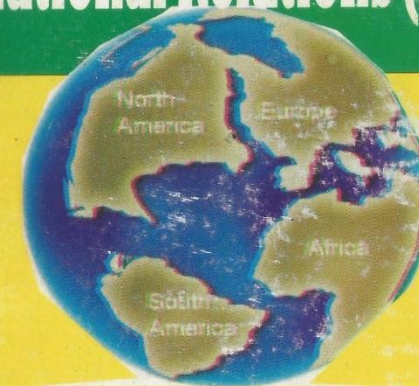


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Editorial

Al-Hikmah Journal of History and International Relations (AJHIR) is published annually (December). It focuses on the broad spectrum of history, culture, international relations, political economy, religious and related disciplines.

The Editorial Board was re-constituted in November 2017, with a specific mandate that hinged on three main thrust, i.e. clear the backlog of articles already processed via the peer-review mechanism; invite submission of well researched papers by prospective authors/contributors; and ensure timely publication of subsequent editions of the Journal.

While thanking most sincerely the leadership and the entire members of staff of the department of History and International Studies for their full support and cooperation, the conscientious effort of the Editorial Board has resulted in the successful publication of Vol. 3 of the Journal in December, 2017 and Vol. 4 in September 2018. It is our hope that Vol. 5 shall be completed and rolled-out from the press by January 2019.

We thank you all for your support, understanding and patronage.

Prof. A.O.Y. Raji,
Editor-in-Chief.

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THE ROLE OF 'MUSLIM-MEDICINE' PRACTITIONERS AND THE GROWTH OF ISLAM IN ILORIN SINCE 19TH CENTURY: AN ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

The practice of Islam has long been in existence in Ilorin and different parts of Yorubaland before the 19th century migration and expansionist activities of the Fulani jihadists. It is argued in the paper that, Muslim medicine and charms, were used by Islamic scholars and jihadists to aid the spread and acceptability of the faith not only in Ilorin, but also in other parts of Yoruba land. The paper has adopted historical methodology using secondary sources and extensive oral information to examine the dynamics in the procurement and usage of Muslim medicine and charms in the 19th and 20th centuries. It further traces the activities of the recent desperate contemporary Ulamas, most of who have completely deviated from the ways of the past practitioners. Some of their attributes are the quest for wealth, strict competition for the limited available resources, and protection against rivalries in public setting. It concludes that there is urgent need for Muslim scholars to redirect their focus and teachings towards the foundations laid by the early Ulamas. It is only when this is done that the aspirations of these contemporary Ulamas would be attained.

Keywords: Charms, Medicine, Muslim, Scholars, Kundi, Emirate, Spirituality

Introduction

The 19th century Ilorin Islamic scholars, charms and medicine practitioners employed their crafts for the manipulation and overthrow of the old order, and installed an Islamic political system in the community. They used their talent to secure and ensured the spread of Islamic religion and philosophy throughout Yorubaland and beyond. Scholarly activities in Ilorin emirate from the early part of the 19th century followed the trend recorded in Sokoto caliphate by focusing on several traditional Arabic and Islamic disciplines including prayer and medication referred to as *Ad' iyah wa al - 'Iay*.¹ The attributes and features of the 20th century scholars were similar to their 19th century counterpart in the display of scholarship, maintenance of peaceful co-existence and service to humanity. They displayed a high degree of ability to help the poor and

needy, without requesting for much gratitude and worldly rewards. Many of them lived the life of sacrifice.

It is noted that charms, divination and spirituality are extraordinarily used as influence on changes in nature, while medicine signifies drugs, medication and remedy recommended to several human ailments and problems. Abdussalam also defined the Ilorin traditional charms also known as *Kundi/Asiri* as a source of traditional spiritual and healthcare among the people of Ilorin emirate which contains prayers, Islamic treatments of certain diseases and African herbal solutions to ailments.² Since the time immemorial, the influence and impact of Muslim scholars, charm and medicine makers and practitioners have been exhibited in several parts of the world. These impacts and influence granted them a prominent role in their waves of migration and trading activities in Ilorin and other parts of Yoruba country in the 19th century. Through their influence, Islam became a strong cultural and political force in the Emirate with a significant foothold in the Yoruba cities as well.³ This paper therefore slot into the existing discussion on the activities of Muslim Ulemas in Ilorin in the contemporary period. It is shown that the early Muslim Ulemas in the 1900s' strictly adhere to the tenets of Islam through the use of medicine as curative measure for the people.

