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

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Citation

Aliyu, S. A. (2015, October 6). *Transmission of Learning in Modern Ilorin: A History of Islamic Education 1897-2012*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/35802>

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Title: Transmission of learning in modern Ilorin : a history of islamic education 1897-2012

Issue Date: 2015-10-06

Chapter Five

Higher Islamic Education

Introduction

Until the reforms of the twentieth century, higher Islamic education basically begins with studies that come after the completion of the recitational study of the Qur'an.¹ A small population of students continued their education after the recitational study of the Qur'an. In the traditional system of Islamic education, this stage is called the *kewu ilimi*² stage from the Arabic word *ilm*, meaning knowledge. After the completion of the recitational study of the Qur'an, those not pursuing a scholarly career would learn a trade either from within the family or outside the family. Sometimes apprenticeship in a craft goes hand in hand with learning.³

In the period under study, this level of Islamic learning underwent changes as did every other aspect of Islamic learning in Ilorin. The changes brought about by colonialism and reforms in Islamic education early in the twentieth century and the post-independence developments added new modes of acquiring higher education, both in the reformed Islamic education system and the government and private owned institutions of higher learning. From the middle of the twentieth century, there is also the connection to the Middle East countries for the pursuit of higher Islamic and Arabic education for the graduates of the *madaris*.

In this chapter we will examine these modes of higher Islamic education; the level of Islamic education that eventually determines who becomes a scholar of Islam. It is here that all scholarly learning is refined. As the crown of Islamic learning, we will explore the challenges and opportunities encountered at this level of learning and how the system responded to these. The impact of this mode of learning on the scholarly community and the society in general would also be examined. This level of learning determines the quality of scholarly learning and knowledge production and reproduction in any Muslim society. It is from this level that changes and progress of Islamic education flow down and permeate all levels of learning

¹ The modernization and advancement in knowledge achieved in the twentieth century by the Islamic education system has however changed this signpost. The Madrasah mode more or less now serves as a sort of intermediary stage in the acquisition of Islamic knowledge.

² *Kewu* is the general designation of Islamic education among the Yoruba speakers. The higher Islamic education was probably designated *kewu ilimi* as it marks the beginning of knowledge for would-be scholar where meaning of what is learned is important compared to learning to read the Qur'an that requires no understanding of the meaning.

³ Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education in,' 45.

Kewu ilimi (Higher Islamic Education in the Traditional System)

In the informal traditional Islamic learning system, only Qur'an is studied at the first stage.⁴ This stage could take several years until the reforms of the twentieth century shortened the number of years needed for this stage to as low as within a year, depending on the age and aptitude of the student. The stages of learning to read the Qur'an have been described in chapter three. Towards the end of this stage the student too would have been involved in the devolvement of knowledge to junior pupils, assisting the teacher to teach the younger ones the knowledge he had earlier acquired through the same method. A career as a future scholar tentatively begins at this stage.

After the completion of the Qur'an, usually those who would pursue a career in Islamic education would be introduced to introductory texts of theology. Rote learning is still essential at this stage.⁵ The pupil recites a portion of the text being studied to his teacher and the teacher translates the meaning to him and he is expected to know it verbatim. Usually a few sentences or at most a page is studied at a time, depending on the intellectual capacity of the student. This is what a colonial official referred to as 'learning parrot wise.'⁶ Knowledge of Arabic at this early stage is still rudimentary, hence the verbatim method. The same words and phrases are used from generation to generation and different teachers teaching the same text would be found to be using virtually the same words for the translation of the text. This is akin to the immutable nature of the Qur'an, from which all Islamic knowledge is derived.⁷

A student may be living with his teacher or staying at home. Most of those coming from home would be those who are engaged with some other occupations. Those living with the teacher have the advantage of having greater access to the teacher and his store of knowledge, not necessarily limited to texts. The skills of officiating religious events and the use of prayer formulas in the prayer economy are acquired

⁴ Danmole, 'The Frontier Emirate,' 113; Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education in Ilorin,' 53.

⁵ Arabic as a language is never taught at the Qur'an recitation level, so that introduction to meaning of texts also begins with rote. Some of the semi-formal Qur'anic Schools now teach some introductory Arabic to their pupils.

⁶ NAK Iloprof file No.3196/3/1936.

⁷ For example the *basmallah* (In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful) that begins all but one chapters of the Qur'an is translated into Yoruba virtually everywhere as '*ni oruko olohun, oba ajoke aye, oba asake orun*,' an exegetical translation rather than literal translation. *Oba ajoke aye* roughly translates as 'The king who is gracious to humans collectively in this world.' '*Oba asake orun*' translates as 'The king who is selectively merciful in the hereafter.' See Isaac A. Ogunbiyi, 'Arabic- Yoruba Translation of the Qur'an: A Socio-Linguistic perspective' *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 3 (1) (2001) 21-45, for a socio-Linguistic perspective on the various translated Volumes of the Qur'an in Yoruba.

alongside text based learning. The skill of a repeater (*ajanasi*)⁸ is also acquired at this stage if the teacher is into preaching. Unlike Qur'an studies slated for morning and noon, *ilmi* classes tended to be very early in the morning after the morning devotions or late in the night after the last prayer of the day, although they could take place at any time of the day.⁹ This allows the teacher to concentrate on the few students without the distraction of the chanting of the Qur'anic class. Some of the students may also be engaged in some trade or craft, making early morning or the night the most suitable time for lessons.

Movement from scholar to scholar in search of knowledge begins at this stage and would feature throughout the period of higher education.¹⁰ In the informal traditional system, there is no terminal point for this stage. A scholar only stops learning when there is no other work that another scholar can teach the student.¹¹ Because the texts to be studied at this stage are largely fixed texts that have been canonized since medieval times, their learning is mostly by rote. This explains why some of the scholars can teach these texts but may not be able to converse in Arabic.¹² The registers to be encountered in these works are largely related to religious rituals, theology and eschatology. These have been passed down from generation to generation verbatim and are all concerned with largely fixed ideas and rituals of religion.

However, this does not mean there were no scholars who could read any Arabic text without having studied it under a scholar or compose writing in Arabic. For example the letter written in the reign of the first emir Abdulsalami to Gwandu emirate seeking answers to some legal questions and putting the new emirate under the guardianship of Gwandu could not have been written except by someone versed in Arabic.¹³ The second emir, Shitta was also acknowledged by a European traveler as being conversant with Arabic.¹⁴ In the pre-colonial period, there were not many who had advanced enough to read any text without having studied it under another

⁸ He plays an important role as an assistant to preachers in their public sermons.

⁹ Yahaya Uthman Kolawole, 'The Development of Islamic Learning in Ilorin' (B. A. Long Essay, Islamic Studies, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 1997), 42.

¹⁰ Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education in Ilorin,' 54.

¹¹ Discussion with Sheikh Sulaiman Dan Borno (Mukadam Agba of Ilorin). 28-12-2012.

¹² Discussions with Alhaji Abdulkadir Jumuah Maimasa (Mufassir (exegete) of Gambari ward). 5-12-2013. There is an anecdote of how the then future Chief Imam of Ilorin, Sheikh Muhammad Bashir, enrolled at Al-Mahad al-dini al-Azhari to overcome this challenge at a time he had many students studying various *ilimi* texts under him.

¹³ Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 49; Danmole, 'The Growth of ,', 19.

¹⁴ W.H. Clarke, *Travels and Exploration in Yorubaland 1854-1858*, edited by J.A. Atanda (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1972), 84.

scholar and even well into the twentieth century. Arabic literacy became widespread in the twentieth century due to the reforms, in comparison to the previous century.

A reason many scholars were not versed in Arabic as a language on its own is to be found in its primary functions as a spiritual and religious language. The primary purpose of Islamic learning is piety, which could be attained with or without a mastery of the Arabic language. It is because of this reason that the members of *Zumratul Mu'meenina* (*makondoro*) are less concerned about mastery of Arabic of its own merit. The texts are largely fixed and have not been subjected to revisions except commentaries (*sharhu*). Lexicons outside of these texts may therefore not be known to the scholars teaching them but the language around the renowned texts are well understood, most of it taught by rote. Many would thus understand some spoken Arabic but may not be able to converse in it.¹⁵ The purpose had never been to be able to converse as such, except to explicate on religious knowledge.

One must also take into cognizance that Ilorin as a Muslim city was less than a hundred years old at the beginning of the twentieth century. The nineteenth century served as the century of incubation of scholarship in Ilorin. The town encountered colonialism and modernity at the time of the blooming of her intellectual endeavors. While many scholars in the nineteenth century were immigrants into the town, at the end of the century the town had produced home grown scholars, increasing the number of scholars who could provide higher education to scholars within the town.¹⁶ The population of the town in the nineteenth century was also limited compared to the twentieth century.

In the early twentieth century, higher Islamic education began to progress at a faster pace than the previous century. A number of factors contributed to this growth of learning. First, there had emerged a considerable number of home grown scholars who could pass the knowledge to others. This meant there were now a variety of choices of scholars to students who could learn different texts under different teachers.

Secondly, Ilorin had come under colonial rule. Colonial rule not only enforced peace that had been near absent in the past century but also introduced new ways of life that would affect everyone and that cut across the social, economic and political

¹⁵ Discussions with Imam Yakubu Aliagan, 12-9-2012 and Alhaji Abdulkadir Jumah Maimasa, Mufasssir (Exegete) of Gambari ward. 5-12-2013. Imam Yakubu Aliagan recalled as a young student studying with another scholar, of being drawn into the Adabiyya network upon hearing their scholars conversing in Arabic in public. He was impressed because he could understand the conversation but could not converse himself.

¹⁶ Danmole, 'The Growth of Islamic Learning,' 26; Al Iluri, *Lamahat al Al Ballur*, has given us some biographies of some of these scholars in his work.

spheres. Contact with the rest of the world was also facilitated through the sea. Previously contact with the rest of the world was largely through the trans-Sahara trade. Unlike the trans-Sahara trade, the sea trade was faster and the volume of goods for exchange was tremendous. So also was the exchange of ideas. It gradually displaced the trans-Sahara trade; Ilorin lost its middle man role in trans-Saharan trade between the north and the south.¹⁷ It is most likely that some of the new Islamic texts came through Arab traders and scholars on the coast.¹⁸

The new experience of modernity and colonialism as we have noted in the previous chapters enabled the scholars of Ilorin to move in many directions as missionaries. The new home grown scholars especially moved into many of the urban towns of the Yoruba region but were not limited to this region alone. They also moved around the Niger-Benue rivers confluence and into the neighboring West African countries.¹⁹ These areas provided fertile grounds for the scholars to put their intellectual prowess to use. These experiences as well as the challenge of colonialism and its attendant western education and Christianity played a prominent role in developing new strategies for the development of higher education in Ilorin.

Reformers emerged in response to the challenge of the new contenders for the attention of Muslims. The reformers of the early colonial period served as the foundation upon which all future developments would be based. The beginning of higher education is known but it really has no end as such.²⁰ This is especially true of the traditional system. Beginning after the completion of the recitational study of the Qur'an, it continues as a lifelong pursuit of learning. The introduction of reformed Arabic and Islamic schools, structured in some ways like its western counterpart also meant earlier access to higher education for Muslims. The reforms of Sheikh Kamalud-deen and that of Sheikh Adam Abdullahi al Iluri and others that would follow, not only reduced the number of years a scholar needed to access higher education but it also reduced the difficulties in accessing the education and made a mass oriented kind of education possible, through the promotion of Arabic language and literature.²¹

¹⁷ Danmole, 'The Frontier Emirate,' 120.

