

SHAYKH ABDULRAHEEM AMEENULLAHI ONIWASI AGBAYE

HIS ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARABIC, ISLAMIC STUDIES AND DAʿWAH

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Ramadan Night Sermon by Shaykh AbdulRaheem Ameenullahi Oniwasi Agbaye: The Making of an Image

Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu[*]

Introduction

The Qurʾan is primarily a book of guidance to bring out mankind from the darknesses of disbelief into the light of belief (Qurʾan, 2:2; 14:1). The *ʿaqīdah* (creed) and Shariʿah the Qurʾan ordained are meant to guide. Even in the historical accounts of the message and messengers of Allah and of the rise and fall of civilizations and perished nations it narrated, there are lessons for men of understanding (*laqad kāna fī qaṣaṣihum ʿibrah li-ulī al-albāb*) (Qurʾan, 12:111). On that ground, the scope of *tafsīr* (exegesis of the Qurʾan) and *wasi* (sermon) and the duty of *mufassir* (exegete) and oniwasi (admonisher/preacher) overlap. The *mufassir* is expected to communicate to his audience the guidance of the Qurʾan in ways understandable to them and by doing so he is preaching. Conversely, the oniwasi must always draw on the teachings of the Qurʾan. This is more so when the *wasi* is holding in the month of Ramadan, the month the Qurʾan was revealed. Nevertheless, the mufassir is more focused on the interpretation of the Qurʾan with less reliance on Arabic poems and less digression as compared to oniwasi.

The Ramadan night wasi (sermon) conducted by Shaykh AbdulRaheem Ameenullahi al-Adabi Oniwasi Agbaye (d. 2012) is an example of the convergence and interconnectedness between wasi and tafsīr. The sitting primarily meant to be wasi featured the hallmark of Yoruba oral tafsīr practiced by Yoruba Muslims in Yorubaland.

Shaykh AbdulRaheem Ameenullahi Oniwasi Agbaye was a celebrated Oniwasi-cum-Mufassir in Ilorin and among the Yoruba Muslim community in Nigeria and abroad. Born to a family of knowledge and virtue, AbdulRaheem studied the Qurʾan and elementary Islamic studies from his father. His father,

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Alhaji Ameenullahi was a friend and the first Arọwasi of Shaykh Muhammad al-Jamiʿ al-Labeeb Taj al-Adab (1877-1924). Though senior to Shaykh Kamalu-deen, he voluntarily served as Arọwasi to Shaykh Kamalu-deen as well after the death of Shaykh Taj al-Adab in 1924. His mother, Ruqayyah and paternal great grandmother, Bilqees, were scholars of Islamic learning. After his basic education with his parent, AbdulRahmeen moved to study under Shaykh Muhammad Kamalu-deen Habeebullah al-Adabi (1905–2005), a renowned Yoruba Muslim scholar and the longest reigning oniwasi in Yorubaland living memory, with wasi and tafsīr activities spanning over eight decades. Shaykh Muhammad Kamalu-deen himself was a student of Shaykh Taj al-Adab whom Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilori classified among the third generation of prominent Islamic scholars in Ilorin in terms of their presence and settlement in Ilorin township.[1] Shaykh Taj al-Adab was a prominent Sufi and an itinerant preacher and teacher with significant contributions to Arabic and Islamic learning in Yorubaland and after whom Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye later named a place where his Kamal School of Arabic and Islamic Studies is situated at Foma Babalaje, called "Madīnat al-Shaykh Tāj al-Adab" (the Village of Shaykh Taj al-Adab).

This study examines the Ramadan night sermons delivered by Shaykh AbdulRaheem Ameenullahi Oniwasi Agbaye between the period of 1955 and 2012. Six video tape recordings of Ramadan night sermons delivered between 1987 and 2011 were sampled for analysis. Drawing on the content analysis of wasi video recordings, interviews and participant observation, the study explores the historical development of night sermon in Ramadan at the Ilorin Central Mosque, the wasi circles he benefitted from, the values he championed and the contributions he made to the enduring legacy of wasi tradition and Islamic scholarship in Ilorin and among the Yoruba Muslim community in Nigeria and abroad.

Omolekewu Turned Oniwasi

In the Yoruba speech community of Nigeria, "*kewu*" denotes Islamic learning typically acquired through Arabic, just as "*iwe*" denotes western learning acquired through English. *Omokewu* (*omo* + *kewu*, meaning 'pupil + *Islamic* learning) means student of *Islamic* learning while o*molekewu* (*omo* + *ile* +*kewu*, meaning 'pupil + centre + Islamic learning) refers to the student of Islamic learning centre. Both words may be used interchangeably.

Wasi is a Qurʾanic Arabic loanword (from *waʿẓ,* meaning sermon), over which the oniwasi (*oni* + *wasi*, meaning 'owner' + *wasi* or 'admonisher') presides, as the mufassir presides over the tafsīr sitting. The Qurʾan recognizes wasi as a noble course. It states that Allah (4:58, 66; 10:57; 11:46; 16:90; 24:17; 58:3), His messengers (26:136; 34:46; 4:63), Books (3:138; 4:63; 5:46; 7:145; 11:120;

24:34) and righteous servants (31:13) delivered wasi to humankind. Wasi is an important vocation for Muslim scholars, particularly in the month of Ramadan. As Abdussalam and Abdussalam observe, wasi is a mode of Yoruba Islamic discourse that communicates religious injunctions to Muslim audience during religious or social occasions.[2] It is conducted to proselytize, remind the faithful of their obligation to their religion and teach lessons on religious matters.[3] In turn, wasi, as Alabi notes, helps the audience to measure the knowledge and understanding of the scholar of the religious texts, leading to reverence for such scholars.[4]

Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye began his journey as omolekewu and later as oniwasi under the tutelage of Shaykh Kamalu-deen. He was a long-time student of Shaykh Kamalu-deen from whom he primarily acquired Islamic knowledge and skills of open-air wasi. Young AbdulRaheem participated in the preparatory team, serving like a town crier, charged with preparing the venue and announcing to the neighbourhood the day, time and venue the sermon of Shaykh Kamalu-deen was to hold. On such occasions fellow omolekewu or pupils would sing songs like the following one:

وَيَا ربِّ انصُرنا ونصرًا عَزِيزًا *** بِجَاهِ رَسُولِ الله وَمُوسَى كَذَا عِيسَى

O Lord, grant us victory, a mighty victory,
By the honour of Your Messenger (Muhammad), Mūsā and ʿĪsā

The poem is a plea for divine support and victory, invoking the revered figures of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The pupils of Shaykh Kamalu-deen would continue to sing the song in a bid to draw attention to their announcement, collecting gifts and tokens from well-wishers as they match their way across the neighbourhood.

