

ISLAM AND COLONIAL RULE IN IBADAN, 1893-1960.

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Abstract

Scholars have attempted to examine the introduction and consolidation of Islam, as a significant component of the general history of Ibadan, a prominent town in modern southwestern Nigeria. However, no specific attention has been paid to the nature and consequences of colonial rule on Ibadan Muslims. This study intends to fill this obvious gap in the historiography of religion, Ibadan, and Yorubaland by focusing on how colonial authorities facilitated the entrenchment of Islam from 1893, when colonialism was imposed to 1960 when Nigeria removed the yoke of imperialism. Islamic learning centres promoted cultural influence with the establishment of structures that undermined the preservation of Yoruba identity as it is related to festivals and legal culture. It reveals the specific policies and action of colonial authorities on the Ibadan Hausa Muslim immigrants who were allowed to exercise their freedom of association and religion. The imamate and the interaction of Islam and other religions in Ibadan during the colonial period were also discussed.

Introduction

Islam penetrated into different areas in Ibadan through the activities of Hausa Muslim traders who taught and nurture the religious life of the town. The peace imposed by the colonialists and their tolerance towards Islam facilitated the growth of the religion. With this, the colonial authorities maintained peace, cordial and friendly relations between Muslims, Christians and practitioners of indigenous traditional religion¹.

Favourable colonial socio-political structures allowed the Muslims to maintain a visible physical and cultural presence in colonial Ibadan. The specific British policy that aided the development of Islam in Ibadan was the freedom of worship that is upheld by the new colonial political system. Consequently, the Muslims began to practice Islam in the open rather than in secret. Islam's phenomenal growth in the town was partly influenced by the British indifference to religious matters, and the support received from the chiefs in Ibadan. This provided a space for Yoruba Muslim to struggle for recognition on their own². It is against this background that this study will examine how Islam was perceived before and under colonial rule with a view to identify the changing patterns and organization of Islamic religion under a new political leadership of the British colonial authority. In this study, the colonial period is operationally defined as the period that covers British authority on Islam in Ibadan and how it shaped colonial structures response to the challenges facing Muslims with regard to Western education, and culture contact on issues affecting the Muslims during the period.

Background to Islam in Ibadan

Islam came into Ibadan through trade relation that had been established between Hausa, Nupe and the Yoruba people. These people usually exchanged kolanuts, leather, hides and skin and groundnuts as articles of trade as far back as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Thus, the age long trade contact and communication between these groups further consolidated the advent and spread of Islam in Ibadan³.

After the collapse of the old Oyo empire, many refugees migrated into Ibadan to settle because it was a war camp that provided security and hope for some immigrant refugees who were displaced from their homelands. By 1830, the dominant Yoruba and Hausa Muslim groups that settled in Ibadan included the Oyo-Yoruba, Ife and Egba, Bornu and Nupe groups⁴. Between 1830 and 1850, the Oyo Yoruba group in Ibadan resisted the implantation of Islam in their domain for fear of Islamic Imperialism. This hostility to Islam became widespread such that the first central Mosque that was built in the town was pulled down during the reign of Bashorun Oluyole, the ruler of Ibadan (1836-1850). This hostility to Islam at the early beginning affected its legitimacy in the town such that no important member of the community converted to Islam⁵.

The Muslim population increased with the returning home of freed slaves after the abolition of the slave trade in 1833. The returning slaves from Freetown no doubt increased the population of Muslims in the town. Most of the Muslims that migrated into Ibadan were from Sierra-Leone. They were locally called *Saro*⁶. By the second half of the twentieth

¹ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba. 1804 – 1908*. London: Longman. P.

² A. Cohen. *Customs and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns*. Los Angeles: University of California:1973.pp151-152.

³ F.H.Elmarsi. "Islam" in *The city of Ibadan* (eds.) P.C.Lloyd, et al. London: California Press: 1973.pp.235

⁴ T. Falola. "From Hospitality to Hostility: Ibadan and Strangers, 1830 – 1904". *Journal of African History*. Vol. 26, No. 1, 1985, Pp. 51 – 68

⁵ T. Falola. "From Hospitality to Hostility: Ibadan and Strangers, 1830 – 1904". *Journal of African History*.

⁶ L. Sanneh. *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*. London:C.Hurst & Company:1983.p.218

Century, Islam in Ibadan had moved from its position as the religion of low status minority group to a popular one, accepted by people across social class and identity. As Islam continued to grow, so did the adoption or fusion of Yoruba political chieftaincy and some customary practices and ideas⁷.

Islam and Colonial Rule in Ibadan

When the British assumed control of Ibadan in 1893⁸, Islam made steady progress as the Muslim community became a fairly large influential body in the city. During this period, T.G.O. Gbadamosi observed that Muslims in Ibadan occupied senior positions in the political and administrative hierarchy of the town⁹. By 1897, this was remarkably evident where the stature of Islam seemed to have been personified in chief Oshundina, one of the Muslim chief in Ibadan. Other prominent Muslim Yoruba elites included Baale Opeagbe, Baale Fijabi and Sumonu Apampa. These leaders encouraged the building of mosques and Islamic educational centres which assisted in the expansion of Islam across the city¹⁰.

The early Yoruba converts did not totally abandon their traditional faith. An individual could become Muslim without necessarily understanding the full teachings of Islam. The simple affirmation 'There is no God; Muhammed is the apostle of God' is sufficient for an individual to be accepted into Islam¹¹. Throughout the colonial period, Islam presented itself as united force in matters of fundamental belief. Its members of different sect such Qadriyyah, Tijanniyyah and Ahmadiyyah worshipped together in the same mosque. At this point, it is pertinent to raise the question: Why and how did the colonial masters become involved in the affairs of Islam and the Muslim community in Ibadan? In matters of faith and religion in Ibadan, the colonial masters assisted in resolving perceived problems observable by the Muslim community. In the words of Gbadamosi, the relationship between Muslims and the British colonial masters was friendly and cordial¹². On one hand, the colonial authorities treated Muslims with considerable respect, deference and understanding. On the other hand, the Muslims saw the colonial government as a sympathetic and impartial administration which they respected and with which they were ready to work with. The colonial government in Ibadan played crucial role in the organisation, development and practice of Islam throughout the colonial period¹³.

The colonial administration demonstrated much concern about the welfare of the Muslims by showing its spirit of tolerance towards all shades of religious opinions. A number of momentous events took place which drew Muslims closer to the colonial administration. First, there was the request from the Ibadan Muslim community for the establishment of western educational institution where Arabic and Islamic sciences would be included in the curriculum and taught by the members of the Muslim community¹⁴.