¹⁸ Reichmuth, 'Sheikh Adam.'

¹⁹ For the impact of Ilorin scholars on the development of Islam around the Niger-Benue confluence, see Mohammed, 'History of the Spread'; see also Danmole, 'The Frontier Emirate,' 167.

²⁰ Higher education in the formal tertiary institutions has helped put some structure to this. But this also has its limits since the knowledge involved esoteric learning that goes beyond textual understanding and cannot be pinned down to particular space or time.

²¹ Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 260-262

This brings out the question of classification of higher Islamic education and equating with the western system, which has remained a pervasive challenge to the Islamic education system. The reformed Islamic schools have the *Ibtidaiyya* as the equivalent of the primary school, *I'dadiyya* equivalent of the junior secondary and the *thanawiyya* as the equivalent of the senior secondary of the western system.²² This classification has been the result of the works of various religious education committees of the 1980s and early 1990s, who had to classify the system in comparison with Arabic model and partly in competition with the western education system.²³

For formal and academic classification, this classification somehow fits. But the differing purpose as well as curriculum and eventual utilization of Islamic education makes this classification somehow incongruous. '*Taqwa*' (piety) is a main aim of Islamic education, since it is *taqwa* that will lead the scholar to achieve the ultimate aim of a positive hereafter. Some scholars never went beyond the *I'dadiyya* or *thanawiyya* level and still rose to become great scholars based on the perceived piety and charisma they were able to attain. It is also to be noted that most of the founders of the *madaris* never had a *madrasah* education but had established the schools in response to modern challenges, especially that of western education. The academic exercise of the *madrasah* education is a means to an end, piety, the key to the cherished positive hereafter.

In the traditional system, there is the absence of formal division into levels and classes as found in the *madrasah* system. Again, at most, only a few students may be learning the same text at the same time with a teacher. A lot of rote is involved in the traditional system while the knowledge of Arabic in the *madrasah* reduces the dependency on rote. In the *madrasah*, the whole text may not be treated while the traditional system treats the whole book unless the student refuses to complete the study. Constraint of time and programming makes completing a text difficult in the *madaris*. Hence many students would still have to learn more about a text in a personal learning with scholars outside of the *madrasah*.²⁴

One advantage in the traditional system is the personal touch to the teaching. In the *madrasah* system, the personal touch is a little bit lost since the teacher teaches a

²² Muhammad, 'A Study of Selected,' 26.

²³ Until then it forms part of the broad higher Islamic education, the progress made since independence made the classification into secondary school equivalent possible with the development of the *thanawiyya* level from the late 1970s and the production of many university graduates of Arabic and Islamic studies.

²⁴ Discussions with Alhaji Abdulkadir Jumuah Maimasa (Mufassir (exegete) of Gambari ward). 5-12-2013. See Ware, *The Walking Qur'an*, 167.

whole class instead of the one on one of the traditional system.²⁵ A comparison of the texts and curriculum of the traditional *ilimi* system and those of the *madaris* showed some slight differences. The common texts in the traditional system favored many of the classical and canonical texts while the *madaris* were open to newer texts especially with their special interest in Arabic language and literature, including works of contemporary Nigerian scholars such as Sheikh Adam Abdullahi al Iluri and scholars from the Arab world.²⁶

One of the early texts a student would be introduced to in the traditional *ilimi* system is *Aqidat al-Salihin*, by Ibn Tumart (d.534/1130) popularly called *I'lamu* from the opening words in the text '*I'lam, arshadanallahu wa iyyaka...*' (Know, may Allah guide us, and you (the learner)...). It is mainly a text of *taohid* (theology) with some *fiqh* (jurisprudence). The *Matn al Risala* of Ibn Abi Zayd Al Qairawani is a popular text written in 386 A.H. It explicates on the rituals of worship such as ablutions and various purifications required in the practice of Islam. The text expatiates on the rituals of the five pillars of Islam and their sub branches such as the various obligatory, supererogatory prayers as well as prayers on special occasions such as when in need of rain, during an eclipse and in period of anxiety. It delves into social relations- wedding, divorce, business transaction, wills and judgment of offenders, booties, food and drinks and greetings as espoused in Islamic law. Also in the text are subjects such as the treatment of psychic attacks, divination and dream. The varied topics treated in the work makes it a classic, hence it is a *sine qua non* for a scholar to study.²⁷

Some of the other popular texts include *Matn al-Ashmawiyya* of Abdul Bari Al Ashmawi Ar Rufai, *Hidayat al-Mutaabbid Assalik* of Abdulrahman Al Akhdari (locally called *lalari*), *Muqaddimmatul Izziyya* of Abi Hasan Aliy al Maliki al Shadhili: subjects in them include rituals of prayers and ablutions and similar topics treated in the *Risala*. *Al-Sab'u al-Mathani* of Muhammad abi Darayn is especially cherished for those aspiring to be *aimmah* (sing. Imam- prayer leader). The book is concerned with the technicalities of the ritual of prayers.²⁸ Others include *Al-Durusul al-Awwaliyya* treating *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *taohid* (theology), *Ta'lim*

²⁵ Discussions with Alhaji Abdulkadir Jumuah Maimasa (Mufasssir (exegete) of Gambari ward). 5-12-2013. Ware, *The Walking Qur'an*, 70.

²⁶ As noted by Brenner, given the structured curricula in the *madaris*, this necessarily affects the pedagogy of religious instruction. Presentation, transmission and reception of knowledge is thus affected. Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*, 12.

²⁷ Discussions with Alfa Zakariya Yahaya, Fiwa-Kesin Qur'anic School. 11-3-2014.

²⁸ Discussions with Imam of Ita Ajia Mosque, Alhaji Muhammad Bello.13-12-2013.

al-Mutaalim (concerned with teaching methodology), *Zuhud*, *Ashriy'a*, *Zabura*, *Makarim al-Akhlaq* among others.²⁹

Each of the branches of knowledge such as *fiqh*, *hadith*, *tafsir*, *adab*, *taohid* and *lugha* among others has dozens of texts specific to it. The choice of what to study depends on what the student wants to study or the teacher advises and is also able to teach. Usually these texts are studied preparatory to the study of the exegesis of the Qur'an. They serve as foundations that will deepen the understanding of the Qur'anic exegesis when eventually the scholar comes to it.³⁰ *Tafsir Al-jalalain*³¹ is the preeminent exegetical work among the scholars of Ilorin. However, with greater connection with the rest of the Muslim world, other exegetical texts have also found their way into the collections of the scholars in Ilorin.

Since the attainment of independence for Nigeria in 1960 and the subsequent establishment of many *madaris*, the *madrasah* route to higher education has become well entrenched such that it is increasingly becoming difficult to find scholars who would not have gone through the *madrasah* system. Most of the scholars of the post-independence period have acquired some form of *madrasah* education in the course of their learning. Only the Zumratul Mu'meenina still hold onto the traditional method of attaining the higher Islamic education and they remained a minority among the scholars. Increasingly scholars are attaining higher education available in the western institutions in Nigeria and in universities in the Arab countries. The traditional system of higher education is no longer the only route to attain a higher Islamic education, though it still retains its pride of place in the scheme of Islamic education, especially the ritual and non-textual knowledge essential for the attainment of piety and charisma, enabled through personal mentoring.

The traditional system or route to higher education is fizzling out gradually with *madrasah* education now generally accepted as a route to higher education, the textual canon of the *madrasah* a blend of the old and modern texts. However, the informal nature of Islamic learning (the mode of the traditional higher education) would continue to be relevant to the acquisition of higher Islamic education. With time, the *madrasah* route would displace the traditional system but not the informal

²⁹ Some of these texts were included curriculum of the first colonial school established in Ilorin in 1916. See 'Provincial School Annual Report' NAK file Iloprof 163/1917.

³⁰ The scholars were unanimous on these preparatory studies before exegetical study which is considered the crown of knowledge. See also Seesemann, *The Divine Flood*, 33.

³¹ This is one of the renowned books on Qur'anic exegesis. It was authored by two namesakes Jalal al Din al Mahalli (d.664 A.H) Jalal Abd al Rahman b. Jalal al Suyuti. Both were Shafii scholars based in Cairo. See Abdulkadir, 'The Development of Tafsir,' for more on the importance of this book in Ilorin.

nature of learning. The graduates of *madrasah* rather than the traditional scholars would continue to relay the informal learning outside of the *madrasah*. The oral nature of textual learning and the importance of personal relation in passing on religious knowledge presuppose that informal learning of higher education would continue to be relevant to the acquisition of higher Islamic learning.

Even as more students pass through the *madrasah* system, they still have to seek more knowledge through the informal personal learning from scholars outside of their school, whether such scholars have passed through the *madrasah* system or not.³² More so, moral and spiritual lessons on which religious education is based cannot be realized through the *madrasah* system alone. *Baraka* (blessing) and *hurmah* (Charisma) are considered important in learning. This is believed to be inherent and better attained in such informal setting. This also functions in building networks with other scholars that often last a lifetime. Students attending the *madaris* will always have to seek this informal learning, more or less to augment their knowledge, skills and charisma. Though the traditional mode of higher education may fizzle out with time, informal learning will remain essential to the attainment of higher Islamic education.

Higher Islamic Education: The Middle East Connection

Until the twentieth century when international travel and communication became easier and faster, travel between West Africa and the Middle East was facilitated mainly through the trans-Saharan trade and the pilgrimage. Islam had reached sub-Saharan Africa through the trade routes and the merchants.³³ Thereafter the pilgrimage as a religious duty was limited to a few people who could take the hazardous journey. This was mostly done in conjunction with the trans-Saharan mercantilism. Although scholars of Hausa region and especially Borno sought knowledge as far as Al-Azhar in Egypt where the Mais of Borno built a hostel for their students in the 14th century,³⁴ nevertheless, most scholars of West Africa sought their knowledge within the region.

Ilorin as an emerging city was still nascent to have had large numbers of scholars participated in the search for knowledge to the Middle East prior to the colonial

³² Sometimes students of Islamic Studies in western institutions of higher learning sometimes have to resort to this informal mode of learning to get a better understanding of texts they are studying, say in the university, under the tutelage of traditional scholars. Limited time allocated to such studies in the western system makes this alternative an important mode of learning for the students. Discussions with Dr Sherifat Hussain Abubakar. 12-12-2013.

³³ Nehemiah Levtzion, 'Islam in Bilad al Sudan to 1800' –in- Nehemia Levtzion & Randall L. Pouwels (eds), *The History of Islam in Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 68.

³⁴ Ali Abubakar, *Al-Thaqafat Al-'Arabiyyah fi Nijeriya min 1750 ila 1960 'am al'istiqlal* (Beirut: Muassasat 'Abd alhafiz Al-Bassat, 1972), 59. Quoted in Jimba, 'The Role of Azhar,'

period.³⁵ Islam had been well established in West Africa before the emergence of Ilorin as an Islamic city in the nineteenth century. It has been noted that the scholars of Ilorin rarely ventured northward. Rather it was from the north that scholars emigrated and settled in Ilorin to spread Islamic learning.