Contributions of Muslim Diviners to the growth of Islam

It is noted that charms making and divination coupled with trade and religious propagation prompted several waves of migration of Muslim visitors to Yorubaland. According to Oloyede, the exact period that Yorubaland came in contact with Islam is unknown, but historians put it between 14th and 15th centuries, during the reign of Mansa Kankan Musa of Mali Empire.⁴ In fact, the first mosque in Yorubaland was erected in Oyo in 1550 A.D., and none of the indigenes was a Muslim at that time.⁵ In the 19th century, the tremendous activities of Muslim traders, preachers, charm makers, diviners and medicine men made their impact widely felt in Yorubaland.

These settlers and traders were very much concerned with trading and selling of charms.⁶ According to Crowther and Schon, the Mallams were not merely teachers, but they still carried on with trading activities. However, charm making was undoubtedly the more lucrative of the two since ministerial labours consist chiefly of trading in charms.⁷ Islam therefore assisted them in selling charms and purveying other skills as fortune telling and medicine making.⁸ For instance, in the early part of the 19th century during the reign of *Oba Aole*, one *Alaja-Eta* a Hausa Muslim trader at Oyo was plundered of his goods, under the pretext that he was bringing bad charms into the city. Koran was one of his

confiscated good which he claimed to have prized more than all his other stolen properties. His travail was as a result of the threat or challenges he posed to some Oyo power mongers, most especially, the *Bashorun* who was the next in political rank to the king.⁹ Similarly, Mallam Al-Salih later known as Alimi in Ilorin was also said to have used his Islamic medicine to cure a mad woman, which made him to draw many adherents from *Saki*, *Igboho*, *Kobayi* and *Iseyin*.¹⁰

Moreover, the 19th century marked the period of incessant crisis, disturbances, instability and series of wars that marked the commencement of the decline of Oyo Empire. The time of Aole was marred with cruelty, usurpation and treachery in the capital; and the provinces were groaning under the yoke of oppression, confiscation, slavery, tyranny, extractions and lawlessness became matters of daily occurrence.¹¹ *Afonja* the *Aare Onakakanfo* the Empire's highest military title, the *Bashorun*, the *Onikoyi* and other powerful provincial and metropolitan chiefs continued to nurture and display the spirit of rebellion and independence. They eventually succeeded in their conspiracy to oust *Oba Aole*, their common enemy. Disloyalty and disaffection of provinces and other power blocks in the capital marred the recognition, development and the rising importance of Muslim scholars, charm makers and diviners in Ilorin and other parts of Yorubaland. *Afonja* became the most powerful and formidable chief in Yorubaland after the collapse of the old Oyo Empire. In order to consolidate his power, defend his capital, and to subvert other towns so as to increase his wealth, he invited and sought the help of *Al-Salih* also known as *Alimi* who was a Muslim scholar, a preacher and an astute charm maker. He recognized and acknowledged the uniqueness and power of the Muslim charms and divination. Muslim charms were therefore highly prized by *Afonja*'s army and by Yoruba warriors in general.¹² At the same period, other two notable non-muslim rulers like *Attah of Igala* and *Aku of Wukari*, also utilized the services of Muslims during warfare and in preparing charms for their personal wellbeing.¹³

Subsequently, scholars from the Northern part of Nigeria trooped in and Muslims from Yorubaland moved in too, in quest for knowledge, guidance and Sufism and Ilorin turned to be the 'Mecca' of Yoruba Muslims. This was enhanced with the belief in high level of spirituality and instant effect of prayers offered by scholars, *Afa* in Ilorin.¹⁴ Ilorin thereby earned the epithet of *Ilu Afa* i.e. the city of scholars, but the term *Afa* among Yoruba Muslims were not restricted to 'academic scholarship' rather it denotes scholars, preachers, teachers and Muslim healers who adopts muslim related prayers combined with herbs.¹⁵

