The Impact Of Islam And Shariah On The Culture Of Ilorin Emirate

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Abstract: This study is to examine on how Islam and Shariah had influence on the culture of Ilorin, which include, the administration, social institution, such as: Naming, Marriage, Burial and inheritance ceremonies and to also figure out the great role which the earlier scholars had played to the grate town of Ilorin.

I. A SHORT HISTORY OF ILORIN EMIRTAE

It is always difficult for historian to say with every degree of certainty what the pre-Fulani Ilorin was, because the period between the eighteen hundred to eighteen hundred and seventeen was obscure, and very little is known about it. This is why whenever, the history of Ilorin is being presented to the people, and the history is always stated with the revolt of one. Afonja who was the field marshal of Oyo Empire before the rebelled against Alafin of Oyo, and also the invitation which Afanja extended to one iterant preacher, as-salih, a Fulani by tribe, and their subsequent friendship before thing fell apart between them. (1)

However, we have some accounts which described Ilorin as a Yoruba settlement which a population of about one hundred thousand, 100,000 in the early nineteen century. Unfortunately this account did not go further to tell us whether Ilorin as a settlement had s Bale or an Oba. Also we are not told in the account when Ilorin was founded. (1)

II. LOCATION AND CLIMATE

Ilorin is situated in a central position within the subarah towns which are parts and parcels of the Oyo Empire. It built on a low hill. It is physically on an undulation of plain with general elevation of one thousand, which rise northward to about one thousand and five hundred. (2)

Similarly, it is a fortified city and its walls were still standing by the beginning of this century. It's of tropical climate experiencing dry and rainy season at reasonable intervals.

This dry season lasts from November till April while the rain takes over from early April till the end of October. From November till end of December harm tan is experienced but not as server as in places like Kano, Kaduna and Sokoto (3). By this location in a transitional zone between the open savannah to the north and forest zone to the south. Ilorin is relatively in a movement of the traders from the north to the south and vice vases.

III. TRIBES IN ILORIN

Basically, Ilorin is a Yoruba settlement. Their origin is traced to the old Oyo Empire and the founder of Ilorin was said to be one by name (Tela) (4). He was succeeded by another Yoruba man, Ole before the arrival of Afonja in the town. However, this source was into explicit enough as to whether these men were actually rulers of Ilorin either as Oba, Bale or Magaji. Another historian of note, Samuel Johnson ascribed the foundation of Ilorin to one hunter by name (Laderin) (5). Be that as it may it is curtaining clear that Ilorin was founded by a Yoruba hunter. But when it founded is a matter that could not even be well speculated. To demonstrate that Ilorin is a Yoruba town, the people of (ARE) compound (the descendants of Laderin) in Idi-Ape, Ilorin usually address their head, (ARE), as "Kabiyesi": meaning "your lordship" even though there is an emir that is ruling the town (6).
In addition to the Yoruba community in Ilorin we have Hausa/Fulani community which pre-dated the arrival of "Alimi. Most of these Hausa/Fulani communities were traders or slaves who were later converted to Islam by 'Alimi' on his arrival in Ilorin (7). The reason why Ilorin has as many tribes as Hausa and Fulani is said to be due to the protection which is naturally endowed the town with the presence of a hill in the outskirts of Ilorin called Sobi. (8) Another reason advanced for the proliferation of the people in Ilorin was the presence of Afoji, the field marshal of Oyo Empire in Ilorin (9).

Ilorin as a town is made of people from surrounding villages such as Megida, Ogbodoroko, Alapa and Amanyo. These people left their respective village to settle in Ilorin. They are also Yoruba. They division consists of the Fulani and Hausa who are popularly referred to in the town as Gambhari. They migrated to Ilorin from different parts of the north eight as traders or slaves (10).

The leader of Fulani community was said to be Olufadi (11). However, one feels reluctant to accept this view in view of the fact that the name has Yoruba connotation whereas we are talking about Fulani tribe. Although it may be argued that it is not impossible that the Fulani leader adopted the name or that the name was imposed on him, this argument may not hold water because of the reference which the name made to ifa, whatever the case may be the significant point that could not be disputed is that the Fulani co-exited with the Yoruba in Ilorin before the arrival of Alimi.

