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*Essays in Honour of Professor Is-haq
Olanrewaju Oloyede*

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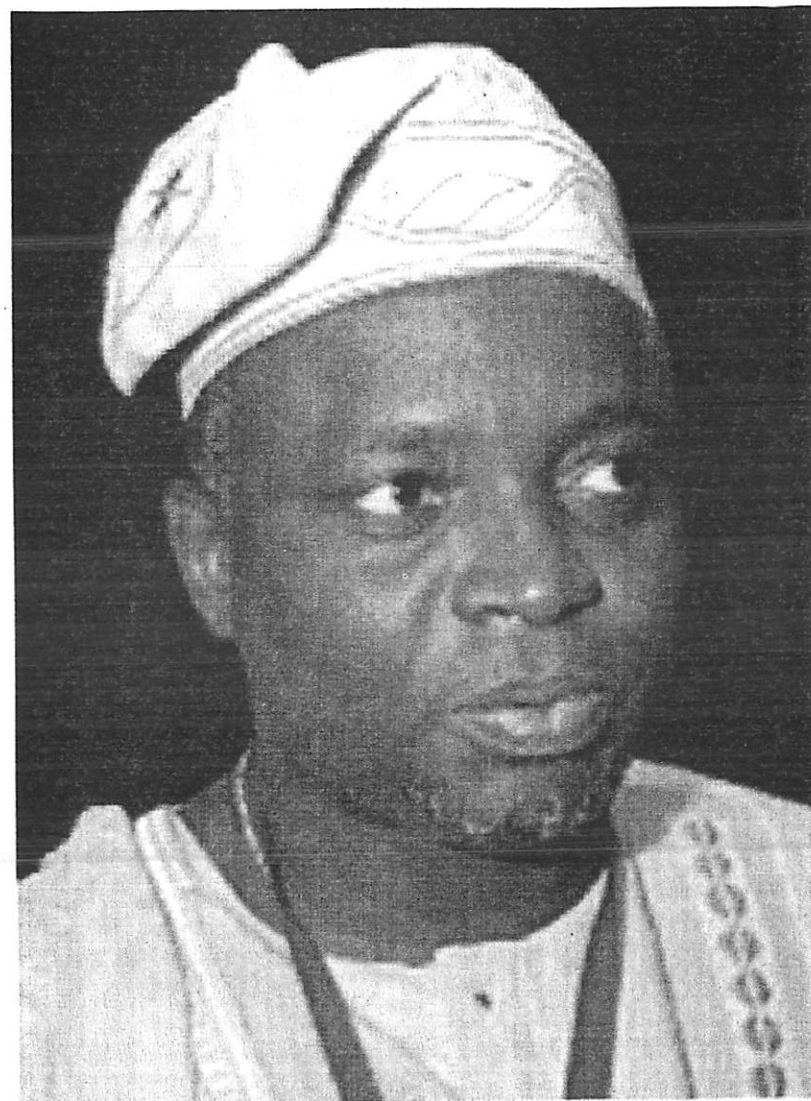
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AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF SHAYKH ADAM ABDULLAH AL-ILORI'S REFORM THOUGHTS¹

AbdulHameed Badmas Yusuf

Introduction

All Prophets are reformers, but all reformers are not necessarily Prophets. A reformer is such a person who feels discontented about social ills in his environment, and seeks to effect a change with peaceful means, especially through education and creation of awareness among the people with a view to mobilising them to address the problems. This definition is true of Shaykh Adam. Like the foremost reformers, namely, Jamaludin Afghani, Muhammed Abduh and Ahmad Khan among others, Shaykh Adam lived in a society where socio-religious anomalies were prevalent among Muslims. He was not satisfied with how Muslims were embroiled in disunity, ignorance, and socio-religious maladies. He envisioned a society where Muslims are united, where Islam is well understood and correctly practised, and where people are conscious of seeking true knowledge about Islam using Arabic language as the means of instruction.

In order to address the socio-religious maladies with which his society was associated, Shaykh Adam first armed himself

with adequate knowledge of Islam. Also, he had a considerable exposure to various cultural and intellectual trends in and outside Nigeria. This provided him with the necessary tools to initiate and bring about a positive change in his society. To a larger extent, he succeeded in his reform mission. This success can be attributed to two factors which are: one, his establishment of Arabic and Islamic Training Centre otherwise known as *Markaz*, where leaders in various fields of knowledge are trained; two, his many scholarly works. This chapter intends to study Shaykh Adam's reform thoughts as regards socio-religious problems faced by his immediate environment in particular and his larger community in general.

