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The Role of Jummat Mosque in the Development of Ilorin Emirate in the Twentieth Century

DR. IBRAHIM A. JAWONDO

Abstract

This paper examines the contributions of Jummat service (Friday Congregation/Assembly) to the economic and socio-political development of the Ilorin Emirate in the 20th century. The paper submits that the Friday assembly of Muslims in Ilorin Emirate has enhanced the socio-political activities and status of individuals, groups of individuals and the society at large. It has also promoted the economic development of the Ilorin Emirate in particular and Kwara State in general.

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Introduction

Every religion has a special day of Assembly in a week on which members of a faith gather. The Jews meet on Saturdays, Christians on Sundays (Gen. ii: 2; Exod. xx: 11) while the Muslims meet on Fridays. The primary purpose of this weekly assembly in Islam is to bring about remembrance of Allah, unity, brotherhood, mutual consultation, collective understanding and action among Muslims (Quran 62v9, Nadwi, 1976).

The history of the origin of this very important congregation in Islam is very scanty. The scantiness apart, opinions also differ among scholars on the available information. On the one hand, some scholars believe that the prophet of Islam Muhammad Abdullahi (SAW) received revelation to start Jummat Service in Mecca but the hostility of some adherents of traditional religion in Mecca did not permit him to carry out the injunction (Al-Ilori, 1990). On the other hand, some scholars are of the opinion that the prophet received the revelation on his migration to Medinah particularly at Quba, a village of about ten kilometres to Medinah, where he performed the first Jummat service in Islam together with the tribe of Salem bn. Awf (Nadwi, 1976).

In spite of the differences of opinion, there are points of convergence. First, all the scholars agree on the revelation of Quranic injunction on Jummat (Quran, 62:9). Secondly, that the first Jummat Service by the Prophet took place in Quba with the tribe of Salem bn. Awf (Nadwi, 1976, Al- Ilori, 1990). However, they all failed to provide the date for this important event. One can therefore use temporarily the date of the migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medinah, which is 623 A.D.

On getting to Medinah, the Prophet formally institutionalised Jummat Service in his Mosque. Consequently, it became an obligatory act at every islamised area to perform Jummat Service. This paper therefore examines the origin and the contributions of Jummat Mosque to the economic and socio-political development of Ilorin emirate in the 20th century.

Origin and Development of Jummat Service in Ilorin Emirate

It is difficult for now to say with precision the date for the beginning of Islam, Islamic scholarship and Jummat Service in Ilorin. This is primarily because unlike in other emirates such as Kano, Borno and other places where Islam started with the conversion of their Kings and Chiefs, who used their power, wealth and influence to adopt Islam as the state religion by building Mosques especially Jummat Mosques, Islam started in Ilorin from the scratch and with the masses who had nothing to assert their new Religion.

Furthermore, the date is remote because unlike in Kano, Borno and other places where giant or renowned Islamic Scholars cleared the ground for Islamisation, in Ilorin, itinerant scholars and traders who had been Islamised elsewhere were likely to have sojourned in Ilorin and practised Islam secretly. This perhaps informed the idea of bringing themselves together as a minority in a ribat – Okesunna. The ribat for the earliest Muslims in Ilorin is said to have been established in the 17th century before the arrival of Shaikh Abdullahi al-Tahir (Solagberu) who later became the leader of the community (Jimoh, 1994). Other early Muslim communities in Ilorin were the Fulani community

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headed by Uthman Olufadi and the Hausa community headed by Bako (Aliy-Kamal, 1984). The date for the establishment of these communities is not certain but they were said to have started as Muslim communities. Perhaps because of their secrecy, we do not have records (oral or written) of their religious activities except that they were Muslim communities. However, the official beginning of Jummat Service in Ilorin Emirate could be dated back to the early 19th century when Shaikh Alimi (al-Salih) arrived in Ilorin. Shaikh Alimi's Mosque at Ori-Oke was the first official Jummat Mosque where Jummat Service was first performed by Ilorin scholars and Muslims under the Imamship of Shaikh Alimi (Aliy-Kamal, 1984). Possibly because of inadequate space, Jummat service was shifted to Munambai Mosque at Oke-kura, later to Makana Mosque and finally to Idi-Ape Mosque which became the first permanent Ilorin Emirate Jummat Mosque in 1870 (Onikoko, 1997). Shaikh Alimi, until his death was the Chief Imam, performing Jummat Service.