In addition to the wasi of Shaykh Kamalu-deen, Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye mentioned a few other wasi sittings he used to patronize before he himself embarked on the same mission. At one of his sessions titled "Itan Afoju", he admitted that he used to trek from his residence to attend the Ramadan night sermons delivered at several quarters in Ilorin. He identified in particular the wasi at Ebugada**,** delivered by Shaykh Sakama, the wasi at Odealausa delivered by Shaykh Ibrahim Dasuki of Ile Asukuti and the wasi at Odesake, which he would patronize in rotation after *ifṭār* (fast-breaking evening meal) during the month of Ramadan.[5] He also attended the wasi at Sooro conducted by Shaykh Abubakr Sooro.[6] The most prominent among these wasis outside Shaykh Kamalu-deen and Adabiyyah fora is the wasi of Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilori (1917-1992) whom he fervently referred to as "Baba la'Gege" in reference to Agege, in Lagos, the seat of Shaykh Adam where his school is located. Young AbdulRaheem related one occasion at Ode Oniro,

at Omonda quarter where Shaykh Adam was conducting a wasi and he together with other fellow omokewus at Shaykh Kamalu-deen's madrasah boarding house would go out to attend Shaykh Adam's wasi. The omokewus listened to Shaykh Adam's impactful wasi with awe and admiration that they wondered whether this Baba Oniwasi was a jinn or human being like them.[7]

How young AbdulRaheem would go out from home or hostel during his leisure time to attend the sermons of other oniwasis was carefully couched using the word "*jarunpa*". Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye admitted that he would *jarunpa* to these circles of knowledge when he was at home and during the time he was at boarding madrasah at Masingba under the tutelage of Shaykh Kamalu-deen. *Jarunpa* (its noun being *ijarunpa*) is a periodic limb movement. It is repetitive, involuntary movements of the limbs while a person is asleep. By using this word, he was telling the audience that he would sneak out from where he was stationed to benefit from the knowledge of other scholars. He considered himself to be an omokewu or student of all Alfas of Ilorin from whom he has benefitted in one form or another, but that only Shaykh Kamalu-deen was the one who taught him Islamic knowledge.[8]

Given his extensive training under the tutelage of Shaykh Kamalu-deen and the experience he gained from other scholars of note, Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye charted out his course of action in open-air preaching, modelled after Shaykh Kamalu-deen's wasi. In the Ramadan lecture he delivered in Lagos in September 2007, he stated that he began delivering wasi in 1947 and started to deliver it in Ilorin in 1955 at the old Idiape Central Mosque.[9] When he was dispatched to Ibadan between 1950 and 1951 during the reign of Awolowo, he delivered wasi at Masalasi Alfa Abata. [10] In 1957, he returned from Accra, the capital of Ghana where he went to deliver where AbdulRaheem Ajikobi of Ile Balogun served as his Arọwasi.[11] In 1959, he was dispatched to Onitsha, the Anambra State's largest city, to deliver wasi among the Yoruba Muslim community where he was commissioned to establish a madrasah named after Shaykh Kamalu-deen.[12] Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye delivered wasis during Walimat al-Qurʾan, Ramadan lectures, commissioning of madrasas, society's branch establishment, dispute settlement, community engagement, graduation, naming and wedding ceremonies and the gatherings of Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria.

There is a particular wasi gathering that Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye meritoriously cited in his wasi experiences. In 1955, Shaykh Kamalu-deen was not allowed to stage wasi at Kankatu quarters in Ilorin. When the Eighth Emir of Ilorin, Shehu AbdulKadir Dan Shauibu Bawa, heard of the incident later, he invited Shaykh to come back to conduct wasi. By that time Shaykh Kamalu-deen had already gone back to Lagos. It was Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye, the Alfa Oba,[13] who was eventually nominated by Shaykh Kamalu-deen to hold the delicate wasi, given

his early experience in the Ramadan night wasi at the Idiape Central Mosque which he had started a few months earlier. Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye recounted how decisive and impactful that 1955 wasi was. The Emir ordered the security apparatus to provide security at the venue. Too much was at stake. The news of the early rejection and rescheduled comeback after the Emir intervention has spread. Well-wishers and friends of Shaykh Kamalu-deen supplied young AbdulRaheem with maximum support (protective prayers, *naqali*, etc.).[14] The wasi was eventually conducted successfully. The success of this wasi, which was well attended, showcased the prowess and sagacity of Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye and his popularity among the Ilorin scholarly circles. In the final analysis, the initial rejection of Shaykh Kamalu-deen to hold wasi in that compound turned out to be a blessing in disguise for Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye later. Over the course of his presentations, Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye became so popular with open-space wasi that he was later recognized by his Shaykh, Shaykh Kamalu-deen, and crowned by the Eleventh Emir of Ilorin with the traditional title of "Oniwasi Agbaye" (the Global Preacher") during the six days of voluntary fasting in Shawwal 1423AH, December 2002. His predecessor in such impactful wasi and honorary recognition by traditional leadership was possibly Shaykh Saʿd (or Muhammad al-Sadisu or al-Salisu) (d. 1931),[15] better known as Shaykh Kokewu Kobere, an appellation drawn from his popular Yoruba song "*kokewu Kobere, bawo ni yio se la,*" meaning "he does not have knowledge of Islam and does not seek it, how will he gain salvation?"[16] Shaykh Kokewu Kobere was an itinerant preacher with successful preaching expeditions to several Yoruba towns, including Oyo, Ibadan, Oshogbo, Ede, Akure, Ijebu-Ode, Abeokuta, Lagos and Ajasse (in the Republic of Benin). In recognition of his profound contribution to the wasi and propagation of Islam, he was honoured and conferred with the title of "Amīr al-Wāʿiẓīn" (Oba Oniwasi or Chief of Preachers) [17] by the Eighth Emir of Ilorin, Shehu AbdulKadir Dan Shauibu Bawa (d. 1919) whose reign covered 1915-1919.

Historical Development of Ramadan Night Sermon at Ilorin Central Mosque

Apart from the regular five daily prayers, Jumuʿat prayers, children learning centres, *zāwiyah* circles,[18] mosques during the month of Ramadan host *iʿtikāf*[19] (seclusion), and most prominently tafsīr and wasi lectures. Right from the inception of the Emirate in Ilorin in the early 19th century, Ramadan wasi in the form of *tafsīr*, had been and is still spectacularly observed. At the Emir's Palace itself and in the presence of the Emir, leading ʿUlamaʾ and Imams particularly the three principal Imams, namely Imam Fulani, Imam Imale and Imam Gambari, accompanied by Ajanasi Agba (the Grand Reciter), preached in rotation.[20]

The old Idiape Central Mosque in Ilorin (Jumuʿah Mosque, locally called "Mọsalasi Jimọ" was the early venue to host the Ramadan sermon conducted by Oniwasi Agbaye. Built in 1835 as Ratibi (daily prayers) mosque during the reign of the First Emir of Ilorin, Abdulsalami (1823-1842), the old Idiape Mosque was enlarged and converted to be used as the community's Jumuʿah mosque by the Third Emir of Ilorin, Emir Zubair (1860-1868) and fully put into use as Jumat Mosque in 1870 by the Fourth Emir of Ilorin, Emir Aliyu (1868-1891).[21] The Mosque occupies a central position in Ilorin. It is a cosmopolitan mosque hosting the ethnic groups Ilorin is composed of, such as Baruba, Yoruba, Fulani, Hausa, Nupe, Gobirawa, among others, though the area of location is a Yoruba enclave. The Mosque became and remained the Central, Jumuʿah Mosque of Ilorin from 1870 till 1981. It was replaced with the current ultra-modern Jumuʿah Mosque which is a few meters away from the old Idiape Central Mosque and closer to the Emir's Palace. Officially commissioned in 1981 by the then President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the new Central Mosque was put into use in that same year. The old, Idiape Mosque is still used for Jumuʿat prayer on special occasions at the instance of the Emir.

