

The Role of Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilori toward Educating Nigerian People

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Abstract: - The aim of this study is to evaluate the contribution of sheik Adam Abdullahi Al-ilori as a scholar in western Nigeria to the growth and development of Arabic and Islamic education while by simplifying the teaching of Arabic language to Yoruba community. This paper cast a retrospect at the various roles and contribution given by sheik in promoting and building schools across the ensile Yoruba. Among the scholar that sheik learn from are sheik Salih Asmiyobo, sheik Adam Namu'aji , Nasir Kabara Sheik Muhammad Alim. therefore this paper aims at presenting the educational philosophy of this seasoned scholar as a way of reclaiming the teaching of Arabic language identity that has been diluted among the contemporary Yoruba community and Nigeria in general.

Keywords: Biography, writings, Sheikh Adam, Nigeri and people.

I. INTRODUCTION

All praises be to God the Lord of the worlds who said :By Amen whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the remembrance of Allah, nor from regular prayer, nor from the practice of regular charity: their (only) fear is for the Day when hearts and eyes will be transformed (in a world wholly new),-

That Allah may reward them according to the best of their deeds, and add Even more for them out of His grace: for Allah doth provide for those whom He will, without measure¹.

Peace and blessings belong to leader of the messengers; the Prophet Muhammad son of Abdullahi who said: "The best of the people is whose life-span prolonged and his work became graceful²" his family and companions.

After that, how useful it is for a person to quote from the rays of his rich heritage, by exploiting and exploring the dimension of personalities who played on active role in enriching that heritage, and then proceed to search for the contributions of his predecessors and most importantly to find the wonderful example and role model to follow those ancestors and trace their footsteps.

Nigerian scholars, nowadays and previously, have been deeply influenced by Islamic culture. First of all, they have adopted Islam as a way of life in political and social situations. This influence is quietly obvious regarding their deep concern with Islamic education. Their reliance on Islamic culture marked the emergence of the great scholars who actively sought to revive the Islamic heritage by teaching, writing and expresses valuable ideas and opinions aimed at social reform.

Among the prominent scholars in twentieth century, the flourishing era was Waziri Junaidu, Nasir Kabara and Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi and many others. From these elites was Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Ilorin who served Nigerian people as a teacher and preacher. This genius has assumed educationally a significant and valuable results in this field. The article aimed to shed light on the contribution of this genius to national development and education of the citizens.

The centre of the paper p after the introduction revolves around the two points as follows:

- A personal biography of Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Ilorin.
- Sheikh's role in educating Nigerian people.

II. BIOGRAPHY OF SHEIKH ADAM ABDULLAHI ILORIN

He is Sheikh the erudite excellent and anchorite, Adam Abdullahi, son of Abdul Baqi son of Habibullah son of Abdullahi nicknamed Al-Ilori. His father is from Yoruba offspring. His great grandfather came from "Owele" and stayed in Ilorin during the era of Emir Abdussalam Salih. But his mother, A'isha, her lineage ends. They were both born from good, noble, pious, knowledge and godly attested family. His mother was king of Wasa's daughter in Benin Republic. His father get married to her, he lived there and gave birth to Sheikh Adam on Friday year 1340 AH equivalent to 1917 AD³.

His Upbringing

Sheikh grew in the hands of his parents, that is he grew in an educationally oriented family. He started learning basic Arabic and Islamic knowledge from his father. His father usually go with him on his trips especially for visiting scholars. He then met Sheikh Salih Asniyobo and learnt some books from him such as: Al-Hukmu Al-Ulawiyyah, Manzumat Zuhd, al-Ishnawiyya, Burdatu Al-Busariy etc.

Sheikh then joined Ma'ahadu Al-Imam Umar Al-Abhajji and further his studies from him. And after that he stayed with Sheikh Adam Nama'aji, Kano and learn a lot form him. In a nutshell, Sheikh Ilori learnt from a number of Arab and non-Arab scholar Nasir Kabara, Kano and Sheikh Muhammad al-Amin, a Syrian etc. Finally, Sheikh travelled to Egypt and joined al-Azhar University. He learnt a lot there and he wrote examinations and acquired a certificate equivalent to

Secondary School certificate that allowed him to teach, preach and write books.

