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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF FOREIGN CULTURES ON ILORIN COMMUNITY

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This article focuses on foreign cultures which have so much gained ground that the children of this day tend to take them as the original culture of the indigenes of Ilorin. It also discusses how these cultures outweigh some of the cherished and the so called 'barbaric' aspects of the Ilorin culture. It has critically assessed the impact of these cultures on the day-to-day activities of the community.

Introduction

It has been socially attested that no culture is better than another, as one man's meat is another man's poison. And what has become a practice in a certain place as dictated by the socio-political, economic and the geographical setup of that place may differ significantly in another place due to the afore mentioned factors. Thus, it came to be recognized that man, in most cases, has influence on his environment and vice versa.

Culture¹ has been defined differently because of its chameleonic nature. However, for the purpose of this paper, it simply means the norms, values, aspirations, beliefs, arts, literature, commerce, philosophy, ideas, science and technology of a community and the way it conducts its affairs to ensure continuity of culture and peaceful cohabitation.

In Nigeria (Ilorin inclusive) the most prominently recognized foreign cultures are the Eastern culture² and the Western culture. The Eastern culture was brought about in Nigeria by the Arabs from the Middle East

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through the North African Berbers to Borno and by the Malian scholars to Hausaland in the eleventh and fourteenth centuries respectively. And it was spread all over Northern Nigeria through the Usmanu Danfodiyo Jihad between 1804 and 1809.²

On the other hand, we have the Western culture which was brought down from Europe to Nigeria by the Christian missionaries-cum-colonizers. Their influence was first noticed in Benin in the early part of the sixteenth century³ and later at Badagry in the nineteenth century.⁴

A lot of scholarly works⁵ have been produced at the advent of these cultures in Nigeria, and even some communities within Nigeria, Ilorin inclusive. However, so far no attempt has been made at tracing the details of how and whence these cultures were established.

The Impact of the Eastern Culture on the Ilorin Community

The Ilorin community (Ilorin Emirate) which now comprises Asa, Moro, Ilorin-West, East and South Local Government Areas was at the onset a 'pagan' community as a Yoruba settlement under the leadership of the Alafin of Oyo.⁶ Ilorin later became an independent enclave of the Yoruba warlord, the Are Onakakanfo, Aforja.⁷ However, with the settlement of some Muslim scholars in Ilorin like 'Abdullahi Tahir nicknamed Solagberu at Okegunna, Shaykh Sani, Shaykh Muhammad Yunabau and his wife 'A'ishat, Shaykh Sanusi, Shaykh Muhammad Thanni and their unreserved teaching, preaching and converting the natives⁸ Islam attained an appreciable influence which it maintained until the coming of Shaykh 'Alimi (al-Salih) to Ilorin, in whose time Ilorin became a local pilgrim center to which the Yoruba Muslims turned for study and guidance.⁹

Ilorin came into full contact with the Western culture, with the establishment of the first government school in Ilorin; Ilorin provincial school in 1914 and other schools that were later established. At the schools the learners were exposed to the Western culture and were made to appreciate the Western culture at the expense of the indigenous culture. The idea of boarding at the schools was emphasized to allow quick acculturation and possibly conversion to Christianity in the case of mission schools.¹⁰

Be that as it may, emphasis is going to be laid on the following areas to enable readers understand how much more or less these two cultures have infiltrated Ilorin indigenous culture to the point of almost total extinction: social, political, economic, religious, and even in education, language, science and technology.