In respect of Hausa community in Ilorin, there is no ambiguity in the fact that they too peacefully with other tribes in Ilorin. Secondly, their leader is said to be called Bukko(12). It is very interesting to note here that the meaning of the name itself tells story, and the story it told is that the Hausa community came to join other tribes in Ilorin hence the reference been made to their leader as Bakko which means stranger or visitor.

RELIGION

The religion of the pre- Fulani people in Ilorin is what is called indigenous religion of Africa. The religion is said to have been handed down from generation to generation by the forebears of the present generation of Africans (13). This religion consists of the creation of the world, the liturgy which is the prescribed forms of rituals for public worship, the songs, piety, sayings, proverbs, adages, epigrams riddles and a body of organized recitals connected with cult of the oracle divinity like the Odu which is connected with the cult of Orunmila (ifa) (14).

However, it is believed that in the Okesuna quarter in Ilorin a handful of Muslims were there under the leadership of a powerful Yoruba chief, Sholaga. This was even before the arrival of Alimi to Ilorin. Sholaga was even said to be a tijani (15).

Concerning Hausa and Fulani communities of the pre-Fulani Ilorin, it is not impossible that some of them were already Muslims before they migrated to Ilorin while some others may worshipers of the indigenous religion. This is because some of these Hausa and Fulani were said to have converted into Islam when Alimi came of Ilorin later in the second decade of the 19th Century (16).

It should be noted that owing environmental factor a particular deity whom the people of Ilorin were worshipping was said to be residing in Ilorin. Third deity is referred to as Oye. It was thought to be residing in Ilorin because Ilorin is an important own in the direction from which the wind blows. It was the belief of the people not only in Ilorin alone that the deity to be worshipped. In order to be protected from the wind is Oye, and so people worship it earnestly.

It also very significant to note that Islam has long been practiced in Ilorin side by side with indigenous religion before the coming of "ALIMI". However, it is not clear whether it was Islam which was held in high esteem by the inhabitants of Ilorin or indigenous religion. It was also very ambiguous whether its practices were limited to okesuna quarter alone or could be felt in some other quarters in the town.

OCCUPATION

The major occupation of the pre-Fulani people of Ilorin includes agriculture, weaving, pottery and mining. However, emphasis was placed on agriculture because majority of the inhabitants were from villages where, a part from hunting there was no other profession. In addition, the fact that the town is blessed with abundant fertile lands made people to practice agriculture very much, above all the quest for self-sufficiency in food production also accounted for the high interest the people of Ilorin had in agriculture. Some section of Ilorin, on the other hand, pre-occupied them with weaving as a means of livelihood. It used to be made in different forms and clours. Sometimes it could be a highly decorated uni colored Yoruba attire or a multi-colored one.

Of particular importance in the major occupations of the people of Ilorin is pottery. It is a popular craft work in Ilorin. This craft work was said to have been brought to Ilorin by the men of Alimi from old Oyo after it was sacked by the Fulani (17). This simply means that this occupation of pottery making was not popular before the sacking of old Oyo by the Fulani. It was hence forwarded that Ilorin became a leading producer of decorative pottery. Mining was also an important occupation of the people of Ilorin, although it could not stand the test of the time as it was stopped as a result of non-availability of the material. Speculation are rife that Ilorin once served and functional as a smelting center hence the name Ilorin. Other areas with similar names because of their previous position as smelting center are agunrin, igunrin and iporin in Ilorin, a town of about forty (40) kilometers in the northern part of the town (18). The significance of this speculation is that the town derived its name from the smelting activities of the people and not from a stone where ojo-sekuse used to sharpen his iron or because oko-erin is close to Ilorin as has been previously by the historians. (19).

As it has been noted before, smelting as occupation did not last long in Ilorin because of non-availability of material. But other occupations namely agriculture, weaving and pottery persistently remain with the people of Ilorin even up till today.

This, in a nutshell, was the position of Ilorin before the establishment of the emirate. We can see that the foundation of the town and existence of the religion of Islam in Ilorin are almost inseparable, at least, the references that had been
carried out all pointed to the same fact that in the pre-Fulani Ilorin there existed Islam at a place called okesuna. It is a pity the date of foundation of Ilorin is yet to be ascertained, otherwise one would have been guided as to the time of emergence of Islam in the town (20).