His Biography

He was Adam bin AbdulBaqi bin Habib al-Ilah bin Abdullah al-Ilôrî. He was born in 1917 in *Wasa*, the Republic of Benin (*Dahomey*). He learnt rudimentary aspects of Arabic language and Islamic studies from his father. Later, he studied under *Shaykh Salihu Esinniyobiwa al-Ilôrî*, *Shaykh Umar Agbaji al-Ilôrî* and *Shaykh Adam Nama'ji al-Kanawî*. In 1942 he embarked on a historic journey to Egypt, Sudan and other Arab lands in his determined quest for knowledge. Having acquired substantial amount of knowledge in and outside Nigeria, he established an Arabic and Islamic training Centre in 1952. It was initially established in Abeokuta and later relocated to its present site at Agege, Lagos in 1955. Till date, the Centre has been producing a number of outstanding scholars in various fields of knowledge e.g. Arabic and Islamic Studies, Law, Medicine, Communication, etc. They are not only based in Nigeria, but also in Ghana, Benin and other neighbouring West African countries.²

Shaykh Adam was until his death, the Secretary General for the League of Imams and Alfas (Scholars) in the Western

Nigeria. He was also a leading member of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA).³

In terms of theological affiliation, Shaykh was a Sunnî scholar per excellence. Aside his interaction with the local scholars — all of Sunnî orientation — during his learning period at home, his travels to a number of Arab countries made it possible for him to meet and interact with reputable Sunnî scholars in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other Arab countries. For instance, during his ambitious journey to Arab lands in 1946, he met in Makkah Shaykh al-Sayyid Ulwî Mâlikî, Shaykh Muhammad al-Amîn al-Shinqîmî, Shaykh Hassan Mishti among other notable Sunnî scholars. Also, while in Egypt, he had contact with the Grand Shaykh of al-Azhar, Mustapha Abd al-Râziq, Shaykh Mahmûd Abû al- Uyûn, Shaykh Muhammad Shaltût, and Shaykh Hassan al-Bannâ, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood Society (*Jamâ'ah Ikhwân al-Muslimîn*).⁴ Perhaps due to this contact and the fact that he received some Arabic and Islamic training in Egypt, the *Ikhwân* reform movement seemed to have had a great influence on him. This assumption can be substantiated further by taking into consideration the ten precepts [*al-waṣāyih al-'asharah*] of the founder of the society, Shaykh Hasan al-Bannâ, which are boldly inscribed at the back of one of his books entitled: *al-Dîn al-Naṣīḥah*, the memorisation of which he recommended to all his students.⁵

In 1989, Hosni Mubarak, the then President of Egypt, acting on the recommendation of al-Azhar University, Cairo, honoured Shaykh Adam with an award of the first category in erudition in Science and Arts. With this, he became the first scholar in the sub-Saharan Africa to be so honoured.⁶

After about six decades of relentless and sincere service to Islam and humanity in general, Shaykh Adam died in 1992. However, his scholarly works in various fields of knowledge as well as his teeming disciples have constituted an immortalising force for him after his death.

A Glance at Socio-Religious Realities of His Time

It is important to have an overview of the situations on the ground in order to know what prompted Shaykh's dissatisfaction and hence his reformist thoughts. The following is his observation of the state of Islam and Muslims in Nigeria during his time:

When Allah has blessed us with His favour, namely Islam and Imân, and when He has illuminated our sights with the light of Sunnah and Qur'ân, it became possible for us to differentiate between the straight path of Islam and the deviated one. Likewise, it became easy to identify the difference between a sincere call to Allah's cause and a mere claim to it. We also understood that there is a huge gap between the ideal form of Islam as explained in the Qur'ân and Sunnah, and the reality and practice among many Muslims....we found ourselves in an upside down environment where a liar is respected while an honest is humiliated, where falsehood is aided, while truth is deserted, where self-esteem is regarded as arrogance, where humility is seen as shame, where saying the truth is considered as impudence, and where concealing and displaying falsehood is regarded as wisdom and heroism.....⁷

According to him, these fundamental deviations from the pristine precepts of Islam inevitably made Muslims to regard western civilisation a model worthy of imitation. The so-called scholars who should have rescued the situation were also found steeped in the ocean of ignorance and in curious pursuance of material benefits. Thus, Muslims remained like sheep without a shepherd to guide them in the right direction. Apparently, there was no sincere movement that could preach the pristine Islam to the masses.⁸

