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Chapter Six
Islamic Education and Society 1940 -2012

Introduction: The previous chapters have examined the history and processes of knowledge production in the Islamic education system across time and in different modes in the Muslim city of Ilorin. This background leads us to the present chapter which examines the matrix of this institution in the life of the Muslim society of Ilorin. The dynamics of this institution as it connects and revolves around the life of the people will be explored as well as the socio-economics of the system. Here, the utilization of the knowledge produced through the institution comes to the fore. In consonance with the Muslim dictum ‘seek knowledge from cradle to grave,’ the ulama, as the guardian of this institution are influential in virtually all aspects of the life of the people of the city. Whether it is the social, economic or political milieu, their influence resonates. The agencies of the mass media and Muslim organizations in the dissemination of education to Muslims form part of this exploration. These modern phenomena played crucial roles not only in the secondary production and dissemination of knowledge, but also served as a means to put into the service of the community, the practical use of the knowledge acquired by the scholars, opportunities not available in the pre-modern period.

The role of women as propagators of the religion is also examined. Mostly working in the background, but increasingly having greater voice in the public, women have been very influential in the propagation of religion, especially among their fellow womenfolk, as teachers and women leaders. From early in the history of the town through the colonial period to the present we can see the roles and influence of women in the production and utilization of Islamic knowledge. Through these histories we are able to see the pivotal role and linkages of the institution of knowledge production with the various aspects of the life of individual Muslims as well as the Muslim society of Ilorin in general.

Dynamics of Islamic Education in the Muslim Society of Ilorin

The Unitarian ideology of Islam presupposes a non-bifurcation of the world into the dual of the secular and the spiritual. The two interwove in Islam and theoretically one should not interfere with the other despite the challenges that both

1 A common saying among Muslims; some attributed this saying to the prophet but others have refuted it, saying it is only a truism; a common adage that can be corroborated with evidences from the Qur'an as well as the Sunnah of the prophet but not a hadith itself. See www.islamtoday.net for comments on this. Accessed 24-3-2014.
opposites pose to each other. This Unitarian ideology comes into force with regard to Islamic education and poses many challenges especially in the modern world. The contact of most of the Muslim world with western ideas through colonialism and imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth century brought a real division of knowledge for Muslims into the dual strands of western and Islamic education. This encounter had set the tone of development of Islamic education in Muslim countries; always having to consider western education in all educational strategies since the encounter with colonialism and modernity. Ilorin’s engagement with western education thus comes in various responses from outright rejection of the challenging western weltanschauung, the friendly and tolerant approach, to critical and cautious engagement.

The nature of Islam and its immutable and sacred book, the Qur’an, has made learning a necessary adjunct to the religion. Starting out as a memorized book among the Arabs in whose language it was revealed; as the religion spread to non-Arab speaking of the world, it was committed to writing after the death of many of the early memorizers. Gradually the Muslims develop scholarship of the Qur’an and hadith (the acts and sayings of the Prophet). Further development of canons rooted in these two most significant sources developed Islamic scholarship into many branches of knowledge. At the height of Muslim epochs of the medieval era, this knowledge production among Muslims reached heights that enabled production in other spheres such as science and technical innovations not directly connected with religion. As Muslim caliphates declined, knowledge production also receded back into mainly the religious sphere. The Muslim world would encounter western imperialism in this state from the late eighteenth to early twentieth century.

As an act of worship, knowledge seeking remains an essential obligation of all Muslims. This lifelong learning is not limited to textual knowledge alone but encompasses other sources of knowledge as well such as sermons and observed acts of pious scholars as exemplars. Sermons in particular form an important source of knowledge for Muslims, not located within a school. In mosques, open air and other public fora, knowledge is passed to the public and since the advent of the mass

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2 As explained elsewhere, this does not simply imply that Islam or Muslims form a monolithic whole as far as social realities, ideology or beliefs are concerned. The modern world in fact has only added to the disparities within the ideal whole that Islam represents. Neither the ideal or realities could be dispensed with, both have to be considered.

3 Hitti, History of the, 123.

media; it has also become an important medium of education, reaching far wider audience than the limits of space and time of the traditional oral sermon.

The history of Ilorin as a city is essentially a history of the entrenchment and development of Islam. The emergence of the city as a Muslim citadel is rooted in the activities of the scholars of Islam. The leaders were Muslim clerics and their followers as well; as such the legitimacy of the city and those of its leaders is rooted in Islam. The identity of the town as well, is synonymous with Islam. From Okesuna through the establishment of the Fulani-led emirate to the present time, Islam is the pivot of the identity of the people. An Ilorin indigene identifies him or herself first as a Muslim before any other indices of identity. An Ilorin indigene who converts to another faith will gradually lose the identity of Ilorin, since his participation in communal activities would reduce. He would be socially ostracized and such a person cannot identify him/herself in isolation. Such identity cannot be sanctioned or supported by the community, thus having little value. The convert naturally withdraws from the society of his own volition into his new social setting and his/her identity with Ilorin further recedes.

Those who have converted into Christianity have lost their identity this way and in the early colonial period even lost their properties. They cannot live in physical proximity with the people and would gradually gravitate towards a new identity. Social mobility through the city’s social network would be near impossible and in a country where ethnic identity matters in social and political advancement, such a person would find it most difficult to move up the social ladder. For this reason very few could be identified as non-Muslim indigenes of Ilorin. No other religion outside of Islam can serve as identity marker for an Ilorin indigene. Religion, together with history and ancestry forms a tripod of identity markers in Ilorin.

The emirs of Ilorin have all been descendants of Sheikh Salih bn Janta (Alfa Alimi). The missionary and educational activity of this Fulani cleric was crucial in the history of the emergence of Ilorin as a Muslim city. While Alimi did not assume political leadership, his children established the emirate with support from the followers of their father. Their legitimacy is thus rooted in the protection and promotion of the legacy of Islam as promoted by Alimi. Alimi is the saint patron of

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5 Reichmuth, ‘A Sacred Community,’ 35-54.
7 Discussions with Alhaji Safi Jimba, (Shamaki of Ilorin).11-7-2012.
9 As the emir himself explains, his trumpeter intones ‘Ummati rahmati,’ meaning ‘My community, my grace’ as a reminder to the emir of his connection to the Muslim ummah of Ilorin. See the video ‘wolimat ceremony of Maryam faruq Onikijipa #2’ on www.youtube.com. Accessed 7-2-2014.
the Islamic identity Ilorin identifies itself with. His name and *barakah* continues to be invoked for blessings in mosques throughout Ilorin, especially in the traditional settlements of Ilorin.\(^\text{10}\)

A common saying in Ilorin signifying the clerical importance in the identity and legitimacy of the emir is ‘*Alfa ni Baba Oba*’ meaning ‘the cleric/scholar is the father of the king (emir)’. This saying confirms the clerical identity of Alimi as opposed to the more political identity of the first emir Abdulsalami and the subsequent emirs. By this, the society reinforces the religious root of kingship. In a subtle form, this is also a way the ulama reminds the emirs of their own importance as the custodian of the source of the legitimacy of emirs’ leadership of the town. In another word the saying is also a reminder that the emirs were first and foremost scholars and a part of the ulama before becoming an emir. The symbiotic relationship between the two is thus reaffirmed in the saying.\(^\text{11}\)

Composed of many ethnic groups, Islam is the city’s most important rallying idea. The supra-ethnic ethos of Islam is the anchor of the legitimacy and identity of the individual members of the Ilorin community as well as the city as a whole. In the course of the development of the city in the nineteenth century, it had to defend itself against irredentist survivors of the old Oyo Empire.\(^\text{12}\) The city was able to survive these pressures relying on the rallying call of Islam. A strange entity among the Yoruba speaking people, composed of different ethnic groups, having a different kingship system and adopting a universal religion as a state policy; the strength of this identity enabled Ilorin to emerge, first, as a defensive city in the early nineteenth century and a conquering one in the later half of the century. Ilorin’s offensive on town after town was only put on hold by the equally new city of Ibadan.\(^\text{13}\)

The emir is thus the primary patron of the scholars. The emirs reinforced their legitimacy in Islam by encouraging scholars to settle in Ilorin in the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century as well. The Chief Imam of the city is appointed by the emir from a Fulani family. He is a primary councilor to the emir and one the kingmakers. Together with his deputies, the Imam Imale and Imam Gambari, they serve as religious counsellors to the emir and serve as communication channels between the emir and the ulama. The religious roles of the emir are many and he is assisted in these by the scholars. In the month of Ramadan,

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\(^\text{10}\) Reichmuth, ‘A Sacred Community.’
\(^\text{11}\) Reichmuth, ‘A Sacred Community.’
\(^\text{12}\) Alabi, ‘Indices of Ethnic Identity.’
\(^\text{13}\) Hodge, *Gazetteers of Ilorin*, 71-72.
this communal relation between the emir, the scholars and the town people is expressed through the daily *tafsir* at the emir’s palace.\(^{14}\)

This practice had its origin from the early days of the emirate as part of the religio-political strategy of binding the alliances that had just formed the emirate.\(^{15}\) Throughout the Ramadan, the *tafsir* is held at the emir’s palace, led by the Chief Imam and his deputies and with the emir present. The emir’s acts may be subtly criticized during these sermons; he takes no offence but accepts it as guidance from the ulama.\(^{16}\) Interested members of the community could also attend. The communal exercise of this religious rite serves as an important bond for the community. The announcement of the beginning of the Ramadan itself is the responsibility of the emir. In the era of mass media, when the moon has been sighted and announced by the Sultan of Sokoto, the emir’s band then goes round the city beating drums and sounding the trumpets of the emir, in addition to the announcement on radio and television.

The same way the emir announces the end of Ramadan and *eid* prayer for the following morning. The Ramadan is a special month observed communally for the annual fasting. It is the main break from learning. Minimum teaching takes place during this month, especially for adults.\(^{17}\) The scholars dedicate the whole month to worship services and open air sermon and *tafsir* takes precedence in the life of scholars. These are observed morning, evening, and night throughout the month according to the preference of the scholars.

The ulama as a class serve to curtail what they may perceive as the excesses of an emir, should the occasion arise. Mentioned have been made in chapter five of the role of Sheikh Badamasi in this regard in the time of emir Aliyu (1868-1891) when he sought to control the public preaching of the scholars.\(^{18}\) Emir Momo who succeeded him also clashed with the ulama when he began his pacific moves. His taunting statements to the ulama over the visits of the Europeans to Ilorin contributed to his alienation when the warriors besieged him in his palace and he committed suicide.\(^{19}\) The ulama were beneficiaries of the spoils of war directly and indirectly. Some of them were participants in the wars and they also provided prayer services and amulets to the warriors. The ulama’s opposition to the coming

\(^{14}\) Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 32.

\(^{15}\) Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 32,50.

\(^{16}\) Discussions with Alhaji Safi Jimba, Shamaki of Ilorin. 11-7-2012.

\(^{17}\) The new Qur'aniyya and Tahfiz Schools, however, are increasingly organizing specialized classes for children during the Ramadan.


\(^{19}\) See Johnson, *History of the Yoruba*, 628.
British colonialists and their pacific dealings with the emir was based on economic and religious motives. End of wars meant end of booties and the interference of the British was loathed on account of their not being Muslims.

Resistance to British conquest was also based on religious belief and the ulama also participated in the physical resistance and after the conquest, were at the forefront of the intellectual resistance to colonialism. The tax riot of 1913 was led by the ulama still smarting from the conquest of the town by a non-Muslim force. As moulders of public opinion, their views in no small measure influenced the people’s resistance to western education and ideas. Hence the attempt to burn down the first school built by the colonial authority in Ilorin. While some loathed western ideas and education, we also have, even though a minority at the time, those who saw something positive in the zamani of the white men. It was from the class of the ulama that we also found promoters of western education for Muslims as exampled by the career of Sheikh Kamalud-deen Al Adabi.

The ulama often had to play the role of conscience of the society. Though they shun partisan politics, political affairs of the town are always within their consciousness. If political affairs began to threaten the peace, identity or legitimacy of the town, their voices would be heard through some of the more vocal members of the class. For example, in the experimental democratization of politics leading up to the independence when the identity and legitimacy of Ilorin became an issue of partisan politics, the ulama intervened through support of the opposing political opinions. Some allied with the populist Ilorin Talaka Parapo (ITP) while others supported the pro-establishment Northern Peoples’ Congress (NPC).

The Action Group (AG) political party, led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, based in the Southwest among the Yoruba began pushing for ‘Ilorin-west’ merger as prerequisite to independence, with the hope of gaining some territorial advantage against the much bigger Northern Region. The AG found a willing partner in a

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20 Hodge, Gazetteer of Ilorin Province, 79.
21 Hodge, Gazetteer of Ilorin, 255.
22 Reichmuth, Islamische Bildung, 112.
23 See especially chapter three of C.S. Whitaker, The Politics of Tradition, Continuity and Change in northern Nigeria 1946-1966 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); Chapter Seven of O’Hear, Power Relations in Nigeria, where the politics of this period was extensively discussed; Fatayi, ‘Politics of Protest’; Arifalo, ‘Egbe Omo Oduduwa; see also Reichmuth, Islamische Bildung, 85.
24 The Ilorin-West merger agitation by the Action Group sought to have Ilorin province merged with the western region on the argument of ethnic, historical and linguistic affinity of the Province with the rest of the Yoruba region. The British established the Willink Minority Commission in 1957 to look into the agitation. See ‘Minority’ PRO /CO 957/11 for exhibits submitted to the commission by the alliance seeking for merger with the Western Region.
grassroots political movement, Ilorin Talaka Parapo (ITP-Commoners Party), with which it formed an alliance. ITP was a grassroots movement that won election in the first experiment at elective representation at the local level in 1957. The Ilorin West-merger agitation was to be its Achilles heels. Power was eventually wrestled back from ITP and its members persecuted. Though ITP had made some progress in local government administration, the west-merger issue alienated it from the majority of the people, aristocrats and commoners alike.

The threat this merger posed to the Islamic identity of Ilorin was the main reason the attempt failed. Though the ITP had performed admirably in discharging their political/administrative mandate, the identity of Ilorin was too important to be sacrificed on this altar. In another way, this southwestern attempt at acquiring Ilorin into its territory was the ethno-political continuation of the irredentist wars of the nineteenth century.

Since Ilorin had always been with the north politically, merger with the west was seen as a threat not only to its Islamic identity but also its political relevance. The people of Ilorin do not consider themselves as simply Yoruba, even though Yoruba is the lingua franca. Religion and ancestry outweigh language as indices of ethnic identity. The west-merger issue split members of ITP, some of whom thought the west-merger politics is one issue too many. Though some of ulama supported the ITP on account of their success with local administration, majority were against them due to the ‘West-merger’ issue. It is commonly believed that the dissolution of the party and eventual oblivion of the leaders was the result of prayers of scholars who placed a curse on them.