The government asked the Muslim community to provide core information about the proposed school and the academic qualification of its teachers. This action showed the interest of the colonial government to support the establishment of Muslim educational institution in Ibadan provided there were no political objections by the chiefs and rulers of Ibadan. The form obtained by the Muslim community assisted the colonial government to regulate, control and supervise the establishment of the proposed school under private ownership. The approval for the establishment of the school was granted and the school commenced its educational activities in 1945¹⁵. Besides, it is necessary to mention that apart from seeking approval to establish Muslim educational institutions, the Muslim community also requested for a loan of 500 pounds as financial support for the building of the infrastructures for the school¹⁶. The government declined this request on the ground

⁷ H.O. Danmole. "Religious Encounter in Southwestern Nigeria: The Domestication of Islam among the Yoruba". In J.K. Olupona and Terry Rey (eds.). *Orisa Devotion as World Religion: The Globalization of Yoruba Religious Culture*. Wisconsin University Press., pp. 202 – 235.

⁸ L. Denzer. *The Iyalode in Ibadan Politics and Society, C.1850-1997*. Ibadan: Kembim Press Ltd: 1998. P.13.

⁹ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba. 1804 – 1908*. London: Longman Press: 1978., p. 176.

¹⁰ I.A. Jimoh. "The Imamate in Ibadan" in T.Babawale *et al.* (eds.) *The Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria*. Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilizations. 2010., pp. 323 – 341.

¹¹ M. Crowther. *West Africa under Colonial Rule*. London: Hutchinson & Company. 1968

¹² T.G.O. Gbadamosi. *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba. 1804 – 1908*. London: Longman Press: 1978., p. 176.

¹³ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba. 1804 – 1908*

¹⁴ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. "The Establishment of Western Education Among Muslims in Nigeria, 1896-1926", *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, vol. 4, No. 1, 1967. Pp.89-114.

¹⁵ National Archives Ibadan 0732. Henceforth (NAI) Ibadan Division 0732. Establishment of proposed Mohammedan Schools in Ibadan, Ibadan division 1/3, 1930-1947.

¹⁶ National Archives Ibadan 0732. Henceforth (NAI) Ibadan Division 0732. Establishment of proposed Mohammedan Schools in Ibadan,

that there is no such precedence in the organisation and administration of schools established by the missionaries. The reaction of the colonial government was seemingly harsh to the Muslims; but they continued to raise money through meagre contributions from the community.

In addition, archival evidence also revealed that by 1938, three protestant churches of the Anglican, Methodist and Baptist, and the Ibadan Muslim community petitioned the colonial government protesting against the holding of *Oke'badan* festival¹⁷, a popular traditional religious festival of Ibadan. The colonial government maintained a neutral stand, arguing that it was outside the jurisdiction of the government to interfere in religious matters. The colonial government advised the groups that the only remedy was to see that its members had nothing to do with the worship of "Oke'badan"¹⁸.

Similarly, the colonial authorities did not accept the demand of the Muslims that an Islamic cleric (Mallam) be appointed into the native customary court²³. Perhaps, the reason for this was because there were political objections by the *Olubadan* office against the request of appointing a *Mallam* as a leading judge in the native court²⁴. The *Olubadan* objected to the request to avoid the imposition of Islamic ideology, which was considered as foreign, on indigenous Yoruba legal culture. He maintained that it is proper to maintain Yoruba laws and customs as observed then and that the representatives of the Muslims can be found in the native court which in his opinion is a sufficient representation²⁵.

It is important to note that the colonial government guaranteed the religious freedom of Muslims by allowing them to hold prayers in the public²⁷. Two explanations can be advanced for the attitude of the colonial government to the Muslims. First some highly influential Ibadan Muslim chiefs sympathized with the quests of the Muslim population to freely practice their religion. Secondly, the support received from the rulers of Ibadan enabled the members of the Muslim community to become an important social and political force in the city¹⁹.

Unlike in Ibadan, Abeokuta and Ijebu-Ode, the colonial government favoured the establishment of government sponsored western education among Muslims in Lagos, Epe, and Badagry. In Lagos, the colonial authorities assisted the Muslims in benefiting from Western education without necessarily converting to Christianity. This gesture enhanced the hope and aspiration among Ibadan Muslims, who asked for the government to replicate the Lagos project in Ibadan²⁰. Two plausible reasons were responsible for this gesture. One, there was apathy and opposition by the Bamidele and Lanase Muslim groups against the Christian-sponsored western education that had persisted for a long time. Two, the colonial government perceived that there were imbalances in the distribution of western education among the people and therefore, took it as a responsibility to bridge imbalance through the establishment of schools devoted to Islamic learning where Arabic would be taught with other secular subjects in the schools²¹.

At Ibadan, the colonial administration made advances to establish government educational institutions to cater for Muslim educational pursuits. However, this was not successful because of the apparent lack of qualified teachers and government financial resources needed to maintain the schools. ²². At this instance, Edward Blyden, was appointed by Governor Carter in 1895 as Agent of Native Affairs. His main task was to execute government colonial policy on western education among Muslims so as to remove the known prejudices against Christian teachings and methods. He suggested that the pupils in Ibadan should be encouraged to move to Lagos or alternatively more teachers should be recruited from Sierra Leone²³. The acting governor, Denton disagreed with Edward, he preferred that students be taught in their own towns where their parents resided. The government was silent about the recruitment of teachers. Consequently, the whole issue of having government Muslim schools in Ibadan was inconclusive²⁴. However, the colonial government considered and approved the establishment of private Islamic educational centres where Arabic and English language would be taught²⁵.

Under colonialism, Islam made much progress and advancement in the first half of the twentieth Century. It increased its tempo under modern conditions and a new government. During this period, numerous places of worship were erected and Islamic learning centres were established to facilitate the teaching and spread of Islamic civilization²⁶. E. G. Parrinder

¹⁷ NAI.Oyo Province file 1771. Petition on Native Festival of Oyo province. Oke'badan festival.

¹⁸ NAI.Oyo Province file 1771. Petition on Native Festival of Oyo province

¹⁹ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. " The Establishment of Western Education Among Muslims in Nigeria, 1896-1926", *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, vol. 4, No. 1, 1967. Pp.89-114.

²⁰ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. " The Establishment of Western Education Among Muslims in Nigeria, 1896-1926",

²¹ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. " The Establishment of Western Education Among Muslims in Nigeria, 1896-1926",

²² T.G.O. Gbadamosi. " The Establishment of Western Education Among Muslims in Nigeria, 1896-1926",

²³ T.G.O. Gbadamosi., *The Growth of Islam Among the Yoruba, 1804-1908*, London. Longman, 1978. p.175.

²⁴ T.G.O. Gbadamosi., *The Growth of Islam Among the Yoruba, 1804-1908*,

²⁵ NAI. Ibadan Division 0732. Establishment of Proposed Mohammedan School in Ibadan.

²⁶ P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam: A Study of Religious Development from the 8th-20th Century*. London: Edward Arnold, 1982. P.162.

describes the development of Islam as a religion that moved with urban civilisation easily through trading and commercial interactions²⁷. It appealed to the traders and Ibadan chiefs and helped in establishing the “Sabo community” in 1916, the mainly Hausa Muslim quarters which are found in most cosmopolitan Yoruba towns in Nigeria²⁸.