Since the establishment of Ilorin Emirate in 1823 and the recognition of Emir Abdulsalam by the Gwandu authorities, the Emir faced with seriousness, the issue of mosque building particularly, Jummat Mosque, in order to keep the friendship of Gwandu authorities that made him builder and monitor of mosques (Last, 1967). He, as well as his successors primarily concerned with up-keeping Islam, Muslims, Mosques and Sharia (Danmole, 1980). The Emirs of Ilorin from Abdulsalam to Aliyu (1823-1891) concentrated their attention, energy and resources on the building, enlarging and renovating of Idi-Ape Jummat Mosque (Yahaya, 2000).

The Idi-Ape Jummat Mosque was (from 1870 to 1980 when the new ultra-modern Jummat Mosque

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was opened) the official Jummat Mosque of the Ilorin Emirate where the Emir and his chiefs, nobles, Muslim governors and government functionaries performed their Jummat Service (Agunbiade, interview, 2005). Although both mosques were occupied during Jummat Service but since 1980 the new one houses the Imam, the Emir and other Jummat Mosque and government functionaries. On some occasions, for the purpose of special prayers the Emirate authorities shift base back to Idi-Ape Jummat Mosque (Imam Bashir, interview, 2005).

Beside the above Jummat Mosque, there are other Jummat Mosques in Ilorin Emirate where Jummat Service is performed. There are individual, institutional, community and Islamic organisations' Jummat Mosques. This is so, as a result of the increasing population of Muslims, number of qualified Islamic scholars and decentralisation or reduction in power and influence of the Ilorin Emirate authorities due to colonisation. Among the individual Jummat Mosques are Alhaji Sultan Kamaluddeen Mosque, Sherifdeen Mosque, Lahola Mosque and Shaikh Yahaya Muritala Mosque. The community Jummat Mosques include Oloje community, Kulende community, Maraba community and Hausa community. The institutional Jummat Mosques include University of Ilorin Jummat Mosque, Al-Hikmat University Jummat Mosque, College of Education Jummat Mosque and School of Nursing Jummat Mosque. The Islamic organisations Jummat Mosques are many, they include Ansaru-Islam, Jummat Mosque, Ogidi, Ilorin, Ansaruddeen Jummat Mosque at Taiwo, Anwaru Islam Jummat Mosque, at off Adamu Attah Road, Ahmadiya Jummat Mosque at Tanke, the Izala Jummat Mosque at Eyenkorin along Ilorin-Obgomoso Road, and Jamatul Soliheen

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Jummat Mosque, Agbooba. The significant differences between the Ilorin Emirate Central Jummat Mosque and the other Jummat Mosques are: (1) sermon is not interpreted in the Central Jummat Mosque while others interpret sermons either into English and/or Yoruba. (2) While the Central Mosque is answerable to the Emir, others are answerable to their respective founders. However, there is a close association between them (Imam AbdulHammed, interview, 2005). The Jummat mosques through the weekly Jummat service have continued to uplift the socio-political and economic standard of Ilorin Emirate in particular and Kwara in general as we shall see in the next section.

Jummat Mosque and the Economic and Socio-Political Development of Ilorin in the 19th Century

Socio-Political Functions

Jummat Service usually brings Muslims from different quarters of Ilorin town and its constituent parts together in one Jummat Mosque or another. This afforded them the opportunity to interact with one another, exchange pleasantries, ideas, knowledge, and materials and cultivate lasting friendships. For instance, Danmole noted that in the 19th century, Jummat service in Ilorin drew Muslims within the Emirate to Ilorin to celebrate Jummat service with the Emir (Danmole, 1980). According to him, scholars from the various districts of the Emirate met on Jummat Day in Ilorin and through this, they discussed issues of common interests and took joint decisions. They exchanged ideas on personal issues and shared Islamic books (Danmole, 1980). This long established relationship continued not only among the *Ulama* (scholars) but the Muslims in general. Friends,

families and well wishers who lived some considerable distance to one another usually scheduled appointments for Friday most especially at the Jummat Mosque where they performed their prayers. After prayers, important issues of concern were discussed with one another. Disputes among people were settled as a result of the opportunity of togetherness offered by the Jummat Service (Shaikh Jamiu, interview, 2005).

The Jummat Service in Ilorin Emirate gave room for the Emir to exhibit his wealth, influence and authority over the Emirate and probably to attract the non-Muslims into the fold of Islam. On the festivity attached to Jummat Service in Ilorin during the reign of Emir Aliyu, Mockler Ferryman noted in 1889 that Emir Aliyu went to Jummat Mosque with:

A number of men on foot, arrived with flintlocks, moved ahead, then followed a crowd of gaily-dressed chieftains, mounted and carrying spears and then the emir himself, perched on a saddle piled up with native rugs and attended by an immense bodyguard of functionaries on foot, amongst whom the royal fan-bearers were conspicuous, their duty apparently being to jump up at intervals and make dabs at their sovereigns face with their small ostrich feather fans (Ferryman, 1892).