Having given a clear picture of the reality, Shaykh briefly presented what he considered as problems and solutions to the current maladies among Muslims in Nigeria. The first problem

he mentioned is inadequate system of teaching Islam. This, he believed, has given rise to stagnancy in the field of teaching. The only solution to address this malaise is to improve on quality of teaching and learning. The second problem he identified is the tendency to think of Qur'ân and Sunnah, and opinions of scholars as equal in terms of validity and authority. This has led to a situation whereby a shell is held in high esteem at the expense of the core essence. He believed that this malaise can be solved by sticking to the Qur'ân, Sunnah and the tradition of the Rightly Guided Caliphs only. Thirdly, inconsistency and lack of steadfastness on the part of many scholars is a major problem which has led to wanton spread of corruption. This anomaly can be solved with autonomy of scholars rather than being subject to political influences. The fourth problem is interference of lay people or non-specialists in religious affairs. To solve this problem, he suggested that scholars should be given free hand in dealing with religious affairs appropriately.⁹

The Establishment of Markaz

Fully aware of the supremacy of Islam in Nigeria prior to the invasion of the British, Shaykh Adam became desirous of seeing Islam regain its lost position. Like many reformers, Shaykh Adam strongly considered knowledge as a potent tool to bring about the Islamic revival in the country. Having acquired necessary knowledge of Islam both at home and abroad (Egypt especially), he deemed it necessary to establish a learning centre where correct Islamic teachings could be taught to the young ones. Hence, his establishment in 1952 of an Islamic training center popularly known as *Markaz*. This training centre served as an avenue through which Shaykh sought to advance his reform agenda by sensitising the youth on the need to revive the Islamic civilisation in Nigeria especially, and the world over

generally. Abu Sulayman was right when he considered education as a reform priority:

Reformers are on target when they mobilise themselves to improve education regarding it as one of the most important aspects of reform and one of the strongest building blocks in the construction of a nation...¹⁰

The Arabic centre established by Shaykh Adam al-Ilôrî has produced a number of successful scholars in various fields of knowledge. Some of them, who later acquired Western education elsewhere, work as lecturers in almost all Nigerian Universities and Colleges of Education where Arabic and Islamic Studies are taught. A mention may be made of Prof. Ahmad Sheu Abdussalam, Head of Department, Languages and Linguistics, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. Having obtained his B.A. and M.A. degrees in Riyadh, and his Ph. D in Sudan, he taught for nearly two decades at the International Islamic University Malaysia in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature; Prof. Is-haq Oloyede, former Vice-chancellor, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. He had his B.A, M.A., and Ph. D degrees at the University of Ilorin. He was the first student from the Faculty of Arts to graduate with first class; and Prof. Razaq 'Deremi Abubakre, former Vice Chancellor, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria. He obtained his B.A at University of Ibadan with first class, and later bagged his Ph. D at the prestigious School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. Given the limit in space, other renowned scholars who studied in *Markaz* cannot be mentioned.

Furthermore, Shaykh Adam produced about seventy (both major and pamphlet, including revised editions). As asserted by Ajetumobi "he is therefore unsurpassed, at least in Yorubaland, if not in (post 1900 CE) Nigeria at large, in the

production of books in Arabic language. He has been a prolific writer and has paid a great deal of attention to historical writing."¹¹ Apart from a number of small-sized books for the pedagogical purpose in his school, the following are some of his major works which were published in Nigeria, Cairo and some other Arab countries:

1. *Al-Dîn al-Naṣīḥah.*
2. *Mu 'jaz Tārīkh Najīriyāh*
3. *Al-Islām fī Najīriyā wa 'Uthmān bin Fūdī al-Fūlānī.*
4. *Falsafah al-Nubūwwah.*
5. *Bayān al-Mīrāth.*
6. *Uṣūl al-Madhāhib al-Arba'ah*
7. *Niṣām al-Ta 'līm al- 'Arabī wa Tārīkhuhu fī al- 'ālam al-Islāmī*
8. *al-Tawāqū ' fī al-Islām*
9. *Mā lā yulām 'Alayhi 'Ulamā ' bilād Yorūba*
10. *Durūsun fī al-Thaqāfah al-Islāmiyyah.*
11. *Al-Islām al-Yawm wa ghadan fī Najīriyā.*
12. *Tārīkh al-Da 'wah wa al-Du 'āt*
13. *Tārīkh al-Da 'wah al-Islāmiyyah min al-ams ilā al-yawm.*
14. *Tawjīh al-Da 'wah wa al-Du 'āt fī Najīriyā wa gharb Ifrīqiyyā.*
15. *Al-Islām wa taqālīd al-Jāhiliyyah.*
16. *Miṣbāḥ al-Dirāsah al- 'arabiyyah fī Diyār Najīriyā.*
17. *al-Islām Dīn wa Dawlah.*
18. *Aṣl Qabā 'il Yorūbā wa al-qabā 'il al-mujāwarah laha fī Najīriyā*
19. *Naṣīm al-Ṣabā fī Akhbār bilād Yoruba*
20. *Al-Ṣirā ' bayna al- 'arabiyyah wa al-injilziyyah fī Najīriyā.*