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27 See ‘Future of Ilorin is at Stake’ *Nigerian Citizen*, 6, April 1957. Emir Abdulkadir called a meeting of NPC and ITP-AG alliance to resolve the agitation. Within the alliance many prominent members felt their identity had been swallowed up by AG and all authority taken from their hand. They argued that they formed the party not to quit the North but to manage Ilorin domestic affairs.
28 While for most ethnic groups, language is the primary index of identity, in Ilorin, it is not so simple because of its history. In political relations with the Yoruba of the southwest, this sometimes brings tension but hardly matters in social relations. See Alabi, ‘Indices of Ethnic Identity.’
29 Those members of ITP against the merger appreciated the social development that the party was promoting but were against the threat to traditional authority and Ilorin’s identity that the west-merger entailed, especially as it was obvious that the instigation was largely from the Action Group, the financially buoyant and more organized partner in the alliance.
From the Second Republic, Dr Olusola Saraki became the preeminent political figure in Kwara state, controlling the levers of power. His political success is often attributed to the prayers he had secured from the scholars through his acts of generosity. When a rift occurred between him and Governor Muhammad Lawal in 1999, at the return to democratic rule, both sides resorted to winning members of the ulama to their side. Sheikh Kamalud-deen tried to get the two politicians to agree to a truce but the two were unable to reconcile. It is generally believed that a prayer war ensued between the camps of ulama employed by both sides, leading to the death of some of the ulama. Dr. Saraki eventually won the battle when his son ousted the governor from power in the 2003 gubernatorial election.

At the expiration of the son’s tenure in 2011, Dr. Saraki apparently wanted his senator daughter to succeed her brother but this was opposed by most of the scholars who openly preached against her candidacy, arguing that women do not hold leadership position in Islam. Though some other scholars argued that women can hold leadership positions, she lost the election to the preferred candidate of the outgoing governor. No doubt, the negative stance of the ulama was effective against the female candidature. In all these, the ulama were actively involved in marshalling religious arguments in favor of their preferred candidates. Politicians constantly seek the ulama for blessings and prayers believed to be crucial to attaining political gains. The politicians always try to associate themselves with the leading scholars. This can swing a lot of the populace into supporting such a candidate. The greater the charisma and Baraka such a scholar is perceived to possess the greater the political relevance of such a scholar to the politicians.

The ulama serve as a censor to the social life and development in the city, curtailing what they perceive as antithetical to the Islamic identity of the town. They do this through their sermons and through the mass media. A number of examples would

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31 A medical doctor turned politician, his first attempt at politics during the First Republic ended in failure. From the Second Republic he dominated the political landscape of Kwara state till he passed away in 2012. He made his fortune providing medical care services to the Nigerian army during the civil war. He was honored with the title of Turaki, later Waziri of Ilorin. see also Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 85.

32 Such as his financial contribution to the building of Ilorin Central Mosque and numerous community development efforts. Alanamu, ‘Islam and Politics,’ 21.


suffice here. In the late 1980s, through their public sermons, they brought to the notice of the emir and authorities the new trend of selling and consumption of alcohol within the traditional settlement of Ilorin and the rising prevalence of night parties. The ulama met with Sheikh Kamalud-deen who had by then become the leading scholar in town and they were unanimous and vociferous in their position through sermons against this practice and the emir had to summon them to inquire what their agitations was all about, wary that action should be taken without his consent.

Although the emir was not happy that such an important decision was being taken without his consent, the ulama led by Sheikh Kamalud-deen assured him they were fighting his battle. They reminded the emir that ‘alfa ni baba oba,’ as well as the role of Sheikh of Alimi in the Islamisation of Ilorin and how the scholars were therefore his students, defending his domain from un-Islamic acts creeping into the town. Meanwhile the alcohol sellers had instituted a case in court and the ulama had asked some lawyers to represent them. The emir summoned one of the town’s lawyers and sought his opinion. The emir was advised to include his name and that of his principal counsellors among the defendants. The emirate eventually won the case.

This censorship is also directed at the ulama class itself. For example, in recent times, there has been criticism of young scholars, especially those involved in the prayer economy (jalabi), as being enamored with materiality and abandoning the clerical frugality and asceticism. They were accused of not being ready to toe the line of older scholars who spent years in ascetic devotional sacrifice to achieve the Baraka that sometimes brings material wealth. Rather, some of the scholars were

36 A researcher from the University of Ilorin had as early as 1982 observed this trend, especially involving Muslims, who openly consume alcohol. One of the early attempts of the clerics to curb this trend was to encourage scholars not to officiate in socio-religious ceremonies of any Muslim known to consume alcohol. It worked only for a short while. The economic implications of this on some of the ulama forced them to be lax over the injunction. Incomes from such officiating form an important part of their earnings. See Y.A. Quadri, ‘Muslims and Alcohol in Ilorin: A Case Study’ Religions - Journal of the Department of Religions- University of Ilorin No. 6 & 7 (1982), 100-113.

37 Discussions with Barrister Shafi Jimba (Shamaki of Ilorin). 11-7-2012.

38 Barrister Shafi Jimba. He is a son of a scholar from the family of the warrior Jimba, who led Ilorin army to sack the capital of the old Oyo kingdom in the early stage of the establishment of the emirate.

39 In the event of a victory in court, it would bring honor to the emir but should the scholars lose, the emir would be in the bad book of the scholars as having abandoned them when they needed him most as the first citizen of a Muslim citadel. Discussions with Barrister Shafi Jimba (Shamaki of Ilorin). 11-7-2012.

40 The emir rewarded Barrister Shafi Jimba with the warrior title of Shamaki of Ilorin for his role in that legal victory.
alleged to be into syncretism, including use of human body parts in sacrifices as a shortcut to wealth. Criticism has also been leveled against the new radical scholars who take a literal reading of the religious texts, as misleading young ones against established religious traditions, believing much in textual authority against the human agency of such authority.

The function of the ulama as a key agent of social integration has been treated in details by Reichmuth in his work. Suffice to say, their position as the vanguard of religion, the common denominator of virtually all the people of Ilorin, placed them strategically to play this role. Their various roles in society see to their presence in almost all spheres of the lived experience of the people. They serve as guarantor of the social order even as other agencies also key-in into this role. They are in the forefront of pan-Islamic movement in the city such as the attempts to organize the madaris to lobby the government to key in to the development of the sector, from in the 1970s through the activities of Joint Association of Arabic and Islamic Schools (JAAIS) led by Sheikh Abdulkadair Orire. He played key roles in the entrenchment of public celebrations of Muslim festivals such as the Hijrah day, marking the beginning of the Muslim year and Malud Nabi. The Council of Muslim organizations (CMO) also resulted from this effort to have an organized platform for the promotion and protection the interests of the Muslims in the state.

In such function of social integration we find the ulama playing a prominent role in the construction of the ultra-modern mosque in Ilorin. Although the idea of constructing the mosque had been mooted since the 1960s, its activation and realization became accelerated when Sheikh Kamalud-deen was appointed the Chairman of the Mosque Committee by Emir Muhammad Sulukarnaini Gambari. Between 1978 and 1981 when the mosque was built, he mobilized the people of Ilorin into supporting the Mosque project. The opening of the mosque was widely

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41 See the news report, ‘Confusion as Residents Find Baby’s Placenta with Alfa.’ *The Punch Newspaper*, 1, August 2014. See also the sermon of Sheikh Buhari Musa Ajikobi ‘Ese Pele’ (Be Careful) on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). Accessed 4-11-2014.
42 Some of these had studied in the Middle East while some had acquired most of their learning through western education and self-learning. They are accused of disregarding the reverence for elderly scholars as entrenched in the traditional system. Such individuals are usually called ‘tabligh,’ ‘Ahlu sunnah’ and even ‘salamalaykum’ as way of distinguishing them from the mainstream Muslim community. See Francesco Zappa, ‘Between Standardization and Pluralism - Islamic Printing Presses and its Social Spaces in Bamako, Mali’ -in- Hacket and Soares eds., *New Media*, 53.
43 Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*.
44 Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 261-262. The madaris and some of the western schools usually gather for a march-past parade in the township stadium. Speeches are given and the new Hijrah calendar is launched at this occasion.
celebrated with the President of the country, Alhaji Shehu Shagari and dignitaries from the Arab world in attendance. The architectural masterpiece became a symbol of the Islamic identity, pride and reverence for the city.  

The pivotal role of the scholars as agents of social mobilization saw the two iconic leaders of Islamic education of Ilorin, Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Al Iluri and Sheikh Muhammad Kamalud-deen Al Adaby being coopted into the editorial work of translation of the Qur’an into Yoruba language, funded by the World Muslim League (WML). The publication came out in 1972. Although there had been earlier translations of the Qur’an in parts, this would be the first pan-Yoruba effort to translate the whole Qur’an into Yoruba. Other translations would follow this and the WML translation itself was reviewed at the end of the twentieth century.  

The story of the dynamism of the scholars would be incomplete without a mention of their role in the development of Sufism in Ilorin. This esoteric science of the Muslims is largely an experiential and ritual based learning. While there are texts on *tasawwuf* (esotericism), text is secondary to the practice of Sufism. Sufis aim at an inner and personal awareness of the Supreme Being, to be achieved through the rituals of *(zuhud)* asceticism and *(wird)* litanies. Generally, Sufis follow the path *(tariqa)* of a Sufi master. The two main Sufi rites in Ilorin are the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya. Qadiriyya has an older history while the Tijaniyya is largely a twentieth century arrival. Other *turuq* have also found their ways into Ilorin in the wake globalization of the twentieth century. Some of the reformers of the twentieth century are known for their connection to Sufism. 

For example, Tajul Adab was initiated into the Qadiriyya sect and was said to have initiated his own *tariqa* with its own set of litanies. However, this *tariqa* did not outlive him, perhaps because his illustrious pupil Sheikh Kamalud-deen did not take after this particular legacy of his teacher, at least openly. Sheikh Adam Abdullahi al

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46 In 2012, the mosque was rehabilitated after a fundraising in which hundreds of millions of naira was realized. The Governor, Dr Bukola Saraki, like his father did in the early 1980s, mobilized his friends in the Nigerian political and business community into donating funds for the project.  
48 This led to some controversy over the propriety of editing the first translation between the son of Sheikh Adam Abdullahi al Iluri, Sheikh Habib Adam Abdullahi and one of the editors of the new edition Dr AbdulMajid Alaro. Recordings of arguments of both scholars can be seen at www.youtube.com as ‘The Truth about the Translation of the Qur’an to Yoruba’ and ‘Mudir’ul Marcz Esi oro.’ Accessed 10-12-2014.  
Iluri was also initiated into the Qadiriyya order and continued to defend Sufis in his writings against the literalists’ condemnation of Sufism as a practice not associated with the prophet.\textsuperscript{51} The inner dimension Sufi worship means that the narratives around these scholars’ involvement with Sufism are often not in the public unlike the narratives around their educational career which is often tangible unlike the largely intangible tropes of Sufism.\textsuperscript{52}

The dynamism of the institution of Islamic education cannot be overemphasized in a Muslim city such as Ilorin. Anchored in the ulama, it radiates through them to other layers and spheres of the lived experience of the people. At almost every point this influence can be discerned even as it is more prominent in certain instances than others. Though the institution operates within defined contexts, its influences and impacts goes beyond these defined contexts.

\textbf{Socio-Economics of Islamic Education (Careers in and around Islamic Learning)}

Muslim scholars have tended to combine scholarship with some commercial occupation. This, however, may change as a scholar increases in his knowledge and charisma to such a point where he fully concerns himself with knowledge acquisition and dissemination. This scholar-businessman career is particularly true of the early stages of Islam in a community. It has been well noted how merchant-scholars had been responsible for the spread of Islam in West Africa along its trade routes.\textsuperscript{53} Once Islam had been entrenched in a place, there may begin a gradual separation of the merchant class from the ulama class even though this not a clear cut line. Some scholars will continue with commercial activities while others would concentrate fully as religious scholars.

In Ilorin for instance, Okesuna was a trade settlement\textsuperscript{54} and Solagberu was a merchant scholar and Alimi is also known to be a rope maker.\textsuperscript{55} Coming closer to contemporary times, Sheikh Kamalud-deen in his youth had been involved in the hand weaving cloth industry that Ilorin is renowned for, although he did not stay long in the family business. Generally younger scholars tended to have some additional occupation. In the absence of a church in Islam through which the clergy

\textsuperscript{52} Many in the Adabiyya and Markaziyya networks are members of Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya Sufi orders.
\textsuperscript{55} Jimba, \textit{Iwe Itan Ilorin}, 25.
is trained and assigned by the church to a particular congregation, the ulama class is more democratic in Islam and entrance into the class is open to any who can face the rigor. Islamic scholars are generally self-made and thus have a greater degree of independence and choice of career.

A number of career routes are opened to scholars upon attainment of a certain level of knowledge and skills. Often the scholars combine more than one role. Traditional career choices include the ubiquitous teacher, imam, qadi, preacher and spiritual consultant. These are traditionally lines that are directly connected to religion, its rituals and practices. Usually more than one of these choices are pursued simultaneously, sometimes in addition to occupations bearing little or no relation directly to the religion such as any of the crafts or commercial activities. In contemporary times, career choices for scholars have widened to the extent you can find competent scholars of Islam in most fields.

By far the more widely pursued career for the scholars of Islam is that of a teacher. Depending on the level of his knowledge, a teacher may be a teacher of Qur’an alone, teaching the reading of the Qur’an to children in the neighborhood. Since teaching often begins during a scholar’s learning period, as he advances in his knowledge, he would begin to train others in the theological and jurisprudence texts that he has acquired knowledge on. Given the wide sub-fields in Islamic learning, a scholar will eventually specialize in some particular fields. Some would be better known as teachers of hadith, jurisprudence, exegesis or in the language sciences. Though all scholars would have studied in all these fields, interest and aptitude would determine a scholar’s area of interest or specialization.