From the above quotation, it is clear that Principal Officers of the emirate and most of the rank and file in the palace accompanied the Emir to the Mosalasi Jimoh for Jummat Service. They also demonstrated openly their loyalty to and support for the authority. It is also important to stress here that Emirs also used the occasion to gauge the level of their influences and popularity among the emirate chieftains and the masses. After the Jummat service, the chiefs used to come before the emirs openly to pledge their unalloyed loyalty to the authority. The masses at whatever area of the Mosque they were, stooped-down to greet the Emir by saying loudly, Shehu! Shehu!! Shehu!!!. Whenever these were not convincingly or overwhelmingly done, it was a sign of protest against the authority of the Emir for one thing or another, which they might consider a mistake on the part of an Emir. These survived into the present but with moderation (Imam Gambari, Interview, 2005).

Economic Functions

The nascent Emirate of Ilorin was, during the 19th century in a stage of consolidation so also was Islam, which became the state religion. Thus, the mosque was used to serve such purposes by the authority but with little economic gains. However, the establishment of the early mosques was said to have attracted establishment of markets in those places as they drew population. For instance, at Ori-Oke Mosque, Ago Market grew, at Idi-Ape Mosque, there grew Idi-Ape Market, and at Munabai Mosque grew Oke-kura Market (Alhaji Saka Apabickun, Interview, 2005) but only the first two survived to the present. The markets were essentially for foodstuffs. All the activities and services involved in building and maintaining of Mosques were championed by the Emirate authorities or individual Malam and were rousinglly

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supported by the masses and disciples respectively. Their involvement in such activities was regarded as a work for God and not for pay. Thus, no income whatsoever was derived. Men and the youths were always involved in construction works while women and children fetched water either for builders at the construction stage or for the purpose of ablution by the worshippers.

During this period the general means of transportation in Ilorin was trekking. Thus, majority went to mosque by trekking. Although it is believed that trekking to and from mosque is more rewarding, it seems absence of other means or financial incapability compelled the masses to trek. However, some of the royalists, the nobles, the merchants went to mosque on horses. What one is saying is that there were no economic gains as far as movement of worshippers to the Jummat Mosque was concerned at this period.

Jummat Mosque and the Economic and Socio-Political Development of Ilorin In The 20th Century

By the 20th century, the situations in Ilorin Emirate had changed greatly as a result of the establishment of colonial rule. The pattern of life changed and all sectors of the society tried to meet up with the challenges. Thus, by the 20th century the functions of the Jummat mosques in Ilorin transcended being a place for worship but in addition it became a place for public enlightenment, psycho-emotional relief, economic and social activities as we shall see in the subsequent discussions.

The Jummat Mosques in Ilorin Emirate serve a good forum to educate and inform the Muslims about happenings in the society. The Emirate authorities have always maximised this opportunity to disseminate information and to solicit support for their authority, that of the State government and

Federal Government at large. Some federal, state and local governments programmes were brought to the hearing of the Muslims and support was solicited through the lectures that usually preceded the *Khutubah* (sermon) or even in the *Khutubah* itself. National Programmes such as Immunisation, Identity Cards, Family Planning, Population Census, Environmental Sanitation, Road Safety Programmes, Operation Go Back to the Farm, Review of Voters Card, Independence Day, Workers Day, Children's Day, Armed Forces Day, Women's Programmes and a host of others, that were usually brought before the religious leaders for onward transmission to the Muslims (Audio and Video Cassettes of recorded sermons, 1990-2005). It should be noted that on some occasions, the worshippers question the reasonability behind bringing some of these issues to the mosques, most especially when prayers were delayed to announce the programme or if they noticed unpopular political undertones in the sermon. Their sentiments were usually expressed by shouting '*Eje Akirun O*' 'let us pray' (Alhaji Zakari, interview, 2004).

It should also be noted that on these activities, mosques Imams were harassed or insulted sometime for taking sides either with government or Christians. When there was intra-religious crisis among the Muslims, the aggrieved sect usually harassed the mosques and Emirate authorities. A good example of programme that brought about serious problem to the central Jummat Mosque and Emirate authority was the Palm Sunday procession of the 1980s and last visit of Evangelist Reinnard Bonke to Ilorin in 2004. The government perhaps with the consent of the Emirate authorities was said to have signed permit to the organisers for the programmes, in spite of hue and cry by some Muslims not to allow the programmes.