Moreover, many of the Ilorin early Ulama extended the tentacles of their Islamic propagation and sojourned to several communities in Yorubaland, with assurance and backing from home government. Alfa Salaudeen Agunbiade also known as *Parakoyi* sojourned in Ijesha land in the mid-19th century which coincided with the time of drought in that territory.¹⁶ So many attempts had been made by notable traditional priests most especially, *Daro*, the most formidable among them, but all their efforts proved futile. When Alfa Salaudeen reached that territory, he prayed and it rained heavily for seven consecutive days. Similarly, Sheikh Ahmed was another notable Ilorin Muslim scholar and spiritualist who was known for his numerous miraculous activities in Ikire, a town near Osogbo.¹⁷ He was said to have used his charms to solve the problem of marauders who had besieged the town. One Sheikh Buraimoh from Ilorin in the second half of the 19th century was alleged to have saved the people of Ede from several Ibadan invasions of the 19th century, by providing them with a charm that was buried to secure the town.¹⁸

These scholars, diviners and spiritualists also spread their tentacles beyond the shore of Nigeria to as far as the West African coastal cities. For instance, the influential Burkinabe Tijaniyya reformist Sheikh Boubacar Sawadogo (1883 – 1946) converted to Islam around 1902 at the hand of a Hausa merchant Awudu from Ilorin.²⁴ Similarly, Badamosi Agaji's fame as an efficient preacher and religious verse maker went beyond the Yorubaland; it extended to the neighbouring land of the present day Republic du Benin.¹⁹

It is important to note at this point, these Islamic scholars, diviners, medicine and charm makers at this point in time, exhibited a lot of courage, wisdom and fear of God also known as *Imani*. They also displayed a high sense of morality and simplicity also known as *Suudu* in their dealings. They engaged in harsh and truthful preaching without minding the favour and threat of the power that be. According to oral information, Badamosi Agbaji and other scholars were jailed for preaching against the arbitrary and reckless reign of Emir Momo.²⁰ They made use of simple and uncomplicated ingredients allowed and tolerated by Islamic doctrines or *Sunnah* known as *Halal*. For instance, Quranic texts were printed on the wood slates known as *walah*, as was often washed with water (potion) to be drunk to heal sick fellow, or one who is in need of protection.²¹ Prayers are also offered using domestic animals tolerated by Islam as sacrifice to appease the Almighty God. In the same vein, Quranic verses were recited into water to heal several kinds of diseases and to ensure protection. They printed and tied Quranic verses with wool known as *tira didi* to be used as a source of prevention and protection against enemies and evil spirit.²² The significant feature of these Islamic scholars of this period was that,

they willingly stimulated and upheld peaceful co-existence and service to humanity. They displayed a high degree of ability to help the poor and needy, without requesting for much gratitude and worldly rewards.²³

Strategies Used by Muslim Diviners towards the growth of Islam in Ilorin

Based on foregoing discussion, it is noted that the heterogeneous status of Ilorin had a profound effect on the use of charms, divination and medicine toward the propagation of Islam in Ilorin in the 20th century. Evidence found that, there was an adoption of the mixture of some ingredients and techniques from the western traditional charms and medicine. For instance, some of them made use of medicinal concoction also known as *Aseje*, traditional body protector against evil doers known as *Bante*; they also used sharp object to make incision and applied some charm on human vein known as *gbeere*, and so on and so forth.²⁴ This category of Islamic scholars did not only use their craft to ensure the common wealth of the emirate, they also spread Islamic religion to the nook and crannies of Yorubaland. Their spiritual and scholastic superiority was astutely exhibited during their various religion crusades in Yorubaland. They confidently confronted, defeated and converted many traditional religion worshippers, and won many adherents to their teams. Their religious and scholastic reputation made the British Colonial Government to be apprehensive about the kind of literature that was being brought to the colony from the epicenter of religious revivalism and anti – colonial campaigns. No wonder why the likes of Sheikh Dindi and many others were unable to secure passage to Egypt in the early years of colonialism.²⁵