THE EMERGENCE OF ILORIN AS AN EMPIRE

The considering how Ilorin emerged as an emirate, we need to see, first and foremost, the growth of Islam in the town. The date of entrance of Islam in to Ilorin, like is the case with Yoruba land as a whole is a matter of speculation. One thing is clear, however and that is Islam has already been introduced to Ilorin before the arrival of an iterant teacher and preacher, Alimi who settled down in Ilorin as a pious Muslim scholar of the nineteen century. This fact manifests itself in our earlier discussion that a Yoruba chief in person of Sholagberu who salted in Ilorin was described as a powerful Muslim leader. He was said to have been a Muslim before the year 18172 before Afonja, the field marshal of Yoruba land declared Ilorin independent of Oyo Empire in the year 1824 during which Alimi's help was sought to maintain the independence of the town (21).

This, therefore, suggests that Islam might have penetrated into Ilorin from the then capital of Oyo Empire. Oyo ile which was about the closest city to Ilorin then. It is interesting to note that Islam was already spread in the Yoruba capital of Oyo ile very much earlier than the eighteen century. Writing on the penetration of Islam in to the Yoruba land a contemporary historian gave the period of its penetration to be around seventh century.

It could be speculated that Islam might have come to Ilorin through some commercial activities of some Muslims who traded to Ilorin from Oyo ile. The emergence of Ilorin as an emirate was not unconnected with the Afonja's revolt against his leadership, the Alafin of Oyo on one hand, and the expected wish of the people led by Abdul-salam the eldest son of Alimi who was the first emir of the town after he had been sent for by his father following the advice of Afonja to do so in order to have better dealings with the jama'(22).

For the purpose of adequate comprehension of how Ilorin became an emirate, it will be relevant at this juncture to shed light on the each of the three principal figures, namely: Afonja, the field marshal of the Yoruba land who revolted against Oyo empire and declared Ilorin independent; al-salih, an internet Muslim preacher and teacher who was popularly known as Alimi and Abdulsalam, his son, who first headed the emirate as an emir and on whose shoulder felt the tasks of consolidating the new emirate and Sholagberu.

AFONJA

The historical figure referred to as Afonja was described variously as a war general of the highest rank in Yoruba land. He was also referred to by some historians as the ruler of the Northern Yoruba. While some other historians described Afonja as a refugee who sought for an asylum and military as in Ilorin after he has rebelled against his overlord, the Alafin of Oyo Empire.

Soon after the arrival of Afonja in Ilorin he became popular amongst the habitants. He also became very powerful and other people from different places stated coming down to Ilorin. All the Hausa slaves in the adjacent towns higher to employ as bather, rope-makers, and cowherds, now deserted their masters and flocked to Ilorin under the standard of Afonja, the kakanfo and were protected.

As determined warriors, Afonja continued to seek for military and first from a Muslim leader called sholagberu and later from a Fulani itinerant preacher by name Alimi who was invited to Ilorin by Afonja. In addition he also determined for spiritual assistance from Alimi who was known to be a pious and dedicated Muslim. He used to pray very fervently for people at them request with the combination of Sholagberu's army and Alimi's followers, Afonja was able to sustain the threat to his person and the territory (23).

Thus the success of Afonja's rebellion could be attributed to this trio friendship which later buffered disintegration, as would be seen later, due to the religion- culture differences among them. Ta'ilif related to us that Afonja invited Alimi, one day to pay him a visit which the later decided until the former removed all the idols from his (Afonja's) premises which Afonja agreed to do and, in fact, did when the invitation was honored, Afonja was said to have advice "Alimi to send for his children. He was reluctant to accept the suggestion but was later prevailed upon by Afonja and he, according sent for the children. The reason for Afonja's request might be due to his need for more solders or, probably, to provide a "better" and understanding leader for the Fulani.

With the arrival of Alimi's children, his already high-reputation stated to give him an edge over Afonja. This was clear through an unprecedented respect which the habitants of Ilorin accorded him, as a brave warrior, to beworthy of the respect than anybody. It was too late when he discovered his mistake in encouraging the influx of Hausa and Fulani into Ilorin. He attempted to dislodge them and he was killed in a duel that ensued thereafter (24).