The new economic order brought by colonialism gradually saw to the demise of the Trans-Saharan trade. Faster travel, first by sea and later by air played a key role in this. More people could now easily travel to the Middle East. As noted in chapter three, this travel to the Middle East in search of knowledge or pilgrimage was a key influence in the reforms of Islamic education that took place from the fourth decade of the twentieth century. Sheikh Kamalud-deen traveled for the hajj in 1937 and Sheikh Adam Abdullahi al Iluri traveled to Egypt in the 1940s and 1950s in search of knowledge.³⁶ It was after these travels that the two scholars pioneered reforms that revolutionized Islamic education in Ilorin and in the Yoruba region. Prior to these two scholars, in the early colonial period, around 1900, we read of al Hajj Abdullahi Muhammad Atturkumami (Waziri Bida).³⁷ He was also instrumental in promoting pan-Arabic and pan-Islamic trends gaining ground around this period.³⁸ Sheikh Adam Abdullahi al Iluri was inspired by the career of this remarkable scholar.

Sheikh Kamalud-deen had visited Saudi Arabia for hajj in 1937, taking with him one of his students and was influenced by that experience. Hence, the following year he began his reforms of Islamic education, first in Lagos, then later in Ilorin.³⁹ However, the Middle East connection to acquiring higher education would not be fully harnessed till after Nigeria got independence in 1960. In 1962, Sheikh Kamalud-deen visited Al Azhar University in Cairo and reached an agreement with the authority of the university, for the establishment of a college of al Azhar in Ilorin, named Al-Ma'had al-Dini al-Azhari. The school formally began its activities

³⁵ A few have done so as suggested by Jimba. Nevertheless it was not the norm. See Jimba, 'The Role of Azhar University.'

³⁶ Stefan Reichmuth, 'Sheikh Adam.'

³⁷ He had followed his father on hajj to the Middle East and stayed behind in Egypt to earn a certificate, one of the earliest from West Africa to have that experience in modern times. He taught in Lagos and Ibadan before settling in Ilorin. He was recalled home to Bida, where the emir, his former student, later made him the Waziri (Prime Minister) of Bida. He was later exiled to Ilorin where he taught and helped to promote the study of Arabic rhetoric, logic and *usul al-fiqh* (foundation of jurisprudence). Reichmuth and Abubakre, 'Ilorin and Nupe,' 488.

³⁸ Reichmuth and Abubakre 'Ilorin and Nupe,' 489.

³⁹ Reichmuth and Abubakre, 'Ilorin and Nupe,' 469; Onikoko, *The Cradle Rocker*, 19; Discussions with Khalifa Adabiyya, Shaykh Sofiyullah al Adabiy. 1-9-2012.

in 1963.⁴⁰ After this period, graduates of Al-Ma'had al-Dini al-Azhari began to get scholarship to do their *thanawiyya* and degree programs in Azhar University in Egypt. Markaz graduates in Lagos were also going to Egypt for their degree program under scholarship from the Egyptian government from about this time.⁴¹

Sheikh Adam Abdullahi al Iluri had as early as 1946 travelled to Azhar University, subjected himself to an examination which he passed. He stayed back to understudy the education system in both Egypt and in Sudan through which he went to Egypt. Travelling to the Middle East was not yet a popular tradition then. The British were wary of Muslims travelling to the Middle-East, then brimming with nationalism.⁴² They were afraid of revolutionary influence on their subjects and discouraged this as much as possible. Sheikh Adam had to follow an irregular route due to official obstacles to travelling to Egypt, hence his stay in Sudan for a while.⁴³ In 1956, Sheikh Adam travelled again to Egypt. In his earlier visit he had met Hasan al Banna, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and was influenced by the later. The Sheikh's pan-Islamic ideal and revolutionary reform of Islamic education was greatly influenced by this journey and his earlier contact with Hasan al Banna.⁴⁴

By the 1970s, other *madaris* that have emerged were also beginning to access scholarship from Arab countries, notably Egypt and Saudi Arabia but also Iraq, Sudan, United Arab Emirate, Libya and Pakistan. Opportunities to study in the Arab countries usually come through either the schools or their organizational arms which were able to source scholarship from the Arab countries that were then given to their brightest students. In the 1970s through to the early 1980s, the *I'dadiyya* certificates were the qualifications the students were using as entry qualification since *thanawiyya* was yet to begin in Ilorin.⁴⁵

A few examples would suffice here. Sheikh Abdullahi Jubril Sahban, founder of Muhyideen College was able to secure some scholarships for his students in 1972 to study in Libya.⁴⁶ The Sheikh also had connections with Iraq and Saudi Arabia

⁴⁰ Abubakr O. Nasir, *The Role of Ma'had 'I-Azhar Ilorin in Manpower Development in Nigeria*, (B.A. long Essay, Islamic Studies, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 1991), 32.

⁴¹ Abubakre, 'The National Board.'

⁴² John N. Paden, *Faith and Politics in Nigeria –Nigeria as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World* (Washington: United States institute of Peace, 2008), 40; Thurston, 'The Era of Overseas Scholarships.'

⁴³ Abdulraheem, 'Ilorin travel literature.'

⁴⁴ Reichmuth, 'Sheikh Adam.'

⁴⁵ Discussions with Dr Abdulhamid Olohunoyin. 20-12-2013; Alhaji Abubakar Ita Ajia 28-7-2013 and Dr Ibrahim Mustapha. 5-7-2013.

⁴⁶ Hamzat Abdulraheem and Yahaya Abdulhamid Ishola were given this opportunity for further study. Hamzat Abdulraheem studied at Markaz in Lagos, but was nominated being

institutions that assisted with textbooks and funds for his school. Ansarul Islam, the organizational arm of the Adabiyya was also able to get some scholarship for some students of Al-Ma'had al-Dini al-Azhari in 1972 to study in Libya.⁴⁷ In the absence of a certifying body for the certificates of the Islamic schools, the certificates from Nigerian Arabic schools were not always accepted as standard; hence the students were subjected to tests to determine their level of knowledge and competence before placing them at the appropriate level.⁴⁸ This enabled some of the students to start in the second year *thanawiyya* class in such countries.⁴⁹

One other important factor that helped the cause of students studying in the Arab countries was government at the center in Nigeria's first republic. The Northern Progressive Congress (NPC) as the majority party allied with National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe to form the government at the center. The NPC, led by the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, established relations with many Arab Muslim countries and these offered scholarship to Nigerian students. The Sardauna was involved in pan-Islamic movement especially the World Muslim League of which he was a co-founder. There were hopes for Muslims from Nigeria to benefit from scholarships the member states would offer to Muslims to study in their countries.⁵⁰

However, the participation of Muslims in the scholarship scheme is believed to have been limited due to Christians of south eastern Nigeria (mainly Igbos) being at the helms of administration at the Ministry of Education at the federal level then and since the Igbo led and dominated NCNC was part of the coalition government at the center, Christian Igbos were able to access this opportunity more than the Muslims.⁵¹ The Arabic schools had no representation; as such, many non-Muslim Nigerians got the opportunity to study in the Arab countries in non-religious subjects such as medicine.

the son of a teacher of Sheikh Sahban, an example of the benefits of lifelong connection between a teacher and his student. Both would later work in the public service as many in that category would do. Discussions with Dr Hamzat Abduraheem. 4-1-2014.

⁴⁷ Among the first set of students of Al-Ma'had al-Dini al-Azhari to go to Libya was Abdulhamid Olohunoyin. Discussions with Dr Abdulhamid Olohunoyin. 20-12-2013.

⁴⁸ Discussions with Alhaji Abdulsalam Imam Olayiwola. 6-2-2014.

⁴⁹ A graduate of Shamsud-deen College who went to United Arab Emirate in 1978 with a diploma certificate from Ahmadu Bello University had to go through the *thanawiyyah* in level UAE since the diploma was not recognized, even though it is a tertiary certificate in Nigeria. However, he found the repeat education rewarding. Discussions with Dr Ibrahim Mustapha. 5-7-2013 and Discussions with Dr Abdulhamid Olohunoyin. 20-12-2013.

⁵⁰ Discussions with Dr Hamzah Abduraheem. 4-1-2014 and Alhaji Abdullateef Adekilekun. 15-5-2012.

⁵¹ Muslim presence in the western education and public service sector was still minimal at this time compared to the Christians.

The Arab countries found out that there were not many Muslims among the beneficiaries of their scholarships, whom they had intended to benefit from the scholarships. The Arab officials were then advised by some concerned Nigerian Muslims that the only way to get Muslims to benefit from the scholarship scheme is to let their embassies in Nigeria liaise with the private Arabic schools and give the scholarship directly from their home country schools rather than through the bilateral agreements with the federal government.⁵² Though some Muslims benefitted through the bilateral agreements,⁵³ the direct school to school route will be the most utilized means to studying in the Arab countries by the graduates of the *madaris*. The coup of 1966 in which the Sardauna of Sokoto was killed put paid to his efforts in this regard.⁵⁴

From the late 1970s, the students themselves were also making individual efforts through teaching personnel from the Arab countries, writing directly to the schools or through their embassies in Nigeria,⁵⁵ given the limited number of scholarships available. For example, in 1979, some students got the opportunity to study in Pakistan. The opportunity came through one of the numerous teaching personnel sent from the Saudi Arabia to Al-Markaz al-Khairi based in the old central mosque. The Pakistani teacher, Hilal, connected some of the students to a Pakistani proprietor of a *madrasah*, Jamiat Arabiyya, located in Chiniot district of Punjab, Sheikh Ahmad Mansour, back home in Pakistan. The missionary scholar offered to train fellow Muslims and three students Al-Markaz al-Khairi were connected to the scholar. They were the first set of students that went to Pakistan from Ilorin.⁵⁶

The students went to Pakistan with *I'dadiyya* certificate; the thanawiyya level had just begun in Ilorin then in Al-Ma'had al-Dini al-Azhari and a few others. In Pakistan, the Sheikh of Jamiat Arabiyya in Chiniot provided clothes and board for the students. The Nigerian embassy in Pakistan was able to give the students some bursary allowance to ease their living conditions as well. The Sheikh also provided an English teacher on request by the Nigerian students to help improve their English. Like their *madrasah* back home in Nigerian, the Pakistani *madrasah* used

⁵² Discussions with Dr Hamzah Abduraheem. 4-1-2014 and Alhaji Abdulateef Adekilekun. 15-5-2012.

⁵³ Alhaji Ahmad O. Kamal, a former Commissioner of Education in Kwara State, studied in Egypt through the Federal Government Scholarship. Discussions with Alhaji Abdulateef Adekilekun. 15-5-2012.

⁵⁴ Thurston, 'The Era of Overseas Scholarships.'

⁵⁵ They got such addresses through magazines from the Arab world that found their way to Nigeria through those who had travelled to the Arab countries.