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The Palm Sunday Procession led to crisis when the procession was taken to Muslim dominated areas. As for Bonke, he eventually came and started his programme but tension mounted as some Islamic organisations threatened to stop the programme. For security reasons, the programme was summarily ended. The Emirate Imams and authorities were openly accused of corruption and were insulted. However, stakeholders quickly brought the situation under control through persuasion of the public (Olukade, interview, 2004).

Furthermore, the gathering of Muslims into different Jummat Mosques in Ilorin Emirate as occasioned by the Jummat Service was used, through lectures, to influence the social behaviour/attitudes of most Muslims. For instance, when there were some social problems i.e. riot/demonstration against government programmes or policies, intra/inter religious crises, menace of armed robbers, assassins, car snatchers, kidnappers, natural disasters, communal clashes, rampant death among nobles, chiefs, and youths through whatever means, special lectures were usually delivered to the Muslims to calm them down and prayers offered as deemed appropriate (Imam Yakubu Aliagan, interview, 2005). This was usually very therapeutic on the psychic of the Ilorin Muslims. Furthermore, oral evidence revealed that the lectures/sermons delivered at the Jummat service have had and continue to have profound positive influence on the public and personal life of the Muslims and their leaders. Some cases of broken homes, acute family disputes, tyranny and misunderstanding among government officers, leadership tussles at Mosques, traditional and political crises died a natural death through sermons delivered at Jummat Service and broadcast through

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electronic media (Alhaja Nusirat AbdulRahim, interview 2005).

Jummat day is a unique day to the Muslims worldwide. It is a mini-festival day on which Muslims appear neat as much as possible and fascinating in appearance more than any other day of the week. The special appearance of the Muslims on Fridays influenced some non-Muslims in all walks of life who dressed like Muslims on Fridays. For instance, 'a Muslim is required to take bath, brush his teeth and use perfume and take the greatest care for cleanliness' (Nadwi, 1976). The Muslims in addition to cleanliness of body and dresses, places of prayers and abode are usually put in order in preparation for the 'Day' and for the 'Hour'. In addition, the social behaviours of the Ilorin Emirate Muslims were observed to be generally more modest on Fridays. So much so that if any one tried wrong things on a Friday, such a person was usually corrected by saying 'to day is Friday'. Ilorin Emirate Muslims believed that 'a person who spends the Friday in a befitting manner for him the other days of the week will also fall in line with it' (Nadwi, 1976). Therefore, one can say that Jummat services encourage personal and environmental hygiene, and indeed a tool for moderating social behaviours among Muslims in Ilorin Emirate.

Jummat services in Ilorin Emirate have always been used to herald the occurrence of social happenings. For instance, apart from the fact that the Emirate authorities usually turban any new title holder on Fridays, the celebrants also visit Jummat Mosque with large following through which the public is sensitised about his new social status. Preachers/Imams usually mention their names in supplications during lectures. Closely related to the

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above is the visitation of Hajj returnees to Jummat Mosque in the midst of families and well wishers. They use the procession to announce their have been to Hajj and of course the resultant change in social status (Alhaji Kehinde Kadir, interview, 2004).

Prominent politicians and the upcoming ones often use the opportunity of Jummat services to revamp their personalities and to popularise themselves among the Muslims respectively. They visited different Jummat Mosques in Ilorin Emirate to perform Jummat Service and try to impress the regular worshippers by offering alms to the generality or giving money to complete/renovate Quranic school/Mosque or carry out Islamic programme for personal aggrandisement (Mualim Elias, interview, 2004).

Economic Functions

Economically, the weekly Jummat Services have been contributing in various ways to the economic development of Ilorin Emirate and by extension Kwara State. Firstly, Jummat Service is very important to the Muslims worldwide; thus Muslims get prepared for it. The preparations of the Ilorin Emirate Muslims for the Jummat Service directly or indirectly boost economic activities. The well to do among the Muslims give out their clothes to local dry cleaners popularly called *Alagbafo*, while the less privileged bought soaps and other washing ingredients to wash and iron their clothes, all in preparation for Jummat Service. This, no doubt, enhanced the economy of those involved in the sale and services that were related to personal and environmental hygiene. In addition, apart from volunteers, a number of able-bodied men were employed to take charge of the various Jummat

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Mosques in the Emirate either as guards or cleaners. Money paid to them however small has gone a long way to help them take care of themselves. On the Jummat Day, the Jummat Mosques were like trade fare centres where all kinds of materials were displayed for the attention of worshippers. The materials displayed include all kinds of local and imported body wears, shoes, and caps. Different types of the Holy Quran, Islamic literature (indigenous and foreign) electronic soft wares containing Islamic songs, Quranic recitation, sermons and other programmes. Portraits of verse(s) of the Holy Quran, Hadith, and Muslim scholars were brought down. Sellers of rosaries, perfume, and herbs were also seen displaying their goods to the admiration of the worshippers.

