard to discipline, indicating much non interest. He also cited the need for increased lesson periods. Furthermore, serious Arabic studies should be pursued in Kano at the School of Arabic Studies. The Superintendent of Education for Ilorin Province in correspondence with the Principal Superintendent of Education holds that lack of attention to Arabic education is due to the official policy of non-interference rather than neglect with the hope that it will die. He advocated that the Qur'an should be translated and the students be made to know the meaning. The students should also be made to observe the ritual prayers as part of their lessons.²⁰²

In 1937, at the Residents Conference, the issue of colonial government interest in religious education was on the front burner. The ambivalent nature of the noninterference policy was mentioned as a key problem for the officers. The idea of 'suitable contact' that Baldwin touted was discussed and it was mentioned that the Sudanese Sheikhs at Kano had been told to prepare a very simple text book on the ethics of Islam which the Waziri of Kano insisted should be in Arabic against the Ma'aji's wish for it to be in Hausa. There were questions as to the propriety of government taking an active part in religious teaching. A participant said the business of the government was the moral and material progress of the people. This would be achieved with the teaching of Arabic which would strengthen Islam, the moral guide of the people. This view was not generally supported, betraying a general non interest but tolerable approach to the idea of Arabic or Islamic education in the government schools by the colonial authority.

Among the arguments put forward in favor of government intervention was that the promise of noninterference does not mean neglecting religious studies or not seeking to improve its method of teaching. On the issue of increasing the time

²⁰¹ NAK 'Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools' Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936.

²⁰² NAK 'Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools' Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936.

allocated for lessons, no extra time was in the drawn up syllabus for elementary school, only in Middle School was a little extra time provided. The problems of syllabus and 'contacts' were among the issues that the Residents agreed upon at the conference.²⁰³ These were the areas the British felt Muslims could be helped with and were willing to facilitate.

The (Sudanese) Gordon College Graduate teachers in School for Arabic Studies in Kano were given these responsibilities. They were used to change people's negative ideas about the British such as speaking in English or wearing English dress. These acts had been the peoples' strategies of resisting colonialism. The Sudanese scholars used verses of the Qur'an to back up their arguments. As part of the policies, Nigerian students were to be discouraged from going to Al Azhar University in Egypt, whose teachings the British considered Archaic and subversive to their interest.²⁰⁴ The first set of Nigerians to go outside for further studies in Islamic and Arabic studies were sent to Sudan before some were later sent to the United Kingdom where such people as Abdul Kadir Orire later studied.²⁰⁵ It was only after independence that Nigerians were able to freely pursue their studies in places like Libya, Egypt, Iraq and Syria and their scholars were allowed to come to teach in Nigeria.

On its own, the colonial Education Department continued to work toward improving Arabic knowledge, without recourse to the traditional scholars. As part of this effort, a two week Arabic course was organized for the Qur'an instructors in elementary schools in Ilorin, in July 1938. The course was drawn up in Kano and was conducted by hajji Hamid of Ilorin Middle School.²⁰⁶ The emir had expressed misgivings that the government religious instructors were not well qualified either in the religious subject or in Arabic and were hardly any better than the students they were teaching. This question of quality mostly must have been due to the inability to get the qualified teachers from the class of traditional scholars, to work for the government. The Education Department was also considered not to have shown sufficient interest in the subject. Because students were not examined on the subject, they tended not to be serious with it as with the secular subjects, especially as they knew that not passing it would not prevent them from passing out of the school. This was what Bello Kagara had noted in his report.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ NAK 'Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools' Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936.

²⁰⁴ Reichmuth, 'Sheikh Adam'; Mustapha, 'Sabotage in Patronage'

²⁰⁵ In Post-independence Nigeria he became the Grand Khadi of Kwara State from 1975 to 2000.

²⁰⁶ NAK 'Mohammedan Native Schools', Iloprof file No. 3177.SCH 75.

²⁰⁷ NAK 'Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools', Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936.