His Reform Agenda

As pointed out earlier, Shaykh used his *Markaz* as an intellectual avenue to articulate his reform agenda. He spelt out clearly what he considered as premises upon which his reform activities are based. These premises are:

- a. Learning and teaching.
- b. Preaching and guidance.
- c. Steadfastness.
- d. Islamic awareness.
- e. Sanitising religious establishments.
- f. Waging war against ignorant practices.
- g. Qur'ân and Sunnah as the solid foundation.¹²

Despite his desperate ambition to make Islam a force to reckon with in Nigeria, Shaykh Adam was ever realistic and cautious. He acknowledged the influence of Christianity which is more pronounced even in the Constitution of the country regarding certain practices, despite the fact that Muslims are in the majority. Thus he admitted that it would be difficult to realise the ambition of making Nigeria an Islamic country where Islamic law would be fully implemented,¹³ when even Muslims themselves are indifferent to *da'wah* activities, and moreso, no Muslim country implements the *Sharî'ah* law in totality except the Saudi Arabia. According to him, it would be more difficult given this reality to actualise such a big ambition. As such, what Muslims could hope for is to be allowed to practise the Islamic personal laws like marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc. But to him, this too could be possible only with the concerted efforts by the Muslims in all parts of the country.¹⁴

In the same vein, he made his position clear with respect to politics in the country vis-à-vis Islam. To him, for a Muslim, the yardstick of belonging to a political party should be defined by the interest of Islam. In other words, Muslims should only associate themselves with any party as long as it is not antithetical to the interests of Muslims and Islam. Otherwise Muslims must desist from joining any political party that is bent on distorting the Islamic message.¹⁵

His Reform Thoughts with a Particular Reference to Islam in Nigeria

The combination of malaises enumerated earlier was responsible for decay in socio-religious and educational aspects of the Muslims in Nigeria. These malaises did spurred Shaykh Adam into advancing some reform thoughts on specific issues of concern to him. The following analyses of some of these reform thoughts:

Unity of Nigerian Muslims; the North and the South

Relying on the large population of Muslims and coupled with the past glory of Islam in the country, Shaykh Adam was concerned and hopeful about the revival of Islam in Nigeria. He, however, considered lack of unity among Muslims as a major stumbling block in the attainment of the desired revival. He observed that disunity existed between Muslims from both the northern and the south-western parts of the country. This spate of disunity, he noted, was intimately connected with the menace of tribalism that dated back to earlier centuries of African society where tribes waged wars against one another. It was a common practice among them then to sell prisoners of war to Europeans, thereby subjecting them to various forms of hard labour in different European countries. As a result of this negative trend, many tribes began to consider others as slaves. For instance, the Hausa in the north used to regard others as ordinary slaves, and precisely they stereotyped the Yoruba people of the South-west in a derogatory remark, namely, *berebi*. In the same vein, the Borno people also considered other tribes as *afno*, meaning slaves.¹⁶

Shaykh Adam argued that this historical hostility that existed between the Hausa of the north and the Yoruba of the South-west did have a strong negative impact on their socio-religious

relationship. More often than not, the former would not agree to be led in prayers by an Imam from the latter tribe, even though he might possess adequate knowledge of Islam. Himself a product of both tribes i.e. Hausa and Yoruba, Shaykh Adam condemned this tribalistic tendency and warned against its negative impacts on both religious and political stability in the country. To him, the Islamic brotherhood tie should be placed over and above tribal or any other material and superficial affiliations. For the cause of Islam to thrive in Nigeria, both Northern and Southern Muslims must be united. They should join forces together and strive for one common goal, namely to regain, sustain and reassert their Islamic identity in the country.

Disunity between Muslims in the country is more manifest among scholars of different ideologies and orientations. For instance, there were two opposing trends among Muslims of Nigeria, namely *Salafi* and *Sûfi*. Both trends were antagonistic to each other, especially in the 70s and towards the 80s.¹⁷ There were confrontations and attacks physically and verbally, between members of the two groups. The bone of contention was the need to correctly practise Islam and avoid un-Islamic tendencies believed to have crept in to the Muslim society in the country. The *Salafi* trend considered practices of *Sûfi* brothers un-Islamic. This ideological disagreement reared its ugly head at the expense of Muslim unity in a country where Christianity, though a minority religion, was promoted by the colonial powers.¹⁸