Apart from the above group, professionals were also seen at the various corners of the mosque premises waiting for their customers. They include traditional professional Barbers called “Onigbajama”, nail cutters, watch and shoes repairers, cap dry cleaners, and a host of others who provided their services to interested worshippers and who in turn pay them agreed charges. Within the mosques premises were also found water sellers who competed among themselves to provide water to the worshippers for ablution. Of recent the water rate ranges from ₦1 to ₦5. Old women and young children of school age are usually seen selling water to the worshippers for the purpose of ablution. The two groups of sellers use the opportunity of Jummat Service to sell water for sustenance.

Furthermore, after the service, worshippers dispersed to various stands within and outside the Mosque premises to cater for their needs. Some bought building materials, foodstuff and a host of

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other materials for use. Children, apart from buying edible things like fried fish, sugar cane and the likes, they went to bicycle repairers who hired out to them bicycles for a ride within their premises. Children pay ₦5.00 to ₦10.00 per trip and each one could spend up to ₦50.00. Thus, the incomes of the bicycle repairers were increased on Fridays. It is also gathered that the various intra city transport providers also made more money on Fridays. The users of Taxicabs, the buses known as *Turo-Turo*, the motorcycles called Okada, made more than their delivery monies conveniently on Fridays. Within the hours of 12 and 2pm, worshippers were picked from various nooks and crannies of the Emirate to their desired Jummat Mosque and between the hours of 3 and 4 p.m. they would have been returned to the destinations from the Mosques. The transporters, rather than increase transport fares on Fridays, cut short their trips. They pick worshippers going to short distances in order to make more money, most especially after Jummat Services. For instance, at Isale Oja Park, buses that (on ordinary days) took off from Oja to Adeta stopped at Pakata or Itamon. Those taking off from Oja to Odota stopped at Gari Alimi, just between 3 and 4pm on Fridays.

Associated Economic and Socio-Political Problems

At this point, it is important to stress that as contributive as the Jummat Service was to the socio-political and economic development of Ilorin Emirate and Kwara at large in the twentieth century, some problems were also attached. As a result of the importance of the Jummat Service, Jummat Mosques in Ilorin Emirate were usually strategically located to allow easy access. Thus, most Jummat Mosques in Ilorin Emirate were located in places that are shared

by other religionists. In Ilorin Emirate the hours of 1-3 p.m. were a waste to some non-Muslims. This is because at every Jummat Mosque location in Ilorin Emirate, there used to be heavy traffic congestion. The reckless driving of some Turo-Turo (bus) drivers and reckless parking of some private car owners made the matter worse. In addition, because of the increasing Muslim population, some mosque premises were no longer adequate for the worshippers, thus, Muslims are seen performing Jummat Service on the main road thereby obstructing peoples' passage. Although, this seems to be a general problem on Fridays and Sundays as it happens on Sundays at every church locations. However, religious security aides should be more alive to their responsibilities and if possible increase their number to make them more responsive.

In some cases and on some occasions, the public, the Emirate authority, the state/local government or adherents of other faiths, saw Jummat Service as a threat. If the Emirate authority or state/local governments took any decision/step about which the public felt aggrieved, they were always apprehensive of what the Muslim masses would do. Also when there was intra or inter-religious misunderstanding, Jummat Mosques usually serve as a rallying point from where militant Islamic groups mobilised the *Jamaat* for Jihad. So, to forestall the break down of law and order, policemen were usually mobilised in full force to the Jummat Mosques and all nooks and crannies of the Emirate. On the part of the masses, if a sad event happened like sickness or death of an important personality, rumour was usually carried about, but they expected to hear a little of it either directly or indirectly most especially through the sermon or through special prayers usually offered

in the mosque. On this type of occasion, Muslim masses go to Jummat Mosques with heavy hearts.

Conclusion

Jummat Service in the twentieth Ilorin Emirate was an important service that drew Muslims together weekly and through the service, Muslims were informed of their rights and duties in the society. The congregation gave opportunity for the worshippers to meet their economic and socio-political needs, before and after worshipping. This therefore contributed to the economic and socio-political development of the Muslims, the non-Muslims, the Emirate authorities and the state at large.

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