Emir Abdulkadir (1919-1959) was also trying to help within what he considered was his power. He informed the authority of availability of books written in Yoruba (roman character) that teaches religion and he promised to recommend others and have them translated. He recommended for the teachers to be sent for further training in Kano. Earlier in 1943, the Education Officer for Ilorin Province had considered the total number of period allocated for Qur'an study as not enough to warrant employing a full time Qur'an teacher. This was not considered economic, complaining that the cost of training an Arabic teacher would be up by 400 percent and that the Law School in Kano was not good in training teachers. It was considered a waste of time and fund to send the old men teaching the Qur'an to Kano, since they would continue to teach parrot-like as they had learnt themselves when they return.²⁰⁸



Fig.6. Emir Abdulkadir (1919-1959). Picture courtesy of Sheikh Salman AbdulKadir (Daudu Ballah)

²⁰⁸ NAK 'Mohammedan Native Schools', Iloprof file No.3177/SCH 75.

Through the 1940s and 1950s the colonial authority continued to work toward improving Arabic studies, which saw the emergence of Nigerians trained as Arabists, many of whom would form the elites of the independence era and many would operate separately from the ulama by virtue of being in formal government employment. The colonial mindset is understandable; that developing Arabic should be helpful to Muslims but colonial attitude is more academic and economic considerations were more important rather than any social value of the subject, unlike Muslims' attitude toward it. The Muslims see the language as sacred and all previous dealings with it had been largely in religious context, and not something to be studied for its own value. The contradictions in the views and aims of the colonial authority and the Muslims would continue to affect the fortune of Islamic and Arabic education till the British left the country. The emir who bestrode the world of his Muslim subjects and that of the colonial authority appears unable to act as a bridge.²⁰⁹

Emir Abdulkadir on the one hand was very supportive of the innovative development being carried out by Sheikh Kamalud-deen, outside of the colonial purview. He not only supported the Adabiyya movement financially from his salary but he also gave two of his sons out to be trained by Sheikh Kamalud-deen.²¹⁰ Yet the emir did not make any move to connect the two reforms (colonial and Adabiyya) which he was in a position to do. This betrays a wariness of the colonial authority and their reforms. Though the emirs were often accused of being tools in the hands of the colonial authority, their actions shows that they were not particularly comfortable in their positions but seems to be maneuvering their ways around the colonial power, to which they were subject and their own people who held them in high esteem. By not linking Sheikh Kamalud-deen to colonial attempts at reforms, he might have thought of protecting the scholar from colonial interference. Often the emirs had to balance between what they considered as good for themselves, their people and the colonial authority, with the possibility of the

²⁰⁹ The emir, like some of his colleagues in the north simply compartmentalized his relations with the colonial authority and those of his subjects; each dealt with in its own context. The fact that the reforms of Ulama (such as that of Sheikh Kamalud-deen) were also at their infancy is also to be considered.

²¹⁰ Discussions with Sheikh Ahmad Adisa-Onikoko. 21-6-2012; Prince Salman Abdulkadir. December, 2012; Alhaji Labaika Bello. 29-10-2012. The emir was giving 2 pounds ten every month from his salary to the Adabiyya/Ansarul Islam cause. The scribe of the group Alhaji Labaiko Bello was responsible for collecting this sum.

three aligning on any issue almost impossible. He may have seen the colonial attempt at reform as half-hearted unlike that of Sheikh Kamalud-deen.²¹¹

Some of the colonial officials had pro-Muslim ideas concerning religious education but they were in minority and their views did not make much impact. J. B. Scott, the Acting Assistant Director of Education for the Northern Provinces issued a circular in June 1944 to all the Provincial Education Officers in which he tried to press home the importance of religious education in the life of pupils. While religious instruction may not help secure lucrative employment, he advised against its neglect. The effect of the neglect would be unfortunate on the society. He cited what he considered moral decadence in England then as an example of what the neglect of religion could lead to. His views give the impression he was of religious bent or at least had some soft spot for religion.

Religious instruction, he believed has a certain foundation upon which modern attempts at character building could be based. He wanted the Native Authority, the emirs and others whose religion and culture it is in the first place to be active and be responsible for the success of the venture. He advised the Provincial Education Officers to articulate interest in the subject (of the over a hundred Education Officers in the Northern Region, only one could speak Arabic). He suggested that the Native Authority demand a certain proficiency in the religious subjects for those seeking clerical posts with the native authority.²¹²

Enthusiasm without much power and responsibility of officials like Scott and Baldwin was criticized by others because Arabic was not vernacular, though used in court for records and was understood only by a few. As a language connected with religion, more than any other language, it is not surprising that a secular system such as the colonial rule would only develop or promote it only in so far as it suits its agenda. In 1945, Scott issued a circular making Arabic an examinable subject in Middle School IV examination. He reiterated the inseparability of Arabic as a language from religious instruction.²¹³

Colonial criticism of the interest in promoting religious education include the complain that many of the older type Arabists were not accustomed to modern pedagogical styles, relatively large class, short intensive period, rigid timetable and the use of apparatus, unlike the indefinite conditions of the Qur'an class under a

²¹¹ The emir's attitude is somewhat similar to Emir Muhammadu Dikko of Katsina (1904-1944) who compartmentalized Islam and the colonial affairs into different domains. See Umar, *Islam and Colonialism*, 143-149.