⁵⁶ They were Alhaji Abdallah Akanbi Makkah, Imam Pataki-Alhaji Salihu Bube Abubakar and Alfa Shakir. Discussions with Alhaji Abdallah Akanbi Makkah. 22-12-2012.

no chair or table, though they were later provided.⁵⁷ Through the news of the first set of students who went to Pakistan other students followed in their footsteps.⁵⁸

The students had to pay their air fare ticket to Pakistan.⁵⁹ Students in Ilorin had found opportunity in writing letters to some of these institutions in Arabic, by virtue of the training in Arabic that they had received in their *madrasah*.⁶⁰ Sometimes they got positive response leading to some of them travelling outside the country to study. Usually they only had to source their transport fare to the place they were offered admission; afterwards their welfare was taken care of by their hosts.

By the 1980s it had become common for outstanding graduates of the *madaris* to get scholarships to study in many Muslim countries. Other countries students had opportunities to travel to, for studies, include Chad, Sudan, Libya, Mauritania, Iraq, Lebanon, United Arab Emirate and Kuwait. Saudi Arabia and Egypt, however, were the favorites since most of the scholarship came from these two countries. Some students who could afford it paid for their own way to Egypt to acquire the knowledge.⁶¹ Most, however, had to rely on scholarship from the institutions in those countries.

Connections to the Middle East countries for studies helped in producing a large number of graduates of Arabic and Islamic studies.⁶² Some returned to find employment in the civil service, the Foreign Service, academia while others remained within the private Arabic and Islamic school establishment. In some instances, some of the students went on to study in non-religious disciplines such as medicine, geology, engineering, agricultural science, business administration, law

⁵⁷ This was not based on any doctrine but a pragmatic decision. Al-Markaz al- Khairi is based inside the old central mosque at Idi Ape: as such chairs and table could not be used in the school even if the school had wanted to.

⁵⁸ Sheikh Abdulkadir Oba-Solagberu went in 1980, on the heels of the first set, to Jamiat Arabiyya Chiniot before joining Jamiat Abubakr Siddiq in Karachi. He eventually left Pakistan to Saudi Arabia to complete his studies. Discussions with Dr Abdulkadir Oba-Solagberu. 19-12-2012. He is the founder of Darul Kitab Was-Sunnah.

⁵⁹ Discussions with Dr Abdulkadir Oba-Solagberu. 19-12-2012. Travelling to Pakistan then also required no visa, thus making their travel easier.

⁶⁰ Discussions with Dr Abdulkadir Oba-Solagberu. 19-12-2012. The skill of writing in Arabic imparted in the *madaris* thus contributed to the opportunities to acquire higher Arabic and Islamic education in the Arab countries.

⁶¹ Discussions with Dr M.M. Jimba. 27-12-2012. Those who could afford to pay their way are able to get some support once they arrive in the host country. Given that most of the students come from less privileged background, only a few could follow this option.

⁶² Reichmuth, 'Islamic Learning and "Western Education"'



Fig.22. Sheikh Jubril Abdullahi Sahban, Founder of Muhyideen College and Society. Picture Courtesy Sheikh Jubril Sahban.



Fig.23. Dr Abdulkadir Oba-Solagberu, founder of Darul Kitab Was-Sunnah. Picture courtesy of his students.

and mass communication.⁶³ Al Azhar University in Egypt especially provided the ground for broadening of opportunity to venture into non-religious disciplines. Its branch in Ilorin, Al-Ma'had al-Dini al-Azhari also provided preparatory experience into the non- religious disciplines through the teaching of science subjects in Arabic.⁶⁴

By the 1990s to the twenty-first century, it is believed that thousands of scholars had benefitted from the opportunities to study in Muslim countries outside Nigeria, especially in the Middle East. Those who were able to get into the more formal sector as government employees either as administrators, diplomat or academics have been more visible. In all these pursuit of higher education, females have been excluded until very recently, with Darul Kitab Was-Sunnah sending some of its female graduates to Qatar on scholarship.⁶⁵ The only woman from Ilorin to have studied at Al-Azhar went through a school in Lagos.⁶⁶ Socio- cultural limitations against females in acquiring Islamic education had been most important in denying the women the opportunity to study in Arab countries for higher Islamic education.

Unlike the traditional scholars who could always be identified by their dress, especially their turban, the Middle East trained scholars are not so easily identified as such, no doubt influenced by their experience of the Middle East that not all scholars had to use the turban as identity. As some of them found employment with the formal sector of paid employment, they were also less inclined to dress as the traditional scholars.⁶⁷ Those who found their ways back to the private Arabic schools with their counterparts who have had higher certificates from Nigerian institutions of higher learning contributed to improve the quality of teaching in the *madaris* as well as in the government owned institutions of higher learning.

⁶³ Mostly these opportunities were discovered when they got to Egypt. Jimba, 'The Role of Azhar.'

⁶⁴ One of their students on scholarship would go on to study medicine and specialized in ophthalmology when he returned to Nigeria. Another would cross into Saudi Arabia from Egypt and study geology. One of the respondents said that after some students had begun venturing into non-religious disciplines, the Egyptian authorities in Al Azhar University subtly began to restrict the access of the Nigerian students into these fields afraid of competition they may pose to Egyptians for admission slots. Egyptian and Saudi authorities appeared to favor students to focus on the religious sciences rather than in other non-religious disciplines. Alhaji Mahmud Hanafi (geologist) 2-1-2014.

⁶⁵ Discussions with the Provost of the School, Dr Ahmad Faozy Fazazy. 23-9-2013.

⁶⁶ Discussions with Hajiya Khadijat Abdussalam. 9-12-2013. She left Ilorin for Lagos where she enrolled in an integrationist school in Lagos run by a friend of her mother. From this school she got scholarship to study in Egypt. She presents the religious program *Al Hidayah* (The Guidance) on Fridays on Radio Kwara, focusing on family issues.

⁶⁷ Partly as a strategy against the stereotype of Islamic scholars as not modern or refined compared to those who have had western education.

Although studying in the Middle East is still held in high esteem, higher Islamic education is now readily available in Nigerian higher institutions of learning than it was in the middle of the twentieth century.

Higher Islamic Education in the *Madaris*

Although higher Islamic education begins after the recitational study of the Qur'an, developments and advancement in Islamic education of the twentieth century has divided this higher education into roughly two phases. The competition with western education beginning in the early colonial period engendered reforms leading to the development of the *madrasah* type of Islamic education. Availability of higher Islamic studies, first through colonial education policy of promoting studies of Arabic in places such as the School of Arabic Studies, Kano;⁶⁸ studies in Arab universities and later Nigerian institutions of higher learning, divided the hitherto monolithic higher Islamic education into two phases corresponding roughly into western system of secondary and post-secondary education.

As noted previously, piety is the ultimate aim of the Islamic education, yet the *I'dadiyya* and *thanawiyya* levels of the *madaris* constituted all the higher education some scholars have had. This has in no way affected their charisma and status built through religious praxis over the years.⁶⁹ They in fact ranked higher in the hierarchy of religious scholars than many with higher degree certificates. As a pointer to this, the *I'dadiyya* level was the main level available in Ilorin from the 1930s when the reforms began through to the late 1970s when the *thanawiyya* level began in Ilorin. It satisfied the needs of higher education, continued beyond the *madrasah* through self-learning and acts considered pious.

In the early 1980s, Muhyideen College, an integrationist school began what we can refer to as the beginning of provision of the post-secondary equivalent of higher education in the *madaris* system. Through its integrationist school it began to offer the Grade II Teacher Certificate courses, then accepted as the minimum requirement for primary school teachers.⁷⁰ But by the mid-1980s, a new educational policy of 6-

⁶⁸ Reichmuth, 'Islamic Learning and "Western Education."'

⁶⁹ It is important to note 'traditional' and 'charisma' are two terms that cannot be easily pinned down. Traditions change and what is traditional in one instance becomes modern in another and vice versa. It will be equally misleading to think charismatic learning belongs only in the traditional setting. Many who have had the more modern of the two systems of education still subscribe to this charismatic learning. The reforms that have transformed Islamic education into 'modern' have been led by 'traditional' scholars!

⁷⁰ Discussions with Alhaji Ibrahim Ishaq Shege, Principal Muhyideen College of Arabic and Islamic Studies. 3-12-2013.

3-3-4⁷¹ system made the Grade II Teacher Certificate obsolete. Although the Grade II teachers program was aimed to fit into the western system, it was facilitated by a *madrasah*. With the change of educational policy, the *madrasah* would continue its provision of both western (secondary) and Islamic education in within its premises, in place of the outdated Grade II teacher program.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, in 2001, Muhyideen College introduced the two year Diploma and in 2005, three year NCE programs for the training of teachers for the primary school level that would serve the western education system in line with current government policy on teacher education. It is to be noted that all this effort at provision of higher education had been in the western education section of the *madrasah*, with allowance for Islamic and Arabic studies, coming as single subjects like the other subjects. As such, students from conventional secondary schools as well as graduates of the *madaris* get admitted into the college for any of the post-secondary school programs available at the college. To do this effectively, the school affiliated the program to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. By 2012, the school had also gotten approval from the University to run degree programs affiliated to the University.⁷²

The second *madrasah* to venture into the provision of higher education is Darul Kitab Was-Sunnah. Unlike the other *madaris* starting with lower level *madrasah* education, Darul Kitab Was-Sunnah began with the higher education level with its diploma program in Arabic and Islamic Studies in 1995.⁷³ The school affiliated the program to the Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria. By affiliating to an existing government university, it saves the *madaris* the financial burden of running the courses independently while at the same time they are able to provide the education they seek to provide. While Muhyideen College has provisions for non-religious subjects in its curriculum, Darul Kitab concentrates on Islamic and Arabic studies⁷⁴ in its diploma programs.

Unlike the *I'dadiyya* and *thanawiyya* levels that most of the surveyed *madaris* run tuition free, the higher education courses are paid for and are well run. Darul Kitab for example, runs its *I'dadiyya* and *thanawiyya* tuition free but the diploma courses are paid for. The affiliation of the *madaris* to a conventional university is

⁷¹ Named after the number of years to be spent in primary (6), Junior Secondary (3), Senior Secondary (3) and University respectively (4).

⁷² The school had since begun running the degree programs. Discussions with the Principal (Arabic section) of Muhydeen College of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Alhaji Ishaq Shege. 3-12-2013.

⁷³ Discussions with Dr Abdulkadir Oba-Solagberu, founder of Darul Kitab Was- Sunnah.19-12-2012. See also its website <http://dks.com.ng/>. Accessed 14-12-2014.