Sabo otherwise known as the ‘new town’ among the Hausa people was initiated and founded by the British colonial masters to maintain peace and stability between the immigrants and the host community²⁹. The settlement of Sabo in Ibadan enhanced the practice of Islamic worship openly than in private or secret as was observed during the pre-colonial period³⁰. Cohen captures the establishment of the Sabo community in Ibadan as the formal institutionalization of Hausa autonomy especially with regard to the practice of Islamic religion under the authority of a Hausa chief of the area, in accordance with the principles and practices of the newly developed British policy of indirect rule in Ibadan³¹. According to I. O. Albert, the Hausa Muslims found in Ibadan where in fact slaves obtained through wars and trade interaction with the Yoruba groups. These settlers served in various capacities as barbers, rope makers and cow herds. Throughout the colonial period, the Hausa rapidly established themselves as middlemen and held monopoly in commercial transactions between the Northern Savannah and Southern forest zones³².

The Yoruba Muslim group and Hausa group co-existed as settlers in Ibadan during the colonial period. In matters relating to the Islamic faith, these two groups were exclusively independent of one another. The reason for this is the prevailing myth among the Hausa/Fulani community that the Yoruba groups are not good Muslims and that the Hausa should therefore stand apart to preserve their ritual purity and religious enlightenment³³. (Olukoju: 2005) The Hausa Muslim confined their activities within Sabo corridor in the city in response to their accusation as exploiters, armed robbers, prostitutes, gamblers and other types of undesirables³⁴. Ibadan chiefs attempted to checkmate the Hausa’s alleged crime by keeping them under control through the support of the colonial authorities. This form of control included segregating them from the rest of the Ibadan within an enclosed area in the interior part of the city³⁵. Besides, the Hausa believed that their traditions and customs on issues relating to Islamic belief were different and superior when compared to the manner the Yoruba Muslim practice Islam. The Hausa Muslims had refused to be led in prayer by a Yoruba chief Imam because the resilience of some indigenous cultural practices among the Yoruba was seen by the Hausa as a proof of the syncretism among Yoruba Muslim³⁶.

The Hausa therefore, seceded to establish the Sabo central mosque where they held their own Jumat and daily prayers. On this issue, Cohen observed that a bitter polemic ensued between Sabo’s Mallams and Yoruba Muslims. The Yoruba Imamate wrote practically scores of protests, which they addressed to the Olubadan in Council and to the colonial administration, auguring great mystical calamities that would befall the city if the heretical Sabo movement was allowed to succeed³⁷. In these protests, the Yoruba Imamate pointed out that in the Hausa towns in the North only one Friday mosque was allowed in each town and this was confirmed in correspondence between the Ibadan District Officer and many District Officers in the North. Meetings were arranged between Yoruba and Hausa Mallams, in which the Yoruba side argued against the separation of the Friday ritual community on various theological grounds³⁸.

The Olubadan summoned the Hausa chief named Shuaibu, Yakubu Umaru and talked to him on the subject in 1942 but the chief was reported to have shouted rudely at the Olubadan, telling him that the Hausa were free to worship Allah as they chose and that freedom of worship was one of the principles upheld by the colonial policy on religious tolerance³⁹. By 1950 the Hausa secession from the Yoruba Central Mosque was of great consequence because it meant that the Hausa had

²⁷ E.G. Parrinder. “Islam and West African Indigenous Religion”. *Numen*. Vol. 6, Fasc 2. 1959., pp. 131 – 119.

²⁸ A. Cohen. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns*. California: University of California Press. 1993. pp. 102 – 103.

²⁹ A. Cohen. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in*

³⁰ A. Cohen. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in*

³¹ A. Cohen. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in*

³² A. Cohen. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in P.154*

³³ A. Olukoju. “Actors and Institutions in Urban Politics in Nigeria: Agege (Lagos) Since the 1950’s” In Working Papers Nr58. Department of Anthropology and African Studies. Institut fur ethnologie und Afrkastudien, Gutenberg Universitat. 2005.pp.12-13

³⁴ A. Cohen. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa P.154*

³⁵ A. Cohen. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in PP.98 - 140*

³⁶ A. Olukoju. “Actors and Institutions in Urban Politics in Nigeria: Agege (Lagos) Since the 1950’s” In Working Papers Nr58

³⁷ A. Cohen. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: p.154*

³⁸ A. Cohen. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in PP.98 - 140*

³⁹ A. Cohen. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in PP.98 - 140*

excluded themselves from the growing masses of Yoruba Muslims in the city. These reasons explained partly the restrictions experienced by the Hausa Muslims in Ibadan⁴⁰.

Islamic Learning Centre in Ibadan under Colonialism

Islamic learning centre is one of the major factors that contributed to the growth and spread of Islam before and after the advent of colonialism in Ibadan. Arabic schools were popular and scattered all over Muslim communities in Yoruba land. These schools were known as *Ile-kewu* among the Yoruba people. H. K. Bidmos captures the description of the schools in the following words:

...the schools are ill organised in the operation of their service. The size of the school is small and the enrolment of student in these schools is few. The students who attend these schools comprise of (sic) young boys and girls are adolescents. In these schools, the teaching method lies in the choral recitation of the Qur'an which often followed the sing song pattern. The method of instruction is as follows, the teacher recites to his pupils the verse to be learnt and they repeat it after him. He does this several times until he is satisfied that they have mastered the correct pronunciation⁴¹.

The above point shows that Islam was not well-organized during the early period of the introduction of the religion to the city. Consequently, this necessitated the need for the establishment of Arabic schools in Ibadan. In the 1930s, the Ibadan Muslim education advance wrote a petition through traditional Olubadan Okunola Abaas Aleshinloye and the council to the resident officer requesting for uninterrupted approval for the Muslim people to be privileged to educate their children in their own school and by their own teacher. In the letter, it was stressed thus;

We prefer that the children should be taught in both English and Arabic just to suit our purpose both religiously and outwardly. The practice of Excluding the Muslim children from Christian schools have started and Become in force (sic) in every school, owing to overcrowding of the people in schools, thousands of Muslim children have since been loafing about the country and the same time the fear of these children may not turn out barbarously when becoming men of age (sic). Necessitated our forming (sic). An organization in the scope of a society, who met and considered it our duty. To petition you for further sanction that these schools may be allowed to be going under any roofing as it is constituted in both English and Arabic languages. Until we may be able to carry out our aim to a certain stage and be well fit to shoulder. Our responsibility of building schools both (sic) educationally and financially⁴².

The content of the above letter confirms that the Muslims in Ibadan sought approval through the Mr L. R. C. Sumner, the district officer in Ibadan to establish formal Islamic educational schools where the Muslim children were to be taught in both Arabic and English Language by Muslim teachers. The use of Arabic language as a medium of instruction in the proposed Islamic schools to be established in Ibadan was targeted at aiding the propagation of Islam and promotion of Islamic culture.