Eastern Culture

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Eastern Culture (Islamic Education)

Politically, before the coming of Islam to Ilorin, like in all the Nigerian communities,¹³ leadership was acquired by the most prominent individuals who had military strength, economic resources or were proficient in local medicine (*juju*) to turn things to their wish. Usually, the leadership was hereditary. Afonja the Are Onakakarlo became the leader of Ilorin because of his military strength. He also suffered the same fate at the hands of the Fulani.¹⁴

However, with the establishment of Alimi Dynasty, all hands were put on deck to operate *Shari'ah* in Ilorin and to convert the large population to Islam. All appointments, *qādis*, *imāms*, *wazīrs* etc. were based on the Islamic jurisprudence. This continued until the formal hoisting of the British flag in Niger area (Lokoja) in 1900¹⁵ and the subsequent establishment of the British colonial administration in Northern Nigeria. Thus, English law was brought into practice with little recognition for *Shari'ah* and customary laws.¹⁶ Today civil and *Shari'ah* laws co-exist.*

Religiously, the wholesale acceptance of Islam and its teachings by the people of Ilorin like some other people of Nigeria and West Africa at large could be traced to the fact that Islam was accommodative of some of the existing practices – the polygamous systems, charity and peaceful co-existence in the society.¹⁷

The people of Ilorin became Arabized so-much-so that the credit of spreading Islam and its education to the then Yoruba 'pagan' communities like Ibadan, Isehin, Iresa, Aghoho, Kobayi, Abeokula etc. belongs to Ilorin.¹⁸ This singular act made Ilorin and its people popular both to the people of the Northern and Southern Nigeria. From thence, the town of Ilorin has continued to house Muslim and Islamic scholars from all parts of Nigeria and beyond.¹⁹

Today, the achievements of Ilorin scholars like Shaykh (D.Litt) Kamaluddeen Al-Adabi founder of Ansarul-Islam society of Nigeria and late Shaykh Adam Abdullahi El-Ilorin, founder of markaz schools in Nigeria etc. both of whom received National and International awards²⁰ for their contributions to Arabic and Islamic literacy, have made Ilorin popular among the Muslim world.

Furthermore, there are numerous Arabic and Islamic institutions (pre-nursery, nursery, primary, secondary, and tertiary) of national and international repute in Ilorin. Thus, it is possible to attain any level in the

* Similar policies were followed in South Asia and Pakistan has also inherited two parallel legal systems — *Ed.*

areas of Arabic and Islamic knowledge within Ilorin. Arabic language became dominant like the deliverance of *juma'at* sermon in all the Ilorin.²¹ Most mosques and '*fedas*' and the palace of the Emir bear the Arabian architectural designs, all of which add more to the beauty of Ilorin as a state capital.

Linguistically, Arabic language has penetrated deeply into the adopted language of the people of Ilorin-Yoruba. Arabic words like *sadaka* (alms), *zakāt* (religious tax), *ṣadaqi* (dowry), *Ḥajj* (pilgrimage), and a host of others²² are being widely used and taken by the new generation to be part and parcel of the Ilorin dialect.

In the areas of marriage in respect of proposition and betrothal and eventual performance of marriage ceremony the horizon of the people of Ilorin has been broadened and their thoughts and deeds sharpened. Thus, instead of parents either asking for or giving their daughters in marriage at a tender age to strengthen friendship ties, business relationship, appreciate good gestures and/or in demonstration of sympathy,²³ most youths are allowed to choose their partners with guidance from the parents, all within the limit of Islamic injunctions on marriage.

At this juncture, it is important to point out that the naming ceremony as performed by the people of Ilorin in the pre-Islamic era which was characterized by extravagancy and large scale alcoholic consumption is now conducted as enjoined by Islam. And most importantly, it is characterized by thanks-giving to Almighty Allah. The children's name which hitherto followed the line of the gods worshiped by families now have given way to Islamic names.

However, some people and compounds in Ilorin bear Yoruba names that are neither pagan nor Islamic, but they are descriptive of the circumstances surrounding the birth of persons, the origin of the people, their means of livelihood, acquired cognomen of their forefathers or self through magnanimity and/or bravery at war front.

Besides Islamic names people bear and answer the names *Taiye*, *Kehinde*, *Alaba*, *Idowu*, *Ladi* (female) *Danladi* (male), *Tanimu* (male) *Tani* (female) *Tatu* (male) *Talatu* (female), *Balabare* (male) *Balaraba* (female) *Danlami* (male) *Lami* (female), *Danjuma* (male) *Jummai* (female).²⁴ *Durosinfahun*, *Okanlawon*, etc.