The Qur’anic teachers are by far the most numerous and noticeable and in terms of remuneration are the least rewarded.\(^56\) Traditionally such a teacher would have other works such as farming to complement his earning. Some of his students would help in lieu of payment.\(^57\) Every Wednesday the children would bring a little amount of money, *owo alaruba* (Wednesday’s money) as fees. This payment is not enforced; as such parents who are constant with this payment do so in the belief in the blessings this brings on their wards. Others can withhold payment on the excuse of not having the means or not bothering since there is little or no pressure on those unable to pay. Others may rely on their relationship or affinity with the teacher; most of the students would be related to him in one or more ways. With many of the scholars ready to give this service free of charge, only a little amount could be realized. During Ramadan and Muslim festivals, gifts of money and materials are

\(^{56}\) Danmole, ‘The Frontier Emirate,’’ 124.

\(^{57}\) Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 110. However this practice has dwindled since many scholars are no longer connected to farming.
also given to the teacher. The modern Qur’anic schools that have largely replaced the traditional ones usually collect fees on a monthly basis but this is also not enforced and usually it is a token.

Hence, the teachers of the Qur’anic schools tended to be poor, especially those who have not combined it with any commercial venture. Ideally, money or gifts given are not regarded as payment for the teaching but as a means to earn alubarika (blessing). The respect and honor the teachers receive from the community is considered more important than the payment; above all the reward from Allah, hence the voluntary nature. Because it is a religious act, material profit is of secondary importance and some may even decline payment.

Fig. 24. Ceremonial handmade wedding wolimat slate used by the researcher’s grandmother in the 1940s. Picture taken by the researcher in 2014.

Fig. 25. A bride with her contemporary ornamental wedding wolimat slate. Picture taken in 2014.

When the teacher of the Qur’anic School combines teaching with say the work of a spiritual consultant and is financially buoyant, he tends to delegate teachings to others. In classical Islamic history in the Middle East, the teacher of the maktab is subject to ridicule and considered a lowly job. However, in Ilorin, they are not

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58 Antonella Ghersetti, ‘Like the Wick of the Lamp, Like the Silkworm they are’: Stupid Schoolteachers in Classical Arabic Literary Sources,’ *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, 10-4 (2010) 78.
subject of ridicule as such but respected members of the community, even though they may not be materially well off. The more knowledgeable and charismatic a teacher is, the more respect he earns. When a teacher has reached a level he cannot personally teach the Qur’an class due to other commitments, his senior students take the responsibility, tentatively beginning their career as well.

In the madrasah system, there is the attempt to pay salaries like in the western schools. All the madaris aimed at doing so but only some of them could do this effectively. Financial constraint has remained a major drawback for the Islamic education system. Even in the madaris where salaries are paid, it is hardly a living wage as the teachers often had to have other sources of income, especially in the prayer economy.59 With many of the madaris running tuition free, it is almost impossible to pay the teachers well, if at all; hence most of the schools relied on the network of old students who out of reverence for their teachers were ready to render the service free of charge, having received the knowledge same way. Only those working in private or government western institutions as teachers of Arabic or Islamic studies had some reliable income. However, they were few compared to those in the private madaris and Qur’anic schools establishment. Unless they connect to the clerical circle, they were not always perceived as part of the ulama proper.

The position of the imam is one of the other options of choice to a scholar. Their role is essentially the leading of fellow Muslims in the daily prayers, observed five times a day. Although any Muslim with minimal knowledge could lead a prayer, only a scholar with the requisite knowledge is usually appointed to be substantive imam of a mosque. The ritual of prayers is guided by many rules such that only knowledgeable persons are expected to be appointed into such position. The imam also becomes a community leader whose roles include settling disputes and counselling members of his community. It is generally an unpaid job,60 but members of the community are expected to support the imam through gifts.

Like other members of the ulama, he can also officiate the naming of newly born babies, during which monies are offered for the blessings he will recite on the new baby. The same goes for officiating wedding ceremonies. Prayers often precede the beginning of many social engagements and imams are usually called for such occasions. It could be anything from dedication of a new house, opening of a new business or even purchase of an automobile. While not on a fixed payment, the

60 The few exceptions are some well-to-do individuals who pay imams of their private mosques, often doubling as teachers of the children of such individuals. Ansarud-deen Society also has some welfare package for their Imam, including a residence.
imam gets rewards through these roles. Any scholar is essentially an imam too, although some assume the role more seriously than others, especially when specifically appointed to such roles. Although no one sets out to be an imam, knowledge and piety determines who is appointed as an imam.

In Ilorin, there are different categories of the imam; in descending order, we have the imams of mosques where only the five daily prayers are offered. These are called imam *ratibi*. They are followed by imam *jamiu* who leads the Friday congregational prayers in a community mosque. In the unique religio-political arrangement of Ilorin arising from the multi-ethnic composition of Ilorin, these two categories of imam are under the two deputy imams to the Chief Imam of Ilorin. In this arrangement, the Imam Imale and Imam of Gambari ward are responsible for imams under their respective wards. Imam Imale is responsible for the imams under Alanamu and Ajikobi wards while imam Gambari is responsible for the Gambari ward. The arrangement is informal and most imams are relatively independent. Unless acceptable behavior is breached, most imams would have little or no recourse to the Imam Imale or Imam Gambari, or the Chief Imam.

The Chief Imam (also known as the Imam Fulani) is appointed by the emir from one of the Fulani families that held the title before. The emir appoints the two deputy imams as well, after the respective families have nominated one of their own for the position. In some localities within the traditional Ilorin settlements, the position of the imam is usually hereditary even though it has no foundation in the jurisprudence of religion. It is rather a pragmatic tradition born of historical and cultural precedents. Sometimes these positions are hotly contested, leading to division in mosques and sometimes outright closure of mosques. Talismanic powers of contestants are tested in such disputes. It is in situations of disputes like these that the leading imams are brought in to resolve the disputes.

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61 From the Arabic *muratib* (consecutive); an indication that the imam leads the five consecutive daily prayers.

62 Imam Imale is the second in rank to the Chief Imam and can deputize for him while Imam Gambari is the third in rank. Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 28. See fig.29.

63 Discussions with Imam Imale, Alhaji Abdulhamid Abdullahi. 27-11-2013.

64 Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 150. The emir is responsible for the payment of the salary of the Chief Imam. Although the emir does not impose the imams, he sees to it that only responsible and loyal persons are appointed. The close relationship between the palace and the family ensures familiarity with members of the family.

65 Discussions with Imam Imale, Alhaji Abdulhamid Abdullahi. 27-11-2013.
Fig. 26. The opening page of a handwritten Qur’an in the possession of Imam Ita-Ajia mosque. Picture taken by the researcher, 2012.

Fig. 27. A Friday congregational (*jummuat*) prayer at the old Central Mosque at Idi-Ape in the early 1980s. Note the booksellers’ stand under the awning of the mosque. Source: Brochure commemorating the opening of the New Central Mosque in 1981.
Fig. 28. Emir Ibrahim Sulu-Gambari with the three principal Imams sitting on his left in order of their ranks; Chief Imam, Imam Imale and Imam Gambari at the turbaning of the third mufti Sheikh Sofiyullah Kamalud-deen Al-Adaby, December 2013. Source: The Pilot Newspaper.

Fig. 29. Ilorin Central Mosque refurbished in 2012. Picture taken by the researcher, 2014.
As the Chief Imam, his main duties include leading the Friday congregational prayer\(^{66}\) in the city’s central mosque located opposite the emir’s palace. He also leads the whole town in the two *eids* prayers at the *eid* praying ground. The first, to mark the end of the Ramadan fast and the second to commemorate the attempt of prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) to sacrifice his son, Ismail (Ishmael) for which a ram is sacrificed in lieu of. A member of the emir’s council and part of the king makers,\(^{67}\) he is the principal spiritual adviser to the emir. He also leads the annual *tafsir* sessions at the emir’s palace. His position relates and connects with the political and social structure of the city even as he is primarily a religious leader.\(^{68}\)

The vocations of scholars flow seamlessly into each other since each vocation has its specific function, time and location and may not interfere with one another. For example, everybody is expected to pray at the same time, so that all other vocations are left for the prayers at the specific time allocated to it. While these career options often can be a stand-alone vocation, in many instances they are combined with more than one option. One individual can assume all these roles if there is no clash between the various lines. For instance, a qadi can be an imam, still teach and take on other roles at the same time. Some focus on a particular vocation, occasionally dabbling into others. Because these vocations are engaged in at different times and occasions, it is impossible for a scholar to be engaged with just only one of these vocations.

An important vocation for scholars is preaching. Preaching and sermons are conducted by scholars for a number of reasons such as proselytization and to remind faithfulls of their obligation to their religion and also to teach lessons on religion. One of the coming of age acts of scholars is the public sermon. While the scholars preach as a pious act, it helps the audience to gauge the knowledge and understanding of the scholar of the religious texts, leading to reverence for such scholars. Members of the audience also improve on their store of knowledge of the religion. Sheikh Kamalud-deen’s first public sermon as a teenager is a popular anecdote in Ilorin.\(^{69}\) Usually the young scholars begin by being a repeater (*ajanasi*).

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\(^{66}\) Until the latter half of the twentieth century, the central mosque is the only mosque for Fridays and serves as a symbolic unifying act. People would come even from the rural areas to attend the mosque and visit relations in town. With development and population increase, other Friday mosques sprang up, mostly outside the core settlement of Ilorin. Now Friday mosques could be accessed in every locality within the city.


\(^{68}\) Despite the socio-political nature of their positions, as scholars whose positions resulted from their being scholars of religion, they often engage in knowledge impartation directly to students of higher learning and or indirectly as proprietors of *madaris*. The Chief Imam, for example, runs a madrasah, School No.27. See Appendix XVI.

for preaching scholars. The *Ajana* recites a verse or line from the text the preacher is using and the preacher then explains the meaning to the audience.\(^{70}\)

In spreading Islam among the Yoruba in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the scholars of Ilorin used public preaching in converting many into the religion. Sheikh Saadu Kokewukobere readily comes to mind among such scholars.\(^{71}\) Sheikh Tajul Adab, his protégé Kamalud-deen and Sheikh Adam and numerous others were renowned for their preaching skills in their careers as promoters of Islam. The rhetorical skills of a scholar can win for him followership; that will always throng the venue of such public lecture. The month of Ramadan forms an important period for this aspect of the life of a scholar.

Apart from informing the public about religion, these public lectures also serve as important source of funds for the scholars. These funds are then channeled into other vocations such as their schools or mosques. Sheikh Kamalud-deen, for example, had a policy of never using money realized in public preaching in Ilorin for personal use. Such money he channeled into his school. Money realized on visits to other towns is used for personal needs.\(^{72}\) In similar vein, the Sheikh of Gbagba Qur’anic School in the 1960s and 1970s usually spent the month of Ramadan in Lagos on preaching tours. From funds realized on such visits he was able to purchase a public address system for use in the mosque of Ode Wole-Wole, the frontage of which is also used for sermons. The equipment was not yet popular in Ilorin at the time and it was sometimes lent out to other scholars.\(^{73}\)

From the 1970s technology will come to the aid of this vocation. When turntable audio players had become popular, Sheikh Ahmad Alaye developed an instinct for the use of this medium for the dissemination of religious ideas through recorded disc.\(^{74}\) Audio cassettes would be used for this purpose from the 1980s through the 1990s but even this was nowhere near the popularity of VCD and DVD of the twenty-first century. The proliferation of VCD and DVD technology making for cheap and mass production of large number of video in CD and DVD formats has enabled some young scholars to use these audiovisual media for reaching wider

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\(^{71}\) Al Iluri, *Lamahat al Ballur*, 46.


\(^{73}\) Discussions with Imam Ahmad Yahaya Maisolati, 16-6-2012.

\(^{74}\) Discussions with Sheikh Ahmad Adisa-Onikoko, 21-6-2012 and Uztadh Mansur Alaye. 27-9-2013.
They were able to tap into the CD and DVD revolution and the mass appeal to home videos among the Yoruba. In the era when filmmakers of the home video industry were using video cassettes in the late 1980s and 1990s, not much thought was given to this medium for the recording of sermons for commercial purpose. Few, if any scholar was using this medium to record his sermons for sale. Indeed there were video recordings of sermons for record purpose but it was not conceived as a commercial venture.

The availability of new technologies simplifying the processes of recording audio visual formats has increased the possibilities of reaching to wider audience. Smartphones, computers and the internet provided new means to record, transmit, access, and share information and knowledge pertaining to religion among the people. The new generation scholars have taken to these new forms of mass media to pass on information to the audience. The Qur’an can be read and listen to on these devices. Mobile phones are used to record both audio and video of sermons of scholar, some even predating the advent of these format, converted to the new media and shared with friends. Many of the sermons have been uploaded into the internet where they can be viewed and downloaded. The physical barrier between the scholar and the audience has further been broken down.

Islam is very much based on jurisprudence; hence its scholars are referred to as al-faqih - a scholar of jurisprudence (fiqh). Asmau avers that alfa- the title the Yoruba ascribe to Muslim scholars is a derivative of al-faqih. Every act of the Muslim is

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75 Sheikh Buhari Musa Ajikobi particularly revolutionized this means. He sells the rights of coverage of his preaching. His argument is that people do not mind spending lots of money for singers who add little or no benefit to their lives while scholars wallow in poverty. His use of humor has given him a wide followership among the Yoruba and as such recording companies pay him money to have rights to his sermons which are them mass produced and sold all over the country. Sometimes, some entrepreneurs of the home video market tried to make profits off the scholars by instigating a scholar to attack another, over a difference of opinion, with the hope of making money out of counter recordings of the controversy. Some these recordings can be seen on www.youtube.com.

76 Hackett and Soares eds., (Introduction) New Media, 3.

77 A scholar in Ilorin and among the Yoruba is called Alfa (also aafa or alufa –by Yoruba Christians). In northern Nigeria among the Hausa, mallam- derived from mualim is used. Alfa is a common name among Malians and also in Borno from among whom the earliest missionaries of Islam came to Ilorin and the rest of Yoruba region. The adoption of alfa instead of mallam is likely due to these influences. See the glossary in Asma’u G. Saeed, The Literary Works of Alhaji Garba Said (Kano: Adamu Joji Publishers, 2007); Stefan Reichmuth, ‘Songhay-Lehnwörter im Yoruba und ihr historischer Kontext’, Sprache und Geschichte in Afrika 9(1988), 269-299; see also Farooq Kperoogi’s article ‘The Arabic
seen as guided by a set of rules, from the mundane to the spiritual. This has led to the development of this discipline among Muslim scholars. The shariah or the Muslim code of law is described as a law and open way; the right way ordained by Allah, for humanity, in order to prosper in this world and also achieve bliss in the hereafter. The scope includes *I’tiqadat* (beliefs), *Ibadat* (devotions), *Adab* (moralties), *Mualamalat* (transaction) and *Uqubat* (punishment/penalties).