⁴⁰ A. Cohen. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in* PP.98 - 140

⁴¹ H.K. Bidmos, "A Literary Appraisal of the Writings of the Yoruba Ulama", M.A. Dissertation Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan. 1972. Chapter two.

⁴² H.K. Bidmos, "A Literary Appraisal of the Writings of the Yoruba Ulama", M.A. Dissertation Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan. 1972. Chapter two.

The Arabic institutes later founded in Ibadan were established to promote Arabic and Islamic civilization. The forerunners of these schools were mainly the Islamic Missionary Society and the Shams-su-deen society of Ibadan⁴³. The petition confirmed that the Muslim children were discriminated against and excluded from attending Christian schools on the ground that missionary schools were overcrowded⁴⁴. Consequent upon the request of the Muslims for the establishment of Mohammedan school, the Superintendent of Education, Oyo Province wrote to the district officer in Ibadan that the applicant should fill form s.68 so as to have idea of the blueprint on ground for the establishment and staffing of the proposed school⁴⁵. After submission of this form, The superintendent of education, G. B. Williams subsequently informed the district officer that the proposed headmaster of the school was a retrenched government school teacher with a very poor record and that from the information gathered through the application form of s.68, the Ibadan Muslim advance education does not hold any title to the land on which it intended to build the school. He requested to know whether there was any political objection from the Bale and his chiefs before making his recommendation to the director of education⁴⁶.

In response to this, the district officer informed the Superintendent of Education in Ibadan that he did not anticipate any trouble in the establishment of the proposed Mohammedan school. He stressed that he was not aware of any political objection by the Baale and chief of Ibadan to the establishment of Islamic schools. This was confirmed through a written letter dated 3rd March, 1933 from the Bale's office recommending the approval of the proposed Mohammedan school⁴⁷.

The advent of formal Arabic school in Ibadan was anchored on the premise that the method used in imparting Arabic education was crude and slow. The schools wherein such education was received in the past were not properly organised. The teachers were often non-professional; they were mostly traders teaching children of all age groups and gender⁴⁸.

The growth of modern Arabic schools started in Ibadan in 1945 after the end of the Second World War. However, the advent of Christianity and the widespread missionary education among the Yoruba people laid the foundation for the establishment of modern Arabic schools similar to the western form of education. Also, the continued resistance of Muslim parents and Islamic teachers against western education, which they claimed facilitated the conversion of their children to Christianity, partly explained the reason for the desire of the Muslim community to establish formal Arabic institutions to cater for their children⁴⁹. Examples of these Muslim schools include Kharashi Memorial Arabic School and Shams – su – udil - islamiyah Arabic School in Ibadan. In addition facilities similar to those in Western-oriented schools were made available. Such provision included uniform, furniture for the teachers and the students, organised examinations, salaries for the teachers and administrative staff, report cards issued and holidays.

In addition, definite duration and stages of Arabic education were introduced⁵⁰. These stages included *Ibtidai* (primary), *Idadi* (preparatory secondary school) and *Thanawi* (secondary school). Each stage had a number of years attached to it. For example, in some of the schools, pupils spent three or four years in Ibtidai, two or three years in Idadi, and three or four years in Thanawi⁵¹. The standard and quality of Arabic education in Ibadan were measured by the level of proficiency at which the students could speak and write Arabic language⁵². Parrinder observed that the non-Muslim converts to Islam who were knowledgeable in Arabic conducted open-air preaching campaigns against the non-Muslim in Ibadan. This most frequently happened during the Ramadan month long fast, when itinerant Muslim preachers were seen on the streets expounding their faith⁵³.

After the emergence of formal Arabic in Ibadan, more and more people continued to accept the Islamic religion as a way of life⁵⁴. L. Sanneh rightly asserts that the Islamic influence was noticeable in the schools in the authoritative ways of ensuring Islamic daily worship within the school environs⁵⁵. The teachers inflicted corporal punishment on students who

⁴³ N A I. Letter from the Ibadan Muslim Education Advance Central Mosque to the Baale and Council. This document is archived in the National Archives, Ibadan . Ibadan Division 1/3. 1930-1947.

⁴⁴ N A I. Letter from the Ibadan Muslim Education Advance Central Mosque .

⁴⁵ N A I. Letter from the Ibadan Muslim Education Advance Central Mosque .

⁴⁶ N A I. Letter from the Ibadan Muslim Education Advance Central Mosque

⁴⁷ N A I. Letter from the Ibadan Muslim Education Advance Central Mosque

⁴⁸ H.K. Bidmos, "A Literary Appraisal of the Writings of the Yoruba Ulama"

⁴⁹ A.A. Oladiti. "Islamic Literacy and Cultural Influence in Ibadan: c. 1945 – 1995". Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. University of Ibadan. (2010).

⁵⁰ A.A. Oladiti. "Islamic Literacy and Cultural Influence in Ibadan: c. 1945 – 1995

⁵¹ A.A. Oladiti. "Islamic Literacy and Cultural Influence in Ibadan: c. 1945 – 1995

⁵² A.A. Oladiti. "Islamic Literacy and Cultural Influence in Ibadan: c. 1945 – 1995

⁵³ E.G. Parrinder. "Islam and West African Indigenous Religion".

⁵⁴ L. Sanneh. *The Crown and the Turban: Muslim and West African Pluralism*. Boulder. West View Press., p. 142.

⁵⁵ L. Sanneh. *The Crown and the Turban: Muslim and West African Pluralism*. Boulder. West View Press., p. 142.

refused to attend Arabic classes or perform regular *salat* (prayer). The students were often punished by being asked to fetch firewood, water, working on the teacher's farm, and washing the clothes of the children and wives of the Muslim teachers⁵⁶. The teachers also exercised their authority and power by flogging the students who refused to prostrate during Islamic prayers. These actions were effective because the students were reluctantly engaged in these services to acquire Arabic education⁵⁷. The Muslim preachers from Northern Nigeria thought that corporal punishment was a means of earning *barakah* (blessing) from Allah (God). However, this punishment was actually a means of imposing Islamic culture on the young children and even adults⁵⁸. Discipline in the modern Arabic schools was meant to ensure students steadfastness and obedience to mundane and spiritual laws guiding the Islamic religion. The students are often beaten when they make simple mistakes like improper pronunciation of Arabic words during class sessions.⁵⁹