The following names of compounds describe their work: *Ile olodo* (makers of mortars, note that the word could mean well diggers), *Ile Asileke* (makers of beads), *Ile Oloyin* (honey extractors), *Ile Olori* (makers of shear butter), *Ile Olomon* (mud house builders), *Ile Adabata* (makers of local sandals), *Ile Onikoko* (pottery makers) and *Ile Olola* (traditional surgeons).

The following names describe the founders of the compounds as brave soldiers and commanders *Ile Jawondo, Ile Alanamu, Ile Jagun*, etc. Names like *Aiykobi, Ajelabegan* etc. are direct pointers to the magnanimity of their forefathers, while names like *Ile Iwo, Agbbaji, Ile Bala* etc. point to their place of origin.²⁵

It is disheartening to note that like other societies in Nigeria, the people of Ilorin emphasized the literary aspect of Islamic culture at the expense of the technical aspect. The Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions emphasized that Muslims should live on what their hands possessed for them in other words, they should labour for their earning. But these days the Islamic and Arabic institutions have been modernized along with the line of Western education. Thus, literary aspect is emphasized and recipients wander about looking for white collar jobs. Most of those who are unable to secure white collar jobs become parasites in the society. Some became antagonistic to liberal government policies while some seek access to men of the underworld to be successful in their nefarious activities. This is indeed a great departure from the goals of both traditional and Islamic education.

The Impact of Western Culture/Education

With the establishment of schools in Ilorin and fruition of the Emir Abdulkadir's appeal to the masses to accept and acquire Western education and give their children opportunity to receive it,²⁶ the schools processed a number of would be teachers, administrators, politicians, engineers, etc. Those who had received the Western education early in Ilorin have raised the status of Ilorin high through their excellent performances in their schools.²⁷ The position they later occupied in the colonial government made them and the community a power to reckon with during the colonial and post colonial eras.²⁸

Among the early beneficiaries of Western education were Mallam Muhammadu and Mallam Usman, Alhaji Saadu and Alhaji (D. Litt). Yahaya Popoola, others are Alhaji Lah, a veteran educationist trained in London University (1954-55) and Dr. AGF. Abdulrasaq (senior Advocate of Nigeria), the first qualified northern Nigerian lawyer by 1959, Justice Saidu Kuru, the first indigenous Chief Judge of Kwara State (1974-1984) and the first Kwaran to be appointed as a judge at the Supreme Court, of Nigeria in 1984. He was the chairman of the constitutional conference commission (1994).²⁹ Justice M.B. Belgore read law in London. He was the first solicitor-general of Kwara State (1967-1972), and the first northern Nigerian

judge at the federal court of appeal.³⁰ Justice Alfa Belgore also read law, Alhaji Saka Alesinloye read journalism³¹ and he rose to the post of press secretary to the head of state during the regime of General Yakubu Gowon (rtd) before his retirement.³²

Professor Ibrahim Agboola Gambari studied political science and (was at one time) Nigeria permanent representative at the United Nations. Justice Ibrahim Sulu-Gambari, the present Emir of Ilorin read law and by 1967, he was the only one in Ilorin with Masters degree in law (L.L.M.). Among others were Justice Akanbi and late Yusuf Idiaro.³³

The Muslim schools have also benefited immensely from the introduction of Western education in Ilorin. They modernized to a certain extent their Qur'anic schools along the line of the Western education system. Some of the schools now have standard school setting, rich curriculum, qualified teachers and administrators. They issue certificates to students upon completion of course; varying literature and other educational materials are made available at the schools. Some of the recipients of such education can now compete favourably with their colleagues from elsewhere. The Friday prayer sermon (*khuṭbah*) is now relayed both in Arabic and English or Arabic, English and Yoruba languages are combined in some places to reach a wider audience.