SHOLAGBERU

This Yoruba Muslim who had been a Muslim before the arrival of Alimi in Ilorin. He was said to have founded a place in Ilorin called Okesuna. But some authors seemed to disagree with this view since the foundation of the place is dated back to 1700A.D. The time of his conversation to Islam is not known. He was said to be a well to do Muslim trade. Sholagberu was said to have migrated from Kuyo to Ilorin. But whether his migration was in company of some other Muslim or not was not stated. All that could not be disputed about him is that on his arrival at Ilorin he garnered himself at a place called Okesuna.

Sholagberu gave an unflinching support to the struggle of Afonja to "emancipate himself from the Alafin of Oyo. Nobody knows why his support was so strong. However it could be speculated that probably the Muslims in Oyo empire capital did not find it esu under the leadership of ruling Alafin. Consequently Sholagberu considered Afonja's request for help as a timely opportunity. But this spirit of comradship between Afonja and Sholagberu did not live long as Sholagberu gave Afonja his greatest shock by not supporting
him when fight for supremacy broke out between Afonja and the first emir of Ilorin, 'Abdul-Salami. Although Sholagberu was not in league with 'Abdul Salami, nonetheless he refused to fight for or against Afonja during the war of supremacy between him and 'Abdul-Salami (25).

After the fall of Afonja in Ilorin the mantle of leadership fell within the hands of 'Abd-Salam and things were going on between him and Sholagberu until, when it was all of a sudden, fight broke out between the two Muslim leaders, Sholagberu and Abd-Salam. The cause of the fight was not clearly stated in Ta’Lif. The author only said that it was when Sholagberu refused to pay a reciprocal visit to 'Abd-salami after the Ilorin Muslim victory at a war in Ikiran that the fight broke out. This refusal of Sholagberu was not taken lightheartedly by 'Abd-salami. It was regarded as a display of arrogance which should attract a commensurate punishment. The emir then matched against Sholagberu via his at Okesuna and in the year 1824 Sholagberu was killed.

After the death of Sholagberu Ilorin then assumed fully the status of an Islamic state. This led to some efforts made by some scholars and members of the ruling family to put an end to the worship of idols which was very rampant in certain area in the town. These efforts, however, did not materialized as expected because the idol worshippers who brought their various gods such as "Ogun the god of iron, Shango and the god of thunder etc. from the Yoruba land had already been absorbed completely into the practice and this led to the existence of some of them even up till now.(26)

Sholagberu helped Afonja greatly to see to the survival of the independence of Ilorin by erupting the enemies, the Alafin why Sholagberu did not extend similar help to Afonja when the fight ensured between him and 'Abdu-salami was probably due to the fact that the two of them i.e Abdu-salami and Sholagberu were Muslim. So when Sholagberu was indifferent to the fight between Afonja and 'Abdu-salami, the latter was able to subjugate the former with minimum efforts with this mind, one could say that Sholagberu was a fore runner of an Islamic state in Ilorin even though fate did not allow him to witness its emergence.

**ALIMI**

This is third principle figure who partook very actively in the event, the rebellion of Afonja that led to the evolution of Ilorin emirate. His other name is as Salih and he was said to have been sent by Sheikh Uthman bn fiodio (1754-1817) as a flag bearer, to preach and propagate Islam to the people of southern Nigeria.

However, this assertion is untenable judging from ta‘lif a narration that Alimi had visited places like Ogbomosho where he spent three months before he moved to ikoyi where he stayed one year. He was equally said to have spent three years in kuwo from where Afonja consequently sent from him. On Alimi's arrival at Ilorin, he was first accommodated at a place where the percent place of the emir is, by that time there was nothing like place there.

Secondly, that fact that he had spent over for year in different places and averted until he was invited to Ilorin is sufficient an evidence that he was not a flag bearer of Uthman bn fiodio that was sent to Ilorin. Before the arrival of 'Alimi” at Ilorin, the town had four quarters namely:

- **Fulani quarter:** this was predominantly a Muslim area with Olufadi as their leader. This name may sound like a Yoruba names, it might be due to cross-culture influence, and this Olufadi was also mention as the leader of Fulani before "Alimi” arrival at Ilorin.

- **Hausa quarter:** this was also largely dominated and inhabited by Muslims; one Bako was the head of the community area.

- **Yoruba Muslim quarter:** this is also referred to as Okesuna, it was a famous place in Ilorin at that time its unrivalled spiritual progress. This leader of this unit was Sholagberu.