Finally, he was on top of teaching, writing and preaching until his reputation became widespread. He became one of the unique personalities that Nigerians will never forget his academic activities and achievements⁴.

His traces

Sheikh Ilori left behind a large amount of academic traces that contributed in promoting Arabic and Islamic teaching in Nigeria in particular and African continent in general. These traces can be compared in to two domains.

III. FORMATION AND IMPLEMENTATION DOMAIN

Sheikh established several adult and children Arabic schools in different areas of Yoruba land. This is one of the factors that lead to the spread of Arabic education in those areas. His effort was not limited in establishing schools but he established an Arabic and Islamic learning centre in 1905 AD. The outcome of the center is spreading Islamic religious knowledge and Arabic language in those areas. He also begun to send delegations from Yoruba lands to Arab countries to further their studies and specialize in Arabic language and Islamic studies. One of the outcome of this effort is having a large number of educated people in Arabic language⁵.

Writing Domain

Sheikh Ilori was among the scholars who were interested in enrichment of Arabic Libraries in Nigeria. The books in the libraries were excellent in this domain. The writings consist of: Monotheism (Tauheed), Jurisprudence, Transactions and Arts. He also wrote numerous books in Arabic literature, the History of Arabic literature and the criticism of Arabic literature. The other books were in Linguistic field and they were estimated about thirty books. These are some of them⁶.

He wrote in Monotheism “Sharh Jauharat al-Tauheed” while in the History and Translations he wrote a book called: ‘Nasim al-Sabd fi Akhbar al-Islam wa al-Ulamā fi Bilad Yoruba’ and ‘Lamahal al-Bullur fi Mashahir Ulamā Ilorin. And also in Arabic Literature he wrote; ‘Misbah al-Dirasat al-Adabiyya fi al-Diyar al-Naijeriyya. In Islamic Da’awa (mission) he wrote ‘Tarikh al-Dāwat al-Islamiyya’ and a book titled: ‘Addin Annasiha’.

In a nutshell, definitely the writing of this man indicate that he is a big encyclopedia in terms of Arabic and Islamic education in such a way that the history of Arabic and Islamic heritage in Nigeria will not be complete without him⁷.

His Demise (Death)

Sheikh Adam Ilori died on Sunday, the 3rd May 1992 AD. (May his soul rest in perfect peace) at the age of seventy-five he spent serving for knowledge and spread of Islamic education. May Allah, the Almighty forgive him and have mercy on him, and paradise his final abode! oh our pious great

scholar, I tried my best toward highlighting the way to the gratification of Allah!! There’s nothing you can do for a person than to mention his good actions:

إنما المرء حديث بعده * فكن حديثاً حسناً عن وعي

Indeed, about the account of a person after his death, it should be of a good account for the narrator⁸.

IV. HIS ROLE IN EDUCATING NIGERIAN CITIZENS

Teaching and Writing:

Sheikh paid attention by putting the books according to the level of the students in his environment pertaining Arabic and Islamic studies. As he paid more attention in the teaching methods, knowing that giving knowledge without much thinking will not deliver the target of sending advanced knowledge that will bring about the continuous development. Ibn Khaldoun discussed about the level of learning in his lifetime and this attributed to the ignorance due to lack of suitable method of teaching. He was saying: “We witnessed many teachers whom we realized that they are unfamiliar with the teaching methods and this brought about a bad teaching.

One of the great efforts that Sheikh did for achieving his goal was that he simplified teaching of Arabic language to Yoruba community by developing the pupil’s ability on written and conversational expression in a simple and accurate manner. This appear in setting the Arabic language curriculum by adopting what is called: “Traditional literal method”. And this method is among the oldest methods. It concentrates on learning language heritage from advanced text like the Holy Qur’an and the tradition of the Holy Prophet. Then the original literal heritage. This method excelled on learning the impeccable Arabic rules, analyzing the sentences in grammatical order. In order to achieve this goal, Sheikh tried to look in to the student’s level and what is appropriate for their environments and he wrote a book in “Reading” subject where he composed valuable texts which will provide students with language fluency that they can understand the Arabic grammar by practicing. Among these books is the book titled: “Al-Fawākih al-Saqīṭah”.