The acquisition of Western education by the Ilorin community led to the emergency of a group of working class which provided the skilled personnel needed at the various government offices, *parastatals*, private companies and individual businesses within and outside the state. The income from such services enhanced their standard of living.

The masses of Ilorin have imbibed the culture of good toileting habits and house building, road and bridge construction systems. They make good use of mass media, both electronic and print by listening to and reading news respectively and advertising their businesses and ceremonies, recreation centers are being visited on daily basis by some elites while large percentage of the masses visit recreation centers during festivals – Christmas and *Eids*. There are a number of clubs and societies where people go to relax themselves and transfuse ideas. There is the formation of development associations at every place in Ilorin³⁴ to see to the betterment of the people of the community.

Due to the familiarization of the people of Ilorin with Western education, road signs and traffic rules and lights are now largely understood and obeyed by pedestrians, cyclists and drivers. The people make use of telephone and other message encoding and decoding machines. Businesses in the line of Western education are engaged in by the people

of Ilorin ranging from establishment of private schools, bookshops, stationary stores, G.C.E. and JAMB candidates coaching centers to textbooks publication.

The farming population of Ilorin community has also benefited from the western culture. For instance, crops like cassava and rice which were not grown in Ilorin before were introduced and are now among the staple food of the masses, thus, the income of the farmers has increased. Besides, the Western trained agricultural experts have always from time to time given radio, television and open-air lectures on how to improve productivity on the farm by using modern equipments, techniques and planting high yielding seeds.

Linguistically, the Western culture has infiltrated into the Ilorin dialect of Yoruba language. So diluted is the dialect that the youths find it difficult to speak Yoruba purely without mixing it with English words or even understand Yoruba names for most of the everyday English words they are used to. In conversation, both old and young, educated and illiterate people of Ilorin use the following English words in their day to day activities: window, loud speaker, fan, microphone, television video, cable, fridge, radio, cup, plate, motor, pan, milk, barber, saloon, garage, globe, carpet, glass, gutter, cement, gate, table, crate, mineral, palour, bread, flour, petrol, oil, vaseline, rubber, plastic, jamkey, starch, Omo, surf, biscuits, sweet, swelter, shop, roundabout, warder, soldier, sugar, calendar, sleepers, sandal, bed, mattress, pillow, block, stove, slate, chalk, biro, pencil, cinema, battery, letter, tank, drum, bandage detol, capsule, tablet, doctor, nurses, exercise book, paper, nylon, leather bag, scarf, handkerchief, wire, headmaster, chair, tent, buka, scissors, cupboard, grease, ball, accident, bricklayer, painter, useless, careless etc.

The institution of European courts in Ilorin where lawyers are permitted to practise, served as a check on the arbitrary use of power most especially by the indigenous chiefs and their wards. Most of them before this time had used their power and position to get rid of their traditional enemies and social critics who attempted any criticism on their activities. However, the usual respect for elders and their words is depreciating in almost all households. Their system of internal settlement of disputes within the family, between couples, among people from the same ward and friends has disappeared resulting in legal disputes and court judgements. The effect is increasing insecurity and instability at homes and in the society at large.

Like other societies in Nigeria, the traditional education in Ilorin above all other things emphasized moral training such that was to make

the citizens respectful to others and live according to the norms of the society. The citizens were given participatory, physical, mental, spiritual and moral instruction that makes individuals useful in life and gain salvation in the hereafter. But at a later stage, the colonizers in order to realise their economic exploitation motives and to meet their administrative needs de-emphasized moral instruction at schools and encouraged subjects that led to production of students that were helpful to the British administration in Nigeria. Therefore, reading, writing arithmetic and Boko (Roman script) were encouraged to get native functionaries for lower cadets at the various ministries.³⁰ Uptil today, little recognition is given to religious instruction in the schools (primary and secondary). On the timetable it is taken either once or twice in a week and usually fixed at odd time. The resultant effect is the rampant immoral and ungodly activities of the so called educated elites who are supposed to be model to others. They perpetrate evil deeds like prostitution, fraud, nepotism, tribalism, favouritism, etc.