The most prominent in this category are those referred to as *Zumurah* or *Makondoro*, with their headquarters at the Agbaji quarters in Ilorin. Although they have existed since the 19th century, their influence and impact became paramount in the 20th century. They explored their talents to promote Islamic religious supremacy and common wealth of all and sundry in the Emirate and beyond. They had attracted a very large number of students, followers and adherents from several parts of Yorubaland. After graduation, some of these students further spread Islamic crusade, knowledge of Islamic medicine and charms to their various indigenous communities in western Nigeria.²⁶ It therefore became a common practice to send naughty and wayward children or those that are spiritually or demonically possessed to the *Zumurachs* for healing and rehabilitation. After some period of time, most of these children went back home as full grown Islamic scholars, diviners and jihdists.²⁷ The likes of Sheikh Okutagidi and many others used their craft to confront and eradicate the last

remnant of the adherents of traditional religion worships in several parts of the emirate in the 20th century.

In the same vein, in the first half of the 20th century, Sheikh Koforo Karatu of Oja – gboro used his spiritual endowment to alleviate the hardship and sufferings of his community when all the wells in the area got dried – up. Oral evidence revealed that, all the well and water sources in the area got dried – up and there was scarcity of water in the community. When he was called upon, he was said to have performed a miracle by writing some Arabic inscriptions on the ground at the junction of the area, and told the inhabitants of the area to go home to check their wells which have produced enough water for domestic consumption.²⁸ It was also uncovered that Allah revealed to Sheikh Mai Turare of Agaka area through dream of the essence of establishing an Islamic centre of repute in the emirate. The result of this was the birth and establishment of the famous Darul – Ulum in Isale – Koto by Emir Zulu Gambari in 1963, which has produced Ulamas of repute in the emirate and several other parts of the country.²⁹

The achievements of Taj al – adab (1885 – 1923) made him one of the most prominent Ilorin Ulama of the 20th century. Since his death in Abeokuta in 1923, several Islamic movements and educational societies in Ilorin and other parts of Yorubaland have laid claim to Taj al – adab as their source of legitimation, their patron saint.³⁰ Other prominent renowned scholars in the 20th century are Sheikh Kamaldeen Al-Adaby and Sheikh Adam Al-Ilory who achieved tremendously in the second half of the twentieth century. Sheikh Kamaldeen a disciple of Taj al – adab was very famous in scholarship, as well as in exploring his spiritual and saintly affinity to solving several communal problems. He averted many crises that might have disintegrated Ilorin community. He was said to have performed a unique and outstanding miracle by causing rain to fall after a harsh and deep drought of the 1982.³¹

On his part, Sheikh Adam Abd Allah Al-Ilory had sojourned and propagated Islam in several parts of Yorubaland before establishing himself at Agege on the outskirts of Lagos in the 1940s and founded his Arabic College there. His spiritual talent and boldness singled him out among his colleagues in the 20th century.³² He was fond of speaking fearlessly and audaciously against the oppressive and haphazard traditional and military governments of the time. The significant feature of these Islamic scholars of this period was that, they willingly advanced peaceful co-existence and service to humanity. They are selfless, as many of them died a death sacrifice. The goal of the Ulamas of this period was to ensure the common wealth of all the people of the emirate. They

displayed a high degree of magnanimity and the ability to help the poor and needy, without requesting for much gratitude and worldly rewards.

Muslims Charm Makers and the Spread of Islam in Contemporary Ilorin

The philosophy and attribute of many Muslims medicine and charm makers of this contemporary time was not only peculiar to Ilorin, but also to other Nigerian communities. The scholars of the 19th and 20th centuries have practiced their craft alongside scholarship, with the goal of promoting the common wealth of all. Many of them established several levels of Islamic schools known as *Madrassa* or *Mahd* that had kept them busy, in line with the prophetic religion ideology.³³ It is important to note that some Ilorin contemporary Ulamas still continued to follow the full steps of their predecessors. Many others have deviated from the past fulfillment of common wealth, and have decided to exhibit a high sense of selfishness, worldliness and ungodliness.