⁷⁴ The two courses are taught in an admixture of English and Arabic languages.

responsible for the way the courses were well organized since the schools have to meet some minimal conditions for physical facilities and qualifications of the academic staff that cannot be based on personal relations or charisma such as is common at the lower levels of *I'dadiyya* and *thanawiyya*. Some of the other *madaris* indicated a desire to run higher education program in the future. Financial constraints and lack of requisite organizational and physical structure have restrained them from making the attempt. The two *madaris* running the programs are among the most well-funded and organized of the *madaris* in Ilorin.⁷⁵

Higher Islamic Education in Western Institutions

In the last chapter we wrote about the beginning of Islamic education in western institutions, the primary and secondary school levels introduced in the colonial period. Higher Arabic education of the formal type also had its beginning in the colonial period. As we have noted, the colonial authority favoured the development of Arabic language.⁷⁶ It saw the higher Islamic education of translational studies of texts as rote like the recitational studies of the Qur'an. While the observation was partly true, it was not the whole picture. For this reason, it was believed that development of Arabic language would be helpful to the Muslims who were passionate about their religious studies. This would also be useful to the administration of sharia law that the colonial authority had formalized. Hence, the first formal institution of higher learning for Muslims in northern Nigeria was the Northern Provinces Law School, Kano, established in 1934.⁷⁷

This came about at the instance of the emir of Kano after he had visited Saudi Arabia in 1934 for the annual pilgrimage. The significance of travel as harbinger of reform and development of Muslim learning resonates in this instance as could be seen in the career of Sheikh Muhammad Kamalud-deen and Sheikh Adam Abdullahi al Iluri. The school was meant to train judicial officials and judges of the *alkali* courts operating in all the Muslim provinces of Northern Nigeria. From its inception, Ilorin scholars attended the school.⁷⁸ This school later metamorphosed into the School of Arabic Studies (SAS) in 1947. In the post-colonial period it would become Abdullahi Bayero College of Ahmadu Bello University established in 1962 and eventually became Bayero University, Kano in 1977.

⁷⁵ Muhyideen has been running fee paying western education for decades and Darul Kitab receives some financial assistance from Kuwait.

⁷⁶ Paden, *Faith and Politics in Nigeria*, 40.

⁷⁷ Muhammad Sani Umar, *Islam and Colonialism: Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria* (Leiden: Koninklijke BV, 2006), 101; Danmole, 'The Frontier emirate,' 184.

⁷⁸ Danmole, 'The Frontier emirate,' 184.

Further development on this preliminary government run higher education system would be built on in the post-colonial period. Until Nigeria got independence in 1960, there was no fully autonomous university in the country.⁷⁹ The School of Arabic Studies in Kano provided an opportunity for many scholars in Ilorin to acquire modern Arabic knowledge in a government run institution. The entrance examination consisted of Arabic, English and Islamic studies. Standard Seven Primary School Certificate was a requirement and some of the Adabiyya Moslem School students went to study in Kano. Because the certificate of the Adabiyya School was not certified by the government until 1957, the students wishing to go to Kano had to sit for school leaving certificate examination in one of the Native Administration run schools such as the Native Authority School in Baboko.⁸⁰

The creation of states out of the Northern Region in 1967 by the Federal Military Government created the problem of access to colleges offering higher Arabic and Islamic studies for students not from the states that inherited the schools, located in Kano, Sokoto and Gombe. Admission for students from other states was given on quotas, thus limiting admission for students from other states. Working knowledge of Hausa language and sponsorship from state governments were now parts of the criteria for admission. Not all the candidates from Kwara State (with Ilorin as the state capital) had working knowledge of Hausa nor was the Kwara State Government giving sponsorship to the students from the state.⁸¹ Despite these difficulties, many students still found their way northward to acquire higher Islamic education. The earlier acquiescence to western education together with *madrasah* education in Ilorin also enabled many of its scholars to secure appointments into the government run Arabic schools across northern Nigeria as teachers of Arabic and Islamic studies, both at secondary and tertiary levels.

The government drive for mass education through the Universal Primary Education (UPE) from the mid -1970s requires having many teachers to teach in government schools, including those who will teach religious subjects at the primary and secondary school levels. However, there was the problem of having sufficient qualified teachers of Arabic and Islamic religious knowledge since many who attended *madrasah* lacked the requisite working knowledge of English language. The requirement was a grade II teacher certificate, which many who had attended the *madrasah* lacked. The government's drive for mass education helped fueled

⁷⁹ The University College of Ibadan was a college of the University College of London.

⁸⁰ Discussions with Prince Salman Olarongbe Abdulkadir, November 2012. Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education in Ilorin,' 88.

⁸¹ Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education in Ilorin,' 112. The considerable population of Christians in the state may have been partly responsible for this government attitude, trying to avoid blame of favoring one religious group over the other.

Muslims appetite for western education and proved helpful to the *madaris* on the one hand and also exacerbated the competition between the *madaris* and the western school system on the other hand.⁸²

As a result, in Ilorin, most schools had one or two teachers for Islamic Religious Knowledge taking the whole school, with each class having two or three periods allocated to religious education during the week.⁸³ The Christians had more Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) teachers, though the Muslims were the majority in population. There were thirty nine Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) teachers against one hundred and eight Christian Religious Knowledge teachers.⁸⁴ This led Muslims to begin agitating for the establishment of an institution that will serve to train middle level manpower to curb the dearth of Muslims trained with the requisite knowledge to teach in schools and work in the civil service, especially the judiciary and Foreign Service (as diplomats to the Arab countries). This would also reduce the dependency of students from the Kwara State on the schools under the control of other northern states for admission.

Members of Joint Association of Arabic and Islamic Schools (JAAIS), led by Justice Abdulkadir Orire⁸⁵ played an active role in the advocacy for a government owned higher institution for graduates of the private Arabic schools in Kwara State. The advocacy would only bear fruition upon the return to civil rule in 1979. In 1980, the civilian government under Governor Adamu Attah⁸⁶ set up a Religious Education Committee of five members, headed by the state Grand Khadi Justice Abdulkadir Orire:⁸⁷ to among other issues; examine the set-up of all institutions offering religious education, Arabic, Islamic religious knowledge in Kwara state with respect to:

⁸² Muhammad S. Umar, 'Mass Islamic Education and Emergence of Female Ulama in Northern Nigeria: Background Trends and Consequences'- in- Scott S. Reese, *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2004), 102-103; Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 260.

⁸³ Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education in Ilorin,' 93. From colonial period the Muslims have always complained about the inadequacy of the time allocated to religious education in schools. See Bello Kagara's Minute in -NAK 'Arabic and Religious Instructions in Schools' Ilprof file No.3196/3/1936.

⁸⁴ Abdullahi Abdulganiyy, 'The Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies, Ilorin: The Journey So far' (M.A. Dissertation: Islamic Studies, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 2003), 25.

⁸⁵ He was the Grand Khadi of Kwara State Shariah Court of Appeal from 1975 to 2000.

⁸⁶ He was the first Executive Governor of the state. To balance this Muslim agitation, the government also approved the established a Christian seminary in Omu-Aran. Discussions with Justice Abdulkadir Orire. 26-12-2012.

⁸⁷ Members of the committee include Justices Yonous Abdallah, I.A. Haroun, Professor I.A.B. Balogun and Alhaji Ahmad O. Kamal. Some of them would feature in subsequent committees relating to Islamic education. See Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 312.

1. Organization
2. Staffing and qualification
3. Curriculum
4. Medium of instruction and
5. More significantly to recommend how these institutions can be improved so as to be able to award nationally accepted certificates, diploma etc.

The committee wrote to all the private Arabic schools in the state to highlight their problems and suggest panacea. The schools recommended that the government should establish Colleges of Arabic and Islamic Studies. Letters and memo were submitted for the consideration of the committee.⁸⁸ After the committee finished its work, among the recommendations of the committee was for the state government to have a grading system for the graduates of the private Arabic schools and to recognize their certificates and provide avenue for them to pursue further studies. The committee also recommended the establishment of Arabic Teachers Training Colleges and for the government to facilitate increase in the intakes of Arabic and Islamic Studies students into Colleges of Education, College of Technology and the University of Ilorin, all located within the state.⁸⁹

In 1981, another committee was set up, headed by a judge of the Shariah Court of Appeal, Justice Yonous Abdullah, to review the work of the previous committee and advise the government on the takeoff of the Colleges of Arabic and Islamic Studies as recommended by the previous committee. The committee recommended the establishment of three new Arabic Teachers Colleges like the existing Arabic Teachers College in Jebba. These would serve as feeder schools to the proposed diploma awarding college. They were to serve as bridge into the formal western system for the graduates of the private Arabic and Islamic school. The committee further recommended the combination of courses to be run by the proposed diploma awarding college for the purpose of preparing the students for admission into universities and provide avenue for further studies for students of Arabic Teachers Colleges. These would in turn contribute to the provision of mid-level manpower for the civil service such as the judiciary and the Foreign Service that will need them.⁹⁰

Courses recommended include:

⁸⁸ Abdulganiyy, 'The Kwara State College of Arabic,' 25.

⁸⁹ Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education in Ilorin,' 116; Abdulganiyy, 'The Kwara State College of Arabic,' 26.

⁹⁰ Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education in Ilorin,' 116

1. Diploma in Arabic and Islamic Studies having the following subjects in its curriculum
(a) Arabic (b) Islamic Studies (c) Hausa/Yoruba (d) English and (e) Education
2. Diploma in Shariah having the following subjects in its curriculum
a) Arabic (b) Islamic Studies (c) Shariah -Islamic law (d) Hausa/Yoruba (e) Court practice
3. Certificate course in Arabic and Islamic Studies
4. A five years Grade II Teacher Certificate course ⁹¹

Entry requirement for the diploma course would be either of these three: Grade II teacher certificate with either merit in Arabic or Islamic studies, General Certificate of Education ordinary level (GCE O/level) with credits in Arabic and Islamic studies, *I'dadiyya* certificate of the private Arabic schools (knowledge of English an advantage).⁹² Based on the recommendations of the committee after the submission of its report, the government established three Arabic Teachers Colleges (ATC) in different parts of the state, at Ilorin, Okene and Babana ⁹³ in 1981, all of them starting out on temporary sites.

These schools would be run like conventional western system colleges except that Arabic language is given special attention. They do not appear to have been popular with graduates of the private Arabic schools, many of their candidates coming from conventional western schools. The incompatibility of the aims of both the private Arabic schools and the government run schools is probably responsible for this lukewarm attitude from the private Arabic schools towards the government owned Arabic schools. Western school subjects dominated the curriculum unlike like the private Arabic and Islamic schools where religious subjects predominated. The diploma awarding college that would be established a decade later would fare better in bridging with the *madaris*.

In 1991, a decade after the establishment of the Arabic Teachers Colleges (ATCs) another committee ⁹⁴ was set up to look into the financial implications and other

⁹¹ The course contents were sourced from the syllabi of universities of Ibadan, Zaria, Ilorin, Kano and Maiduguri already running similar courses. It also included the recommendations of the 1980 Religious Education Committee.

⁹² Aliy-Kamal, 'Islamic Education in Ilorin,' 117. Note that *thanawiyyah* had only just begun in Ilorin at this time.

⁹³ Okene and Babana have since become part of Kogi and Niger state respectively after the creation of Kogi state and merger of parts of Kwara state to Niger state in 1991.

⁹⁴ The state Commissioner of Education during this period was Alhaji Ahmad O. Kamal who had been the Secretary of the 1980 Religious Education Committee. The Diploma awarding

issues relating to the takeoff of the diploma awarding college that had been recommended a decade earlier.⁹⁵ The vision for the school is to become a center of academic excellence comparing favorably with the best of similar institutions in sub-Saharan Africa in the study of Arabic and Islamic legal education. The committee⁹⁶ visited states already having such a system as they were planning to establish in Kwara State. These include Kano, Sokoto, Niger, Bauchi and Ogun states. They also visited the Arabic Teachers College in Ilorin being proposed for conversion into the diploma awarding college. Within five weeks the committee submitted its report, pleading for speedy implementation of the report. The report and recommendation gave birth to the College Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies in 1992, located in Ilorin, the state capital.