Sheikh compiled in this small book selected pieces from different sections that will blaze and boost the students’ knowledge and mastering the Arabic language. A part from “Al-Mutālī’ah” (Reading) Sheikh also wrote other books in grammar, literature and rhetoric such as “Sharhaya Talib al-Irab”, Misbah al-Dirasat al-Adabiyya fi Naijeriya and Durus al-Balaghat al-Arabiyya.

Sheikh said expressing the reason for selecting this method in his writing – which some of the scholars considered it the best method of teaching because it connects the pupil with the reality, ‘we have chosen the method of separating poem, writing and oration with writing and teaching in order to facilitate the pupil in mastering and differentiating the elements of literature, it is an exemplary method and realistic experiment’⁹.

Mission Activity (Da'awa) and Counseling's

Da'awa has two meanings in Islamic teaching:

1. Islam and the message
2. The process of spreading Islam and conveying of the message.

Al-Ilori has given the first meaning in his preaching activity as the meaning of *da'awa* for him is calling the truth to the mankind; to believe that there is only one God, worship him not associating him, following his commands. He applied the second meaning where he considered the conveyance of the God's message to the people in every period and place with methods and manners that suit preached people¹⁰.

Perhaps Sheikh's book titled: "*Addin Annasihah*" is giving the example of his efforts towards the *Da'awa* when he incited Islamic scholars to carry the flag of preaching diligently keeping away from the debris and runs of the world because the (scholars) are the successors of the prophets giving an example of Allah's saying in the Qur'an:

Invite (all) to the way of Thy Lord with wisdom and preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and Most gracious: for Thy knoweth best, who have strayed from His path, and who receive guidance¹¹.

The scholars are the truth – withies of the messengers to the servants of Allah (people) as long as they did not intermingle the ruler and engage into the present life. If they intermingle the sovereign ruler and engage into the present life they definitely betrayed the messengers avoid them and separate away from them¹².

It is worthy mentioning that Sheikh encouraging the people in general and particular to adhere to the traces of the scholars those are zealous to the tradition of prophet Muhammad such as Al-Imam Al-Gazali, Mugili and Usman bin Fodiyo. And what Sheikh concerned most in his *Da'awa* was eradicating innovations (*bidi'a*) and widespread customs in Yoruba land and breach of Prophet's sunnah. Indeed Sheikh wage was against customs and traditions without fear, saying.

It is obvious from these verses that his *da'awa* targeted adherence to the religion of Allah which he has contented for the mankind. It is also a simplification for their needs, fulfillment to their rights, protection to their affairs, safekeeping to their unity, respect to their humanity and a spread to the truth and justice between them¹³.

V. FORMATION OF THE CENTRE

Formation of the Islamic Centre was one of the ways of spreading of Islamic education. Thousands of Nigerians benefited from the centre founded by Sheikh Ilori. Its activities continued in the Yoruba Land. He supervised the activities of the centre since its establishment until his last breath.

The centre was established in Abeokuta 1371 A.H. equivalent to 1952 AD in a rented house with the support of

"*Ansaruddeen*". The contribution was accepted by Muslim Ummah who were interested to educate their children by sending male and female students. The centre remained in Abeokuta for three years then it transferred Agege. The religious activities continued until became a shelter of people craving on Islamic education from different tribes coming from different angles.

After the establishment of the centre, Sheikh encountered a sort of harming and intimidation from the enemies of Islam and envious but he deep-rooted by plan for it giving an instance for Allah's saying in the Holy Qur'an:

Or do ye think that ye shall enter the Garden (of bliss) without such (trials) As came to those who passed away before you? They encountered suffering and adversity, and were so shaken in spirit that Even the Messenger and those of Faith who were with Him cried: "When (will come) the help of Allah." Ah! Verily, the help of Allah is (always) near!¹⁴

The centre played a significant role in fillings the gap for eradicating illiteracy where it produced a large amount of student who became proficient scholars in Arabic and Islamic education as well as western education not only in Yoruba land but in the continent of Africa, Asia and Europe. The centre has many branches and instates not only in Nigeria but in Africa. These branches include: Arabic institute in Ibadan, established in 1957 AD and Centre for Islamic Education, Oke Agude, Ilorin established by Ustaz Yahya Murtala Imam as well as Centre for Islamic Education, Sakitete, Benin Republic.