A legal career is one of the options a scholar may take as a jurist. In pre-colonial period, the shariah system operated differently from the way it was structured under colonial rule, with the emir as the final authority, guided by his jurist. The Baloguns also held court in their domains. In the absence of written records, we cannot have precise knowledge of how it worked. When Ilorin came under colonial rule, the British introduced reforms into the system and formalized many aspects of the judicial system.

The British accommodated shariah (under its indirect rule policy) with proviso against especially those aspects of capital punishment that involve mutilation. The British hoped that with time, the shariah courts would follow the pattern of the British legal system. They used repugnancy clause to keep the shariah according to their idea of a legal system. The District Officers could cancel any decision of the court which did not suit their views. The *alkalis* were left to treat certain cases according to the shariah but it still has to go through the approval of the British colonial officers.

The application of the shariah was generally limited to civil cases. The British formalization of the shariah legal system helped the development of Arabic and even the spread of Islam to non-Muslim areas under the jurisdiction of the emir. Formal Higher Education in the Islamic sciences in western institution began as part of the efforts to streamline and systemize the Muslim legal code by the British. It is along these lines that the system developed in the post-independence period. The

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81 Among the reforms was recording of cases, which the emir and his chiefs initially objected to, because it was a new practice. See Danmole, ‘Colonial Reforms in,’ for more on these reforms.
82 Ali, ‘Shari’ah Legal Practice,’ 54-57.
need to train law officials to man the shariah system under the colonial authority
led, for example, to sending some scholars from Ilorin to train informally under the
alkali of Bauchi. The first formal institution of higher learning in the north, The
Kano Provincial Law School, established in 1934, also resulted from this
preoccupation with the Muslim legal system. Thus among the careers open to a
Muslim scholar is that of a legal expert of the shariah system. From among those
who have had higher education in the Islamic sciences, Arabic or law, the qadis and
administrative staff of the various shariah courts were recruited.

In the early colonial period, it is from the cadre of traditional scholars that the
judges and clerical staff of the shariah courts were sought. As the system got more
formalized, the traditional scholars were no longer needed. Rather those trained in
special schools such as the Kano Law School were now groomed to hold these
positions. In the post-colonial period, graduates with diploma and university
degrees in Arabic, law and Islamic studies became the source of jurists and judicial
staff of the shariah system as allowed under the constitution of the Federal Republic
of Nigeria.

Although piety is a key aim of Islamic education, education alone does not
guarantee piety. Yet piety can hardly be achieved without knowledge. Devotional
strategies that develop piety in the individual are learned through text and act based
skills. A scholar who has developed piety is believed to have intercessory power to
intervene in the life of those less endowed. This skill or talent achieved through
knowledge and devotion becomes the calling of some scholar. Unlike the other
career choices largely related to intellectual knowledge, the knowledge of the power
of intercession cannot be learned through text alone and it is a secret discipline. It is
these arcane secrets that are deployed in the prayer economy.

The charisma of a scholar is largely dependent on the perception of this quality in
him by the people. For some scholars, the calling of a spiritual consultant is the line
their knowledge would take them. This skill is usually learned through devotion to a
teacher or number of teachers over the years. This is one aspect where personal

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83 NAI ‘Alkali and Members of Native Court N.P Training of’ CSO 26/2 17746 Vol.III:
Hodge, Gazetteers of Ilorin, 203.
84 Danmole, ‘The Frontier Emirate,’ 184-185. This is also probably responsible for the
popularity of the legal profession among western educated Ilorin indigenes.
85 Al Iluri, Lamahat Al Ballur, 15.
86 Soares, Islam and the Prayer Economy, 153-180. This work explores this subtle economy
among the Malians and will be found in all traditional Muslim societies and it is also
connected to esotericism.
87 In his study of the Niassen strand of Sufism, Seesemann refers to this as ‘cognizance’.
Seesemann, The Divine Flood, 19, 72.
teaching in the informal Islamic learning system becomes very important. The words of the Qur’an are believed by Muslims to possess esoteric powers which can change and influence the fortunes of a believer. The use of these words in prayers, in specific ways is believed to have powers that can alter the fortunes in positive or negative ways.⁸⁸

These formulas are not to be found in texts of jurisprudence or language sciences as such. The personal relationship between a teacher and his students determines at what stage these secrets would be revealed to him and to what extent. The trust that brings this about comes through devotion, dedication and service to a teacher. Sometimes, these are inherited from parents in scholarly families. However, being a son of a scholar is not a guarantee of access to his store of esoteric knowledge. Some of these powers cannot be inherited. Scholars are known for paying more attention to their students more than their biological children; perhaps to avoid being seen as favoring their children. Often they would send their children away to study under another scholar whom they trust can impart knowledge to their children. This way the children will face the rigor of scholarship and be disciplined.

_Jalabi_ (from Arabic _jalub_, meaning ‘to bring along, to bring about, to cause’) as it is called, is sometimes combined with knowledge of herbal medicine for healing. This vocation includes fortune telling through geomancy and dream interpretation and dream visions (_istikhara_). Offering prayers to resolve particular personal problems, advising on what actions are spiritually propitious or reversing unfortunate situations among others form a major preoccupation. Some scholars, especially those with salafist bend have argued against the vocation, especially the fortune telling aspect, calling it _shirk_ (association of something with God). The practitioners countered this by saying that the prophet had prayed to heal sick people and that unless this is mixed with paganism, then it is not _shirk_. In recent times, there has been outcry from even among the scholars themselves of the love of material profits that young scholars have used to turn this vocation into a purely commercial and often fraudulent vocation.⁹⁹

The argument of the scholars critical of the literalists is that helping people resolving their spiritual problem is a pious act that should be done whether there is material profit with it or not. When such is done for material gain, then the _barakah_

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⁸⁸The founding of Ilorin emirate, like in some other African societies, is connected to the provision of this service by Alimi to Afonja. Levitizon, ‘Islam in Bilad,’ 65; Al Illuri, _Islam fi Nijeriya_, 140.

⁹⁹In the course of my field work, a scholar took me to see fetish objects in a house formerly occupied by man involved in such spiritual consultancy. The fetish scholar was ejected and the apartment given to the respondent who wanted to use it for a _Tahfiz_ school.
(blessing) is lost. The scholar is expected to have faith in Allah rewarding him and whatever material appreciation showered on him is acceptable. Exploiting their knowledge for strictly material profit is considered contrary to the tenets of piety.  

A jalabi scholar is perhaps the most materially comfortable in his calling compared to all the other options open to a scholar. The greater the power of intercession a scholar possesses the greater the material benefits accruing from his work. Lagos, as the commercial capital of Nigeria, attracts a lot of scholars in this vocation. He is sought by people for all sorts of problems that are believed that they cannot be solved by man’s effort alone except with some supernatural assistance. The young scholars are seen to be in a hurry to possess material wealth this option offers and therefore ready to go into syncretism as a short cut, rather than the long and arduous ascetic path the traditional scholars are believed to have passed through to attain such power.

Lagosians are mostly Muslims but unlike the Ilorins, they are more inclined to commercial activities, located as they are in the commercial capital of the country. Their spirito-religious needs are thus filled by the scholars of Ilorin who have the reputation as the custodian of Islamic knowledge among the Yoruba. There is greater financial reward for scholarly activities in Lagos than in Ilorin, given the greater economic prosperity of the city over Ilorin. When one takes into consideration the abundance of scholars in Ilorin, who often had to move out of the town to practice their vocation, it is less economically rewarding for many in Ilorin. This symbiotic relationship thus makes Lagos an attractive center for scholars. Scholars also have greater autonomy to operate in Lagos unlike Ilorin, where the hierarchical structure of the scholars is very pronounced and the networks of scholars quite familial.

This does not mean that there were not very successful scholars in Ilorin nor does it imply that financial reward is the main reason scholars flock to Lagos. The missionary ideal is also an important factor. With increasing population in the country so also was the need for people to fill the different vocations open to Islamic scholars. Muslims all over Yoruba region constantly request from reputable scholars in Ilorin to send them their protégés to come and serve as teachers or

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90 Scholars with ascetic bend have always been wary of material benefits coming the way of scholars by virtue of the service they render. Berkey mentions in his work; of how a medieval scholar expressed his disgust at scholars exploiting their knowledge to acquire wealth. See Berkey, The Transmission of Knowledge, 95
93 Reichmuth, Islamische Bildung, 195.
clerics in their towns. Many scholars thus began their career this way and remained in such community, sometimes for their lifetime. Merchants of Ilorin trading in Lagos and other such places also attracted scholars who provided them the spiritual services needed.  

Outside of these vocations and closely tied to the rituals of the religion are also a number of vocations around Islamic learning. Education and scholarship revolves around the book; the trade in books is one such vocation that is on the edge of Islamic learning and scholarship. In pre-colonial times books were mostly copied. The copying itself was part of the training of a scholar. To learn a text, the scholar had to copy it from the teacher. There was the absence of mass produced texts, making texts rare and highly valued. The copying of texts survived well into the twentieth century when printed materials began to displace the hand written texts. This in itself was resisted for a while.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, printed materials from the Arab world began to make appearances. With the displacement of the trans-Saharan trade with the trade on the coast, some of these materials began to appear on the coast through Arab traders. The Muslims in Lagos were already in contact with the wider Muslim world as far as London and Turkey. It is likely that the illustrated texts that Tajul Adab was credited with having introduced to Ilorin came through this route. The rarity of books and the rigors of producing them thus gave the books in people’s collection a very sacred status and it took a while before people adapted to the printed Arabic texts. Derisive songs were composed to impugn them.

As a key article of their vocation, the scholars themselves were actively involved in the trade in books when printed texts were becoming popular. Sheikh Kamaluddeen at some point in his career became a dealer of Arabic books. Some of these he ordered from Egypt and resold to scholars. This was in the 1950s and 1960s when

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95 Imam Yakubu Aliagan remembers copying the texts he studied in the first half of the twentieth century. Printed works were still not very common them. Discussions, 12-9-2012. Sheikh Sulaiman Dan Borno remembers earning some income in the first half of the twentieth century selling pieces of prayers written on papers at emir’s market before printed books became popular. Discussions, 28-12-2012.
96 Discussions with Imam Yakubu Aliagan. 12-9-2012 and Sheikh Suleiman Dan Borno. 28-12-2012; Last, ‘The Book Trade, 184.’
98 Reichmuth, ‘Sheikh Adam.’ He made mention of the career of one such Arab scholar, Mustapha Al Muradi involved in this book trade in Lagos.
his efforts had begun to yield some fruits such as the connection to the Middle East academic world. He was helped in hawking the books by his students, who took the books to sell to scholars around Ilorin. They went beyond Ilorin as far as Jebba, Okene and many areas of the Yoruba region. At Okene his students were helped in their book trade by Sheikh Yahaya Tajudeen (d.1958), the friend and student of Sheikh Tajul Adab, who made his missionary career in Okene.100

This became an additional source of income for him and it was helpful in taking care of his family in Ilorin some of the times he was away in Lagos. He opened a bookshop at Ita Ajia and Omoda where his students managed the shop on his behalf. 101 In later years, perhaps due to much commitment on his part and easier access to books through more people in the trade, his involvement in the trade reduced to largely selling to his students. Sheikh Jubril Sahban was also into the book trade at some points his career, selling as far as Ibadan. The proceeds from this helped him to pay his teachers, especially in the early days of establishing his school when he faced financial difficulties.102 It appears some of these scholars had to take on the business of selling books since there were few people who were into it, especially in the early stage. Sheikh Adam’s interest in books as an author led him to having a printing press at his base in Agege. Some of his writings were published through this medium.103

Some students who would not pursue a scholarly or clerical career would go into the book trade as well. The early traders of the book who took it up as a business started through hawking around the city. After hawking around town, they often ended up by the old central mosque to rest. Later an Islamic books and materials selling shed would be erected in front of the old mosque at Idi-Ape in the 1960s or early 1970s with permission of Emir Sulu-Gambari Muhammad (1959-1992) and the Chief Imam. In the early 1980s, the shed was built of cement block and roofed with zinc. Located in the center of Ilorin, in the Emir’s market, it is the main Islamic books selling point patronized by scholars and students of the madaris.104

Qur’an and other books printed in the maghrebi script were the early popular books. The script is the type the people were used to in hand copied books and for writing on slates. It is called Bugun Zaria (Zaria typeset). Most of these were sourced from

100 Discussions with Imam Shehu Ahmad Warah. 4-9-2012.
101 Discussions with Imam Shehu Ahmad Warah. 4-9-2012.
104 Discussions with book traders at the old Central Mosque at Idi-ape. 2012.
Fig. 30. Alhaja Maimunat Mustapha Idiagbede, Proprietor Shamsud-deen College of Arabic and Islamic Studies. Picture provided by Alhaji Olawale Mustapha Idiagbede.

Fig. 31. Samples of printed works relating to scholars’ vocation. Picture taken by the researcher, 2014.
Kurmi market in Kano, serving the West African region. The coming of Arab teachers to the madaris popularized the thuluth, nashk and other scripts. The madaris were instrumental in popularizing the other scripts till the maghrebi script has become marginal in use. It could now be found mainly with old folks and in old prayer books. The increase in the number of madaris from the 1970s helped the growth of the book trade. From the central mosque book sellers’ shed some of the traders moved out to open shops elsewhere around the city. As well as books, slates and ink, rosaries, perfumes, zam zam water, caps, ceremonial slates for Qur’an graduation, prophetic medicine and herbal products can also be bought at the centers. On Fridays, at the central mosque and some other mosques, would be found a bazaar after the congregational prayer where many of the above listed items could be sourced.

From the 1990s and especially in the new millennium, with the emergence of many western educated Muslims who have also come to a greater understanding and appreciation of their religion through western education, a new set of traders in Islamic materials emerged. Mostly western educated, they differ in their approach to the business and their products also differ to cater to the needs of western literate buyers, compared to the traders at the old central market. Some scholars who had travelled and lived in the Middle East also latched onto the new trade. The middle income working class Muslims would patronize the new market of trade in Islamic items but also the general populace also bought into the trend. Items in this trade include prayer accessories and religious items such as prayer mats, jalabia, hijab and abaya wears, skull caps, prophetic medicinal products, various books on Islam written in English and vernacular, story books targeted at Muslim children, audio and video cassettes of Qur’an recitation and lectures of scholars, clocks, compass, tesuba/tasbih (prayer counters). Others include electronics tailored to religious needs, Arabic calligraphy, stickers for cars etc. Some of these materials are sourced from the Middle East while others are sourced locally.