The committee recommended the immediate take off of the school to offer the following diploma courses:

1. Arabic and Islamic Studies and Hausa
2. Arabic and Islamic Studies and Yoruba
3. Shariah and Civil Law.

The school began using the premises of the Kwara State Shariah Court of Appeal as temporary office for the first three months of its existence. In December 1992, the school moved from its temporary location to its new location.⁹⁷ The College began with certificate, pre-Diploma and Diploma programs. This made it possible for students to study in Ilorin instead of going further north to Gombe, Sokoto or Kano as was the case before the establishment of the college. Academic activities began in January 1993, the college accepting Higher Islamic Studies (HIS), Senior Islamic Studies (SIS),⁹⁸ *thanawiyya* or *tawjihyya* certificates (with working knowledge of

college became a reality under his tenure. He is a son to Sheikh Kamalud-deen al Adaby and had studied in Egypt under the Federal Government Scholarship in the 1960s. Discussions with Alhaji Ahmad O. Kamal. 24-9-2012.

⁹⁵ The Official Report of the Committee on the Establishment of the Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies, Ilorin. September 1991. See Appendix XVII for the Terms of Reference and Objectives of the school.

⁹⁶ The members include Justice Yoonus Abdullah of Kwara State Sharia Court of Appeal, Alhaji A.K.W. Aliy-Kamal, Dr H.I. AbdulRaheem, (all of College of Education, Ilorin). Others are Alhaji S.A. Yakub, (of College of Education, Oro) and Dr A. A. Lawal representing the Ministry of Education, Ilorin.

⁹⁷ Abdulganiyy, 'The Kwara State College of Arabic,' 41.

⁹⁸ This was the examination that the State Ministry of Education had introduced to help students of *madaris*, especially from the integrationist schools to help them bridge into higher institutions for further studies. It has since been replaced by the National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS) examinations when the later became backed by legislation of the National Assembly.

English) from the *madaris*. The West African School Certificate was also accepted. The school would later run remedial and Sandwich/affiliated degree programs.⁹⁹

By the turn of the century the school had expanded its program from the original three courses. It now has four Schools¹⁰⁰ and numerous departments:

School of Arts and Islamic Studies

1. History
2. Islamic studies
3. Mass communication

School of Languages

1. Department of Arabic
2. Department of English
3. Department of Nigerian languages

School of Law

1. Department of Common Law
2. Department of Shariah Law

School of Library Science and Sub Diploma

1. Department of Library Science
2. Department of General Studies

Centre for Continuing Education

1. Degree Program Unit
2. Affiliate School Unit
3. Diploma Unit

Unlike Arabic Teachers Colleges¹⁰¹ established in the early 1980s, the diploma awarding college proved more valuable to the graduates of the *madaris*. Many,

⁹⁹ Abdulganiyy, 'The Kwara State College of Arabic,' 45-47.

¹⁰⁰ Abdulganiyy, 'The Kwara State College of Arabic,' 51.

¹⁰¹ They had converted to secondary schools by the mid-1980s when a new Nation Education Policy of 6-3-3-4 was introduced. Grade II Teachers College Certificate was no longer the minimum teacher requirement but National Certificate of Education (NCE), offered only in the Colleges of Education.

especially those who have had at least primary education of the western system were able to pursue higher education in the western system through this college. They could pursue diploma courses in either Arabic, Islamic Studies or Law. This also helped many to branch into non-religious disciplines if they choose to do so at the university level, after the diploma course. The target beneficiaries of the proponents of government intervention in Islamic education as espoused in the various committees finally were able to adequately benefit from the government supported western system.

As would be noted from the above history of the curriculum development of the school, the fear usually expressed by the traditional scholars of Islam, of the domination by western education over the Islamic system, wherever the two systems try to integrate had manifested by the end of the first decade of its establishment. Of the four schools with about a dozen departments, only three of the departments have direct bearing on Islamic education. Thus, while fulfilling the needs of the graduates of *madaris*, it also had to accommodate other disciplines. This development was inevitable. It is a government owned institution and the government has interests in other disciplines as well, and it cannot be seen to be biased towards one religion or the other.

Apart from CAILS which had at the core of the aims of its establishment, the interest of the graduates of the *madaris*, other government institutions of higher learning also had provisions for the pursuit of higher education in both Islamic and Arabic studies within their broader aims of provision of higher education. The two other government-owned institutions of higher learning within Ilorin offering courses in these disciplines are the College of Education owned by the State Government and the University of Ilorin owned by the Federal Government. The College of Education was established as a teacher training institution for would-be primary school teachers, offering NCE courses as well as affiliated degree programs of universities. The university on the other hand offers degree and postgraduate courses in various disciplines. The Polytechnic established for the provision of technical and vocational education was also running a diploma in Sharia Law and Common Law before it was discontinued.¹⁰²

¹⁰² One of the Religious Education Committees had appealed to the government to see how the students of *madaris* could fit into the Polytechnic as well. The polytechnic was then running a Legal Education Department and Islamic Religious Knowledge was also one of its 'A' Level IJMB subjects. These were phased out by the early years of twenty-first century. The establishment of the Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies, most probably informed the decision to phase out the legal and religious courses from the Polytechnic. I am grateful to Dr M.M. Jimba and Mrs Habiba Adam for bringing this to my notice.

The College of Education offers Islamic Studies and or Arabic in combination with education and other courses such as History/Social Studies, English, Yoruba or Hausa languages leading to the award of NCE certificates. The NCE has duration of three years and has been the minimum qualification required for employment as primary school teachers since the introduction of 6-3-3-4 system in 1985. Until NBAIS examination became a statutory examination, the Ministry of Education administered SIS was accepted for entrance into the college. Thus, graduates of the *madaris* who wished to bridge into the mainstream western education system for higher education could achieve this through SIS result. This is especially true for those who have had a primary school certificate in addition to the *tawjihiyya* or *thanawiyya* certificate. After the NCE a candidate can gain Direct Entry into the university.¹⁰³

The University of Ilorin offers opportunities for the graduates of the *madaris* for the pursuit of a degree in either Arabic or Islamic studies either as single honor degree or in combination with Education course for those aspiring into the teaching profession.¹⁰⁴ Except for Arabic, the medium of instruction at both higher institutions is English, the official language of the country. The College of Education has in recent times introduced Islamic Studies and education courses taught in Arabic medium, which suits the aspirations of the graduates of the *madaris* more than the English medium.¹⁰⁵ It is especially favorable to the graduates of the *madaris* whose command of the English language is minimal and have little or no formal western education. A recent development, only a few institutions in the country have this mode of Islamic education. This mode has its origin at Ahmadu Bello University which has been at the forefront of integration of Islamic education with western education.

The university also offers masters and doctoral degrees in these fields. As noted in the last chapter, many of the Islamic scholars are increasingly pursuing these higher degrees after their first degree program from either Nigerian universities or those of the Arab world such as Al Azhar University in Cairo. This has helped increased the quality of teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies both in the private *madaris* and in government run schools. Despite these avenues, the traditional Islamic system and

¹⁰³ Direct Entry students start in the second year of the Nigerian university system. Such students must have sat for and passed one of West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) or National Examination Council (NECO) School Leaving Certificate examinations or GCE either privately or through a conventional secondary school.

¹⁰⁴ Such candidates must have sat for and passed WAEC or NECO School Leaving Certificate examinations either privately or under a conventional secondary school. Such candidates must obtain at least a credit in English language in combination with other subjects required for the program.

¹⁰⁵ Baba, 'Islamic Schools, Ulama,' 7.

the *madaris* still retain the pride of honor as the core and bulwark of Islamic education system.

Islamic Studies in the English could be pursued by those who have not had a madrasah education, since the main medium of instruction is English. Knowledge of Arabic is less important than English. Rooted in the western education system inherited from the colonial period, Islamic Studies at the higher institutions is more or less orientalist in approach.¹⁰⁶ In the main it serves to allow the owner of such higher certificate to blend into the mainstream formal employment sector of the economy either as teacher or administrator or as a stepping stone into related fields such as law, especially Shariah law. It does not confer the charisma that the traditional system endues the scholar with.

Two factors can be adduced to the interest in the higher degrees by those based in the madrasah system. One, the high unemployment rates in the country has been forcing many graduates into pursuing a higher degree with the hope to increase their employability. It is a general phenomenon for most non-professional disciplines and the limited employment opportunity (especially in the formal sector) for the graduates of Islamic and Arabic studies makes this more acute for them. The remunerations of those in the formal employment is much better than those in the private *madaris*, thus the competition to have these degrees is keen for those hoping to get into the formal employment.

A second subtle reason is pride. The cognizance that society is enamored with these degrees, especially the terminal degree that confers the highly valued 'Dr' title on the owners of such degree; has led the younger generation of scholars to be pursuing these degrees to confer respectability on their person and calling. It is also useful for social mobility. Seeing how their revered elders in the traditional system, despite their charisma and knowledge are less regarded in the formal society, they seek to prove that these degrees are not beyond their ability. They thus seek to increase their knowledge while also promoting their class of scholars in the domineering formal society. This does not in any way mean that such degrees are being not pursued for their own merit but these two factors have also played some role in the quest for higher degrees.

Until the beginning of the twenty-first century, most formal higher Islamic education is only achievable in Nigeria at government owned institutions of higher learning that are secular at their core. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, university education was liberalized, allowing for private sector participation and

¹⁰⁶ Mustapha, 'Sabotage in Patronage.'

one of the early Muslim owned private universities in the country is sited in Ilorin. Al Hikmah University was established in 2005 by Abdur-Raheem Oladimeji¹⁰⁷ Islamic Foundation (AROIF) as a private Muslim university to cater for the educational needs of Muslims who had always been disadvantaged in this regard since colonial times. The Mission Statement of the university reads “To be an educational institution where sound academic knowledge blends with moral and spiritual excellence.”¹⁰⁸ Though its admission policy does not discriminate based on religious affiliation, there is no doubt as to the fact that its main target is the Muslim population.

Al Hikmah University was established with financial support of World Assembly of Muslim Youths (WAMY). It offers courses like conventional universities, with students of Islamic and Arabic Studies highly subsidized. Muslim culture is promoted in the school such as Islamically compliant dressing, most noticeable with female students. One of the few Muslim owned and run universities in Nigeria;¹⁰⁹ it essentially provides western higher education targeting Muslims. It is neither a theological university nor connected with any particular sect or doctrine. Arabic and Islamic Studies only form one of the many disciplines being taught in the school.

Essentially the university is an indication of the advancement that Muslims have made with regard to western education. With decreasing government dominance of provision of education, the private sectors in the last twenty years have been dominating the provision of education (edupreneurship) from the kindergarten through to the university level. Muslims have also latched on to the new trend as indicated by the establishment of Al Hikmah University. The Ansarul Islam Society is also building its own university to be named after the founder of the organization as Muhammad Kamalud-deen University.¹¹⁰

There is as not yet a formal purely theological institute of higher learning, where only religious sciences and ancillary Arabic language sciences are taught. Nor are there any known future plans in that regard in Ilorin or even Nigeria as a whole.¹¹¹ Up till the period of this research, all formal higher Islamic education is gotten through either the government owned or private institutions of higher learning. For

¹⁰⁷ He is a businessman and philanthropist from Igbaja, an Igbomina town near Ilorin.