Studies suggest that Shaykh Kamalu-deen requested from the Eighth Emir of Ilorin, Emir AbdulKadir, a close friend of Shaykh Taj Al-Adab and the first Life Patron of Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria, to allow his society to hold wasi at the old Idiape Central Mosque. When the Emir granted permission in 1955, Shaykh Kamalu-deen tasked his omokewu becoming oniwasi, Shaykh AbdulRaheem Ameenullahi, to be in charge, knowing well that he was up to the task. Subsequent Emirs of Ilorin have retained that privilege and allowed wasi organized by Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria to continue to hold at the Central Mosque.[22] Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye began delivering wasi at the old Idiape Central Mosque in 1955.[23] When the Central Mosque shifted from Idiape to its current location in front of the Emir's Palace in 1981, the venue for Ramadan night wasi was also shifted shortly afterwards to the current Central Mosque. When Alhaji A. R. Sallah (fondly called Baba Ilela), the first National Missioner of Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria, died in 1987, Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye became the Second National Missioner of the society and continued with his wasi sessions until his death on 25 May 2012. The Third National Missioner of the society, Shaykh Abdul Mumin Hanafi Ayara, appointed in 2012, became the oniwasi of Ramadan night sermon till the present.

Features of Ramadan Night Sermon

There are several features that characterize the Ramadan night sermon of the Ilorin Central Mosque. Some of them are as follows:

Seating Arrangement

The sitting arrangement is simple. Shaykh Oniwasi, accompanied by a few senior members of Ansarul Islam, are seated in the front with their backs to the Mosque gate. The supportive team, consisting of *Ajanasi* (text reciter), *Arọwasi* (sermon transmitter) and their assistants are seated or standing a few metres away facing Shaykh. Other members of the audience are seated behind and on the left and right sides. They are all seated on chairs and others, particularly pupils of Shaykh, are seated on mats spread on the floor. The organizer, Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria, provides chairs, a public address system, sitting mats and other logistics.

Segment and Structure

The night sermon often started as soon as the *Tarāwīḥ* prayer known locally as "*Asamu*" was completed. The wasi of Oniwasi Agbaye was usually held between 10.00pm and 1.00am and occasionally extended beyond that time. Before the arrival of Shaykh at the venue, a senior omokewu or Arọwasi of Shaykh would engage the audience with a preparatory sermon. As Shaykh entered the venue and settled, Ajanasi would take over the microphone with prayers or poems of prayer to Shaykh. There are several citations he usually read as a prelude. One of the famous ones, particularly in the 1980s are:

﴿قَالَ رَبِّ ٱشۡرَحۡ لِي صَدۡرِي وَيَسِّرۡ لِيٓ أَمۡرِي وَٱحۡلُلۡ عُقۡدَةٗ مِّن لِّسَانِي وَٱجۡعَل لِّي وَزِيرٗا مِّنۡ أَهۡلِي هَٰرُونَ أَخِي ٱشۡدُدۡ بِهِۦٓ أَزۡرِي وَأَشۡرِكۡهُ فِيٓ أَمۡرِي كَيۡ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرٗا وَنَذۡكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا إِنَّكَ كُنتَ بِنَا بَصِيرٗا قَالَ قَدۡ أُوتِيتَ سُؤۡلَكَ يَٰمُوسَىٰ﴾[24]

> (Mūsā) said: "O my Lord! Open up for me my chest. And ease my task for me. And remove the impediment from my tongue. That they may understand my speech. And Appoint for me an assistant from my family. Aaron, my brother. Add to my strength through him. And make him share my task. That we may glorify You much. And remember You much. You are always watchful over us." (Allah) said: "Granted is your request, O Moses!" (20:25-36).

Through these verses, he prayed to Allah to help him deliver the sermon properly and make it comprehensible to audience just as He helped Prophet Musa articulate the message to Firʿawn. This passage of the Qurʾan would be followed by Arabic poems singing the praises of the Qurʾan or praying to Allah for Shaykh or the audience such as the following:

كلامٌ قديمٌ لا يُملُّ سماعـــُه *** تنزّه عـن قـــــولٍ وفعلٍ ونيتي

به أَشتَفِي مِن كلِّ داءٍ ونورُه *** دليلٌ لقلبِي عند جَهلي وحَيرَتِي

فيارِبِّ متّعني بسرِّ حروفِـــه *** وَنوّر بـــــه قَلبي وسَمعي ومُقلَتِي

Pre-existing words that are never boring to hear,
Transcending speech, action, and intention.
With it, I heal from every ailment, and its light
is a guide for my heart in times of ignorance and confusion.
O Lord, grant me the secret of its letters,
And illuminate my heart, my hearing, and my sight with it.

Next came the main part of wasi. Here, Shaykh would read verses or passages of the Qurʾan he intended to interpret. The audience, with their Qurʾan open, led by Ajanasi would read after him the same verses. He would then proceed to the elaboration.

The last segment of the sermon usually contained prayers for notable Shaykhs in Ilorin and the audience. In this last part, the audience would be encouraged to offer tokens and gifts as charity.

Three sessions of the 29/30 night wasis of Ramadan would be dedicated to *duʿāʾ*, each at the end of every 10 days of Ramadan. In each session, the entire Qurʾan would be read. People of note would be invited to grace the occasion. The nightly sermon of Ramadan's 29 or 30 days would be followed by Shawwāl's nightly sermon of six-day voluntary fasting.

Audience

Although it was primarily and more regularly patronized by members of Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria and its affiliates, the gathering of the Ramadan wasi at the Ilorin Central Mosque is all inclusive, attracting the notable and the rank and file from within and outside the association of the Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria, the host society. Traditional leaders, Baloguns, Imams, oniwasis, farmers, taxi-drivers and omokewus, among others, patronized the Ramadan night wasi at the Ilorin Central Mosque at one time or another.

Arọwasi

Arọwasi is a transmitter of sermon (from *arọ* + *wasi*, meaning 'transmitter/decoder' + 'sermon'). He is a person who elaborates in Yoruba the preacher's sermon in Yoruba. He paraphrases the preacher's utterances, highlights the vital parts of the message and adds samples to buttress the preacher's point. He does so, often in a loud voice, with some embellishments to keep the audience attention intact. Among the Arọwasi of Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye are Alhaji AbdulRaheem Ajikobi, Alhaji Baba Agbogi and Alhaji Issa Agaka, Alhaji.[25] With the passage of time, the role of Arọwasi is gradually diminishing in wasi settings.

Ajanasi and Indigenous Intonations

Ajanasi does in Arabic citations what Arọwasi does in Yoruba for the preacher, with more assignments. Ajanasi (from *aja* + *nasi*, meaning 'reader' + 'text') is a person who rehearses in a loud, melodious intonation the preacher's citations in Arabic, i.e. Qurʾanic verses and Arabic poetry. He repeats the text after the preacher and initiates other relevant quotations and intertext citations to illustrate the preacher's point. After long digressions and extensive illustrations by the preacher and his Arọwasi, the Ajanasi brings the discourse back to focus by citing the initial text. The function of Arọwasi and Ajanasi is also vital in the *tafsīr* setting where the *mufassir* engages in the interpretation of the Qurʾan, but with less recourse to Arabic poetry.