²¹² NAK 'Mohammedan Native Schools', Iloprof file No.3177/SCH 75.

²¹³ NAK 'Mohammedan Native Schools', Iloprof file No.3177/SCH 75.

tree. This problem is discernible more in the elementary school (Arabic) teachers than the teachers in the Middle School. Refresher courses were therefore advocated for the elementary school teachers (a two weeks course had been organized earlier in 1938). The western approach to education was seen as valuable in addition to the traditional one. This view is similar to what Vischer had advocated earlier in his educational project in Kano. There were arguments for the subject to be taught in the same way other secular subjects were being taught, not the custom of relegating the teaching of religious instruction to some dark remote corner of the school. Use of exercise books was also advocated and a reading textbook for each student provided, so that silent reading (against the chanting in the Qur'anic schools) should be targeted at the appropriate stage.²¹⁴

These suggestions coming from the colonial officials betrayed some disconnect between the colonial ideas on the development of Arabic and Islamic education and that of the local Muslim community where, as will be seen in the next chapter. Sheikh Kamalud-deen had already introduced these reforms in his school but the colonial authority appears unaware of this, though the Native Authority headed by the emir and its native staff were fully aware and the emir supported his reforms. The colonial authority also felt the Native Authority had its share of the blame in the lack of much progress in the development of Arabic education. The Secretary of the Northern Provinces in July 1949 wrote to the Resident of Ilorin complaining that the Native Authority was employing the graduates of the Arabic School from Kano, instead of utilizing them for the specialist training they have received, so they can pass on the knowledge of Arabic to others. He expressed surprise at this attitude when all along the complaint had been that the Education Department was not doing enough or taking sufficient interest in Arabic and religious education.²¹⁵

In 1953, another course was organized for twenty-six Arabic teachers in Ilorin province, twenty of them from Ilorin town, the rest coming from Lafiagi, Patigi and Kaiama. This was conducted by mallam Abdulkadir Okekere²¹⁶ and he was assisted by mallam Ahmadu Ori Okoh and mallam Abdulkadir Ori Oke. Subjects taught included Arabic reading and Qur'an, each having two periods. Writing, dictation, composition and religious instruction were also given two periods. Two periods were allocated to tests and general talks. A period each was allocated for the correction of dictation, composition and tests. The participants were graded A,B,C,

²¹⁴ NAK 'Mohammedan Native Schools', Iloprof file No.3177/SCH 75.

²¹⁵ NAK 'Mohammedan Native Schools', Iloprof file No.3177/SCH 75.

²¹⁶ He later became a Nigerian Ambassador to the Republic of Egypt. Weekly Trust Newspaper. Interview with Sheikh Ahmad Lemu (retired Grand Khadi of Niger State). 5 May, 2013.

according to their performance. This would determine the salary to be paid and the levels they would be assigned to teach in the schools.²¹⁷

As Nigeria's independence was approaching, it appears the British were more concerned with a safe passage out of the country and would do no more than it had already done in the field. The success achieved with western education surpassed expectation of the colonial authority and they were satisfied in that respect.²¹⁸ Self-government was achieved by the Northern Regional Government in 1959 on the eve of the country's independence. As part of the Northern Region, these policies of the British affected Ilorin. Though Sheikh Kamalud-deen had begun his reforms along some of the lines advocated above by the British officials, either the British were not aware of it or deliberately ignored it.²¹⁹ His reforms could have been latched on to but it appears the British were uninformed of his efforts or thought it insignificant or could not imagine their subjects capable of such reforms. When he applied for registration of his school in 1946, the British officials relied on the information the emir passed on to them that he was a reliable person, in processing his application, suggesting they were oblivious of his reforms.²²⁰

The NA workers as well were not supportive of some his initiatives such as his western education primary school that he established in 1946 and derisively referred to his school as '*ile iwe abe petesi*'²²¹ (school under the storey building). He had started his school under his one storey building apartment. This is somewhat surprising since the head of the Native Authority, the emir, was very supportive of his reforms. Graduates of his school were discriminated against in the grant of scholarship, leading some of them to study in the Western Region against the norm

²¹⁷ NAK 'Mohammedan Native Schools', Iloprof file No.3177/SCH 75.