Most contemporary Islamic scholars and charm makers have refused to engage in works that will make them independent of their followers and the general public. According to Omotosho, there are many learned Muslims (with the exception of western-oriented scholars) who are not usually engaged in any genuine occupation, other than consultation, healing and teaching pupils who do not pay any tuition fees, and participating in naming and wedding ceremonies.³⁴ None of these can provide regular income. This attitude has led to a variety of practices, some of which are contrary to the teachings of Islam.³⁵ For example, in the process of consultations, they are compelled to tell lie to their clients on imminence of calamity, simply in order to pressure them to bring money.³⁵ This attitude has exposed some of them to sexual temptations through unlawful private audiences with certain categories of women.³⁶

The quest and desperation for wealth was a common phenomenon among this category of Muslims. They engaged in all sort of dirty, immoral and devilish ways *Al – Fasad* to acquire material resources. They are fond of kidnaping, killing, using human parts for money rituals, and stealing human corpse from graves which is strongly forbidden by Allah in Quran 49, verse 12. It was gathered that, they used human lungs, throat and blood mixed with soap to prepare *olugboun* or *afose* to command and dupe the public.³⁷ This category of charm and *Kundi* makers are back-bone and God-fathers to reckless politicians and desperate political office holders. They have supported them spiritually in their act of desperation to the extent that, they helped to eliminate their political enemies.³⁸

Moreover, some of them went to the extent of using their charms *Kundi* to defraud and cheated members of the public. Many of them are spiritual mentors to armed robbers, drug pushers and fraudsters all in quest to amaze wealth. Some of them also collaborated with the pastors, as well as the traditionalists of their likes to perpetuate their acts.³⁹ This category of Ulama did not only drink alcohol which is highly forbidden by Allah in Quran 5, verse 90 – 91 and Government of Kwara State through an Edict titled Ilorin Township (Prohibition of against Manufacture, Sales, etc. of Liquor in certain areas) Edit of 1988 for pleasure, many of them also use alcohol to mix and prepare charms *Kundi*.⁴⁰ It is important to note that, the significant feature of this period was the direct opposite of the historical experiences of the activities of the scholars and charm makers of the 19th and 20th centuries. They have lost the extreme regard and respect from members of the public, mainly because; they have rather aggravated the common societal problems instead of solving it.⁴¹

Conclusion

This paper has examined the role played by Muslims-medicine practitioners in Ilorin toward the propagation of Islam. It was found that Muslim scholars, charms and medicine makers performed a very unique role in the 19th century. It is also noted that, they used their talents and endowment to install a powerful and functional Islamic government in Ilorin. Similarly, they also used their genius and gift to expand Islamic scholarship as well as propagated Islamic religion not only in Ilorin, but also in other parts of Yorubaland. Some of their attributes includes, teaching and scholarship, maintenance of peaceful co-existence and service to humanity. They also displayed a high degree of ability to help the poor and needy, without requesting for much gratitude and worldly rewards. It concludes by reflecting on the changes that occurred in the role and activities of the Islamic medicine and charm makers of the contemporary period. One of the common factors of this change was their act of desperation and quest for wealth without hard work. They have lost the extreme regard and respect from members of the public, mainly because, they failed to meet or solve common societal problems. It revealed that the attitudes of Islamic scholars, spiritualists and charm makers of the contemporary period have drastically changed. Although some of them still continued to maintain the statute quo, many of them have deviated and decided to wine and dine with the devil in the quest to acquire affluence, wealth and worldly prominence. One of the factors of this change was their act of desperation and quest for wealth without hard work. They have lost the extreme regard and respect from members of the public, mainly because; they have rather aggravated the common societal problems

instead of solving it.

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