Sheikh Adam's good job toward the society was commended by remarkable scholars such as: Sheikh Nasir Kabara who said, I do not see him except like he who resurrect the dead bodies, revive the bones of a corpse, is there any other thing to be proud of above who he did in Islamic education in this country. May Allah the Almighty reward him and put his work in the book people who are close to Allah.

A former ambassador of Morocco to Nigeria, Muhammad Al-Sa'adi said; 'Sheikh Adam had struggle in belief trustfulness, and feeling to fulfill his obligation until he was able to establish this centre where the sharia (Law) is studied. It is also a centre of teaching of peaceful Islam for the new generation in West Africa.

I may not exaggerate if I say: The Sheikh Adam's role in literacy resembles the role of An-Nazzam, the founder of Almadrasatu Al-Nizamiyya in Baghdad in second half of the fifth century of hijra and from this school, the Islamiyya schools divided into branches in Muslim countries such as : Balkh, Naysabur, Asfahan, Basra and Marwa.

1. A perfect performance in legal expenditure and a tremendous effort to train the students effectively in order to reach the needed aim.
2. Producing a good individual for himself and a reformer to other people.

3. Providing an academic atmosphere that helps teachers to think, write, invent and continuously add new things in various academic fields.
4. Providing intellectual horizon for the students so that they can acquire new and productive skills from the pass generations, therefore they can be able to transfer their Islamic culture and intellectual heritage to the new generation.
5. Preparing befitted citizens for exercising different services either public or private sectors.

It is worth mentioning that all the above goals had been achieved by the centre as it had graduated ambassador had worked hard in the spread of Arabic and Islamic education not only in Nigeria but in the whole continent of Africa¹⁵.

VI. CONCLUSION

The paper in the above lines discussed a brief presentation of Arabic education by Sheikh Adam Abdulalhi Al-Ilori starting by his biography, growth, study and his work in literacy. The paper also discussed his role in teaching his people his writings which facilitate in comprehension of the subjects. The paper also discussed his preaching for reformation of the society where he began to preach for moral discipline. The paper also clarified the philosophy of Sheikh in Islamic

da'awa that is a complete awareness of the parameters of Islamic education and effort in the integration of Muslim ummah.

The expectation of the lines is to highlight the roles of Sheikh Ilori in teaching the people of Nigeria. I hope base on what I presented that the expectation has been achieved.

ENDNOTES

- [1]. AnNur: 37-38
- [2]. Muhammad bin Isah Attirmizy, Sunanuattirmizy, darsadar, BerutLebaon, no date, bab ma ja'a fi dualilumri.
- [3]. Nuru Atiku and Adam Masama, FannuMaqalalada Al- Ilori, Malam Vol. V111, Novermber: 2011 ADpp: 207.
- [4]. Op-cit, p.207..
- [5]. Agaka, AbdulbaqiShuaibu, al-adabu al-islamiy fi Diwani al-iloriy,pg:9.
- [6]. Dr. Isa Alabiy, A'imalu al-alamatu al-ilory, qira'atunwa talkhesun,pg:26.
- [7]. Kabir Adam, Tudunnufawa, Almadkhalila al-adabilarabiy an-najairiyfilqani al-ishreen al-meladey, book 2, pg: 26
- [8]. Dr. Isa alabiy, pg:27
- [9]. Al-Ilori: Libab Al-Adab, pg: 11
- [10]. Agaka, pg:15
- [11]. AnNahal: 125
- [12]. *Kanzu al-Ummal fi Sunani Al-aqwalwa al-af'al* 204/10.
- [13]. Agaka pg:15
- [14]. Al-Baqarah : 214
- [15]. Agaka, pg: 16