Ajanasi of wasi is often more than one, standing or sitting in front of oniwasi. A lead Ajanasi is accompanied by one or two assistants. He can be assisted by another one when he gets tired. One may also memorise the Qurʾan more while another is better in Arabic poems. The Ajanasi may read after the Oniwasi citations from Prophetic hadith and other texts. However, the intonation is applied mainly when reciting Qurʾanic verses and Arabic poems.

The importance of Ajanasi in wasi sitting needs further elaboration. Yoruba is characteristically a tonal language, referring to any language that makes use of the pitch of the voice as an essential element in the formation of words and in connected speech.[26] All the three kinds of tones are featured in the Yoruba language, namely Rhythmic Tones, Syntactic Tones and Semantic Tones.[27] Every word uttered in Yoruba is made on a definite tone, and the slightest alteration in the tone-pattern results in an alteration in its meaning.[28]

It is important to note that people may choose one wasi or tafsīr setting over another not necessarily only because of the oniwasi or mufassir's commentary on the Qurʾanic text which after all may remain more or less the same, but because of the melodious intonation which varies from one organisation to another.

Indigenous Yoruba intonations of reading the Qurʾan and chanting Arabic poems are an integral part of Muslim culture in Ilorin and Yorubaland. There are hundreds of Islamic religious movements or associations in Ilorin and Yorubaland. Each has its tonal idiosyncrasies and phonological idiolect: one mode of intonation for reading the Qurʾan and another, different mode for chanting Arabic poetry. In fact, some, most prominently Markazi founded by Shaykh Adam al-Ilori, has various tones to chant different poems in Arabic and to test different metres.[29] Ekemode intonations were adopted by the Ansar-ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, a society which was founded in Lagos in 1923. Markazī intonation was generally believed to have originated from Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilori, the founder of Markaz al-Taʿlim al-ʿArabī al- Islāmī in Lagos. Adabī intonation, named after its

founder, Shaykh Muhammad al-Jamiʿ Taj al-Adab, was the standard intonation of the Ansarul Islam Society of Nigeria founded in 1942 by Shaykh Kamaludeen and all its affiliates. Adabī intonation is also the standard intonation of al-Maʿhad al-Kamālī al-Adabī li-al-Dirāsāt al-ʿArabiyyah wa-al-Islāmiyyah also called Maʿhad al-Kamāl al-Adabī li-al-Dirāsāt al-ʿArabiyyah wa-al-Islāmiyyah (Kamal School of Arabic and Islamic Studies) founded by Shaykh AbdulRaheem Oniwasi Agbaye and which this research paper was written to commemorate its 75-year anniversary. There are several others as well. While many reciters of these indigenous intonations generally disregarded the rules of *tajwīd* for proper pronunciation and recitation of the Qurʿan, as rightly observed by Shaykh Luqman Jimoh, there are still a few who observed them.[30] This number increased over time as a result of the awareness created by the Annual National Qurʾanic Recitation Competition organized by the Center for Islamic Studies, Usmanu Dan Fodio University, Sokoto, which the current writer was fortunate to be among the pioneer participants to represent Kwara State in Sokoto in 1986.

There is an attempt by Kannike and Yusuf to trace Ajanasi's recital function to what Mujāhid ibn Jabr was doing for ʿAbdullah ibn ʿAbbās in the early century of Islam, when the former was reciting and the latter interpreting the recited verses of the Qurʾan.[31] Such a phenomenon could be merely a semblance at best. It is more pragmatic to look inward and examine it in the light of the linguistic trait of Yoruba and the effect it could have on the socio-cultural values of the Yoruba speech community.

Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye made extensive use of this Ajanasi during his wasi sittings. There are several Shaykhs and Ajanasis who served Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye during his long wasi preachings from 1947 to 2012. Among them are Shaykh Abdul Qadir Mustapha Oniyangi, Shaykh Ahmad Aluko, Shaykh Ahmad Alaye, Shaykh Ambali Gunniyan, Dr. Ibrahim Mahmud Muhammad Adabata, Shaykh Muheeb al-Din Uthman Kuranga, Shaykh Bukhari Musa and Shaykh Abdul Rauf Salahud-deen.[32]

Sufi Brotherhood Performance

Occasionally, bandiri drum performance of Qādiriyyah Sufi brotherhood would feature in the Ramadan night sermon of Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye, particularly when the topic of the sermon was related to Sufi figures or the role Sufi Brotherhood played in the spread of Islam in the region.[33] Bandiri is used in diverse religious ceremonies, including Walimat al-Qurʾan, Laylat al-Qadri, Mawlud al-Rasūl, graduation, naming and wedding ceremonies among others. Shaykh also engaged the followers of Tijaniyyah when the theme of discussion demanded, reciting, along with his Ajanasi, the poems, commonly chanted by the associates of Tijāniyyah Sufi brotherhood. Though he is a direct disciple of Shaykh Nasiru

Kabara (1912–1996), a prominent Kano-based Sufi scholar of Qādiriyyah order and former leader of Qādiriyyah in West Africa, Shaykh tolerated other Sufi orders in his wasi sittings. Such incorporation of Sufi poems and prayers adds spice to the sermon.

Learning and Training Circle

Another feature of Ramadan night wasi of Oniwasi Agbaye is the lesson omokewus were expected to gain on religious matters. The night wasi would reinforce or complement what students have acquired in the curriculum of the morning madrasah. It is also a training circle for the future oniwasis among the growing omokewu who upon their completion of thānawiyyah (Senior Secondary School) level may be posted as Arabic/Islamic teachers and oniwasis. He reminded the audience, particularly omolekewu, that *"akeku ni kewu"*, meaning knowledge acquisition must continue till death. Occasionally, Shaykh would specifically draw the attention of omokewu to some semantic or grammatical aspect of Arabic or Qurʾanic verse under study. An example of this is the distinction he made between the words غُرُور "*ghurūr*" and غَرُور "*gharūr*" as mentioned in the Qurʾanic verses 3:185; 57:20 and verses 31:33; 35:5, respectively. Yusuf Ali translated *ghurūr* as "goods and chattels of deception"[34] while Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall rendered it as "comfort of illusion".[35] On the second word, "*gharūr*", Yusuf Ali and M. M. Pickthall rendered it as "Chief Deceiver" and "deceiver/beguiler" respectively.[36] Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye interpreted the second word "*gharūr*" as "*girimankayi*" (obstinateness) and *ijọrẹniloju* (arrogance or vaingloriousness) which is slightly closer to the English renditions by Pickthall and Yusuf Ali. However, Shaykh Oniwasi translated "*ghurūr*" as "*erepe aso ti obinrin nlo ti oban se ela lọwọ*"[37] (a small rag that a lady uses as a pad during her menstrual circle). He noted that the worldly life is as repugnant as a rag used for menstrual blood which is repulsive even to its user and would be discarded after menstruation. He used a classical Yoruba word "*erepe asọ*" to bring the meaning of *ghurūr* closer to the mindset of the audience. While a young woman who uses a "menstrual pad" in place of a rag would find the meaning of the word difficult to comprehend, students particularly those who would be posted as teachers or preachers in rural areas would find such an approach instructive.