Closely related to the trade in books is printing and publishing. It appears Arabic printing did not come to Ilorin till the late 1970s or early 1980s. Although there were printers in Ilorin, Arabic typesetting and printing were taken to Lagos where there were some Arabic printing presses. From the early 1980s, Ilorin printers began printing Arabic works without having to go outside the city. For example, Ibrahim Kewulere Printing Press started out taking its works to Lagos; when the owner

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105 Discussions with Dr Abdulhamid Olohunoyin. 20-12-2013.
106 The students of the madaris as well as the traditional scholars patronized mostly the traders at the old central market.
107 Discussions with Alhaji Ibrahim Kewulere. 3-3-2014. One of the earliest Arabic printing press was established by Alhaji Ibrahim Kewulere. He had attended Al Mahad al Dinil
of the press went to Saudi Arabia for the hajj in 1981, he bought the Arabic typesets and upon return began to print his Arabic works without having to go Lagos again. The popularity of computers by the beginning of the twenty-first century simplified Arabic printing for the printers. Desk top publishing could be done by individuals and this has helped some of the madaris who now own computers to teach their students as well serve their administrative needs.

Certificates of the madaris, Hijrah calendars, wedding invitations, naming cards and prayer books are key products of Islamic printing presses serving the Muslim community. The mass oriented nature of madaris education means not all the graduates of the madaris will take to a clerical career. Some of these would find avenues in vocations supporting Islamic education and culture such as printers and sellers of Islamic materials. The printers support Islamic education and the Muslim society providing printing services related to Islamic education and Muslim needs.

Generally the career of a scholar would follow along the lines discussed above. Since scholars do not live and work in isolation, it follows that their preoccupation would also engender other vocations not directly connected with study but with items and services that guarantees their continuous engagement with studies. Although not trained specifically to make profits, rewards come along the line in varying degrees in the course of putting their knowledge to practice and engagement with the rest of the society. In the same way ancillary services such as the book trade, selling of Islamic material and printing and publishing benefit from scholars preoccupation with learning and scholarship.

The Mass Media and Education of Muslims in Ilorin
The Mass media is one of the legacies of colonialism and Africans have adapted it to their cultural milieu. The mass media serves varied purposes; among which are informing, communicating, educating and entertaining the audience. Religion and media seem to be ever more connected from the late twentieth into the twenty-first century. The mediating role of the mass media in religion has increased since the last half of the twentieth-century. It plays a prominent role in disseminating ideas about religion and icons of religion.\footnote{Stewart M. Hoover, \textit{Religion in the Media Age} (Oxon: Francis and Tailor, 2006.)}

\footnote{Azhari in the 1960s and subsequently trained in Lagos as a printer before returning to Ilorin to establish his printing press. His connection to Islamic education played a key role in the career he chose. He would serve the madaris printing their certificates and the women asalatu groups printing their prayer books. Muslim organizations also patronize him for calendars and sundry printing requirements.}
Basically divided into the print and electronic media; in the twenty-first century the internet has subsumed all media under its wing, thus making access to information more universal than it had hitherto been the case. The mass media gave scholars a broader means of reaching out to the Muslim public than had been the traditional open air preaching, thus expanding the educative value of this vocation. The globalization of the world, beginning from the late nineteenth century and that had turned the world into a global village by the twenty-first century, through the mass media, provided Muslims, scholars and laity, the opportunity to connect in closer communion with each other and with the rest of the Muslim world, leading to exchange of ideas and broadening of awareness.

Though the print media came before the electronic media, the reach is limited to only to those literate either in Arabic or Latin script. In the colonial period, the availability of mass produced texts enabled the reforms introduced to Islamic education. As Muslims formed organizations, the publication of pamphlets either in the vernacular or in English was being used to spread the message of Islam. Sometimes these were done by individuals. In the post-independence period, religious ideas increased its presence in the print media, as more Muslims have control and access to this media. Kwara State, established its own print media, The Herald Newspaper in 1973. By the early 1980s, western educated Muslims began to write columns in it dedicated to enlightening readers about Islam. As the years progressed, most local and national newspapers have pages dedicated to the two main monotheistic religions in the country, Christianity and Islam.

The electronic media is privileged in Ilorin for extending the means of educating Muslims. The electronic media of radio and television dominates religious journalism. The popular nature of these media offered better opportunities than the print media, the circulation of which was limited to negligible percentage of western educated persons. Radio programs offering religious program began in the 1960s using relay services of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) based in Lagos, then the nation’s capital. There was always the problem of truncating services and the station was advised that there were scholars who could run the program locally in Ilorin instead of depending on the relay service.

109 Discussions with Sheikh Abdulkadir Orire. 25-12-2012.
110 Shehu Jimoh (Later Professor of Education at the University of Ilorin. D. 2014) and Muqadam Yahaya Adabata were among the first to start presenting Islamic programs on radio in English language. Muqadam had been an English Language teacher in one of the Ansarud-deen Schools, through the informal exchange of teachers between Ansarul Islam and Ansarud-deen Societies. He understudied a teacher-colleague who was also a broadcaster in Lagos and when he returned to Ilorin, the experience prepared him for radio program presentation when he started presenting in 1976. In 1983, he changed the language of
In 1978 the NBC stations were handed over to the states in which they were located.\footnote{111} In 1979 an Islamic Program Department was created in Radio Kwara, the broadcasting station owned by the Kwara state government. The manager of the radio station had been to hajj and was impressed with the assistance one of the scholars \footnote{112} was rendering to fellow pilgrims and invited him to come and work for the station to start an Islamic Program Department. However, the social status of the scholar was beyond the position that could be offered to him and he declined the offer.\footnote{113}

When the advert for the position was put out, two women were among those who applied. Although the one of the women performed well and was being considered but the position was given to a man. The management of the station felt though the woman qualified, the society would not be favorably disposed to a woman holding that position.\footnote{114} Under Alhaji Aliyu Bayo Salah,\footnote{115} the department grew and he mentored others who took over from him. Over the years the religious programs of the radio has expanded to over a dozen, spread throughout the week. There is the daily *waasi idaji* (early morning sermon) aired at the beginning of the station’s opening hours. The Christians also have their equivalent program as well.

Some of the programs were station programs while the rest were sponsored. As Muslims awareness of their religion increased, some of these programs began to get sponsored by Muslims. Well-to-do Muslims would sponsor particular scholars to run a program on the radio. Christian sponsorship of many programs also played a part in nudging Muslims to do the same. The month of Ramadan particularly has a variety of sponsored programs throughout the day. From early in the morning when Muslims wake up for their early morning meal, the radio programs keep the Muslims company till the end of the day. The liberalization of the telecom industry

\footnote{112} Sheikh Abdulraheem Aminullahi Oniwaasi Agbaye (d. March 2012) ran a madrasah and was a student of Sheikh Kamalud-deen with whom he remained very close to and collaborated with throughout his life.
\footnote{113} Discussions with Sheikh Ahmad Adisa-Onikoko. 21-6-2012.
\footnote{114} Discussions with Sheikh Abdulkadir Orire. 25-12-2012.
\footnote{115} Alhaji Aliyu Bayo Salah, trained through the Adabiyyah system and had taken a course in broadcasting in Cairo and had been teaching Islamic Religious Knowledge at Queen Elizabeth College in Ilorin. Discussions with Sheikh Ahmad Adisa-Onikoko, 21-6-2012 and Alhaji Aliyu Bayo Salah. November, 2012.
made phone-in programs popular, with the audience participating in such programs.\footnote{116 Before then telephony was the preserve of only the elites. Discussions with Alhaji Abdulsalam Imam Olayiwola. 6-2-2014.}

Like the radio, the television also provides a channel for the airing of religious program. On the state owned and the national television stations are programs targeting Muslim audience. The programs follow almost the same pattern as the radio stations. While some are station programs, others are sponsored programs with the month of Ramadan being the busiest for religious programs. The cost of television programs has limited the number of programs on television compared to the radio programs.

The Muslims running these programs see them as an extension of religious service and often their programs turn interventionist beyond the radio listening period. They tried to mold opinions of the society by calling on both the rulers and the ruled to reform their ways. Government attention is drawn to activities considered injurious to the society. They also defend Muslim rights where this is considered to have been neglected. For example, through his radio program Abubakar Imam Aliagan was able to mobilize Muslims to have their own cemetery. Female presenters on radio often had to do counselling outside of the studio.\footnote{117 Discussions with Dr Abubakar Imam Aliagan.17-8-2014; Hajiya Khadijat Abdussalam, 9-12-2013 and Asiya Abubakar (Omo-Eleha), 1-12-2013. Women in particular found an avenue to share their personal problems with the women presenters, something they were unable to do until the emergence of the women presenters.} Islamic Orphanage Foundation, a non-profit charity was established out of a program on the radio in 2002. It has since then been engaged in assistance to orphans especially their educational needs.\footnote{118 Abdulganiy Abimbola Abdussalam, ‘Muslims of Kwara State: A Survey,’ Nigeria Research Network-Background. Paper No.3, January 2012. \url{http://www3.qeh.ox.ac.uk/pdf/nrn/BP3Abdussalam.pdf}. Accessed 15-12-2014.}

The proliferation of cable and satellite television channels run by private companies from the 1990s also meant Muslims now have access to Islamic programs from across the Muslim world.\footnote{119 For the influence of world events on these channels and their responses see Ehab Galal, ‘Conveying Islam: Arab Islamic Satellite Channels as New Players’ -in- Rosalind I.J. Hackett and Benjamin F. Soares eds., \textit{New Media and Religious Transformations in Africa} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 171-189.} For example the annual Hajj could now be watched in real time, as pilgrims from all over the world converge in Mecca. Initially available only to the elites, it is increasingly becoming affordable to most working class people with many cable satellite companies offering the service. The Muslim society of Ilorin, like the rest of the world has also found in the telecommunication...
and internet revolution that has brought the world to our fingertips other means of sharing knowledge about their religion.

The telecom companies as well offer a range of services targeting the Muslims such as Daily Hadiths and Sunnah, Qur'an Quotes, ringtones and Call to prayers for different cities which could be subscribed to. These snippets of knowledge could be shared with friends and relatives, such as texts and MMS. The internet offers an almost limitless opportunity for knowledge seekers and there abound many websites offering different opportunities for increasing one’s knowledge. Although these by no means replaced the traditional school, they offer access to knowledge not limited by space and time. Although the scholars of Ilorin may not yet be significantly passing on knowledge through this means, they can access such knowledge from the rest of the Muslim world where such facilities are being used for this purpose. This is especially so for those who have had formal education of western or Arabic mode. A few of the madaris as well have websites to promote their schools.

As Hoover noted in his study of religion and the media in the United States, the media and religion inter-relate and mingle. This is particularly true of Ilorin, the media offers an alternative channel for the opinion molding role of the ulama. They challenge and reform the way the society thinks and perceives itself. In the increasingly socially and economically globalized world, the mass media is influenced by events in the local and international scenes, in how it shapes public opinion and how the public respond to its interventions. The mass media is increasingly organic to the lives of the people and has become aspects of the acts of religion itself.

**Muslim Organizations and the Education of Muslims in Ilorin**

Yoruba cultural nationalism has its root in activities of the educated Christians and who formed the earliest Yoruba elite in the early colonial period. They dominated the political and economic life at the coast. Their connection to European missionaries had given them an earlier start and advantage against the Muslims who already have an education system and loathed European incursions on their lives and religion. Resistance to western education by Muslims, as everywhere else, was an extension of the resistance to colonial rule. The Muslims in Lagos were thus the

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120 Hackett and Soares eds., (Introduction) *New Media*, 4.
first to rise in competition with the Christians for space in the social, economic and political life emerging under colonial rule. The relative disadvantage of the Muslims led them to form associations to give them western education which was obvious to them as the cause of their disadvantage compared to the Christians.

Yoruba tendency to form associations for mutual benefit found expression among Yoruba Muslims early in the colonial period that benefitted the religion. The Muslims at the coast, who have had decades of experience with the colonial authority, led in this movement in the early part of the twentieth century. Relationship between the Muslims and colonial authority on the coast in Lagos was essentially cordial and friendly; this had been part of the reasons for quick acquiescence of the Muslims at the coast to western education. Islam had never been a state religion at the coast compared to Ilorin and the rest of the Muslim north of Nigeria. It was therefore not a new experience for the Muslims of Lagos to live under non-Muslim rule.

In 1923, some forty two young Muslims gathered together and formed the Ansaruddeen Society of Nigeria. It was to be the first such organization among the Muslims in Nigeria. First named Young Ansarud-deen Society, by its young founders; it emerged out of the Muslim concern to provide education to Muslims without the danger of conversion to Christianity. Among its stated aims and objectives are:

- The society shall found, build and maintain educational institutions
- It shall encourage literacy and intellectual pursuits among its members
- It shall keep and maintain a library for use of members and
- It shall undertake generally other things that may tend to promote education.

It sought to promote moral and religious advancement among Muslims, revive Islam from corruptions stalling its progress and general propagation of the

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125 The Obas of Lagos are custodians of the traditional religion which plays an important role in the rituals of kingship, even when the kings have been followers of universal religions like Islam and Christianity. Their legitimacy has never been based on the followership of the universal religions.
126 The name connotes ‘the helpers of the cause of religion’. The term is derived from the name given to the citizens of Medina who took it upon themselves to help the Prophet and the emigrants (*muha'irun*) nascent Muslim community from Mecca.
religion. By the end of that decade, it had begun the construction of its first primary school. By the time Nigeria got her independence in 1960, the organization had established over two hundred primary schools, eighteen secondary schools and some teacher training colleges all over the Yoruba region.

Ansarud-deen established a branch of its organization in Ilorin in 1954, through Muslim workers of multinational trading companies working in Ilorin. Most of the founders had come from the southwestern region and it took a while before the people of Ilorin adapted to the association, especially when Ilorin scholars became active members of the association. The Ilorin branch built a primary school. The school began as unregistered school in 1956. The emir granted them a land in 1964 before the school moved to the present site in 1967. The school was later taken over by the government under the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program in the mid-1970s.

Qur’anic education is offered within the mosque premises of the association. It should be noted that this organization pays particular attention to western education: Sheikh Adam had worked with the organization when he was laying the foundation for his reforms in the late 1940s. One of the reasons he left was that he felt the organization pay more attention to western education to the detriment of Arabic and Islamic education.

In 1943, Sheikh Kamalud-deen who began to visit Lagos as a missionary from the 1920s established a similar organization in Ilorin. Named at first as Adabiyya Muslim Society, its aim is similar to that of Ansarud-deen: that of promoting education of Muslims both the western and Islamic forms. Formed together with other scholar friends; no doubt they were inspired by the success of organizations such as Ansarud-deen Society, Ahmadiya Muslim Society and Ijebu Muslim Friendly Society who were providing education to Muslim children without the fear of conversion to Christianity.