¹⁰⁸ See its website www.alhikmah.edu.ng. Accessed 23-10-2013.

¹⁰⁹ Others include Foundation University, Oshogbo, Katsina State University, Katsina and Crescent University, Abeokuta.

¹¹⁰ See www.mukeyf.org.ng.

¹¹¹ Informal nature of religion and doctrinal differences make this option less likely. Hierarchy in religious knowledge is highly subjective and cannot be restricted to strict classifications as possible in the western educational tradition.

the most part Arabic and Islamic Studies form single disciplines among other disciplines of the conventional institutions of higher learning. Only one of the *madaris* offering higher education concentrated only on Arabic and Islamic Studies.¹¹² All these institutions have emerged as a result of the influence of western system of education. While they have become important route to higher Islamic education, sometimes bridging into non-religious fields, those wishing to explore the knowledge within religious circle still have to connect to the informal traditional and charisma based mode of acquiring higher education to complement what has been learned in the formal system.

Higher Islamic Education, Scholarship and Impact on Society

The scholarship of any society reflects its higher education. As such, the impact of any educational system on the society is a reflection of the higher education within the system. In a religious education system, piety often precedes intense scholarship. The need to keep up piety and revitalize it through knowledge develops into scholarship that continues to expand in an unending dynamic. The history of Islamic scholarship in the Muslim world showed a gradual development from the oral discourse of the religion from the time of the Prophet through the various epochs of the Umayyad, Abbasid, Andalusian, and Ottoman to the modern time. At its medieval peak, this preoccupation with scholarship enabled scholars of Islam to foray into non-religious subjects.¹¹³

As with general development of scholarship in the Muslim world, in Ilorin, the development was also a gradual one from its humble beginning at Okesuna to its widely expanded status in the twenty-first century. An important index of the level of scholarship in a society is to be found in the original writings from the scholarly community. What is written could only have come from interaction of the scholars with texts. Scholarly Muslim communities usually begin with interaction with copied texts and recopying of the texts. This will then spin off into original writings. We have no record of original writings from Okesuna. They may have been lost in the destruction of the settlement or taken away by some of the scholars who ran away to other places in the course of the destruction of the Okesuna.¹¹⁴ What we have are original texts brought into the community by scholars from

¹¹² This is partly due to its limited capacity in this regard and partly due to a desire to concentrate on religious studies.

¹¹³ Some of the works which classical Muslim scholars such as Ibn Sina, Al Biruni and Al Khawarizmi are well known for works in the pure sciences, outside of the religious canon. Then knowledge was not sharply bifurcated into the 'religious' and 'secular' as we have it in the modern time. See Lyons, *House of Wisdom*.

¹¹⁴ According to Hodge, *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province*, 67, many ran to Ogbomosho.

elsewhere, such as Borno.¹¹⁵ The settlement did not last long enough for its scholarship to fully boom. The new emirate led by the Fulani emirs inherited most of its scholars. The scholars of Okesuna and the scholars that settled in Ilorin from elsewhere, incubated the scholarship that came to maturity in the twentieth century.

Alimi, unlike the jihad leaders of Sokoto, left few writings. We have a poem in Fulfude¹¹⁶ but outside of this, there is little else except maybe religious texts that may be found with his descendants. Perhaps the earliest original writing from the new emirate of Ilorin was the letter written to Gwandu under the first emir, Abdulsalami, putting the new emirate under its guardianship and seeking clarifications on some jurisprudence issues.¹¹⁷ Though the letter is no longer extant, the reply from Gwandu has given us insights into what was written. The author or authors definitely would not have received their training in the new emirate but would be some scholars who had studied somewhere in the north or elsewhere.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, original scholarship began to emerge from home grown scholars, first in the form of poems and short treatises, a genre considered to be an integral part of Islamic scholarship. These were few and far in between. For example, the ode *Qasidat waq'at ofa*, written to commemorate the siege of Offa.¹¹⁸ Sheikh Badamasi Agbaji (d.1895) around this time also composed a poem in *ajemi*,¹¹⁹ using rhyming scheme.¹²⁰ He was the first to compose poems in Yoruba using Arabic script. He has three collections of such poetical works. This scholar had led other scholars in protesting against a decree of emir Aliyu (1868-91) that scholars should take permission from him before making sermons. The scholars decided that rather than take permission from him, they would rather stop their sermons. Then Sheikh Badamasi took it upon himself to break the silence of the scholars. He started out alone chanting around the town challenging his fellow scholars:

*Walitakun minkumu*¹²¹ *t'Olqhun wi da?*

¹¹⁵ Reichmuth, 'Literary Culture and Arabic,' 216-219.

¹¹⁶ For a copy of the poem see Jimba, *Ilorin-Waka*, 9.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Abdullahi Smith, *A Little New Light-Selected Historical Writings of Abdullahi Smith*, Vol III, (Zaria: Estate of Abdullahi Smith, 1987), 148.

¹¹⁸ For this siege see Hodge, *Gazetteers of Ilorin*, 72 and Jimoh, *Ilorin the Journey*, 119-120. For the poem see Danmole, 'The Growth of,' 24.

¹¹⁹ From *ajami* in Hausa, this is writing of local language with Arabic letters. See Appendix XVIII for the opening page of one of his poems.

¹²⁰ Moshood Mahmood Jimba, *Ilorin-Waka*, 11.

¹²¹ This phrase is derived from the Qur'an 3: 104; "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity."

Kopare n be doni ewo'nu Tira

Kadake jeje nilu'mole kama se nasiha nibe

Kar'eni tinnulo kalohun lo mo

Kabiyin lere bi be dara?

Meaning:

What becomes of (the phrase) “let there be amongst you...” mentioned by God?

It has not been erased (till date), check in the Book (Qur'an)

Keeping mute without giving sermon in a Muslim town

Seeing someone who is going astray and telling him he is the most knowledgeable

Let us ask you if this is the right thing to do.¹²²

Other scholars joined him chanting and they went en masse to the palace. The emir listened to them but was not influenced to rescind his decision nor did any scholar thereafter sought permission from the palace to preach publicly.¹²³ It appears the issue was not resolved either way till the emir passed away. This event shows the power of the scholars if they chose to speak with one voice. This is reminiscent of Imam Hambali's battle for the independence of scholars during Al Ma'mun's reign in the classical Abbasid caliphate.¹²⁴ The critical power of the scholars against the authority of the emir is discernible in this anecdote.

Other scholars at the turn of century known with poetical works include Muhammad Bello (d.1919) Ajongolo and Alfa Saadu Kokewukobere (d.1935).¹²⁵ Their poems were composed in Yoruba, the lingua franca of the town. They used these devices in their preaching tours around the town in Ilorin and in missionary

¹²² I am grateful to Dr M.M. Jimba for this version of the poem. For the Arabic translation see, Al Iluri, *Lamahat Al Ballur*, 37. He rendered the poem into Arabic. See Appendix XVIII for a copy of the first page of one of his compositions in ajami. See also Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 147. The wordings and arrangement are slightly different from the above.

¹²³ Al Iluri *Lamahat Al Ballur fi*, 37.

¹²⁴ Ira M. Lapidus, 'State and Religion in Islamic Societies' *Past and Present* (1996) 151 (1) 3-27. While Imam Hambali was defending a dogmatic position, Sheikh Badamasi was defending the rights of scholar to preach publicly and serve as a check on the rulers.

¹²⁵ Jimba, *Ilorin-Waka*, 12.

tours to various parts of Yoruba region. Ilorin scholars were particularly active in the spread of Islam among the Yoruba around this period.¹²⁶

Naturally, these early works were in verse. This has the influence of religious literature, many of which were in verse. Poetical devices help memorization of texts which is a key characteristic of Islamic learning. The song-like poetry also has mass appeal as it could easily be memorized by the audience during public preaching, from where it spreads to others who were not present at the recitation of the works. Thus, illiterates could also partake in this knowledge sharing.¹²⁷ Mostly their themes revolve around theology, knowledge, criticism and praise for leaders. An example of a popular poetical work is that of Alfa Saadu Kokewukobere from where he got his appellation

Kokewu kobere yio ti se la?

Oonirun oolawę ootise la?

Meaning:

How would he succeed, he who did not learn and make no enquiries (to learn)?

You observe not the prayers, you observe not the fast, how would you succeed?¹²⁸

By the beginning of the twentieth century, there began to emerge more writings. Longer poems and prose began to come into the picture. Sheikh Tajul adab, the precursor of the reformers of the twentieth century, wrote a number of works covering a wide range of subjects, ranging from Grammar, Rhetoric, Sufism to Arithmetic. Bamigboye has compiled some of these works in his work. Among his works are *Kitabu fi Nasihatil Ikhwan*, '*addid, Subul Najah, Ala Ya Murida, Tas'hil al-Hisab*.'¹²⁹

His critical work '*addid*' was composed in reaction to the disagreement he had with scholars in Ibadan which made him to relocate to Abeokuta where he spent his last days. Full of allegorical references, a line in the work challenged the reader to loosen the chain in the work:

¹²⁶ Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam*, 49, 84; F.O. Jamiu, 'Contributions of Ilorin scholars to the Development of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Yorubaland: Focus of Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al Iluri' *African Journal of History and Culture* Vol. 6 (8) (2014) 112-118.

¹²⁷ Quick, 'Aspects of Islamic Social.' Part of this work explores the use of similar literary device in enlightening the public by Uthman Ibn Fudi, especially before the declaration of the jihad.

¹²⁸ Al Iluri, *Al Islam fi Naijiriya*, 142.

¹²⁹ Bamigboye, 'The Contribution of Sheikh,' 72.

‘Can you (scholar) find for me a person who can loosen the chains in this book’ (line 48).¹³⁰

His *Subul al-Najah* (Path to Religious Salvation) is a treatise on morality and responsibility a Muslim has over his body, as a trust of his Creator, which he must avoid using to disobey the commands of his Creator. In it, he commends a Muslim to live an ascetic life.¹³¹ In *Tas’hil al- Hisab* (Simplifying Calculation), he used versification to teach simple multiplication which scholars use in alpha-numerical divination of the *abjadiyya* system.¹³² *Ya Murida* is a treatise on Arabic grammar in verse. In it, he encouraged the reader to memorize the work so as to come handy in the study of grammar.¹³³ Through these works, one could get some glimpses into the depth of his knowledge as a scholar.

Around this time in 1913, Ahmad Abubakar Ikororo wrote what would pass as the first written history of Ilorin *Ta’lif Akhbar Alqurun Min Umara’ Bilad Ilurin*.¹³⁴ This would be roughly the beginning of prose writing in the twentieth century. He authored another treatise in prose, *Iltiqat al Mutun min Khamsat Funun*. An introduction to the various sciences of language; it was written for a scholar in Lagos.¹³⁵ In 1948, after his sojourn in the Middle East, Sheikh Adam also wrote his *Addin al-Nasiha*, in which he spelt out his vision for a pan-Nigerian Muslim unity, organization and reforms of Muslim educational and social system. These agenda he would pursue throughout his life.¹³⁶

The reforms of Islamic educational system from the middle colonial period, led by Sheikh Muhammad Kamalud-deen and Sheikh Adam Abdullah, which promoted Arabic language and literature, would bear fruits in post-independence Nigeria. The graduates from these reformed Arabic and Islamic Schools who had studied for degrees in the Arab World and some even in Europe would author a number of works both in prose and in verse. Some of these scholars would find themselves as

¹³⁰ He essentially showed his disappointment with scholars who spurned him. This he sees as a lack of knowledge which is the most important value any being should seek. He called for unity among scholars. His experience is a typical occurrence in the career of scholars, whose knowledge threatened the privileged position of established scholars. Bamigboye, ‘The Contribution of Sheikh Tajul Adab,’ 82.