Two formal Arabic schools were established under colonial rule. These were Kharashi Arabic schools and Shamsu-dil Islamiyyah in 1958. These schools were established to expand the knowledge of Arabic language and Islamic culture among the Muslim converts and children in a well arranged manner. These schools were the forerunner of modern Arabic schools in Ibadan⁶⁰. At this point, the question may be raised, what aspect of Islamic education contributed to the growth of Islam under colonial rule in Ibadan?⁶¹. According to J. Hunwick, the knowledge about Islam is derived from the "The Book" popularly known among Muslims as the Qur'an. The Qur'an is regarded among Muslim as the verbatim revelation from God and represents the summation of the divine will for mankind. It is for this reason that the Qur'an has been held to be *ipso facto* untranslatable⁶². J. Hunwick's observation attests to the fundamental point on how Islamic education facilitated the growth of Islam in the city. More so, without the knowledge of Islamic teaching through education from the Qur'an (Word of Allah), the *Hadith* (translations and saying of the Holy prophet Muhammad), the practice and worship of Islam may not have been ordered. It is the knowledge acquired through Islamic education that Muslim jurists were able to understand, interpret and explain the verses of the Qur'an to the people who were yet to be Islamized in the practice of the faith⁶³. With the establishment of Islamic learning centres in most parts of the city, knowledge about Islamic ritual worship increased. This informed the popular saying among Yoruba Muslims: "*Imo lo ladini, Ogbon o gbe*" meaning "knowledge is superior to reasoning on religious matters". Through Islamic education, Islam spread to different parts of the city⁶⁴. T. G. O. Gbadamosi, described the schools as *Ile-kewu*, an elementary school where Muslims in Yoruba communities learnt Arabic alphabet; Qur'an and basic principles of Islamic worship were also taught. The schools were mostly attended by young and old people interested in the learning of the simple tenets of Islamic religion. Islamic learning in these schools covered the biographies of Muslim prophets, principles of Islamic prayers and the general orientation about the Islamic way of life⁶⁵. T. G. O. Gbadamosi has described the schools as the live-wire for sustaining the life of the Muslim community⁶⁶. Similarly, under colonial rule, E.G. Parrinder⁶⁷ and J. D. Y. Peel⁶⁸ noted that prestige, education and modernism were factors that led to the growth of Islam in Ibadan. The new religion, i.e., Islam was seen as *olaju*, "a religion of civilization," that is new within the metropolis of Ibadan. In the opinion of M. Crowther, this new religion facilitated the change of orientation and religious

⁵⁶ L. Sanneh. *The Crown and the Turban: Muslim and West African Pluralism*. Boulder. West View Press., p. 142.

⁵⁷ L. Sanneh. *The Crown and the Turban: Muslim and West African Pluralism*.

⁵⁸ L. Sanneh. *The Crown and the Turban: Muslim and West African Pluralism*.

⁵⁹ L. Sanneh. *The Crown and the Turban: Muslim and West African Pluralism*.

⁶⁰ A.A. Oladiti. "Islamic Literacy and Cultural Influence in Ibadan: c. 1945 – 1995". Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. University of Ibadan. (2010).

⁶¹ A.A. Oladiti. "Islamic Literacy and Cultural Influence in Ibadan: c. 1945 – 1995". Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. University of Ibadan. (2010).

⁶² J. Hunwick. *Literacy and Scholarship in Muslim West African in the Pre-colonial Period*. Nsukka Midwest Newspaper. 1974., pp. 8 – 21

⁶³ J. Hunwick. *Literacy and Scholarship in Muslim West African in the Pre-colonial Period*

⁶⁴ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba. 1804 – 1908*. London: Longman Press: 1978., p. 176.

⁶⁵ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba. 1804 – 1908*

⁶⁶ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba. 1804 – 1908*

⁶⁷ E.G. Parrinder. "Islam and West African Indigenous Religion".

⁶⁸ J.D.Y. Peel, "Olaju: A Yoruba Concept of Development". *Journal of Development Studies*. Vol. 14, No 2. 1978

life of the people by abandoning their traditional belief for the sake of Islam⁶⁹. At this juncture, it is necessary to ask the question, how did modernism contribute to the growth of Islam?

“Modernism” for the purpose of this paper is conceptualized as the acquisition of a new foreign language (Arabic) through educational awareness, wearing a foreign dress like the *Jalamia* for men and *Hijab* for women and abandoning participation of in traditional festivals and sacrifices commonly found among the indigenous Yoruba religion⁷⁰ With the advent of western education among Muslims in 1896, the progress and advancement of Islam in the city took a new turn in the twentieth century as a result of new and enabling socio-economic and political structured. By 1959, the number of mosques, which helped to consolidation Islamic religion have increased exponentially but exact number of the mosques was uncertain⁷¹ Although, there is no reliable statistics on the population of Muslims when Ibadan was founded in 1829; however, T. G. O. Gbadamosi has noted that the population was small when compared to the figure of 275, 110 reported in the 1953⁷². It may be difficult to state with precision how accurate the exact figure of the population was as at 1953. This was because they were based apparently on questions addressed to individuals or heads of families⁷³ As I have noted elsewhere, Islam was dominantly noticeable among the people. Hardly would you find a community in Ibadan that did not have a mosque or Islamic learning centre during the colonial era⁷⁴.

In addition, Islam contributed in the transformation of traditional religion and faith. The traditional Yoruba faith believed in God as creator or the Supreme Being, assisted by lesser gods, deities and ancestral spirits. Examples of these lesser gods include *Ogun, Sango and Orisa oko*. Polytheism was popular, recognised and patronised in their belief system. The cults of the indigenous religion were structured and tightly organised that neither Islam nor Christianity has made much progress against them⁷⁵. When Islam advanced into Ibadan, the Muslim missionaries through their preaching discouraged the Yoruba Ibadan people from participating in polytheism or in the traditional religious festivals of the city. The belief system of the Yoruba people in Ibadan have been labelled by Muslim preachers as “heathen”, *kufi* (unbelief) or “uncivilized”⁷⁶. During the month long Ramadan fasting season, Muslim missionaries conducted preaching campaign to persuade and change the indigenous orientation of the Ibadan people by espousing their faith. Occasionally, Muslim chiefs in the town sent for such preachers and paid their expenses. These Muslim preachers doubled as traders and teachers to bring more advanced Islamic teaching in order to enliven the rather debased forms of Islam that existed in most parts of Muslims-dominated communities in Nigeria⁷⁷.

The activities of the Ahmadiyyah Muslim Jamaat have been described by H. J. Fisher as the most obvious and active Muslim missionaries found in Ibadan⁷⁸. The Ahmadiyyah group is believed to have migrated from **India** into Nigeria in **1921** and from there spread into Ghana and Sierra Leone⁷⁹. The Ahmadiyyahs were very active in the dissemination of Islam through active literary writings in public newspapers espousing their views on Islamic doctrines. Also western education and propaganda became popular among the group claiming converts among Christians and other non-Yoruba Muslims through preachings and writings. **The Ahmadiyyah movement in Islam was established in 1889 by its founder Ghulam Ahmad.**⁸⁰

According to Afolabi A.B., Islam did not only bring Arabic language but also a tradition of scholarship and historiography which to this day remain a source of information and inspiration to scholars and students of Nigerian history⁸¹. Similarly, Oyekola, observed that through the influence of Islam, there was cultural contact, the adaptation of new ideas

⁶⁹ M. Crowther. *West Africa under Colonial Rule*. London: Hutchinson & Company. 1968., p. 5.

⁷⁰ E.G. Parrinder. “Islam and West African Indigenous Religion”.

⁷¹ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. “The Establishment of Western Education among Muslims in Nigeria, 1896 – 1926”.