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131 Remarks of discussants at the International Conference on the Life and Times of Shaykh Adam Abdullahi al Iluri, University of Ilorin, August, 2012.

132 Aliy-Kamal, ‘Islamic Education in Ilorin,’ 84.
In 1946, Al Adabiyya Moslem School was opened in Ilorin. In 1947, the name of the organization was changed to Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria. Like Ansarud-deen, Ansarul Islam also established many western primary and secondary schools for the education of Muslim children, most especially in the post-independence period. It established a symbiotic relationship with Ansarud-deen; through this, the Ansarud-deen which has teacher training colleges supplied teachers for the schools of Ansarul Islam while Ansarul Islam supplied the Arabic teachers for the schools of Ansarud-deen. Through these schools many Muslim children were able to access western education and it had been so helpful that by the end of the twentieth century Yoruba Muslims have generally almost leveled up with their Christian counterpart in terms of western education.

By the early years of the twenty-first century, unable to affiliate to Al Azhar University to run a diploma program due to legal constraints, the association decided on establishing its own university to be named Sheikh Kamalud-deen University after its founder. A not-for-profit charitable organization, Muhammad Kamalud-deen Foundation (MUKEF) was established under the aegis of Ansarul Islam Society to see to the realization of this dream among other aims. Through its many branches all over Nigeria, Ansarul Islam promoted education for Muslims, building western schools and madaris for the acquisition of both forms of education. Regular sermons and open air lectures, celebrations of important Muslim festivals form key informal education channels for its members and the public at large.

In post-independence Nigeria, other Muslim organizations with similar aims of providing education for Muslim children emerged in Ilorin. The success of the early organizations in Ilorin and the rest of the Yoruba region and the new spirit of independent nationhood encouraged other scholars to form their own organizations for the promotion of the religion and the two systems of education that Muslims have to contend with. In the 1960s mainly two Muslim Organizations emerged in Ilorin; Muhyideen Society and Shamsudeen Society. Both promoted the two systems of education in the schools they established.

133 NAK ‘Adabiyya Moslem School.’ Iloprof file No. 4659.
134 Between 1970 and 2006, twenty one secondary schools were established in Kwara, Osun, Ondo, Kogi and Edo States. See http://www.mukef.org.ng/schools.php for the list of the schools.
135 Adisa-Onikoko, The Legacy of, 102; Discussions with Muqadam Yahaya Adabata. 21-7-2014. Muqadam Yahaya had been a beneficiary of this program.
136 Nigerian law does not permit affiliation to a foreign institution.
137 Discussions with Alhaji Ahmad O. Kamal. 24-9-2012.
Apart from the formal schools established to educate Muslim children, these organizations also have other informal means of educating the general Muslim population. Regular public lectures form one of these. 138 They all have women wings where women gather together to recite litanies and educate one another on the precepts of the religion. Some adults who have missed out of Qur’anic education in childhood found opportunity for the lost education through the adult education programs of the organizations. The organizations have outreach programs to rural areas as well for the provision of religious education in those communities.

The reformist scholars have tended to establish organizations as missionary arm of their religious and educational endeavors. The madaris and such organization arms are fairly independent of each other but collaborate closely. Through the missionary organizations, the scholars were able to raise funds and attracted large members of the society to aid of the organizations and by extension their madaris. Thus, the ummah was brought into the religious reformation and revivalism championed by the scholars. Only Sheikh Adam among the earliest reformers did not establish a missionary organization connected to his school. In lieu of this, he focused on his pan-Islamic endeavors such as the League of Imam and Alfās (which he co-founded) and the World Muslim League (in collaboration with the Sardauna). 139 These and his preoccupation with writing and publishing may have been the reason he never had such an organization.

Exposure to western education had led to development of Muslim youth organizations from the 1950s. Many of these had their origins in the southwest among the Yoruba who were ahead of the Ilorin as well as the rest of the Muslim north in the acquisition of western education. These ideas easily found their ways to Ilorin from the 1970s through the 1980s. Students, for example, found outlets for the propagation of religious ideas through the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN). It was founded by Muslim students of Methodist Boys High School in conjunction with other secondary school students in Isolo area of Lagos in 1954 to unite Muslim students and promote their interests. 140 It eventually became the umbrella of Muslim students associations both in secondary and tertiary institutions all over Nigeria. They regularly organize Islamic

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138 For example, the Ansarul Islam headquarters in Ilorin have regular lectures every Friday evening within premises of its primary school, inviting different scholars to speak on varied topics.
139 Reichmuth, ‘Sheikh Adam.’
140 Lateef Adegbite (d.2012) was its first president. Trained as a lawyer; he later became the Secretary General of Supreme Council of Islamic affairs (SCIA), the most important Muslim organization representing the interests of Muslims in Nigeria, chaired by the Sultan of Sokoto. Adekilekun, (second edition) Selected Islamic organizations, 62.
Vacation Courses (IVC)\textsuperscript{141} for Muslim students. They publish newsletters and magazines as well. Scholarships were also given to indigent students. As early and founding members left school into the working class society, they formed new associations to carry on their activities beyond the school years, such as The Companion and The Criterion.\textsuperscript{142} The MSS in the tertiary institutions were particularly active; apart from promoting and guarding the interests of Muslim students on campus, they also have outreach programs such as Hospital Visitation Group.\textsuperscript{143} Taking after the MSSN, other Muslim youth organizations emerged and these also found their way into Ilorin. Among them were the Young Muslim Brothers and Sisters (YOUMBAS)\textsuperscript{144} and National Committee of Muslim Youth Organization (NACOMYO).\textsuperscript{145}

In the last decade of the twentieth century, Nasrul-Lahi-l-Fatih (NASFAT) and Al Fatih-Ul- Quareeb (QUAREEB)\textsuperscript{146} emerged in Lagos as prayer groups and soon became national organizations with international outreach. Both would find their way into Ilorin in the early years of the new millennium. Some features distinguished these two organizations from the earlier Muslim organizations. These features perhaps are also a response to the changed nature of the Muslim society especially of southwestern Nigeria, where they originated.

They are mostly renowned for the weekly prayer meetings on Sundays.\textsuperscript{147} Here selected prayers are recited in unison. In Ilorin, both groups started out meeting inside the premises of schools to accommodate their large followers. Their

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\textsuperscript{141} A five days residential program for Muslim students to learn more about their religion.
\textsuperscript{142} The Companion is a male organization while The Criterion is the female counterpart. See Taofiq Migdad Gidado, ‘New Trends among Muslim Youths in Nigeria: The Muslim Student Society of Nigeria as a Case Study 1980-1996’ (MA Dissertation: Islamic Studies, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 1997), 1-2.
\textsuperscript{143} They render moral, spiritual and financial aid to the patients in hospitals. Shuaib Ganiyu Olarewaju, ‘A Study of Activities of Hospital Visitation Jama’ah of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria - University of Ilorin’ ( B.A Long Essay: Islamic Studies, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 2011), 45.
\textsuperscript{144} Founded in Ibadan in 1974 among young civil servants, it emerged in Ilorin in 1981 and carried out activities similar to the MSS. YOUMBAS were particularly noted for using music and drama as a means of propagating the religion. They recorded Islamic songs on cassettes as a way to keep Muslim youths from listening to songs considered un-Islamic. Salawu Adeyemi Ganiyu, ‘The Contribution of Kwara State Young Muslim Brothers and Sisters (YOUMBAS) to the Propagation of Islam in Kwara State’ ( B.A Long Essay: Islamic Studies, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 1989), 5-16, 27-29.
\textsuperscript{145} See Adekilekun, (second edition) Selected Islamic organizations, 13.
\textsuperscript{146} Adekilekun, (second edition) Selected Islamic Organizations, 19-23.
\textsuperscript{147} Their choice of Sunday as the prayer meeting day suggests a subtle response to Christian evangelism. Moreover, it is about the only free day for members, most of whom are middle income working class people in formal employment.
emergence was partly a response to vigorous Christian, especially Pentecostal evangelization that had become prominent in Nigeria from the 1980s. The leveling up of the educational gap between the Muslim and Christians among the Yoruba also provided a fertile ground to their emergence. Their activities are well organized and attracted the youth. Prayer requests and assistance with employment opportunities became part of the group’s mimetic acts after the Christian Pentecostalism prevalent in the country. They were able to attract mostly western educated Muslims and youths who felt the traditional Muslim organizations were conservative and had not packaged their programs to meet modern trends. Within the short span of its existence, NASFAT had established its own secondary school as well as Fountain University at Oshogbo.

There are also a number of individuals and groups who have established organizations for Islamic causes in Ilorin. Some have come from the class of the ulama; others have come from senior or retired civil servants. Some have ventured into provision of formal Islamic education or integrated with western school while others have focused on the informal education of Muslims, sometimes not limited to religious education but have encompassed as diverse fields such as health, human and civil rights and economic empowerment.

A general Muslim advancement in western education from the 1970s through to the 1990s has generally resulted in Muslims’ refined awareness of their religion. As some of them have come into position of power, they tried to empower fellow Muslims. The awareness that the backwardness Muslims have experienced is not so

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149 Soares, ‘An Islamic Social Movement,’ 179-196.
150 http://www.fountainuniversity.edu.ng
151 These are conventional western institutions, the difference being Muslim ownership and management. The organization also established a business outfit with different units such (Tafsan Beverages) producing malt drink and fruit juice, TAFSAN Travel and tours for umrah and hajj, a cooperative and thrift society and TAFSAN Investment, concerned with rentals and publications of the organization’s work. NASFAT as well has hospital and prison visitation panels and is engaged in many charitable causes. These can be further explored on its website www.nasfat.org.
152 For example a madrasah (No. 34) was established by Alhaji Abubakar Kawu Baraje as a civil servant. In retirement he joined politics and rose to become the National Chairman of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) 2011-2013. In 2012, he bought a private school where he transferred his madrasah, until then located close to his residence. Similarly, Retired President of Federal Court of Appeal and Pioneer Chairman of country’s Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC-2001-2006) also established a private integrationist madrasah as well as a charitable organization (MaaSalam Foundation) for assistance to the needy.
much the result of the faith they profess as the weak position of Muslims in the modern science moderated knowledge, from which they are emerging, is seen as elevating to their religion. This consciousness has been influential in the emergence of many such organizations.153

The globalization of the world facilitated not only the presence of national but also international Muslim organizations that have been playing important roles in the provision of formal and non-formal education for Muslims in Ilorin. Part of the gains of the connection to the Middle East for higher education is the facilitation of the presence of some of the Muslim international organizations in Ilorin. Notable among them are; International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO),154 World Assembly of Muslim Youths (WAMY)155 and International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). Their presence is to be found in the madaris, universities and the civil society based in Ilorin.

In the 1990s, IIRO provided skills acquisition for young women in tailoring and domestic services at its center in Osere in addition to the distribution of food stuff to the indigent especially during Ramadan. The organization through its office in Kaduna is responsible for the payment of the salaries of teaching members of staff it facilitated for some of the madaris in Ilorin.156 WAMY has given assistance to students of tertiary institutions. For example, it built a hostel for the students of Al Hikmah University in Ilorin, established in 2005; which it also played some roles in its establishment.

International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) has a library at the University of Ilorin where researchers can access their publications as well as academic research works from universities relating to their aims. Other organizations not having presence in Ilorin have also impacted especially the madaris through financial support. Individual scholars usually facilitated the connections to Islamic charities in the Middle East when they travel for studies or for the hajj. The Kuwaiti Zakat and Endowment, for example has been helpful to Darul Kitab Was-Sunnah whose

153 Such as the Muslim Orphanage Foundation led by Architect Saefullahi Ahmad Alege and efforts of Sheikh AbdulKadir Orire towards a center for the education of young Deaf Muslims. See Abdussalam, ‘Muslims of Kwara State.’
154 For the activities of this organization see Ibrahim O. Kadri, ‘Impact of the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) on Muslim Women in Ilorin Metropolis’ (BA Long Essay: Islamic Studies, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 2006).
156 Kadri, ‘Impact of the International Islamic Relief Organization,’ 33. Shamsud-deen College is a beneficiary of such gesture.
proprietor represents its interest in Nigeria. Many of the Arab countries offer financial assistance like this to the madaris. However, it is difficult to trace most of this assistance because the individual beneficiaries tend to keep this secret.

As Muslims get more organized, the organizations would continue to play important roles not only but especially in education, with declining government dominance of education in favor of the private sector. Increasingly, the provision of education is in the private sector and Muslims are organizing more to provide the educational needs of Muslims within the ambience of their faith. Muslim educational advancement has also meant Muslim organizations are venturing beyond purely religious domain into other areas such as health, civil rights, economic empowerment in the civil society.

**Women Propagators of Islam in Ilorin**

Muslim women form a small percentage of Muslim scholars and have always been in the background. Nevertheless they are important propagators of the religion. Although the connection of Muslim women to the world of formal learning is limited, their presence in the informal learning process as propagator of the religion, especially to their fellow womenfolk has been remarkable. As with other Muslim societies and across historical time, women have always had their strong influence in the propagation of religion. Aisha, the wife of the Prophet readily comes to mind as the precursor of women as propagators of the religion. She was responsible for a large number of hadiths, the second most important source of Muslim jurisprudence.

During the Sokoto jihad, led by Uthman Dan Fodiyo, his daughter Nana Asmau played a very important role in the intellectual life of the jihad period as teacher and recorder of events. She also mobilized the women into missionaries and social activists. In Ilorin, anecdotes about a number of women who supported their husbands in the propagation of the religion abound. Mention is often made of Asiya, the wife of Sheikh Munabau, who joined the male scholars in the fasting and

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157 Such as digging of wells and building of mosques. Discussions with the Provost of the school, Dr Ahmad Faozy Fazazy. 23-9-2013.
158 There is a fear of disclosure, which may engender petty jealousies.
160 See Beverly B.Mack and Jean Boyd, One Woman’s Jihad Nana Asmau, Scholar and Scribe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000) on this remarkable woman.
prayer that aimed at making Ilorin an Islamic city as requested Alimi when he met with the scholars of Okesuna, on his arrival in Ilorin.  

In the absence of record, we have no way of knowing if there were women groups dedicated to religious litanies in the pre-colonial period as would be found from the colonial period. None of the narratives suggest such organization among the womenfolk existed. What was most likely were individual female scholars, especially from scholarly families like Asiya mentioned above, given that the period was mostly incubatory to the development of learning and scholarship in Ilorin.