Method and Sources of Reference

Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye adopted tafsīr as a way of preaching. His method is a hybrid of *tafsīr bi-al-maʾthūr* and *tafsīr bi-al-ishārah. Tafsīr bi-al-maʾthūr* refers to the interpretation and commentary on the Qurʾan using another portion or part of the Qurʾan, the sayings of Prophet Muhammad, and the narrations from the Companions and their Successors. *Tafsīr bi-al-ishārah* is a method of interpreting

the Qurʾan by ways of allusions. It is a Sufi way of Qurʾanic interpretation, aiming to go beyond the literal meaning of the Qurʾanic text to derive deeper and hidden meanings through intuitive perception.

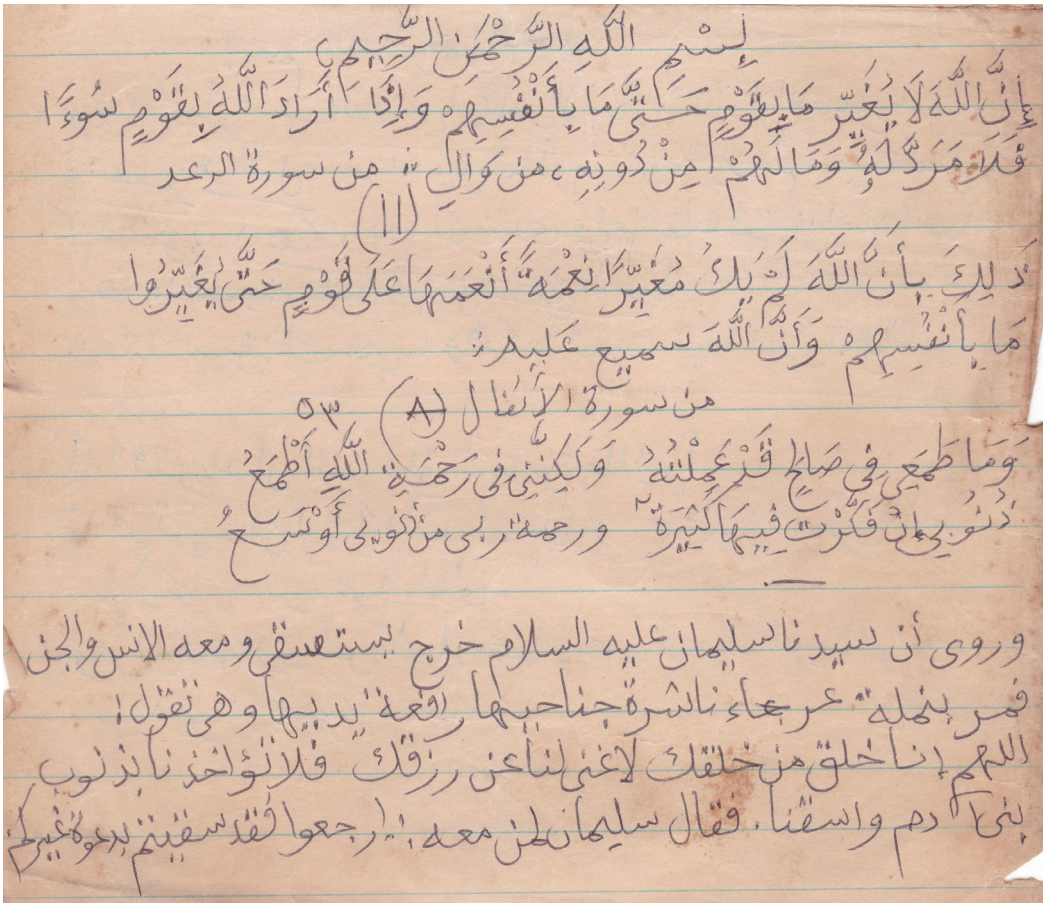
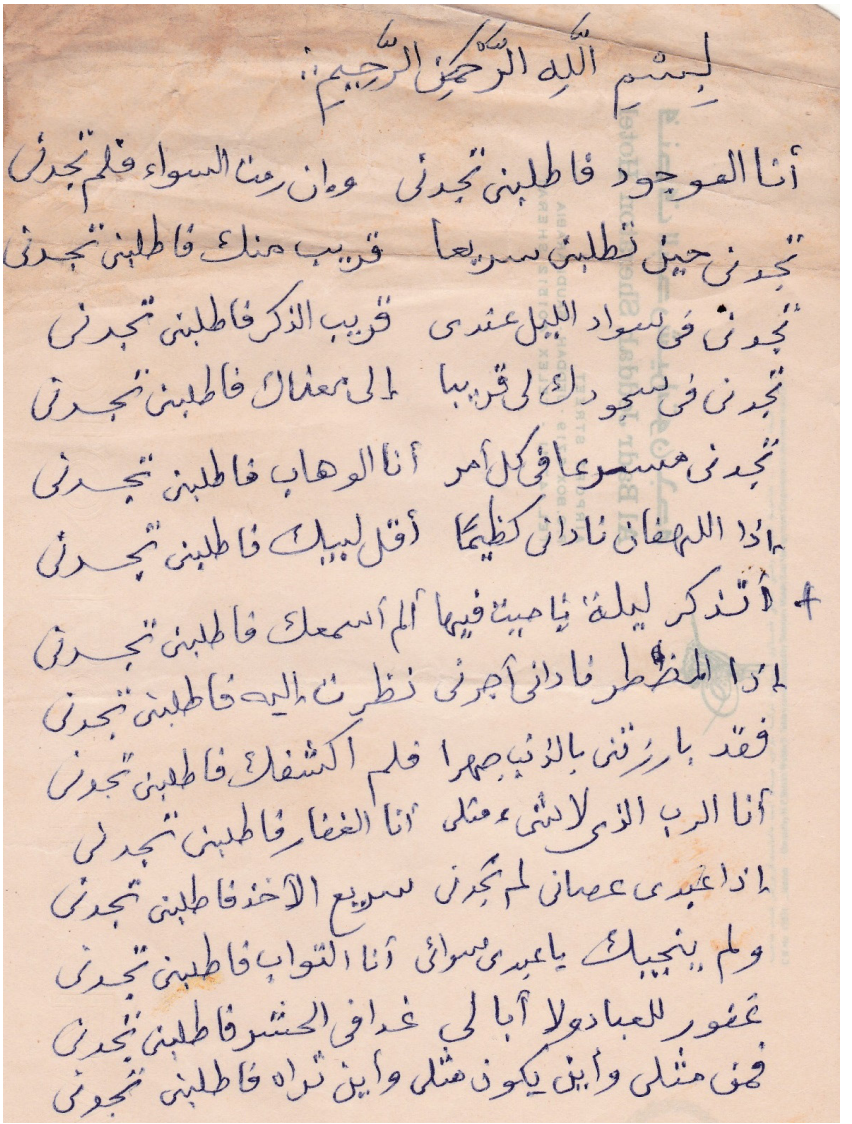


Figure 1: Handwritten Note of Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye on relevant Qurʾanic verses, Arabic poems and historical report, accessed on 29 October 2024.