⁷² E.G. Parrinder. “Islam and West African Indigenous Religion”.

⁷³ E.G. Parrinder. “Islam and West African Indigenous Religion”.

⁷⁴ A.A. Oladiti. “Islamic Literacy and Cultural Influence in Ibadan: c. 1945 – 1995”

⁷⁵ J. Awolalu. *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. 1979.

⁷⁶ A.A. Oladiti. “Islamic Literacy and Cultural Influence in Ibadan: c. 1945 – 1995”

⁷⁷ E.G. Parrinder. “Islam and West African Indigenous Religion”.

⁷⁸ H.J. Fisher. *Ahmadiya: A Study in contemporary Islam on The West African Coast*. London: Oxford University Press: 1963. P.3

⁷⁹ www.alislam.org/library/history/ahmadiyyah/56.html

⁸⁰ For details on this, see Fisher. *Ahmadiya: A Study in contemporary Islam on The West African Coast*. Throughout the period covered in this study, the Ahmadiyya movement were not regarded as non-Muslims. In 1974, other Muslim group regarded the movement as unorthodox.

⁸¹ A.B. Afolabi. “Islam and the Minaret: A Review of Arabic Writings and Early Nigerian History before the Nineteenth Century”. *Journal of Islam and the Modern Age*. Vol XXIX, No. 4. 1998. Pp. 319 – 329.

which lead to a new religio-social order, assimilation and dualism, which with time, change to parallelism. The influence of Arabic language became widely used in commercial, educational, religious and social interaction.⁸²

Muslims dislike using the term Mohammedanism to describe the religion of Islam because it carries the implication of the worship of Mohammed as a more than human figure-- thus suggestive of polytheism. Islam is one of the world's religions that have not been named after their founders like Christianity, Buddhism and Judaism⁸³. The area where Islam is construed as a religion of peace is the giving of charity support to those who are in need, maintaining a supportive community within and outside the religious faith of Islam, linking family ties and social relationship with one another and avoiding unholy acts⁸⁴.

The Imamate in Ibadan

The Imamate in colonial Ibadan was central to the development of Islam in the city. The Imam is recognized as the spiritual head of the Muslims, saddled with the responsibility to lead prayers and insure compliance with Islamic law, principles and tradition⁸⁵. The Imam directed the affairs of the various Islamic associations in matters relating to inheritance, Islamic marriage, ritual bath for new converts, and settlement of dispute. The Imamate was a permanent and institutionalized office which had both religious and political significance⁸⁶. Among the Yoruba and Hausa Muslim communities, the Imam conducted the traditional congregational prayers, *Jumat* and *Id* prayers held during the feast of *id- el Fitri* and *Id- el -Kabir* annually⁸⁷. Usually, the *Onitafsiro* possess considerable knowledge of Islam and other related studies on the canons of Islamic jurisprudence⁸⁸. Conferment of such titles as *Balogun* was based on age, gender, and status within the Muslim community. In addition, the *Balogun* was expected to have virtues of leadership qualities and good behaviour⁸⁹.

The Hausa Muslim established the position of the Imam of Ibadan. The first Imams of Ibadan namely, Abdullah Gunnugun and Uthman Abubakr Basumu were from Katsina in Northern Nigeria. The exact date of the appointment of the first Imam in Ibadan was uncertain. However, available records did not give information about it. It is believed that he lived as Imam between 1829 – 1839. This shows that in the early stage of the establishment of Islam among the Yoruba people, the Hausa Muslims were recognised by the Yoruba in respect to their knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of the religious office⁹⁰. In addition, this confirms the claim that in terms of knowledge about Islamic theology, the Hausa Muslims were well versed than their Yoruba counterpart⁹¹. The implication of these is that the Yoruba have a high level of religious tolerance and how much they accepted the concept of equality and universality of the single community of all Muslim believers⁹².

As the knowledge in Islam increased among the Yoruba Muslim, the practice of the Hausa Muslims leading ritual prayer was no longer acceptable by the Ibadan Muslims⁹³. Consequently, the appointment of Yoruba native as Imam by the Olubadan in Council lead to the secession of the Hausa Muslim to have a separate central mosque in the outskirts of the town in Sabo. It is important to mention that the Yoruba Muslims in Ibadan were in no way less orthodox or less learned than the Hausa, a few Hausa Muslim⁹⁴. Besides, the activity of the Imam and the influence of the class of Muslim locally known as "Alfa" swayed a large number of people to Islam through their teaching, preaching and healing of the sick. It is necessary to provide explanation on the role of the Alfa as they were significant group among Yoruba Muslims. The Islamic clerics, otherwise known as Alfa, were very significant in the organisation, expansion and development of Muslim culture in Ibadan.

⁸² A.G. Oyekola. Tenor Discourse in English Medium in Selected Muslim Sermons in South- Western Nigeria. In Akin Odeunmi et al (eds.) *Styles in Religious Discourse*. Germany. Lambert Academic publishers: 2011. Pp214-225.

⁸³ Oral interview, Mr Taofeek Yekeen, Akanran, Ibadan, June 2010

⁸⁴ Oral Interview, Mr Balogun Bashiru, Ibadan, August 2010.

⁸⁵ Oral Interview, Mr Mutiu Amuda, Ibadan, Oje, Ibadan, August 2010.

⁸⁶ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. *The Growth of Islam Among The Yoruba 1804-1908*. p.37-38

⁸⁷ T.G.O.Gbadamosi. The Imamate Question among Muslims in Nigeria". *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol. VI, No. 2., 1972 pp. 229 -237

⁸⁸ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. *The Growth of Islam Among The Yoruba 1804-1908*. p.37-38

⁸⁹ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. *The Growth of Islam Among The Yoruba 1804-1908*. p.37-38

⁹⁰ A. Cohen. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns*. California: University of California Press. 1973. pp. 102 – 103.

⁹¹ A. Cohen. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa*:

⁹² O.B. Lawuyi. "Islam, Economy and Political identity: An insight into Yoruba Religious Identifications of the Yoruba" *Ife Annals of The Institute of African Studies*. No. 6, 1995.pp.4-15

⁹³ A. Cohen. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa*:

⁹⁴ this statement is credited to Abner Cohen in his private interview with the Hausa Mallam on the subject.

They assisted in the provision of Islamic religious teachings on issues relating to good behaviour (*adab*), faith (*tawhid*), advanced Islamic learning (*Ilm*), and encouraged interpersonal relations among families and peaceful community relations⁹⁵.

Four categories of Alfa exists, depending on the interest of cleric. This includes, Imam or Judges (*Alikalī* or *Qadi*), teachers (Mallam) and preachers (*Onitafsiru*) and *Jalabi* Mallams popularly known as Al-hishaby in Arabic. The *Al-hishaby* also known as *alfa onijalabi* makes a series of double or single marks in a tray of sand and then interprets them. In other cases, verses of the Quran are written on a writing-board in ink, which is then washed off and drunk by a client.⁹⁶ These *Alfas* undoubtedly contributed in shaping the religious orientation of the Yoruba Muslims towards Islamic culture. According to Gbadamosi, the expansion of the Islamic community was facilitated through the efforts of these *Alfas* who participated actively in the conversion of influential Yoruba chiefs and custodians of traditional faith into Islam. Some of the key people in Ibadan who embraced Islam were Baale Shittu, Baale Opeagbe, Baale Fijabi and Sumonu Apampa⁹⁷.