The colonial period enabled the formation associations for mutual benefits among the Yoruba, starting at the coast and spreading into the hinterland. Like the women mobilized by Nana Asmau, the women in Lagos had formed themselves into asalatu groups in the early colonial period. This found its way into Ilorin through one of the wives of Sheikh Kamalud-deen, Alhaja Munirat Alawiye. She had been active in the asalatu group in Lagos. On one of her visits to Ilorin, she intimated her friend, Alhaja Gogo Alawo of the development in Lagos and advised that a similar group should begin in Ilorin. This took place in the 1940s when her husband was establishing Ansarul Islam Society and reforming his school. Already, Sheikh Kamalud-deen had considerable number of women following his propagation both in Lagos and Ilorin. One of the earliest asalatu groups in Ilorin emerged around these women. Gogo Alawo led the women in this charismatic prayer group.

Between the mid-1940s and mid-1960s different groups emerged from the first women asalatu group. The first group developed around Gogo Alawo and began

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161 Discussions with Ustadh Isa Abdulsalam Sirrullah. 27-11-2013; Al Iluri, Lamahat Al Ballur, 20; Reichmuth, Islamische Bildung, 269.
162 Dare Halimat, ‘The Impact of Women Wing of Ansarul Islam Society on Women in Ilorin’ (B.A. Long Essay: Islamic Studies-Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 2005), 20; They were at the early stage referred to as the ‘Seli’ group from the Arabic word ‘sallı’ derived from the first sentence of benediction on the Prophet (Allahumma salli ‘ala sayyidina Muhammad…) Kamal, ‘Islamic Education in.’
163 Among the Yoruba, the forming of egbe (association) grew along with the consolidation of Islam in the 19th century. It is possible it existed in this form in Ilorin as well but so far there no reliable evidence for this. For the history of women asalatu groups among the Yoruba, see Gbadamosi, The Growth of Islam, 53-55.
164 Atinsola Latifat Kehinde, ‘Da’awah among Muslim Women in Ilorin: its Successes and Threat’ (B.A. Islamic Studies, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 2002), 32. Also Discussions with Alhaja Raihanat Arowolo. 25-11-2013.
165 She was a successful business woman who used her wealth to support religious cause. She was given the title of ‘Iya Adini’ (Matriarch of Religion) of Ilorin by Emir Muhammad Sulu-Gambari for her role in propagation of religion.
meeting in her house. Later the group moved to the old central mosque at Idi-Ape. Seeing her efforts in propagating and leading the women, Gogo Alawo was advised by Alhaja Rihanat Arowolo to either establish a Qur’anic school or the women section of the mosque. She was reluctant to take the women out of her house but eventually she agreed to the advice. She sought the permission of the authority of the old central mosque where she was allowed to build the women section. As a well to-do trader, she also supported the scholars in the annual celebrations of the *mauld nabiyy* celebrations.

The various *asalatu* groups that emerged have among other aims: to educate women on the general ideas and principles of Islam, engage women and involve women in Islamic programs and activities; to build Islamic centers where Muslim women would be opportune to receive knowledge from Islamic scholars; to propagate Islam through open air lectures; to develop understanding, cooperation and awareness in women; organize Islamic classes for both adults and children and to stress the importance of *asalatu* i.e. eulogy and litanies of the prophet.

Ansarul Islam played a key role in supporting these women with male teachers to guide their litanies and advise them generally about religious affairs. With time, more women keyed-in into the trend of forming new *asalatu* groups. One of the earliest *asalatu* groups under the auspices of Ansarul Islam Society began around the workers at the Domestic Welfare Centre, a primary healthcare services and domestic training center for the women in the center of the town. Some of these western educated women wanted to learn to read the Arabic scripts too like the men, not just rote learning of the traditional Qur’anic school. The group began their meeting in 1966. They fixed their prayer meetings for Saturday evenings when they would be off duty at the center. Sheikh Kamalud-deen had two of his Saudi Arabia trained students, Alhaji Hassan Qadiriiya and Wahab Sanusi Alomimata seconded to serve as the teachers and guide to the women.

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167 Discussions with Alhaja Raihanat Arowolo. 25-11-2013.
168 Kehinde, ‘Da’awah among Muslim Women,’ 28.
169 Umar Nimota Orilonise, The Impact of Alhaja Fatimoh Ayoka Omo-Oloka on Muslim Women in Ilorin, (B.A. Arabic and Islamic Studies Department, University of Ilorin, 1997) p.12. Among the founders of the group were Alhaja Salamat Madawaki, Binta Yusuf Idiaro, Alhaja Baido Hassan Oriokoh, and Alhaja Mujibat Ayinla.
170 Discussions with Alhaja Raihanat Arowolo. 25-11-2013.
The first mualimat (female teacher) of the group was Alhaja Fatima Omo-Oloka. She had been married to a missionary scholar based in Cotonou. When her husband died, she remarried another scholar in Ilorin, from where she began leading the women at the center. The group began under the name, Nurudeen Islamiyyah Society, before coming under the auspices of the Ansarul Islam Society. Alhaja Raihanat Arowolo joined the group in one of their earliest meetings. When she started reciting the litanies with the women, the women then noticed that she could read the prayer texts very well and could render the reading in good intonation like the male teachers, all of whom had trained under Sheikh Kamalud-deen. The women began to prefer her to lead them, rather than Alhaja Fatima Omo-Oloka.

This brought friction within group. This was resolved by Sheikh Kamalud-deen. This eventually led to Alhaja Omo-Oloka having another center at her home called Center B in 1978. Apparently Alhaja Omo-Oloka was well versed in her knowledge of the various texts taught in the traditional higher Islamic education but her vocal rendition was not appealing to the western educated women who prefer Alhaja Arowolo who read like the male Adabiyya teachers. The Adabiyya place emphasis on their students pronouncing the Arabic words with the correct phonetics.

Through the emir, the women were able to get the government to allocate a land for the women to build their prayer meeting center, not far from the Domestic Center they were initially using. At the fundraising for the building, the Emir, Sulukarnaini Gambari and Dr Olusola Saraki donated generously to the women and the money

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171 Orilonise, ‘The Impact of Alhaja Fatimoh Ayoka Omo-Oloka,’ 12. She studied fiqah and taohid texts such al Akhdari, Ashmawi, Quritabiyu, Risala, Burda and al Wasil al mutqabillah. She began her teaching career in Cotonou.
173 Daughter to Sheikh Jum’ah Jabaje (Zainudeen 1910-1965), first Missioner of Ansarul Islam Society in 1943. She grew up in Ghana and began her Qur’anic studies there. At some point her missionary father brought her home to study under Sheikh Kamalud-deen but she left for Ghana after a couple of years only to return to Ilorin at the point of marriage. Her co-wife introduced her to the prayer meeting.
174 Discussions with Alhaja Raihanat Arowolo.25-11-2013.
177 This interest in phonetics had made the Adabiyya subject of ridicule by others not familiar with the phonetics of Arabic. Discussions with Alhaji A.K.W. Aliy-Kamal, June 2012. See also Bamigboye, ‘The Contribution of Sheikh,’ 65.
was used in building the ground floor of the one storey building. The women on their own completed the first floor through personal levies.  

The women meet on week days, with Fridays as their special day. They read from prayer texts such as *Kanzul arsh*, *Dalail Hassan wa Hussein* and *Dalailu-l-khairat* and some chapters from the Qur’an. In the beginning, the prayer meeting began as early as 6:00 am. Over the years as most of the women get older, the time shifted to 8:00 am. After the litanies, the leader of the group would give some sermons to the women. Lessons in reading the Qur’an are also given at the center to some of the women, who have missed out of the education in their youth. During the month of Ramadan, the women read the whole Qur’an; reading two of the sixty divisions of the Qur’an (*hizb*) each day.

Though the group had its origin among western educated women, with time, market women and house wives seemed to have dominated the group. The educated women of the 1980s and 1990s as well as young girls seemed to have found their way into other women organizations. Location of the center within the core Ilorin settlement also made it closer to the women within these areas.

The women in Center ‘A’ regularly print and sell their prayer books, not only to their members but also to others from outside the group. Sometimes entrepreneurs would ask the group permission to use the name of the group on their printed works, such as calendars related to religion, knowing the popularity of the group would boost sales. From time to time, the Ansarul Islam Society provides them with new male teachers to assist them in their activities. The state government sometimes gives the group hajj air fare tickets, which is then given by the leader to deserving members of the group.

Among the things to be learned in the women circles include *fiqh* which teaches the ritual baths and washings and the five pillars of the religion, women duties and

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178 Orilonise, ‘The Impact of Alhaja,’ 13. Also Discussions with Alhaja Raihanat Arowolo. 25-11-2013. Alhaja Raihanat also suggested the use of white clothes as uniform dress for the group and it became popular among other *asalatu* groups in Ilorin as well.  
181 Discussions with Alhaja Raihanat Arowolo. 25-11-2013.  
183 Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 268. These are usually facilitated by politicians or top government officials with close links to the Adabiyya group.
responsibilities. The women are taught theology and prophetic histories and especially *madiu nabiya* (prophet’s eulogy). They also organize special prayers for themselves, seeking God’s grace and interventions in issues, sometimes personal, at other times communal. They organize open air sermons from time to time, inviting scholars to deliver the sermon. They actively participate in annual celebrations such as *maulud nabiya* (Prophet’s birthday), *lailatul qadr* \(^{184}\) (Night of Majesty), *nisf Shaaban* (half of the month of Shaaban). They donate generally to the building of mosques, Islamic organizations and the physically challenged individuals. \(^{185}\)

Although the socio-cultural role of women limits the participation of women in knowledge production, yet within this limited role, the women of Ilorin have always contributed to the development of Islamic education. As the opportunities for learning generally improved, women participation increased and they have impacted considerably. The development of *asalatu* centers as avenue for women to propagate the religion in the first half of the twentieth century opened the ways for their semi-public participation in religious acts hitherto limited to men.

The reforms in the Islamic education system impacted on the women as the female graduates of the *madaris* would assume leadership of some of the key *asalatu* groups as exampled by the career of Alhaja Fatima Omo-Oloka, Alhaja Raihanat Arowolo and Alhaja Fatima Batuli Salah. \(^{186}\) It developed into a religious culture; most married women belong to one or more of these groups and it became a way of socializing into married life for the women. Women from scholarly families often had to take leadership roles on account of the knowledge they have garnered from their families.

Their role as propagators of religion goes beyond the *asalatu* circles. Some of them have, as individuals or groups, established both Qur’anic and western schools. In one instance, a woman inherited the proprietorship of a madrasah. \(^{187}\) Under her guidance, the madrasah developed and expanded into an integrationist madrasah.

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\(^{184}\) It is believed to be one of the odd nights occurring in the last ten days of Ramadan. It is believed that angels descend on this night and prayers offered on this night would be fulfilled. It is marked with night long sermons.


\(^{186}\) Among the younger generations we have others such as Alhaja Khadijat Abdussalam (Al Hidayah), Alhaja khadijat Aboto, Alhaja Habeebah Otuyo and Miss Asiya Abubakar (Omo-Eleha) among innumerable others.

\(^{187}\) Alhaja Maimuna Mustapha Idiagbede- The Proprietor of Shamsudeen College of Arabic and Islamic Studies. Daughter to Sheikh Girgisu, she is a successful business woman. Her
husband, Alhaji Mustapha Idiagbede was resourceful to the school and upon his death in 1979; she took control of the school. She also leads the women of the Shamsud-deen Society.

Fig. 32. Center ‘A’ Asalatu circle of Ansarul Islam Society. Note the male assistant in the middle. Picture taken by the researcher, 2014.

Fig. 33. Asalatu circle of Ridwanullahi Islamic Society, Eruda. Picture taken by the researcher, 2014.
Before the education system became saturated with private schools, due to reduced dominance of the government in the education sector from the mid-1980s; in 1978, The Muslim Women Association of Nigeria was among the first organization to establish a private western school for Muslim children in Ilorin. In the more recent proliferation of private schools, others have also established schools. For example, Alhaja Raihant Arowolo established a school and named it after her father and Alhaja Khadijat Abdussalam (Al Hidayah) established a school as well and named it after her mother.

The madrasah and western education systems both enabled women to become involved in teaching from primary school level of both systems of education and up to the university level. In the traditional system, women of the scholarly households have been known to be supportive of their husbands in teaching as well. One of the ways the scholarly community in Ilorin is integrated is through inter-marriage between scholarly families and between scholars and their students. This developed the culture of *iyawo sara*, although it has largely disappeared now. Hence we have a number of women referred to as ‘*iyya kewu*’ (learned mother), in households of scholars known for their knowledge of the religious texts. They teach and serve as role models for other women.

When the madrasah system was developed, some of the scholars had their wives assisting them in teaching in the *madaris*. In the western school system, women have also found opportunity to teach religious subjects especially in the primary and secondary schools, which are taught in English and vernacular at the primary and in

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188 The Brochure of the Muslim Women Association of Nigeria Kwara State; see also Musa Risikat Omowumi, ‘Taqoheed Educational Institution the Journey So Far’ (B.A. Long Essay: Islamic Studies, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 2004), 27
189 Zainul Abideen Nursery/Primary School and Batimoluwasi Nursery/Primary respectively.
190 Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 60; Ware, *The Walking Qur’an*, 83. *Iyawo sara* literally means ‘dowry free wife’. To maintain scholarly traditions, females of the scholarly households are given in marriage to other scholars or students of teachers without having to pay the bride price or incur expensive wedding ceremonies as common in the community. This also helped the scholars who were often not materially comfortable to achieve the religious obligation of marriage. Advancement in knowledge, both western and Islamic and resistance to the culture by young ladies, who sometimes absconded before the consummation of the marriage, led to a decline of this practice.
191 For example, the household of Sheikh Abdurahheem Aminullah is referred to as *Ile Iyya Kewu* (House of the Learned Mother) Based on the life of a woman of that house, Ruqayat, renowned for her teaching career. Discussions with Alhaji Abdurrazak Abdulraheem Al Adaby. 8-12-2013; Hasanat Funmilayo Abubakar, ‘Asbabu tahkif Nisai an Dirasatu Lughatul Arabiya fi Bilad Yuruba’ (B.A. Department of Arabic, University of Ilorin, 2002), 47.
192 Sheikh Yahaya Oke Agodi, Sheikh Jubril Sahban, Sheikh Abdulganiiyu (Nurul Hikmah) and Sheikh AbdulGaniyu Aboto all have been assisted by their wives in teaching in their *madaris*. 