The audience, particularly omokewus, were often asked to bring along the Qurʾan. The Oniwasi-cum-Mufassir would read verses from the Qurʾan which he would then ask the audience to read after him. The audience led by Ajanasi, the lead omokewu, would recite in unison. The Oniwasi would follow their readings with the elaboration of the meaning of the verse under study word by word. Relevant verses are invoked by Shaykh (see Figure 1) or independently introduced by his Ajanasi which the Oniwasi may or may not accept to incorporate into his commentary. Quotations from the Hadith and more frequently Arabic poems were cited to corroborate the interpretation. More often, he would handwrite Arabic poems from the original source on a sheet of paper

and pass it to Ajanasi to memorise before the wasi session (see Figure 2) He would follow this with quotations from his predecessors among oniwasis in Ilorin, when necessary. If the verse under study relates to stories of the prophets or perished nations,


بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

أنا الموجود فاطلبني تجدني وعن رمث السواء فلم تجدني
تجدني حين تطلبني سريعا قريب منك فاطلبني تجدني
تجدني في سواد الليل عندي قريب الذكر فاطلبني تجدني
تجدني في سجودك لي قريبا الى معناك فاطلبني تجدني
تجدني مسرعا في كل أمر أنا الوهاب فاطلبني تجدني
إذا اللهفان نادان كظيما أقل لبيك فاطلبني تجدني
أتذكر ليلة ياحبيبة فيها ألم أسمعك فاطلبني تجدني
إذا المضطر نادان أجرني نظرت اليه فاطلبني تجدني
فقد بارزتني بالذنب جهرا فلم أكشفك فاطلبني تجدني
أنا الرب الذي لاشيء مثلي أنا الغفار فاطلبني تجدني
إذا عبدي عصاني لم تجدني سريع الأخذ فاطلبني تجدني
ولم ينجيك ياعبدي سواني أنا التواب فاطلبني تجدني
غفور للعباد ولا أبالي غدا في الحشر فاطلبني تجدني
فمن مثلي وأين يكون مثلي وأين تراه فاطلبني تجدني

Figure 2: Handwritten Note of Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye on Arabic Poems, accessed on 29 October 2024

the Oniwasi would dwell at length on its narration. As a result, the exegesis of passages on stories of the prophets proceeded very slowly as compared to other passages. An example of this is the tafsīr of Sūrat Yusūf (surah 12), the longest storytelling surah of the Qurʾan, with elaborate encounters of the prophets, the princesses, the kings, the family relationships, the sexual temptations, the food scarcity, and the preaching in

times of prosperity and adversity. The tafsir of this surah spanned over two years to complete in the 1980s because each of the incident/issue raised therein was elaborated and then contextualised within the socio-cultural settings of Ilorin. In terms of priority, citation of Qurʾanic verses came first, followed by citations of hadith and lastly citation of Arabic poems. However, in terms of frequency, citation of Arabic poems came before hadith, as reflected in Figures 1 and 2 which were his handwritten notes used as a bookmark in *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*.

One of the most frequently used references which he would bring to wasi sitting almost on a daily basis with extensive bookmarks separating various pages and volumes of the book is *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* together with its Commentary (Hāshiyah) authored by Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ṣāwī.[38] He also made frequent use of bookmarks in a book titled *al-Mawāʿiẓ al-ʻUṣfūriyyah* written by Muḥammad Abū Bakr al-ʿUṣfūrī.[39] While the first book was a book of tafsīr and commentary upon that tafsīr book, the second one was on preaching and contained selected 40 hadiths, historical reports, Sufi tales, and literary anecdotes. The styles and content of his wasi lectures were reflections of these two books.

Selected Major Themes

Importance of *Duʿāʾ* (Prayer) in Muslim Life

Duʿāʾ (prayer or supplication) occupies a central position in Muslim life and forms a very central theme of every wasi sitting. The session would start with *duʿāʾ* and end with it. On one Ramadan night wasi occasion during the tenure of Military Governor Ibrahim Alkali in the 1980s, Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye addressed the importance of *duʿāʾ* through the interpretation of the verse لَهُ دَعوةُ الحقّ "*lahū daʿwat al-ḥaqq"* which he rendered as "*ti Olohun ni adua tinje ododo*" (unto Allah alone is due the true prayer) (13:14). He explained that Muslim prayer should generally revolve around the word لا إله إلا الله "*lā ilāha illā Allāh*" (there is no god but Allah) and that all supplications and prayers must be directed to the Almighty Allah alone. Other than that, every problem in Muslim life has its right solution and Shaykh warned that "*ẹmajeki afi ogun ẹtẹ wo lapalapa*"[40] (we must not use drug for leprosy to treat ringworm). For someone who is suffering from pain, his prayer should be the prayer of Prophet Ayyūb whose protracted ailment was cured upon his crying out to Allah as reported in the following verse:

> And (remember) Ayyūb, when He cried to his Lord, "Truly distress has seized me, but Thou art the Most Merciful of those that are merciful." So We listened to him: We removed the distress that was on him, and We restored his people to him, and doubled their number,- as a Grace from Ourselves, and a thing for commemoration, for all who serve Us (21:83-84).

With this Shaykh emphasized the need to look for solutions in the rightful way. Here, he managed to shed light on the meaning of *lahū daʿwat al-ḥaqq* in the light of other parts of the Qurʾan, which was typical to his approach to tafsīr, as noted earlier.

Contribution of and Tributes to Preachers and Scholars of Ilorin ʿUlamaʾ

The recognition of the contributions of the early ʿUlamaʾ of Ilorin was another theme that often features in Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye Ramadan night sermons. The pains and struggles of the early Ilorin ʿUlamaʾ to acquire and disseminate Islamic knowledge were the gains of their successors. Their contributions were well appreciated in the sermons of Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye. He reported from Shaykh Maymasa that when students of his time heard of a renowned scholar in Borno,[41] they would collectively raise funds to pay for the transportation of one of them. The person would go to Borno to acquire that knowledge and upon his return would teach and disseminate such knowledge to his fellow.[42]

In addition to the list of scholars he learned or attended their sermons, as mentioned earlier, he made mention of the contributions of Shaykh Ahmad ibn Abubakar Ikokoro, Shaykh Kokewu Kobere, Shaykh Badamasi ibn Musa Agbaji (d. 1895), Shaykh Badende of Akalanbi (d. 1921) among many others. As he put it, "*igi kan ole digbo*"[43] (a single tree cannot make a forest), none of them could have singlehandedly achieved what they had collectively bequeathed to us.[44] So this enduring legacy was a collective contribution of the early Ulamaʾ which a true seeker of knowledge must acquire and appreciate without any discrimination. Elsewhere, he referred to the great ʿUlamaʾ of Ilorin along with the successive Emirs of Ilorin as "Opo Ilorin"[45] (pillars of Ilorin) from whom people from far and near in Yorubaland came to learn.[46] With such an open recognition and acceptance of other scholars' contributions to the edifice of knowledge, he managed to pull to his sittings a huge crowd consisting of people of diverse schools and affiliations from all social strata. On these grounds, he admitted that he committed himself to reciting the following prayer every morning:

> اللهم اغفر لشيخ شيخنا الشيخ محمد الجامع تاج الأدب ولآبائهم وأمهاتهم وأزواجهم وأولادهم. اللهم اغفر لشيخنا الشيخ محمد كمال الدين حبيب الله ولآبائهم وأمهاتهم وأزواجهم وأولادهم. اللهم اغفر لشيخنا آدم الإلورى ولآبائهم وأمهاتهم وأزواجهم وأولادهم. اللهم اغفر لشيخنا الشيخ أبي بكر سورو... اللهم اغفر لشيخنا الشيخ أبي بكر ساكاما... . اللهم اغفر لشيخنا الشيخ محمد ميماسا... . اللهم اغفر لشيخنا الشيخ موسى ألوفنلا ألونماتا... . اللهم اغفر لشيخنا الشيخ عبد الله ألابي إِلَىْ أونيكِيجيبا...[47]

> O Allah, forgive Shaykh of our Shaykh, Shaykh Muhammad Al-Jamiʿ Taj al-Adab, his fathers, mothers, wives and descendants. O Allah, forgive our Shaykh, Shaykh Muhammad Kalamalu-deen Habeebullah, his fathers, mothers, wives and descendants. O Allah, forgive our Shaykh, Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilori, his fathers, mothers, wives and descendants. O Allah, forgive our Shaykh, Shaykh Abubakr Sakama… . O Allah, forgive our Shaykh, Shaykh Maimasa… . O Allah, forgive our Shaykh, Shaykh Musa Alufanla …. O Allah, forgive our Shaykh, Shaykh Abdullah Alabi from Onikijipa Compound ….