In order to bring about unity among the Muslims especially those within the two dominant ideological trends, Shaykh Adam appealed to both, reminding them of the priority of unity. He especially cautioned against the act of dismantling what the past generation of scholars had laboured to build, when they fought and defeated the enemies of Islam to establish the religion in the country. He called on both groups to stick to the ideal

practice and principles of Islam. However, he exposed and rebuked corrupting and extreme elements in both trends. To him, the ideal and real *Salafiyah* movement is premised on preservation of *Tawhîd* against idolatry acts, and protection of *Îmân* against unbelief, based on the Qur'an and Sunnah and consensus of the past Muslim generations. The ideal principle of the movement is not about calling to Islam with ignorance, neither is it about the propensity to ignore what scholars of various orientations have contributed to the religion.¹⁹

On the other hand, Shaykh Adam asserted that the *Tasawwuf* movement is no more than purification of souls, sincere assertion of servitude to Allah, and liberation of self from ephemeral tendencies. It is a practical manifestation of *Ihsân*, the third category after Islam and *Îmân*. That notwithstanding, he repudiated those who partake in the movement without adequate knowledge of Islam.²⁰ Thus, Shaykh sought to identify with both trends, even as he condemned corrupting elements that have crept in. He called on both to make compromise and join hands together to fight common enemies like Christianity, secularism, Zionism, and other elements of unbelief which have negatively affected the society in all aspects.²¹

It is important to observe that Shaykh's approach to addressing this divisive issue appears moderate due to far reaching effects it has had on the Muslim unity. He reduced the bone of contention to the realm of *ijtihâd* where every sincere *mujtahid* (scholar) will be rewarded.²² The *Salafiyah* movement was concerned about the need to practise the pristine Islam devoid of elements alien to the religion, while the *Tasawwuf* movement was all out to help in the spread and consolidation of the religion in the country with emphasis on the spiritual dimension. In principle, it is obvious that both trends pursue the same purpose, except that they employ different approaches and methods to realise their identical goal. Given this similarity

in agenda, Shaykh Adam appealed to both trends to recognise and pursue that primary and uniform objective and do away with secondary issues where much disagreement lies, for the sake of unity. Obviously, he appeared to be more sympathetic towards the trend of *Tasawwuf* perhaps because of the fact it had played a pivotal role in the spread of Islam in Nigeria in particular and in the western and northern parts of Africa in general. In addition, he seemed to have argued that the ideal form of *Tasawwuf* does not condone acts of innovation. Hence the presence of some bad eggs in the movement should not be taken as a justification to condemn and rubbish its importance and contributions to the spread of Islam.

On Socio-religious Issues

Shaykh Adam was a keen observer of socio-religious activities and trends in his immediate society. His main vision was a society wherein activities are conducted in line with the Islamic precepts, where Islam is a formidable force and Muslims a united and prosperous family. This vision cannot be too ambitious especially when it is known that Muslims constitute the majority in Nigeria, and that Islam was a force to reckon with for a long period of time prior to the coming of the British colonial power.

Consequently among socio-religious issues that he sought to address was monopoly over and negligence of the religious institutions. He identified the northern part of the country with the former, because of the tendency among some northern rulers to assume religious authorities without adequate knowledge of Islam. This monopolistic trend, he argued, was a logical consequence of the hereditary system of succession and ascendancy. Once the sitting ruler died, his heir would automatically succeed him and assume both the mundane and religious authorities, in a total neglect of leadership qualities

such as knowledge, piety, and competence. Shaykh Adam, however, noted that few past rulers in the north like Abdullah Bayero of Kano (d. 1954), Ja'far bn Ishâq of Zaria, AbdulQadir bn Shua'ib of Ilorin (d. 1959), and the then Emir of Gwandu Harun al-Rashid were exceptions, because they were up to the task as far as both mundane and religious authorities were concerned.²³

The second aspect of the problem, namely negligence of the religious institutions was associated with the southern Muslims in the country. Apart from the fact that they also practised hereditary system in terms of assumption of religious positions as their counterparts from the north, majority of religious leaders in the region have also failed to wield their influence judiciously, although they enjoyed some official recognition. Shaykh Adam observed that most prayer leaders (*'aimmah*) in the southern part of the country were found to be incompetent with respect to mosque management. They could not make initiative as regards funding of the mosques, were immersed in tussle over Imamship position, and were frequently alleged of fund mismanagement. All these factors were considered by Shaykh as reasons religious leaders eventually lost their authority to the muslim philanthropists who came to finance mosques' activities, thereby wielding some authority in the religious community. One ultimate outcome of this development was emergence of unqualified people as religious leaders with the support of the philanthropists who usually sponsor major mosque activities.²⁴