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English at the secondary level. More recently, the advance in education has also seen women teaching at the tertiary levels.  

Women voices on religion in the public have always met with resistance. The traditional argument has always been that the whole of the female body is nudity. This is then marshalled as argument that she should neither be seen nor heard in public. In the 1960s, one of the itinerant scholars of Ilorin (alfa Sumaila) had returned from Ghana and had his young daughter (Wosila) served as his ajanasi. As it was novel for a female to take that role, it attracted both admiration and condemnation. Scholars who were not comfortable with the idea of a woman reading the Qur’an in public reported the case to the emir.

While the opposing scholars wanted an outright proscription of the action, the emir was cautious in his action and preferred an intellectual response to the problem. The scholar having come from Idi-Ape whose ancestors the Fulanis had overcome in the struggle for power, during the formative years of the emirate, it was a knotty issue for the emir. To proscribe the action outright would satisfy the antagonizing scholars but put the emir out as dictatorial against a clan whose relationship the ruling dynasty was often testy. The emir asked the scholars to bring an intellectual argument based in the Qur’an or hadith that a female cannot play that role. With no explicit rule in the religious texts to back the argument of the opposing scholars, the lady continued with her supporting role to her father and they even had to be protected by the police at some point when there was possibility of being physically attacked.

During the Ramadan tafsir session at the palace, the issue was raised again and the emir forbade anyone to stop the scholar and his daughter until textual legal evidence can be used against them and warned them that the people of Idi-Ape

193 University of Ilorin now has its first female Arabic lecturer in Abubakar Funmilayo Hassanat. She had studied at Muhyideen College of Arabic and Islamic Studies, before doing her degree program at the University of Ilorin. She joined the university teaching staff in 2009 where she is also pursuing her terminal degree. The Kwara State University at Malete also has female lecturer in Islamic studies, Dr Sherrifat Abubakar Hussain. There are still very few women studying Arabic. More women, however, are to be found in Islamic Studies especially with English as the medium of study.
197 This incidence most probably occurred during the Ramadan when open air sermons become a daily affair across different locations in the city.
would never accept for the scholar to be stopped. The Idi-Ape scholars met with the Chief Imam who told them that one of the reasons the scholars were opposed to a female *ajanasi* was that it was drawing crowd away from other sermons, as the people were thronging to Idi-Ape to see a young lady reciting the Qur’an publicly as an *ajanasi* (repeater) for the father. This obviously cannot be the only reason. The threat to the *status quo* was also a factor. The Idi-Ape scholars finally reached an agreement with the Chief Imam that if the Chief Imam would not raise the issue with the emir again as would be expected of him by the opposing scholars, the emir on his own would not raise the issue, since he had given a condition. The Chief Imam agreed to their proposal and the issue ended there.  

The voice of the women in public religious acts have largely been in the background in *asalatu* and women organization circles, but more recently, the radio has given them an opportunity to be heard publicly on issues only men have been known to air views. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, women began to be heard on radio presenting religious programs like the men. This also met with some resistance but the resistance could not hold much ground. The woman whose radio presentation helped entrenched women presence on radio, Khadijah Abdussalam (often referred to by the title of her program - *Al Hidayah* 199 (The Guidance), had studied in Egypt and had the support of the husband and management of the state owned Radio Kwara. 200 Arguments against a woman presenting a religious program are based on the Muslim belief that a woman’s voice should not be raised in public. 201 While some opposed her, other scholars also supported her, seeing that she has working knowledge of Arabic and the religious texts.

198 Discussions with Alhaji Amosa Magaji Aare. 14-2-2014. The young lady continued assisting the father till she got married to one of his students. She continued for a while supported by her husband but marital responsibilities made it difficult and she eventually stopped. She would continue teaching at home, people given her their wards to be tutored by her and she leads an *asalatu* group within the community (Ganmo) where she lives. 199 She began presenting the program in 2006. 200 Her entrance into radio presentation had come through a relative who invited her to come and speak on a radio religious program *Shariyat Islamiyyah* in 2006. The program aired when the management of the station was meeting and they had listened to the program. Impressed with her performance on the program, they requested that she should come and start a program of her own with the Station, without realizing that her husband was a member of staff of the station. She constantly refers to her husband during her program; this seems a subtle defense of her vocation, an affirmation that she is a responsible Muslim woman. 201 See Umar, ‘Mass Islamic Education,’ for the exploration of this argument through the career of two female ulama in northern Nigeria.
Fig. 34. Alhaja Khadijat Abdussalam (Al-Hidayah) at a public function outside of the studio. Picture courtesy of Al Hidayah.

Fig. 35. Asiya Abubakar (Omo-Eleha) presenting her program in the studio of Royal 95.1 FM. Picture taken by the researcher, 2014.
By 2010, a second female presenter had joined her. Asiya Abubakar’s going into religious broadcasting also came through the radio station, which threw a challenge to the members of the public to come with proposals of programs for the station. Her entry for the call was successful. A common thread running through the experience of these women is their religious education background and both had come from scholarly families. Both also have asalatu groups where they lead other women in weekly religious recitations of litanies. Their work in the radio station further exposed them into social activism beyond the radio presentation.

Women for the first time had some of their own gender presenting religious programs targeting them. Some would seek personal audience with them after the program to seek religious guidance on issues they could not be free to discuss with the men. This way, the radio programs provided opportunities to serve the audience beyond the context of the radio station. They get to be invited to speak publicly on occasions such as weddings, something quite uncommon until their emergence. Women have also showed presence on television, particularly during the Ramadan. There were dissenting voices in all these instances of women speaking publicly in fora only men have been doing so until recently but the women have also been supported by men especially their husbands who often are scholars as

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202 Daughter to Sheikh Abu Sherif, who had initially opposed the daughter speaking on radio but eventually acquiesced. The father had been a radical scholar early in his career and had founded The Sheriff Guards, a para-military organization modelled after the Boy Scouts and the First Aid Group. His radicalism, however, seemed to receded with age. For more on the life of this scholar see Oba Titilola Maryam, ‘Abu Sharif and His Contributions to the Propagation of Islam in Ilorin Kwara State’ (B.A. Long Essay; Islamic Studies-Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 1988).

203 At the time, she was in her teens as a student of Shamsudeen College of Arabic and Islamic Studies and an apprentice in video camera shooting. Her interest had been to propose a social program but her master advised her that as a student of a religious institution, to present a proposal on a religious program. She was successful and she started presenting with Radio Kwara, making two female presenters in the station. When a private FM radio station, Royal FM, was established in 2011, she was invited to become a religious program presenter at the new station. Currently she is pursuing her tertiary education in Arabic at the College of Education, Ilorin.

204 Discussions with Discussions with Hajiya Khadijat Abdussalam 9-12-2013 and Miss Asiya Abubakar (Omo-Eleha), 1-12-2013.

205 Alhaja Habeebah Otuyo and Alhaja Dimeji co-presents a phone-in program during the Ramadan during which gifts are given to members of the audience who could answer some questions. Alhaja Otuyo studied Arabic in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia while her husband was studying there. She also runs an asalatu and a business in Islamic books and materials and teaches Arabic at the University of Ilorin Secondary School. Discussions with Alhaja Habeebah Otuyo. 11-12-2013.
well. Several other women have taken after these women and women voices have become a norm over the mass media in Ilorin.\textsuperscript{206}

Women have also established women-only organizations through which they propagate religion and education. The formal organizations have emerged from among the western educated women. They differ from the \textit{asalatu} groups in having members mainly from working class women and they have made their organization formal. For example, the Muslim Women Association of Nigeria had its origin among the female teachers of Queen Elizabeth School in Ilorin in the late 1970s. Seeing the Muslim girls of the schools acting contrary to the dictates of the religion and seeking enlightenment for themselves, they began with religious classes during school lesson breaks, taught by one of the male staff.\textsuperscript{207}

It became a weekend program outside the school\textsuperscript{208} and non-staff joined the group and it was eventually registered as a formal association. In their words ‘ …the Muslim community of Kwara state is faced with the task to retain the culture of Islam and make it flourish in the face of aggressive western civilization.’\textsuperscript{209} The aims of the group include; to make members informed and practicing Muslims, cater for the moral, social and physical developments of Muslim youths in the state, to promote education and scholarship, to build up libraries of books on Islam where members could read and borrow books. The group aimed at organizing Qur’anic classes for adults and children and to build nursery, primary and secondary schools for the children, with emphasis on Islamic education. The organization sourced funds for its activities through membership levies and donations.\textsuperscript{210}

A most important contribution of this women’s group to the development of education was the establishment of a Muslim focused school, Taoheed Nursery/Primary School in 1978.\textsuperscript{211} The secondary school section was established in 1986.\textsuperscript{212} The government later took over the control of the school.\textsuperscript{213} The

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\textsuperscript{207} Olatunde, ‘The Role of Muslim Women,’ 26.

\textsuperscript{208} Prayer books of the group include \textit{Addua al Musma} ‘The Mentioned Prayer’ \textit{al Majmuat al Mubarakat} ‘The Blessed Collection.’ \textit{Dalailu al Khairat} (Evidences of Goodness) \textit{Dalailu Hasan wa Husein} (Evidences of Hasan and Husein)

\textsuperscript{209} The brochure of the Muslim Women Association of Nigeria Kwara State (nd)

\textsuperscript{210} Olatunde, ‘The Role of Muslim Women,’ 27

\textsuperscript{211} Olatunde, ‘The Role of Muslim Women,’ 36; Discussions with Alhaja Zainab Oniyangi. 23-11-2013.

\textsuperscript{212} Musa Risikat Omowumi, ‘Taoheed Educational Institution the Journey So Far’ (B.A. Long Essay: Islamic Studies, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, 2004), 27.
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foresight of the women is remarkable; being one of the very first Muslim focused western schools, decades before it became a trend. The Adabiyya Moslem School established in 1946 is about the only such school that predated it.

As more Muslim women organizations emerged, an umbrella organization emerged in the Federation of Muslim Women Organization of Nigeria (FOMWAN). Established in 1985 in Kano, it developed gradually and has branches throughout the nation. Western educated women have been at the forefront of the organization but over the years they have also brought non-western educated women onto their fold through many of its non-formal programs. The mission of the organization among other numerous objectives is to propagate the religion of Islam in Nigeria through da’awah, establishment of educational institutions and other outreach activities. It has inspired the creation of similar organizations across the West African sub-region and has working relationship with international organizations including the United Nations Organization. Its branch in Ilorin has its own Nursery/Primary School and has many programs through which its aims and objectives are being realized.

Women propagation of the religion of Islam and the two educational systems that Muslims in Ilorin have to contend with in the modern time has generally been progressive. Women irrespective of the social status have been active in this remarkable progress from less known and less active participation in the development of religion and education of the pre-colonial period to the knowledge driven and active participation in the development of education of Muslims in the twenty-first century. Like the general progress of Islamic education, western education has been a great challenge to this progress but it has also been an important positive force propelling the achievements that Muslims have been able to make in this regard.

Working largely in the background and with the support of the males, they have had some opposition to their rising status, as partners of the males in this, especially with regard to their voices being in the public. Even this has not met with a general disapproval of the males. Support could be said to be more in their favor. Education in both systems had given them a voice and presence beyond the traditional confines of the home into the public domain. Through this, they have impacted on the public good. Despite this, the Muslim women have not aimed nor lay claim to equal partnership with the men. Rather they have asserted their role as necessarily supportive of the men. They have focused on women and family issues, education,

213 Discussions with Alhaja Zainab Oniyangi. 23-11-2013. This is similar to the experience of Ansarul Islam and Ansarud-deen Schools.
children and health within the ambit of their sanctioned authority in religion. Through the powers education conferred on them, they have sought to uplift the society through the uplifting of the womenfolk and the family generally. A popular dictum among female Muslim activists in Nigeria is the saying; ‘educate a woman you educate a nation.’

The role of women as propagators of the religion has progressed from relative obscurity to a more apparent and active position and the future one can envisage for this is further consolidation and expansion as more women get exposed to education of both the western and Islamic systems. In the end, Islamic learning and scholarship allied to modern technology has allowed the partial breakdown of the traditional power relations between the genders.

Conclusion
This penultimate chapter examines the symbiotic relationship of Islamic education with the society. The nature of the institution as an arm of religion makes its connection to the society very significant. This is even more pronounced in a mono-religious society like Ilorin, where virtually all the citizens are Muslims. Being a Muslim becomes a key index of identity as an Ilorin person. The legitimacy of the city, its rulers and citizens are all intertwined with the religion, the pivot of which is the ulama. Essentially, it examines post learning utilization of knowledge by scholars as teachers, clerics, religious officials, spiritual advisors and consultant, opinion moulders. Through these vocations we see the scholars of Islamic education system at work. Beyond transmission of learning, the Islamic education institution has economic implications for the scholar and the society. This we have examined through the various vocations opened to scholars as a way of earning a living.

Around Islamic education also developed a number of economic activities such as selling of books, printing of books and other materials related to learning and religious practice. Others include articles related to religious praxes such as books, clothes and worship accessories. This opened opportunities for members of the society, not directly connected with learning, to be earning living as service providers for the institution.

The role of the mass media as agency of non-formal education of Muslims is part of this exploration of the engagement of scholars with the society. The utilization of this means has further expanded the oeuvres of the scholars of religion. The

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215 This saying does not appear to have any root in Islamic sources but finding it supportive of other Islamic sources encouraging the education of women, the modern female Muslim activists have appropriated the dictum for their cause. It is probably of Fanti origin in Ghana and popularized by Dr. James Kwegyir-Aggrey in his advocacy for female education in Ghana in the early twentieth century. See African proverb of the month September 1999 http://www.afriprov.org. Assessed 26/6/2014.
influence of formal Muslim organizations, beginning in the mid-colonial period and especially in the post-colonial period as promoters of education of Muslims both in the Islamic and western system was also examined as part of the general advancement Muslims have made towards the development of their community. These organizations have played important roles in helping Muslims to overcome the challenges that western education posed to their religion and its educational institution.

Finally, this chapter explored the role of women as propagators of religion. Traditionally less educated than the men and having little voice in the matter of religion and education, the advancement made in Islamic education rubbed off on these women and they began to organize themselves through charismatic asalatu (prayer) groups. As more women get improved Islamic and western education, their voices and presence in the public began to be more pronounced even though this met with some resistance. Their non-combative stance helped them to assert their voices and presence as supportive and complimentary of the men’s role and importantly they also have many of the men supporting their knowledge based voice and presence in the public sphere.216

216 An important consideration is also the culturally strong economic position of Yoruba women. This had its impact on the female participation in religious function as important supporters of the menfolk.