- **Yoruba non-Muslim quarter:** this accommodated nearly all non-Muslims in the town. Their first leader was said to be Tell and Afonja's genealogy was traced to him. Probably that was why it was being held in some quarters that Afonja was the leader of Ilorin or that the Alafin had made Afonja the governor of Ilorin before he rebelled against Alafin. In point of fact, there was no political head for the town until the first emir Abdul-Salami was turbaned.

After the success of Afonja and the sentiment of the people of Ilorin. The people wanted "Alimi” to ascend the throne as a ruler because of his piety and righteousness but "Alimi” declined the offer and preferred to live a sophistic life preaching and teaching Islam to the people of Ilorin. Since his children had been living with him before people of the town whose majority were muslims proclaimed "Alimi”s elder son, 'Abd-salami as the “amir-l-muminin, meaning the commander of the Islamic faithful."Alimi then retired to the mosque which he first built on his arrival at Ilorin at a place called Agò behind the emir's palace. These he remained till he died in the year 1823 A.D. The said mosque of “Alimi” is still one of the historical movements for Ilorin till today (27).

At very period when "Abdul-Salami emerged as the first emir of Ilorin, Sokoto caliphate, an islamically organized state in north western part of Ilorin had gained complete control of its immediate surrounds. Some other town which had been Islamized through Sokoto caliphate and were referred to as emirates with a leader to be called amir-l-muminin. The commander of the Islamic faithful.

'Abdul-Salami wrote to the emir of Gwande, the capital of the second division of the Sokoto caliphate for recognition which would properly enable Ilorin to be protected by the caliphate army, when the reply came, Muhammad Bello the then emir of Gwande was said to have recognized Ilorin as a protected emirate under the caliphate as Muhammad Bello also did recognize the emirs of Bauchi and other emirs.

'Abdul-Salami reign was peaceful throughout his twelve years tenure of throne. With the exception of an internal square between him and one Balogun Fulani, one Hinakonu in which he was victorious an event of remarkable importance took place in his period. Because over three quarter of the population of Ilorin was Muslims as shown in the previous discussion, he had no problem of either internal consolidation or military aggression (28).
After the death of Abdu-Salam, succession to the throne of the emir of Ilorin became hereditary and the following emirs in this under their own share.

1842  1860 Shita, the brother to "Abdul-Salam reigned for eighteen years
1860  1888 Zubairu, the son of Abdul-Salam
1888  1891 Sheu Aliyu
1891  1895  Momo who reigned for four years
1895  1915 Sulayman the son of Aliyu
1915  1919 Shuaibu Bawa, the son of Zubairu
1919  1959 Abdul-qadri, the sone of Shuaib Bawa
1959  1992 Zalukarnain Gambari Muhammadu
1992  1995 Malam Aliyu Abdulkadir
1995  Ibrahim zulukarnain Gambari

IV. CONCLUSION

In the prerecording of this paper, which we have shed light on the history of Ilorin, the spread of Islam in the town and how Islam is able to influence culture outlook of the Muslim there. The formation of Ilorin as has been satiated before is not completely accomplished by adherents of indigenous religions alone, for evidence has been adduced to the fact that Islam has been in Ilorin before the arrival of sheikh Alimi in the town. It should be recalled that there is handful of Muslim women and men at Okesuna even right before the revolt of the Are Onakankafo of Oyo Empire, Afonja, Sholagberu has been leading this Muslim community for a long time and this made it possible for him to mobilize enough army for Afonja to assist his war against the Alafin.

In addition, it has also been confirmed and this too has been stated above, that prior to the arrival of Alimi at Ilorin. A band of Hausa Fulani Muslims were already living there either as traders or escapees. Very few of them were non-Muslim and they even embraced Islam in the hand of Alimi on his arrival at Ilorin. The above facts are significant in two ways. One, they showed that the town of Ilorin has been inebriated by Muslims before the arrival of Alimi in the town and, secondly, that it could be speculated that in the areas where we had Muslim communities in the town, Islam reigned supreme amongst them. This could be proved further by the fact that Sholagberu, the Muslim community leader for Okesuna, was Tijaniyyah which means that he, together with the community of which he was the leader, might have been absorbed in to the fold of Islam.

REFERENCES

[1] Ahmad Baba, s celebrated African Historian, was said to have described Southern Nigerian a non-Muslim area because the rulers in the area were not Muslim. See Abdullahi A. (Alhaji) op. cit. p. 34.