Examples of notable Alfa that specialized in teaching and preaching of Islam in Ibadan were Abu Bakr Ibn Qifu (1871 - 1872), Alfa Abdul Salam Oke-Koto (1905 - 1919), Alfa Harun Matanmi (1922 - 1934), Alfa Salami Alikinla (1940s - 1950s), and Alfa Sanusi Katibi (1950 - 1959) to mention a few. Alfa Ahmad al-Rufai b. Bello, was appointed the first Mufti of Yoruba Imams and Malam in Ibadan⁹⁸. Similarly, the contributions of these Alfa to scholarship were significant to Arabic writings in the town. For instance, some of these scholars wrote poems, poetry and aspects of the history of the development of Muslim community in Ibadan⁹⁹. Detail compilations of some of the body of literature written by Ibadan Muslims are available at the Centre for Arabic Documentation (CAD) at the University of Ibadan's Institute of African Studies.¹⁰⁰

The expansion of the Muslim community transformed the desire for a purposeful leadership of the Muslim *Ummah*. The Imam under the leadership of Alhaji Muhammed Ajagbe (1935-1940) wrote a petition on behalf of the Muslim community on 7 June, 1938, through the Olubadan Okunola Abaas Alesinloye and traditional council, the district officer to the Honourable Resident of Oyo Province requesting for the appointment of a Muslim judge knowledgeable in the Qur'an as a leader of the native court in Ibadan¹⁰¹. **This was resisted by the Olubadan and traditional council with a counter petition to the district officer opposing the approval of a Muslim judge in the native court**¹⁰². **The Olubadan and traditional council stressed, thus in the following words:**

We have to inform you that we do not agree with the requests of these Chief Mallams because (sic) as from time immemorial none of these mallams has ever been a member of native court in Ibadan, and as such we are not of the opinion that it should now be established. If this is conceded then it will be a precedent for other religionists for similar requests and as the Ibadan population is mainly Yoruba, it is proper to maintain that only Yoruba laws and customs be observed. Besides there are Mohammedan judges in all our courts, we believe this is a sufficient representation for our Mohammedan citizens¹⁰³.

This showed that the native courts in Ibadan resisted the imposition of Islamic judge in the organisation and administration of native court system. This indicates that Ibadan people strongly opposed the influence of Islamic legal system on their traditional legal cultural identity. Furthermore, the central Mosque was rebuilt after its destruction in 1837 by Oluyole, a ruler of Ibadan between (1836 - 1850). By 1850, Olubadan Opeagbe gave permission for the rebuilding of the mosque. The Mosque was regarded as an important place of worship among the Muslims. It is a place specifically designed for the adherents of Islam to engage in ritual worship in the canonical five daily prayers and the congregation prayer (*Salatul*

⁹⁵ Oral Interview Alhaji Abbass Shittu, Irefin, Ibadan August, 2010.

⁹⁶ M.A Ajetumobi. "Islamic Scholars of Ilorin and Their Place in Yorubaland" *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs Journal*. Vol.12, no.1, pp.135-147. The statement on How Alfa in Ibadan performs their responsibility was obtained through Oral Interview, Alhaji Ashafa Oloyede, Kudeti, Ibadan August, 2010.

⁹⁷ R. Watson. "Murder and the Political Body in the Early Colonial Ibadan". *Africa*. Vol. 70, No 1, 2000. .pp. 25 - 45

⁹⁸ R.D. Abubakre and S.Reichmuth. "Arabic writing Between Global and Local Culture: Scholars and Poets in Yorubaland" (SouthWestern Nigeria). *Research in African Literatures*. Vol. 28, No. 3, 1997. Pp.190-191.

⁹⁹ R.D. Abubakre and S.Reichmuth. "Arabic writing Between Global and Local Culture: Scholars and Poets in Yorubaland" (SouthWestern Nigeria). *Research in African Literatures*. Vol. 28

¹⁰⁰ I.A.Jimoh "Arabic Manuscripts of Ibadan Scholars". Monograph Centre For Arabic Documentation, Institute of African Studies. (Unpublished)

¹⁰¹ NAI. Oyo Prof. 247/101 Petition report from the Olubadan the appointment of Muslim judge in Ibadan NativeCourt.

¹⁰² NAI. Oyo Prof. 247/101 Petition report from the Olubadan the appointment of Muslim judge

¹⁰³ NAI. Oyo Prof. 247/101 Petition report from the Olubadan the appointment of Muslim judge

Jumuah) as well as *Eid* prayers in the central Mosque and praying ground respectively. As T. G. O. Gbadamosi has noted, the population of Ibadan Muslims increased tremendously during the reign of Bale (king) Situ (1914-1925)¹⁰⁴.

The central Mosque in Ibadan was rebuilt in 1850. The mosque is the entity under which the organization of the Imam and the affairs of the Muslim in the town are coordinated. Between 1921 and 1924, an attempt was made by the Ibadan Muslim community to extend and enlarge the Mosque premises to accommodate the steady rise in the increase of the Muslim population in the town willing to attend the weekly congregational prayer of (*Salatul Jumaah*). The sponsors of the renovation and expansion of the Mosque were the late Chief Salami Agbaje, Oba Okunola Abbas Aleshinloye and a host of others¹⁰⁵. Oba Okunola Abbas Aleshinloye, the king of Ibadan between 1930 and 1946 made significant contribution to the development of Islam in the city. It was through his influence, personality and fame that the Muslim community was able to acquire more plots of land for the building of the central Mosque as well as the present Agodi Eid prayer ground that is still being used for the annual Eid prayer¹⁰⁶. Throughout the colonial period covered in this study, eleven successive Imams emerged. Of all these only three were indigenes while the remaining eight were non-indigenes of Ibadan. This attest to the fact that the early Muslims in Ibadan were dominated by migrant settlers from northern part of Nigeria, Hausa people in particular, who migrated into Ibadan for security of their lives, economic prosperity and teaching of Islamic polemical doctrines¹⁰⁷.