The problems of monopoly and negligence of religious institutions constituted a major setback as far as the Islamic revival in the country is concerned. In order to remedy this anomaly, Shaykh Adam suggested that religious positions should be assumed only by those who are specialists in Islam. He reasoned that professions like medicine, law, and politics cannot be practised excellently except by medical doctors,

lawyers and political scientists respectively. As such, unqualified people should not be given religious positions like leading worshippers in the prayers and passing religious verdicts. This should be the responsibility of the qualified scholars only.²⁵

Women Education and the Position of Arabic Language in the Nigerian Universities

Women Education and the position of Arabic language in Nigerian universities were two educational issues that Shaykh dwelt on considerably. Firstly, like many contemporary scholars, he campaigned for the need to educate Muslim women because of their important role in nurturing and teaching children. He observed that before and briefly after the *Jihād* which was ably led by Shaykh Uthman bin Fodio, there were notable women who excelled in Islamic scholarship. Shaykh Uthman allowed women to attend his lectures in order to gain some fundamental knowledge of Islam. In fact, despite a poetical critic penned by one of his contemporaries, Shaykh Mustapha al-Barnawi, Shaykh Uthman bin Fodio did not compromise his policy on women education and enlightenment in the areas that later came to be known as Northern part of Nigeria.²⁶

However, Shaykh Adam noted with dissatisfaction the subsequent depreciating condition of the northern women education after independence, where women were subject to some forms of restriction thereby barring them from seeking knowledge. He identified the extreme practice of purdah and early marriage as two restrictive measures that were responsible for the inability of women to get educated in the northern part of the country. This attitude towards women education, he observed, was responsible for low level of participation of the northern women in the public life in comparison with their counterparts from the southern part of the country. However, he was confident that things would get better with time.²⁷

Secondly, according to Shaykh Adam, Arabic language is distinct among other world languages due to its intimate affinity with Islam. The Glorious Book, Qur'ân was revealed to the Prophet in Arabic language. As such, Islam and its principles can best be understood via the means of Arabic language. Moreover, aside its religious significance, Arabic is a language of science and civilisation. It is spoken by a large number of nations from African and Asian continents.²⁸ He therefore asserted that every Muslim must learn rudimentary aspects of Arabic in order to be able to observe prayers and other fundamentals of Islam. However, a specialist in Islam is required to be well-versed in Arabic language so that he can have the ability to derive legal rulings from the primary sources of Shari'ah.²⁹

But a major problem noted by Shaykh about Arabic was inertia on the part of its native speakers (i.e. the Arabs), to safeguard the language, as well as the phenomenon of orientalism. The latter has especially had a negative effect on the place of Arabic in many Nigerian universities. With few exceptions, he observed that, some Nigerian universities teach Arabic and Islamic studies in English language as against Arabic language. This abnormal way of teaching Arabic and Islam in those universities was orchestrated by the orientalist scholars who had some considerable influence in those universities as foreign teachers. Ultimately, the products of such universities would likely be handicapped as far as mastery of Arabic language and understanding of Islam are concerned.³⁰ Because of this repercussion, Shaykh alerted the stakeholders on the impending dangers of teaching Islam with languages other than Arabic. He saw this trend as a colonial strategy to undermine Arabic language and Islam:

They (colonialists) in some countries encourage the learning

and understanding of Islam via any language, other than Arabic. By this they considered Islam as Christianity whereby its (fundamental) teachings are taught through various languages and dialects. Hence it is incumbent upon Muslims to beware of this well planned conspiracy against Islam to get rid of it and divide Muslims. Arabic language is an integral part of Islam; it is not possible to understand Islam without the knowledge of Arabic; and Arabic language can only be mastered by adequate grasp of its secrets and literatures.³¹

Un-Islamic Customary Practices in Yorubaland

Muslims in the southern parts of the country were deeply involved in many practices arising from their customs and cultures. Many of those customary practices contravene the teachings of Islam. Thus, consequent upon the introduction and spread of Islam in Yorubaland, individual scholars were ever committed to sensitising people of the region about the need to live in accordance to the Islamic principles and ethos.³² In this regard, Shaykh Adam resolved to Islamise those cultures which he believed to be antithetical to the Islamic principles and teachings. Some of those anti-Islamic cultures among Yoruba Muslims were extravagant celebration of naming and marriage ceremonies, and funeral rites, inscription of facial marks, and prostration for elders in salutation as a mark of respect.

It is true that the power of culture is great because once imbibed, it is difficult to change overnight the mindset of people who subscribe to it. To redirect and dissuade people from certain cultural practices therefore requires some period of time as gradual steps need to be taken to achieve the goal. This may explain why Shaykh Adam took his time in his mission to purge the Yorubaland of cultural practices that are at variance with the ethos of Islam. In 1948, he first wrote a book entitled: *al-în al-Nasîhah*, followed by another one, *al-Tawâdû' fî al-Islâm* in

1956, and finally with *al-Islâm wa taqâlid al-Jâhiliyyah* in 1964. While carrying out his mission to Islamise the Yoruba cultures, Shaykh Adam realised that not all Yoruba cultures are antithetical to the fundamental principles of Islam. Those cultures that do not go against the spirit of Islam could be modified, if need be, and accepted.³³ Apart from these works, he also used his public sermons as a medium to sensitise the people on the need to forgo cultural practices that are not in line with the teachings and principles of Islam.