Conclusively, there is nothing bad in analyzing and adopting what is good in other peoples or nations culture with the view to quicken development but developing communities or nations should be very cautious of wholesale acceptance of foreign culture so that it may not lead to total extermination of their own culture.

Notes and References

1. For some of these definitions see A. A. Adeyinka, (ed.) *Popular Topics in Comparative Education for Nigeria Tertiary Education Students*, Success Educational Service, Educational Service, 1994, pp. 13-15.
2. This term designate a composite culture i.e., Hinduism, Buddhism etc. but the choice of the term Eastern culture shows the impact of Western culture while relates to Islamic culture.
3. M. Omolewa, *Certificate History of Nigeria*, Longman, Lagos, 1986, p. 23.
4. A.B. Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, Allen and Unwin 1974, London, p. 74.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
6. *Ibid.*, see also A.I. Doi, *Islam in Nigeria*, Gaskiya Corporation, 1984, G.T.O. Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam Among the Yoruba 1841-1908*, London, 1978, H.O.A., Danmole, *The Frontier Emirate: A History of Islam in Ilorin*, Thesis University of Birmingham, 1980.
7. L.A.K. Jimoh, *Ilorin: The Journey so far*, Atoto Press, Ilorin, 1994, p. 419, see E. Isichei, *History of West Africa since 1800*, Macmillian, Ibadan, 1987, p. 72.

8. E. Isichei, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
9. L.A.K. Jimoh, pp. 420-1.
10. Gbadamosi, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
11. I.A. Jawando, *Development of Western Education in Ilorin: A History of Ilorin Grammar School, Ilorin, 1967-1996*, M.A. Thesis, UDUS, p. 36.
12. *Ibid.* See also A.K.W. Aliy-Kamal, *Islamic Education in Ilorin, 1918-1980*, M.A. Thesis, Development of Islamic Studies, Uni-Ibadan, 1980, p. 91.
13. Some of these factors are discussed under state formation process in Nigeria by T. Falola, *et al.*, *History of Nigeria*. (Nigeria before 1800 A.D.), Longman, Nigeria, 1989, p. 38.
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15. Omolewa, *Certificate History*, p. 158.
16. O. Ikime, (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Heimann, Ibadan, 1984, p. 455.
17. M.O.A. Abdol, *Historical Origin of Islam*, Publication Bureau, Nigeria, 1971, pp. 125-126, see also J.S. Trimingham, *The influence of Islam upon Africa*, Librarie du Liban, Longmans, 1968.
18. Jimoh, p. 419.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Shaykh Adam received the highest honour for scholarship from the Egyptian Government in 1990. Shaykh Kamaluddeen also received same in 1992 and Doctor of Letter in year 1998 from the University of Ilorin.
21. See T.O. Tajuddin, "A Survey of Jumat Mosques in Ilorin", B.A. Project Department of Islamic Studies, Uni-Ilorin, 1999, p.81.
22. Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam*, *op. cit.*, (See the Appendix for some Arabic names Yoruballised).
23. I.A. Jawondo, *Zakat among the people of Ilorin in the Pre and Post Islamic eras*, NCE project, 1989.
24. I. Madauci, *et al.*, *Hausa customs*, NNPC, Zaria, 1980, p. 8.
25. A.I. Dol, *Introduction to the Hadith*, Lagos, Islamic publication Bureau, 1970, pp. 124-125.
26. Danmole, *Frontier Emirate*, p. 173.
27. Jimoh, pp. 258, 506-508. See also Danmole, *op. cit.*, p. 174.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 174.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 508.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
31. I.M. Mora, *New Foundation: Preparing the future leaders*, Northern Nigeria Publishing Corporation, Zaria Nigeria, 1996, p. 18.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
33. Jimoh, *op. cit.*, p. 508.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
35. Jawondo, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
36. Ikime, *op. cit.*, p. 574.

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