The Interaction of Islam and other Religions in Ibadan

The interaction of Islam and other religions in Ibadan is also another important issue of focus under the colonial rule. Prior to the emergence of the two foreign religions (Islam and Christianity) in Ibadan, the Yoruba people had their own traditional religion. It is popularly known as the *Orisa* or *Ifa* religion. Its adherents believe in one God (*Olorun* or *Olodumare*), who manifests his essence in variety of spirits and natural phenomena. It is generally believed among the people that *Olodumare* is worshipped through various *Orisa* (deities) who control these spirits and natural manifestations¹⁰⁸. According to J.F.A. Ajayi¹⁰⁹ and N.A. Fadipe¹¹⁰ each individual, family or society has its own *Orisa* (deity) which was worshipped and deified. J.F.A. Ajayi describes the *Orisa* as the minister of the supreme God, who is a creator, the final arbiter of heavenly and worldly affairs, the Omniscient, Immortal and Pure and the source of all benefits to mankind. Among the Yoruba people, numerous *orisas* existed. Their nature and origin are varied. Some are personifications of natural features such as *Sango*, the Oyo divinity of lightning; *Oya*, *Sango's* supposed wife identified with thunderstorm; *Orisa Oko*, identifies with the forest; *Ogun* the god of iron, hunting and war; and *Yemoja* who is connected to the goddess of river¹¹¹.

In Ibadan, Islam, Christianity and traditional religion co-existed and influenced one another. The interaction of these religions was mutual and reciprocal. The three religions believe in God as the creator of all things and preached peace and stability¹¹². They had days of festivals and special ceremonies to celebrate and relate with one another through the exchange of food and gift items. All these gave meaning and cohesiveness to Ibadan as a community and strength to the religious system. Examples of these festivals include the *Egungun* festival, *Oke'badan* festival, Eid-el-fitri and Eid-el-Kabir, Easter and Christmas festivals¹¹³.

Similarly, Muslims in Ibadan adapted politico-religious titles of the Yoruba in their organizational structures. These Islamic titles for political office holders among the Yoruba were borrowed from the indigenous traditional customary religious practices. The adaptation of Yoruba political titles to the growth of Islam in the town was deemed necessary to celebrate important personalities that had contributed in one way or the other to the development of Islam in the town¹¹⁴.

¹⁰⁴ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba*. 1804 – 1908

¹⁰⁵ I.A. Jimoh. "The Imamate in Ibadan" in T.Babawale *et al.* (eds.) *The Chieftaincy Institution in Nigeria*. Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilizations. 2010., pp. 323 – 341.

¹⁰⁶ I.A. Jimoh. "The Imamate in Ibadan"

¹⁰⁷ I.A. Jimoh. "The Imamate in Ibadan"

¹⁰⁸ J.F.A Ajayi. "Promoting Religious Tolerance and Cooperation in West Africa Region: The Example of Religious Pluralism and Tolerance among the Yoruba, retrieved from www.geovities.com/agboleyorubaschool/sacred

¹⁰⁹ J.F.A Ajayi. "Promoting Religious Tolerance and Cooperation in West Africa Region:

¹¹⁰ N.A. Fadipe. *The Sociology of the Yoruba*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. 1970.

¹¹¹ N.A. Fadipe. *The Sociology of the Yoruba*. P.261

¹¹² N.A. Fadipe. *The Sociology of the Yoruba*.

¹¹³ S.A. Adewale. *The Interaction of Religions in Nigeria*. Lagos: Sudan Commercial Press. 1988., pp 10 – 12

¹¹⁴ H.O. Danmole. "Religious Encounter in Southwestern Nigeria: The Domestication of Islam among the Yoruba". In J.K. Olupona and Terry Rey (eds.). *Orisa Devotion as World Religion: The Globalization of Yoruba Religious Culture*. Wisconsin University Press., pp. 202 – 235.

These people were mainly traders and business merchants who are patrons, of the religion of Islam. These categories of Yoruba Muslims are influential, wealthy and knowledgeable in Islamic doctrines. Islamic titles are regarded among the people as a social and religious honour within the community. Examples of some of the Yoruba political titles that were borrowed with the contact to Islam include the title “*Baba Ogun*” meaning “leader of war” now adapted in Islam to mean “*Baba Adini*” meaning “father of religion”. Others include *Balogun* (the warrior) to mean *Balogun Adini* (warrior of religion) and *Seriki* (junior warrior in the battle field) to *Seriki Musulumi*, i.e., (the warriors that protect Islam from attack)¹¹⁵. According to Danmole, almost every aspect of social life of the Yoruba Muslim is affected by Yoruba culture. Just as celibacy is unacceptable to Yoruba traditional society, it has no place in Islam. This shows the relationship that both Islam and traditional religion regarded marriage as an important milestone in the life of every person¹¹⁶.

Furthermore at this juncture, it is instructive to note with examples, the relationship Islam had with Christianity during the colonial periods. One of the most important relationships Christianity had with Islam was the opportunity for Muslim children to have western education through the missionary schools established by the Christian missions of the Anglican, Methodist and Baptist churches which proliferated within the city¹¹⁷.

In addition, G. A. Akinola observed that Christianity made social welfare services an important component of its missionary activities that both Muslims and adherents of indigenous faith enjoyed. The Christian missionary agents provided schools, health institutions including centres for rehabilitation of outcasts like lepers, the deaf and dumb. All these assisted as a measure of reforms to social development in the town. Both adherents of Islam and Christianity affirm that their religious orientations are ordained by God. The acceptance to these two alien religions (Christianity and Islam) was largely because of materialistic consideration and meeting the challenges of human need. Indeed, the sacred literature of both Islam and Christianity were regarded as fetish endowed with magical powers for solution to worldly problems¹¹⁸. Muslims and Christians believed that both the Bible and the Quran possess spiritual powers for healing and spiritual cleansing.¹¹⁹. However, the indigenous religion had no similar literature which served as a symbol of power.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that colonialism aided the spread and consolidation of Islam. The colonial master’s tolerated freedom of worship among new converts, maintenance of religious tolerance among the adherents of Islam, Christianity, and traditional faith. The sustenance of Islam was achieved with the support given to the Muslims in Ibadan to establish modern Arabic schools where Islamic and Arabic education would be part of the curriculum. The colonial government maintained regulation and control of the structure, curriculum and teachers of the schools. By this action, the colonial government was able to reduce the imbalance of western education among Muslims and Christians in Ibadan. Under colonialism, Islam made appreciable and steady progress in terms number of adherents. Besides, much concern about the welfare of the Muslims was encouraged and tolerance towards all shades of religious opinion was preserved. With the patronage of new converts and the advancement of Islam in the town, the Imamship system was introduced to centralize the organization and communal development of Islam in the town. This greatly transformed the leadership structure of the Muslim community.

¹¹⁵ H.O. Danmole. “Religious Encounter in South -Western Nigeria: The Domestication of Islam among the Yoruba”.

¹¹⁶ H.O. Danmole. “Religious Encounter in South-Western Nigeria: The Domestication of Islam among the Yoruba”.

¹¹⁷ T.G.O. Gbadamosi. *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba*. 1804 – 1908.

¹¹⁸ G.A. Akinola. “The Relevance of African Nigeria’s Adopted Alien Religion”. Unpublished Manuscripts. Paper Presented at the Staff/Student Postgraduate seminar/ workshop. University of Ibadan. (2010).

¹¹⁹ G.A. Akinola. “The Relevance of African Nigeria’s Adopted Alien Religion”