¹³¹ Bamigboye, ‘The Contribution of Sheikh Tajul Adab,’ 93.

¹³² Bamigboye, ‘The Contribution of Sheikh Tajul Adab,’ 102. In the *Abjadiyya* Arabic alphabet system, the letters of the alphabet are given a numerical value. These values are then computed to determine their esoteric values or powers of the written words.

¹³³ Bamigboye, ‘The Contribution of Sheikh Tajul Adab,’ 116.

¹³⁴ Ikororo, *Ta’lif Akhbar Alqurun*.

¹³⁵ Thaqafi, *Tarikh al-Adab li Arabiy*, 45; Al Iluri, *Lamahat Al Ballur*, 39; Reichmuth and Abubakre, ‘Ilorin and Nupe,’ 446.

¹³⁶ Reichmuth, ‘Sheikh Adam.’

academics in the universities in Nigeria and abroad. The establishment of departments of Arabic and Islamic Studies in these institutions of higher learning promoted the writing of articles, long essays, theses and books.¹³⁷ Unlike their precursors, they would also venture to areas that are not purely religious. They wrote both in English and Arabic. Prose writing became more prominent from this period onward. The quality and quantity of scholarly writings rose to new heights.

At-Thaqafi has listed some of these scholars, both academic and nonacademic authors and their publications. Some of these scholars were from outside Ilorin, some of whom studied in Ilorin as well.¹³⁸ Some of the works have also been textbooks for use in secondary and post-secondary institutions of learning.¹³⁹ Through these writings, some lesser known works of the traditional scholars have been brought to wider audience. Scholars not based in the western institutions of learning have tended to write on religious subjects while those in the formal institutions of higher learning do not limit their writings to religion alone, though religion would always resonate in their writings.

For example, at the University of Ilorin, in both the departments of Arabic and Religions, hundreds of research works have been written at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in both English and Arabic languages. The doctoral theses have tended to focus on the scholars of the Yoruba region, dominated by scholars of Ilorin.¹⁴⁰ By using the scientific method, they deepen our knowledge of the technicalities of sacred texts such as the Qur'an and the canons of the religion. The lives and works of scholars are analytically and critically explored, focusing on specific aspects of their writings for the purpose of deepening our understanding of such works. They narrow their focus on specifics like morphological, semantic, exegetical, phonetic, phonological and rhetorical devices in such texts, thereby expanding the knowledge on these specific aspects.

The availability of higher education in Arabic and Islamic Studies in the formal mode has been most influential in improving the quality of teaching in the private *madaris* where the bulk of intermediate knowledge could be accessed. The large number of graduates of higher education produced from the period of independence

¹³⁷ Thaqafi, *Tarikh li Adab li Arabiy*, 71.

¹³⁸ Thaqafi, *Tarikh li Adab li Arabiy*, 81.

¹³⁹ For more on the works of these scholars see R.D. Abubakre and Stefan Reichmuth, 'Arabic Writing between Local and Globak Culture: Scholars and Poets in Yorubaland' *Research in African Literatures*, 28,3, (1997)

¹⁴⁰ Oseni Zakariyau Idrees –Oboh, 'An Annotated Bibliography of Doctoral Theses in Arabic Language and Literature of the University of Ilorin, Nigeria (1987-2012)' –in- A.G.A.S. Oladosu, Z.I. Oseni, M.A. Adedimeji, A.L. Azeez, *Ilorin, History and Culture: A Lesson in Peaceful Co-Existence* (Ilorin: Centre for Ilorin Studies, 2013), 259-269.

and the trend has continued, has been influential to this improvement in the quality of teaching in the *madaris*. As noted in the previous chapter, up till the mid-1980s the number of degree holders teaching in the *madaris* were few. *I'dadiyya* and *thanawiyya* holders were more common.¹⁴¹ However, by the turn of the millennium, the large numbers of diploma, NCE and degree holders have reduced the number of *thanawiyya* holders teaching in the *madaris*. Master degrees as well as Ph.D holders have also become visible in the *madaris*.

Western education has also made it possible for more women to pursue higher Islamic education in tertiary institutions. More women study Islamic studies because it requires little knowledge of Arabic and English is the medium of instruction. It has the additional advantage of conferring employability on the holders of such certificates as any of the arts discipline especially with regard to government employment. Arabic on the other hand has been dominated by the men. At the time of this research Ilorin has produced only a negligible number of female teachers of Arabic at the tertiary level.¹⁴² A number of others have studied Islamic Studies in English mode and teach at tertiary institutions.¹⁴³ A few teach Arabic at secondary school level. Women attainment of higher Islamic education has the effect of greater presence of Muslim women in public discourse of religion and promotion of women issues within the ambit of religion.

Among the impacts of the development of the formal higher Islamic education is the possibility of diversification from Arabic and Islamic education into other disciplines and the bridging of the Islamic scholars into the mainstream western formal system of education and service. While the informal higher education of the traditional system continues to be relevant and sustains itself on interpersonal relationship and charisma and have remained within the religious circle, the formal system, rooted in the western system has provided opportunities for employment into the formal sector as teachers of religious subjects and as civil servants. It has also provided opportunity to diversify into other disciplines such as law, business management and administration, journalism and professions in the sciences such as medicine, geology etc.

¹⁴¹ Muhammad, 'A Study of Selected,' 81-82.

¹⁴² Two examples would suffice here. Hasanat Funmilayo Abubakar attended Muhyideen College of Arabic and Islamic Studies. She then studied Arabic for first (2002) and second degree at the University of Ilorin. At the period of this research she lectures at the University of Ilorin, where she is also pursuing her terminal degree. Alhaja Rahmata Shehu studied Arabic at Benghazi University in Libya. She had a master degree from the University of Ilorin. She teaches at the Kaduna Polytechnic. I am grateful to Dr M.M. Jimba for part of this information.

¹⁴³ An example is Dr Sherifat Hussein Abubakar, teaching at the Kwara State University.

This has the positive effect of producing Muslims well-grounded in the religious sciences and who are also professionals in other disciplines. As such, scholars of religions are no longer limited to the traditional circle of religious clerics cum traders or craftsmen. They are also to be found in formal and modern professions and have combined these roles successfully. Non formal means of education through the various media has also increased the opportunity for Muslims to improve on their understanding of the religion and its various sciences, beyond a recitational knowledge of the Qur'an; where most Muslims would terminate religious study.

The proliferation of books and pamphlets in English and vernacular has meant greater access to knowledge accessible to only a few until about the second half of the twentieth century. The availability of translated Qur'an and many of the canons of the religion into English and vernacular has meant the western educated Muslims have greater access to traditional texts of the religion in the languages they understand best. This has created some tension and disaffection between the traditional scholars and the new age scholars, most of whom had 'read' the knowledge of Islam especially in the English language. The traditional scholars see such individuals as pseudo-scholars, not having studied the Arabic texts in detail through the traditional system. They in turn often condemn the reverence for the scholars in the traditional system as tantamount to *shirk* or hero worshipping.

By the twenty-first century, the internet has become an important addition to resources for accessing knowledge on Islam. These resources not based in the traditional informal system, however, have been blamed for lacking in teaching piety (central in the Islamic knowledge system) and producing half-baked and radicalized Muslims who have little regard for the traditional scholars. Knowledge through the mass media is sourced personally, lacks the interactive essence and the intermediary guidance of clerics, without which knowledge lacks much merit in the traditional system.

The challenges facing the development of higher education in the *madaris* and even in the conventional institutions include lack of financial and other resources hampering the objectives of these institutions. Not limiting themselves to the religious and Arabic courses alone has helped some of these institutions like Al Hikmah University and Muhyideen College overcome parts of this challenge. Part of this financial challenge resulted in the reliance on some form of external funding, such as we see to some extent in Darul Kitab Was-Sunnah and Al Hikmah University. Muhyideen College does not appear to be relying on external funding especially for its tertiary programs, perhaps because more or less it is like any other conventional western institution and has had experience in this at the secondary

school level for decades. Al Hikmah University on the other hand relies on external support for parts of its funding (because of its connection to the religious course) despite being run like the conventional western institution. Thus each institution operates in a way peculiar to it.

The possible trajectories in the development of formal higher Islamic education would mostly follow the lines already being pursued by the institutions discussed above. It would be through affiliations to conventional universities for the *madaris* whether they focused on Arabic and Islamic education alone or include non-religious subjects in their curriculum. Financial capacity will also play a key role in how many of the *madaris* could latch on to this trend given the general very weak financial base of the *madaris*.

Conclusion

Traditionally higher Islamic education begins after the recitational study of the Qur'an, often embarked upon by a few who generally aimed at a clerical career. Within the period of this study, higher Islamic education underwent important changes starting with the reforms that led to the establishment of the *madaris*. This accelerated the process of acquiring higher education with the promotion of Arabic language and literature in the *madaris*. The *madaris* thus became an intermediary higher education system. Western education beginning from the colonial era would also lead in the development of formal higher Islamic education through the Northern Provinces Law School which later became the school of Arabic studies. This resulted from colonial interest in developing Arabic language to serve the Muslim judicial service, formalized under the British.

Connection to the Middle East Arab countries from the middle of the twentieth century and especially after independence opened new opportunities for accessing higher education in the Arab world. From the period of independence, other modes of acquiring higher education began to emerge first in the universities being established by the government and later through Colleges of Education and Colleges of Islamic Legal Studies, building on the earlier colonial foundation. These would form important modes of acquiring higher Islamic education that would help bridge the Islamic education into the mainstream western system of education and formal employment. At the turn of the millennium a couple of the *madaris* would also be providing higher education through affiliation to universities.

A private Muslim run conventional university emerged in the twenty-first century that privileged Islamic and Arabic Studies through support from Saudi Arabia religious endowment even as it provides education more in the conventional university curriculum. More women have also had access to higher education

especially Islamic Studies in the English medium, giving them greater presence and voice in public affairs. They have also begun to access higher education in the Middle East.

While these forms of higher Islamic education have become important in the training of Islamic scholars, nonetheless they have not replaced the informal traditional route to higher education where charisma and personal relation between the teacher and the students have remained essential. Rather they have been complimentary and intertwined. The formal system of higher education has also been helpful in bridging the scholars into other disciplines not essentially based in the religious sciences. Some have been able to combine roles in both religious and non-religious sphere. Higher Islamic education under the period of study experienced expansion of curriculum. It also became mass oriented and deepened opportunities not hitherto possible in the traditional system. Thus, it has largely been a history of consolidation and expansion of opportunities through seeking religious knowledge. The expansion is still ongoing as exemplified by the new trend of Muslim run universities privileging Arabic and Islamic Studies while still providing education in other non-religious disciplines like in the conventional universities.