Conclusion

The spread and entrenchment of Islam in Nigeria was possible due to efforts of some individual scholars. This chapter has studied one of them, namely Shaykh Âdam al-Îlôrî, the 20th century Nigerian reformer. He was an educator, an author, and a reformer who sought to revive Islam in Nigeria, following the footsteps of his predecessors like Shaykh Uthmân bin Fodio who was the 19th century Nigerian reformer. His reform thoughts cut across significant aspects of woman endeavour such as unity of Nigerian Muslims; socio-religious aspects with a particular concern on monopoly of religious affairs by some northern emirs and negligence of religious institutions by southern scholars, and fierce battle between the *Salafi* and *sûfi* trends; education of women, and the place of Arabic language in the Nigerian universities and local customs in the Yorubaland that are at variance with the teachings of Islam. After a life full of teaching, writing, giving public sermons, and devotion spanning over five decades, Shaykh Âdam died in 1992 in a London hospital following a brief illness. However, his legacy as epitomised by *Markaz*, an Arabic and Islamic institution, continues and keeps on producing scholars of high calibre in various human endeavours.

Two decades after the death of Shaykh Adam, some of his

reform targets have witnessed improvements, while things continue to get worse in other aspects. Generally speaking, there seems to be no improvement in Muslims' condition in Nigeria. Disunity among Muslims from the North and South is far from being over. Though, to some extent, physical confrontation between the *Sufi* and *Salafi* has receded, Muslims in the country have suffered from the scourge of disunity very severely. This has weakened the Muslim community and has made it possible for the Christians, though a minority, to have an upper hand in the country. Given the large number of Muslims in the country, one would have expected the country to be under perpetual influence of the Muslim community. But the reverse is the case! This reality in Nigeria further buttresses this wise saying: "a well organised and united falsehood can defeat a disorganized and uncoordinated truth."³⁴ Therefore, for Muslims to really assert their presence and justify their numerical strength, it is high time they joined hands to salvage the country from abyss of destruction. This is the vision of Shaykh Adam.

In the same vein, there is a considerable improvement with respect to women education in the Northern part of the country. Governments of most Northern states are now encouraging female education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. However, the position of Arabic language in some Nigerian universities has not improved as one would expect. Up till now, in Department of Arabic Language of some universities, dissertations and theses are still being written in English language, and not in the original language i.e. Arabic. To improve Arabic language in the Nigerian universities, courses must be taught in Arabic language, and researches; dissertations and theses be conducted in Arabic language. Otherwise, the language would be forced into a state of total extinction, and ultimately, proper understanding of Islam would be compromised, as foreign languages would become necessary alternative.

Notes and References

1. This article was presented at the International Conference on Islam in Africa: Historical, Cultural and Global Perspectives, which was jointly organised by the International Institute for Muslim Unity (IIMU), International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC), Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO) and The Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World (FUIW), between 19-21 July 2011/ 17-19 Shaaban 1432 H, at the International Islamic University, Malaysia.
2. Onireti Abdullateef Ibrahim, "*Nizâm al-Shaykh Âdam 'Abdullah al-Ilûrî fî tazlîm wa al-ta'îf bi al-lugah al-'arabiyyah fî naijiriyyâ*", *Majallah Hawliyyât al-turâth*, 2009, Mustagânim: Algeria, p. 91.
3. Rahman Adewale Abdul-Azeez, "Shaykh Âdam 'Abd Allâh Al-Ilorî of Nigeria: A Brief Study of His Life and a Selected Arabic Work", *Hamdard Islamicus*, 2000, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, p. 77.
4. Mohammad Muneer'deen Olodo al-Shafi'i, "Shaykh Âdam 'Abd Allâh al-Alûrî (R.A): His Influences in Islamic Thought On Nigerian Yoruba", (M.A. Dissertation, IIUM, 2008), p. 16.
5. Adam Abdullah al-Ilori, *al-Dîn al-Nasîhah*, p. 38.
6. R. D. Abubakre, *The Survival of Arabic in the Difficult Terrains*, The Fifty-Eight Inaugural Lecture, (Ilorin: University of Ilorin : Unilorin Press, 2002), p. 18.
7. Adam Abdullah al-Ilûrî, *al-Dîn al-Nasîhah*, p.3.
8. Adam Abdullah al-Ilori, *al-Dîn al-Nasîhah*, p. 4-5.
9. Adam Abdullah al-Ilori, *al-Dîn al-Nasîhah*, pp. 6-5.
10. See the main web page of i-epistemology through this link: <http://i-epistemology.net/>
11. M. A. Ajetunmobi "Islamic Scholars of Ilorin and their Place