Natural World in Worship of Allah

Another theme that deserves mention is the creation and design of natural phenomena. The sun, moon and other stars show their piety to Allah and constantly worship Him as they move in their predetermined, respective orbits. They are all in transit in their movements, like humans, and they shall all return to their Creator, like humans. When illustrating the meaning of the Qurʾanic verse (36:38-40) and the splendour and structure of the natural phenomena, he cited extensively poems on nature and the primordial state of terrestrial and celestial bodies. Written by Maʿrūf al-Ruṣāfī (1875-1945), an Iraqi prolific poet, the poem was titled and starts with خَبرٌ في الأرض أوْحتْه السَّما *"khabar fī al-arḍ awḥath al-samāʿ*:

خبرٌ في الأرض أوْحتْه السَّما *** لأولي العلم بِرُسُل الفِكـر
أنّ هذي الأرض كانت أولا *** ما ترى بحراً بها أو جبـلا
أو سهولاً أو رُباً أو سُـــبُلا *** أو رياضا زهرها الغضّ نما
من سحاب جادها بالمطر[48]

A message on Earth inspired by the heavens,
To the wise, through the messengers of thought.
This land once was not what you see,
No seas, no mountains, nor valleys or paths,
No gardens where blooming flowers thrive,
Nurtured by the clouds that brought the rain

This poem beautifully captures the transformation of the Earth from its primordial state to its current form. He acknowledged that he first learned about the poem from Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilori long before he discovered them in Diwan.[49]

Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye was so moved by the strength of the poem's rhythm and words which the Ajanasi, Alfa Abdul Raufi, was reciting with a captivating and soul-piecing voice. Shaykh could be seen attempting to stand up amidst this intense feeling, as he was translating into Yoruba what Ajanasi was chanting word by word. Impressed with the Ajanasi's recital, he spontaneously murmured

"ọlalubarika ọmọ yi"[50] (may you be blessed, this pupil), in contrast to the way he formally addressed this same Ajanasi by calling him "Alfa Abdul Raufi." With such a captivating and charismatic *atmosphere*, which occasionally prevailed in his wasi, the audience would not fail to grasp the message Shaykh was passing.

Conclusion

There are indeed many great Muslim ʿUlamaʾ, oniwasi and mufassir in Ilorin who preceded Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye in preaching but whose actual oral wasi contributions were not available to the succeeding generations due to the unavailability of recording materials during their time. Their contribution, nevertheless, were duly recognized by Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye.

Wasi in Ilorin is an identity marker and a hallmark of Yoruba speaking Muslims in Ilorin and Yorubaland, fostering the social and cultural bond with the Qurʾan. The oral delivery of wasi was in tune with the linguistic characteristics of Yoruba, a tonal language that is more appreciated when communicated orally. The impact wasi and tafsīr would have when delivered orally is significantly higher than when it is transcribed into a written form. It is even doubtful how the interpretative and informative melodious intonations of oniwasi, mufassir and ajanasi could be intelligibly transcribed. As presented in this study, the strength of indigenous Yoruba Muslim culture and contributions of Ilorin ʿUlamaʾ to Islamic scholarship are exemplified in the Ramadan night wasi delivered at the Ilorin Central Mosque by Shaykh AbdulRameem Ameenullahi Oniwasi Agbaye.

Endnotes

1 Adam Abdullah al-Ilori, *Lamaḥāt al-Ballūr fī Mashāhīr ʿUlamāʾ Ilūrin (1200–1400 AH / 1800–1980 CE)* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzīʿ, 1982), 57-62.

2 Ahmad Shehu Abdussalam, and Abdulganiy Abimbola Abdussalam, "Wa`asi in Ilorin: A Manipulation of Religious Discourse," *NUSK Journal of Humanities,*1, nos. 1–2 (2011): 223.

3 For a study on the manipulative features of wasi, see Abdussalam, and Abdussalam, "Wa`asi in Ilorin,"

4 Aliyu Sakariyau Alabi, Transmission of Learning in Modern Ilorin: A History of Islamic Education 1897-2012 (Unpublished PhD Thesis) (Universiteit Leiden, 2015), 267.

5 AbdulRaheem Ameenullahi Oniwasi Agbaye, "Itan Afoju," Ramadan Night Sermon, 2011, https://youtu.be/kHs9u2j8vO8?t=2321.

6 AbdulRaheem Ameenullahi Oniwasi Agbaye, "Oniwasi Agbaye on Suffi and Other Ilorin Scholars," Facebook Video, https://web.facebook.com/watch/?v=1451880261541927.

7 AbdulRaheem Oniwasi Agbaye, "Karamo Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Alilory," Ramadan Night Sermon, 2010, Facebook Video, https://web.facebook.com/watch/?v=2604459939583311; Oniwasi Agbaye, "Oniwasi Agbaye on Suffi and Other Ilorin Scholars."

8 AbdulRaheem Ameenullahi Oniwasi Agbaye, "Latest Ramadan Lecture by Oniwasi Agbaye," Ramadan Lecture in Lagos, September 2007, Youtube, https://youtu.be/rAUGMqQK0tE?t=1631.

9 AbdulRaheem Ameenullahi Oniwasi Agbaye, "Latest Ramadan Lecture by Oniwasi Agbaye," https://youtu.be/rAUGMqQK0tE?t=1654.

10 Oniwasi Agbaye, "Karamo Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Alilory."

11 AbdulRaheem Oniwasi Agbaye," Idaro Alfa Mi," Funeral Sermon at Masingba, Ilorin, December 2005, Youtube, https://youtu.be/AcXBbnXDN3g?t=1970.

12 AbdulRaheem Oniwasi Agbaye, "Idaro Alfa Mi," Youtube https://youtu.be/AcXBbnXDN3g?t=1391.

13 Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye noted that following the instruction of his Shaykh, he became Alfa Oba (the Emir's tutor on Islamic learning) of the Eight Emir of Ilorin, Emir AbdulKadir Dan Shauibu Bawa (1919–1959) and also taught *ʿAshmāwī* book to his Prince, AbudlKadir Baba when was the Daudu of Bode Saadu who later became the 10th Emir of Ilorin (1992-1995). See AbdulRaheem Oniwasi Agbaye, "Idaro Alfa Mi", https://youtu.be/AcXBbnXDN3g?si=OHu5rbTwV-8c3eub.