²¹⁸ There were several British initiatives to integrate Islamic Institutions into the colonial system which had its effects both in the judiciary and in education in the Northern Region, such as the Shahuci Judicial School in Kano (1928), the Khadi School in Sokoto (1932) and the Northern Provinces Law School in Kano (1934), where the Sudanese scholars were brought in. They and their Nigerian counterparts initiated training courses for teachers and new curricula for Arabic and Islamic instruction at both elementary and middle schools. SAS gained wide acceptance and a number of Ilorin scholars already well acquiesced to western education attended the school. The 1950s were important for the development of modernized Islamic institutions both at the private and state levels.

²¹⁹ Moreover, his reforms were still nascent at this period.

²²⁰ See comments on the reverse side of his application form, NAK 'Adabiyya Moslem School', Iloprof file No. 4659. The fact that he was mostly alone in this reform (not just in Ilorin but the whole of the Northern Region) at this period may also have contributed to the colonial authority not taking his reforms seriously.

²²¹ Discussions with Sheikh Ahmad Adisa-Onikoko. 21-6-2012.

in Ilorin to look towards the north for higher education at the time.²²² It took a decade after the establishment of his school before its certificate became accepted by the government.²²³ His students had to take school leaving certificate examinations in the government approved schools to move to higher levels of education.²²⁴

This legacy of lip service to Islamic education would continue when Nigeria got independence, though more efforts were made to bridge the dichotomy.²²⁵ At one end the dichotomy widened as western education received more attention and at the other it narrowed with greater accommodation of Islamic education in western institution, even if the form of accommodation was not satisfactory to many Muslim scholars. A uniform approach has not yet been achieved in bridging the gap between the two systems of education. Rather different methods have been tried with varying results.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined how the British conquered Ilorin in 1897, one of the first emirates of the Sokoto caliphate to be brought under colonial rule. This would affect not only its political and economic life but also the intellectual activities of the Islamic educational system. The scholars had provided the intellectual discourse against having any relationship with the foreigners and when Ilorin was conquered militarily, many of them withdrew their support for the emirs, seeing them as tools in the hands of unbelieving usurpers of Muslim territory. When the indirect rule was instituted, the emir would need the Muslim scholars whom the colonial authority had asked the emir to approach to offer clerical services for the new administrative structure put in place, being the only section of the local population equipped to render such service. Some accepted but many rejected. This rejection was extended to the new system of education introduced by the colonial authority.

The traditional method of instructing Qur'an reading, starting with the knowledge of Arabic alphabet especially the tri-lingual means of teaching the Arabic alphabet and syllable formation, harking to the different ethnic background of the foundational scholars of Ilorin, was explored as well.

²²² Discussions with Alfa Ibrahim, 5-6-2012 and Sheikh Ahmad Adisa-Onikoko. 21-6-2012.

²²³ Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education in' 88.

²²⁴ Discussion with Sheikh Salman Olarongbe Abdulkadir (Daudu Ballah). November 2012.

²²⁵ Such as the efforts of the Premier of Northern Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello's effort to integrate Islamic schools into the mainstream education sector.

In the course of the colonial rule, the authority sought to accommodate Islamic education in its own secular education program, partly to draw unwilling Muslims to the system needed to provide the colonial clerical needs. Attempts were made to improve the method of teaching in the Islamic education system, which the British considered archaic and not suited to modern living. However, the reforms were done without much recourse to Muslim views. The result was that Muslims were making reforms in their sphere at the same time the colonial authority were also making what appeared as halfhearted efforts in the same direction within its western system. Colonial success with western education further eroded the somewhat weak interest it had in improving the indigenous system. Some success was made especially in the promotion of Arabic and but the dichotomy between the two systems was not completely bridged and this continued in the era of self-government in the 1950s into the independence and post-independence era.