- in Yoruba", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 12:1, 1991, p. 145.
12. M. A. Ajetunmobi "Islamic Scholars of Ilorin ..." pp. 8-34.
 13. M. A. Ajetunmobi "Islamic Scholars of Ilorin ..." p. 35.
 14. M. A. Ajetunmobi "Islamic Scholars of Ilorin ..."
 15. M. A. Ajetunmobi "Islamic Scholars of Ilorin ..." pp. 36-37.
 16. M. A. Ajetunmobi "Islamic Scholars of Ilorin ..." pp. 96-97.
 17. In the 70s there was a tense intellectual battle between *Salafi* trend ably represented by Shaykh Ahmad Gumi and that of *Sunni* which had as champions Shaykh Mohammad Sani Kafanga from the *Tijâniyyah Sufi* order and Shaykh Nasir Kabara from the *Qâdiriyya Sufi* order. Shaykh Gumi had in 1972 written a book entitled *al-'Aqîdah al-sahîhah* as a critique of the *Sufi* brotherhood in Northern Nigeria. Consequently, both Kafanga and Kabara differently wrote as a rebuttal two polemical treatises, namely *al-Mînah al-hamîdah fî al-radd 'alâ fâsid al-'Aqîdah* (The Praiseworthy Gifts in the Reply to the One Who is Corrupted in His Faith), and *al-Nasîhah al-sarîhah fî al-radd 'alâ al-'aqîdah al-sahîhah* (The Frank Advice in the Reply to *al-'Aqîdah al-sahîhah*) This intellectual battle later turned into physical attack especially after the establishment in 1978 of *Jamâ'atu Izâlat al-Bid'a wa Iqâmat as-Sunna* (Association for the Removal of the Innovation and for the Establishment of the Sunna). For more on this, see Roman Lomeier, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in Northern Nigeria*, (Illinois: Evanston, 1997), pp.197, 207 and 215.
 18. Roman Lomeier, "Islamic Reform ..." pp. 119-120.
 19. Roman Lomeier, "Islamic Reform ..."
 20. Roman Lomeier, "Islamic Reform ..."
 21. Roman Lomeier, "Islamic Reform ..." p. 117.
 22. Adam Abdullah al-Ilûrî, *Tawjîh al-Da'wah wa al-Du'ât fî naijîriyah wa garb ifrîqiya*, 2nd edition (Lagos: mamba'ahah

- al-thaqâfah al-Islâmiyyah fî naijîriyyah*, Agege, 198,), p. 24.
23. Âdam Abdullah al-Ilori, *al-Islam al-yawm wa gadan*, (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1st edition, 1405 AH- 1985 AD), p. 110, Adam Abdullah al-Ilûrî, *Al-Din al-Nasîhah*, p. 30.
 24. Adam Abdullah al-Ilûrî, *al-Islam al-yawm wa gadan*
 25. Adam Abdullah al-Ilûrî, *al-Islam al-yawm*, pp.116-117
 26. Adam Abdullah al-Ilûrî, *al-Islam al-yawm*, p.130.
 27. Adam Abdullah al-Ilûrî, *al-Islam al-yawm*, p.132.
 28. Nizam al-ta'îm..., p.126.
 29. *Al-Din al-Nasihah*, pp.10-13.
 30. Adam Abdullah al-Ilûrî, *al-Islam al-yawm...*, p. 155.
 31. Adam, *al-Din al-Nasihah*, p. 30. Quoted in Hamid Ibrahim Olagunju, "*Jâmi'ât naijîriyâ wa ta'allum al-lugah al-'arabiyyah*", *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, Vol. 6, 1989, p. 57.
 32. B. O. Yusuf, "Islamisation of Yoruba Culture According to Shaikh Âdam 'Abd-Allah al-Ilory (1917 C.E- 1992 C.E.)", *Islamic Culture: An English Quarterly*, July 2000, Vol. LXXIV, No.3, p. 112.
 33. B. O. Yussuf "Islamisation of Yoruba ...," p. 110.
 34. Results of the last general elections held in 2011 further showed how divided the Muslims are. A Muslim, Muhammadu Buhari lost the presidential election to Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian. It is a common belief of many Nigerians that the former was let down by his people, including the emirs who supposedly represent the interests of the Muslims in the northern part of the country.