14 AbdulRaheem Oniwasi Agbaye, "Idaro Alfa Mi", https://youtu.be/AcXBbnXDN3g?si=OHu5rbTwV-8c3eub.

15 Moshood Mahmood Jimba and Ismail Salihu Otukoko (eds), *ʿUlamaʾ of al-Imarah (Scholars of the Emirate)* (Malete: Centre for Ilorin Manuscript and Culture, 2015),

16 L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin: The Journey so far* (Ilorin: Kwara State University Press and Publishing, 2022), 477-478; Moshood Mahmood Jimba and Ismail Salihu Otukoko (eds), *ʿUlamaʾ of al-Imarah (Scholars of the Emirate)* (Malete: Centre for Ilorin Manuscript and Culture, 2015), 77-81.

17 Musa Ali Agetunmobi, "Islamic Scholars of Ilorin and Their Place in Yorubaland," *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs. Journal*, 12, no. 1 (1991): 141; Jimoh*, Ilorin: The Journey so far*, 488-489.

18 *Zāwiyah* refers to a corner or place inside the mosque where members of the Sufi tariqah perform *awrād* (litanies). It is also called *Khānqāh*.

19 *Iʿtikāf* is a meritorious voluntary act, devoting oneself to ibadah and shunning world distractions, done normally in the last ten (10) days of Ramadan.

20 Hakeem Olumide Danmole, "The Spread of Islam in Ilorin Emirate in the Nineteenth Century," *NATAIS: Journal of the Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 2, no. 2 (1981), 3; al-Ilori, *Lamaḥāt al-Ballūr fī Mashāhīr ʿUlamāʾ Ilūrin*, 14-15.

21 Jimoh, Ilorin: The Journey *so far*, 152; Danmole, "The Frontier Emirate: A History of Ilọrin," (Unpublished PhD dissertation) (University of Birmingham, 1980), 128; Danmole, "The Spread of Islam in Ilorin Emirate in the Nineteenth Century," 3; Ahmad Abdullahi Onikijipa, *Shaykh Muhammad Kamal-ud-deen Al-Adabiyy* (Ilorin: Rahmat Jaji Press, 1990), 181.

22 The 11th Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Ibrahim Sulu Gambari, considered the Idiape Ramadan night sermon, as once cited by Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye, as initiative of his forefathers which must be preserved

23 AbdulRaheem Oniwasi Agbaye, "Abdulraheemi Agbaye (Ramadan Lecture) Sheikh Abdulrahim Abata," Ramadan Night Sermon, 2011, Youtube, https://youtu.be/JP0ZqyTJ7D4?t=153.

24 The word قَالَ in the beginning of the verse is often dropped in the reading to make the passage proceed as a prayer Shaykh is making.

25 Salih M. Jum'ah Alaso*, Shaikh AbdulRaheem Ameenullahi Al-Adabiyy (Oniwasi Agbaye): His Educational Achievements and Islamic Propagation Ingenuity* (Ilorin: Al-Maktabah al-ʿArabiyyah al-Nayjīriyyah li-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzīʿ, 2016), 82-83.

26 Adetokunbo Adekanmbi, "Tones of Yoruba Language," *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences* 79, no. 1 (1989): 29, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24537005

27 Adekanmbi, "Tones of Yoruba Language," 29-34.

28 E. L. Lasebikan, "The Tonal Structure of Yoruba Poetry," *Présence Africaine*, no. 8/10 (1956): 43. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24346888.

29 Razaq Deremi Abubakre, *The Interplay of Arabic and Yoruba Culture in South*

Western Nigeria (Iwo: Darul 'Ilm Publishers, 2004): 384-388.

30 Shaykh Luqman Jimoh, "Indigenous Qurʾanic Intonations in Nigeria: Between Modernization and Standardization*," World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization*, 3, no. 3 (2013): 109-115, 2013

31 Uthman Mohammed Mustapha Kannike, and AbdulHameed Badmas Yusuf, "Fastening the Bond with the Qurʾan in the Fasting Period: A Study of Ramadān Tafsīr in Ilorin, Nigeria," *Pakistan Journal of Qur'ānic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2024): 171.

32 Salih M. Jum'ah Alaso, *Shaikh AbdulRaheem Ameenullahi Al-Adabiyy (Oniwasi Agbaye,* 84-87.

33 Shaykh AbdulRaheem Ameenullahi Oniwasi Agbaye, "Opo Ilorin2," Video Tape Recording of Ramadan Night Sermon, 2009 (Ilorin: Babaita Production).

34 Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary* (The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd Complex, 1991), 199, 1695.

35 Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall*, The Meanings of the Glorious Qurʾan* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2001), 103.

36 Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary* (The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd Complex, 1991), 1221, 1298;

Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meanings of the Glorious Qurʾan* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2001), 616.

37 Oniwasi Agbaye, "Opo Ilorin2."

38 On my visit to the Shaykh Oniwasi Agbaye's personal library at his residence at Ile Iyakewu compound, Abata Sunkere, Ilorin on October 29, 2024, I sighted several books he (over)used during his wasi sittings. In particular, he put several bookmarks of his handwritten notes, consisting of Qurʾanic verses, hadith and Arabic poems of prayers etc. to separate pages of his mostly used tafsir book titled *Ḥāshiyat al-Ṣāwī ʿalā Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*: Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ṣāwī, *Ḥāshiyat al-Ṣāwī ʿalā Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (Cairo: Sharikat Maktabat wa-Maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Awlāduh, 1941). I extend my deepest appreciation to the family of Shaykh for granting me the access to his personal collections.

39 Muḥammad Abū Bakr al-ʿUṣfūrī, *al-Mawāʿẓ al-ʿUṣfūriyyah* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Awlāduh, 1342AH/1924)

40 AbdulRaheem OniwasiAmeenullahi Agbaye, "Oniwasi Agbaye sermon on Yakub During Zhul karnain of Ilorin. So Old!" Ramadan Night Sermon, 1988/1989, https://web.facebook.com/watch/?v=1223742004355755.

41 Borno State (as it was known later, its capital being Maiduguri) is a state in the North-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It is around 1,300km away from Ilorin, the capital city of Kwara State located in the North-Central region of Nigeria.

42 Oniwasi Agbaye, "Karamo Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Alilory."

43 Oniwasi Agbaye, "Karamo Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Alilory."

44 Oniwasi Agbaye, "Karamo Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Alilory."

45 See AOniwasi Agbaye, "Opo Ilorin2."

46 For more on the notable Ilorin ʿUlamaʾ see: al-Ilori, *Lamaḥāt al-Ballūr fī Mashāhīr ʿUlamāʾ Ilūrīn*; Moshood Mahmood Jimba and Ismail Salihu Otukoko, *ʿUlamaʾ of al-Imarah (Scholars of the Emirate)* (Malete: Centre for Ilorin Manuscript and Culture, 2015); Musa Ali Agetunmobi (1991) "Islamic scholars of Ilorin and their place in Yorubaland*, Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs. Journal,* 12, no. 1,

135-147. https:/doi.org/10.1080/02666959108716194.

47 Oniwasi Agbaye, "Karamo Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Alilory."

48 Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfī, "Khabar fī al-arḍ awḥath al-samā," 2012, https://www.radar-news.net/archives/40179; https://www.aldiwan.net/poem45070.html#

49 Oniwasi Agbaye, "Karamo Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Alilory."

50 Oniwasi Agbaye, "Karamo Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Alilory."

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